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CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

*THE UNION OF
THE STATE AND THE CHURCH.*

BY THE
REV. EDWARD L. CUTTS, B.A.,

HON. D.D. UNIV. OF THE SOUTH, U.S.

AUTHOR OF
"TURNING POINTS OF GENERAL, AND OF ENGLISH CHURCH HISTORY," ETC.

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THE reign of Constantine is one of the most interesting and important periods in the history of the Church.

It closes the three centuries of primitive Christianity, to which the Church has always looked back as its Golden Age. In the great Council of Nicæa, which forms the glory of Constantine's reign, the contemporary Church summed up and recorded the faith, constitution, and discipline of that primitive age.

Then it was that the civil power entered into that alliance with the Church which has ever since formed the basis of society in the Christian nations.

It has been thought that a monograph of the Life of Constantine, which should give an adequate view of the Empire on the one hand, and the Church on the other, as they existed at the beginning of this reign, and should point out the principles upon which, in the course of it, their mutual relations were settled, would be especially interesting and useful at the present time, when the problem of the right relations between the Church and the State has again become a question—one of the most important questions possible—of our practical politics.

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274 (Feb. 27). Birth of Constantine.

284. Accession of Diocletian.

285. Maximianus joint Emperor.

292 (March 1). Constantius and Galerius Cæsar.

303 (February 1). First persecuting edict.

306 (July 25). Death of Constantius : election of Constantine.

306 (October 28). Maxentius usurps the purple.

312 (October 29). Battle of the Milvian Bridge : conversion of
Constantine : Emperor of the West.

313. Edict of Milan.

313 (May 1). Defeat of Maximin : Licinius Emperor of the East.

314 (June). First defeat of Licinius : Constantine takes Illy-
ricum.

323 (September 10). Second defeat of Licinius at the Battle of
Adrianople : Constantine sole Emperor.

325. Council of Nicæa.

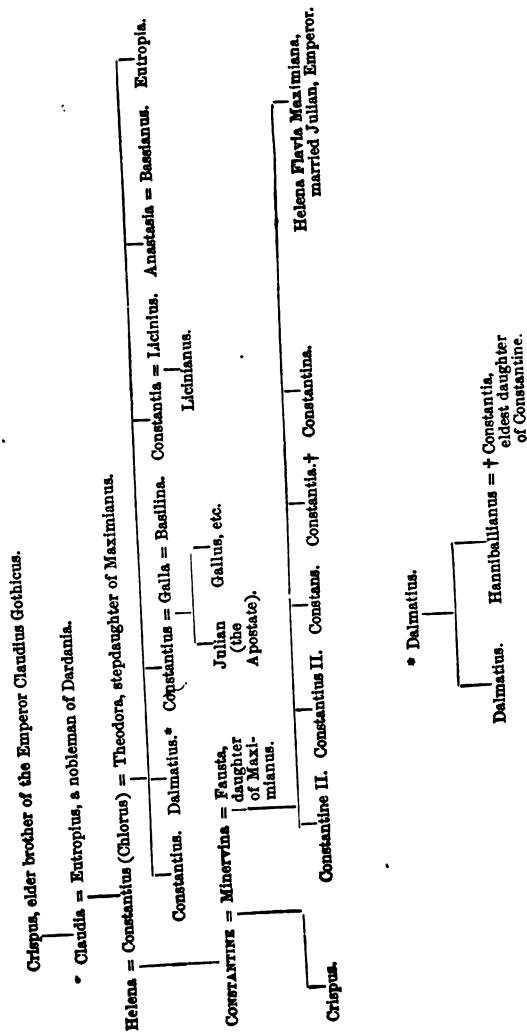
326. Death of Crispus.

330. Dedication of Constantinople.

335. Council of Tyre, and dedication of Church of Holy
Sepulchre.

337 (May 22). Death of Constantine.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE.



• Dalmatius.

Dalmatius.
 Hanniballianus = † Constantia,
 eldest daughter
 of Constantine.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.



CHAPTER I.

THE CONDITION OF THE EMPIRE.

THE political history of modern times has taught us how important a barrier the broad and rapid waters of the Danube form, for a thousand miles of its course, from west to east, between the fertile countries which lie to the south between it and the Mediter-

anean, and the semi-civilized empire which occupies the north-east of Europe and stretches far back over the unknown wilds of Asia. In the third century of the Christian era the historic stream was already the great boundary of races, though the political conditions of the peoples north and south of it were reversed.

The provinces which are so familiar to us under the names of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Servia, and Bulgaria, were as familiar to the world then under their ancient names of Dalmatia, Noricum, Pannonia, Mœsia, and Thrace. But whereas now they are independent provinces, feeble because of their independence, they were then united, under the name of Illyricum, and formed an integral portion of the Roman Empire; while the country on the north bank of the great river was inhabited by independent and unsettled tribes, known to the Romans as Alemanni and Sarmatians; behind whom Goths, Avars, Huns, and Tartars swarmed over the Asian steppes.

The contrast between the countries north and south of the great boundary was far greater then than now. South of the boundary the country, up to the water's edge, was under cultivation, studded with the villas of great landowners and the cottages of peasants; there were cities and towns, adorned with public buildings, and connected by great roads; there were commerce, letters, law, fine art; in a word, south of the Danube there was the civilization of the Roman Empire. North of the

boundary, starting from the very water's edge, were forests and wilds, occupied by tribes of barbarians, hardy, bold, rapacious, unsettled; subject to pressure from migrations of unknown hordes of Central Asia, always tending down towards more genial and fertile regions.

The great River Rhine, rising within a few miles of the Danube, and running from south to north, formed a similar barrier to the Gallic provinces of the Empire on the west, against the same Alemanni, and their kindred tribes, the Franks and Saxons, on the east.

The continual irruptions into the Empire of the barbarians from beyond the Danube and the Rhine did not at this period aim at conquest. They were simply raids, on a more or less extensive scale, of energetic, warlike, barbarous tribes, who saw on the other side of a broad river a vast country covered with flocks and herds, magnificent villas, wealthy towns and cities, tempting their cupidity by their wealth, and offering a field to their spirit of adventure and their love for war. The tribes were always on the watch for an opportunity. Did a long period of quiet lead the Duke of the Marches to relax his vigilance; did the withdrawal of troops for some intestine quarrel weaken the garrisons, the vigilant barbarians assembled, beneath the screen of their forests, under some enterprising leader, and suddenly swooped upon the unprepared or badly defended province. They overran it, fighting, killing, plundering, burning; and, when at length

confronted by a formidable force, retreated, unmolested, or with a running fight; leaving behind some hundreds or thousands—as the case might be—of their heroes who had died gloriously in battle; leaving behind sacked towns, and smoking villas, and a devastated country; but carrying with them flocks and herds, gold and silver, silken vestments, gilded arms, men and women captives; enough to enrich the tribes, and to whet the appetite of the warriors for another raid, at the first opportunity, into the Empire which yielded such spoils to the adventurous and brave.

The Euphrates formed another great river frontier of the Empire, separating it from the nations and provinces whose myriads of warriors mustered for battle under the standard of the Great King.

The forces of the Empire were disposed for defence against these barbarian foes.

The Legions were not like the standing armies of modern times, which have no settled abode, and are marched from side to side of an empire as their services are needed. They were permanently settled, with wives and families, in the frontier provinces, and lived in the same stations century after century. Three legions were stationed in Gaul, three in Spain, and three in Britain; six garrisoned Dalmatia, Pannonia, and Mœsia; four the frontier provinces of the Euphrates; two each were allotted to Egypt and North Africa. The auxiliaries, drawn from all the subject races, were similarly distributed

in the frontier provinces, in connection with the legions.

The southern bank of the Danube and the western bank of the Rhine were fortified by walled towns and forts, garrisoned by the auxiliary forces, who kept constant watch and ward ; while the solid might of the legions, gathered at the great strategic centres, was ready to move as occasion might require. Fleets of armed galleys were maintained, which constantly patrolled the two great rivers.

The interval which intervenes between the head waters of the Danube and the Rhine, and which left a gap by which the barbarians might easily penetrate through the province of Noricum into the north of Italy, was closed by Probus with a wall and fosse, strengthened by forts. From the neighbourhood of Neustadt and Ratisbon on the Danube, it stretched across hills, valleys, rivers, and morasses, as far as Wimpfen on the Neckar, and at length terminated on the banks of the Rhine after a winding course of near two hundred miles.* A similar wall, built by Trajan, extended from the point where the Danube, after running east for five hundred miles, takes a sudden bend to the northward, and continued the defence of the frontier for another forty miles in the same eastward line, from Rissova on the river to Kustendji on the coast of the Euxine ; thus closing a gap by which the Goths had been used to find an entrance into Illyricum. And still another wall, built by Hadrian, across the

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," ch. xii.

narrow neck of land between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde, secured the province of Britain from the barbarous Caledonian tribes left unsubdued in the forest-covered mountains and wilds of the north of our island.

The great commanders who governed these frontier provinces held positions of great authority and influence. They combined in their own hand all the various powers of civil government and military command. The legions were accustomed to give them the unquestioning obedience which well-disciplined soldiers give to their general. The inhabitants of the country were accustomed to their rule. The fact that the legions of a province so often during the third century elected a favourite commander to the imperial purple, arose out of the circumstances of the case. These great officials were the foremost men in the State. It was natural, in the absence of any principle of succession, to look among them for a successor to the highest office of the State when a vacancy occurred. It was natural that each of these great officials should aspire to the highest office within his reach. It was natural that his officers and soldiers should elect him to it, since his election to the purple led to promotion and donations to themselves.

The ceaseless pressure of the barbarians on the frontiers of the Empire, like that of the sea on the dykes of Holland, was the great external danger of the Empire. And the absence of any hereditary

or other established principle of succession to the imperial power, and the consequent scramble for empire at every vacancy, with the civil wars which so often arose out of it, constituted the great internal difficulty and danger of the State.

The period of fifteen years included within the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus (A.D. 253–268) affords an extreme example of the operation of these two—internal and external—sources of danger. During this period the Empire was invaded on every frontier, and ravaged through almost all its provinces by the barbarians ; and, at the same time, was torn and distracted by a multitude of domestic dissensions and usurpations ; the two evils aggravating one another.

The Franks, having crossed the barrier of the Rhine, rapidly overran Gaul, ravaged Spain, and, when the exhausted country no longer supplied them with plunder, seized the vessels in the ports of Spain and crossed over into the African province.

The Alemanni penetrated across the Danube, and through the Rhætian Alps into the plains of Lombardy ; advanced as far as Ravenna, and displayed the victorious banner of barbarians within sight of Rome ; then the Senate, strengthening the Prætorian guards with volunteers, confronted them, and accepted the retreat of the barbarians as a Roman victory.

The Goths, coasting round the eastern shore of the Euxine, stormed and plundered Trebizond. In a second expedition, ravaged the province of Bithynia

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and burnt Nicomedia, its capital. In a third expedition, overran Asia Minor, burning the Temple of Ephesus ; overran Greece, and advanced within sight of Italy ; when the Emperor confronted them, and, by concluding an alliance with them, arrested their further progress. Sapor, King of the Parthians, taking advantage of the distress of the Empire, also crossed the Euphrates, vanquished the Emperor Valerian, and took him prisoner near Edessa ; surprised Antioch, which he pillaged and destroyed ; and penetrated as far as Cæsarea in Cappadocia ; wasting the country and carrying off its treasures. Odenatus, of Palmyra, raised a force against Sapor, harassed his retreat, and laid the foundation of his dominion in the East.

The Empire, thus insulted and plundered by its external foes, was at the same time the victim of internal dissensions. During the reign of Gallienus, nineteen different persons assumed the imperial title and authority in different parts of the Empire. Some were mere adventurers ; some were the generals of the armies in the provinces, who, of their own motion, or on the solicitation of those about them, assumed authority in the general confusion, as the only way of saving society.

Gallienus, under whose reign all these calamities fell on the Empire, was a remarkable man ; accomplished, versatile ; philosopher, poet, musician, artist ; but he seems to have thought that the loss of the outlying members of the Empire was no great misfortune, so long as Italy was tranquil and pros-

perous. When news came that this or that province was overrun by the barbarians, or had declared its independence, he would single out some production which the province supplied to the luxury of Rome, and ask, Is Rome lost because it may be deprived of this or that? But with all his *poco-curantism*, Gallienus was personally brave, and when Aureolus, the commander of the Upper Danube, assumed the purple and invaded Italy, then the Emperor buckled on his armour, put himself at the head of his Prætorians, and marched to meet him; inflicted upon him a total defeat, and sat down before Milan, upon which he had retreated. But Gallienus had worn out the patience of men. His own chief officers conspired against him, and in a night alarm, to which Gallienus rushed from the banquet without armour, without guards, an unknown hand dealt him his death wound. Before he expired, a patriotic sentiment induced him to name a worthy successor, and he desired that the imperial ornaments should be delivered to Claudius, who was in command of an independent army in the neighbourhood of Pavia. The conspirators had already agreed among themselves to elect Claudius to the throne, as the man fittest to cope with the difficulties of the Empire.

Seven hundred years of conquest, from Romulus to Augustus, had gathered the nations into an empire; two hundred years more of wise legislation and vigorous administration, from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius, had consolidated these heterogeneous

conquests; a hundred years of revolution and misrule, from Commodus to Gallienus, had disorganized and imperilled it; and now, at the end of a thousand years, this majestic Empire seemed to be breaking to pieces of internal weakness, and about to be swallowed up in a new flood of barbarism.

It was a crisis which called for the Empire's best man to save it from impending ruin, and the Empire's best man was providentially called to the head of affairs.

Claudius was originally a peasant, a native of one of the Illyrian provinces. He had gradually risen by his merit in the reign of Decius, until at length Valerian made him Commander of the Illyrian frontier. His victories over the Goths on the battle-fields of Dardania and in the passes of the Balkans had gained him the honour of a statue and the surname of Gothicus. His ability was equalled by his fidelity. While the other generals of Gallienus were usurping the purple on all sides, the greatest of them, while despising the Emperor, was true to the Empire. Claudius seems to have had that discernment of character which is one of the most valuable qualities of a ruler of men; and out of the hardy Illyrian peasantry, from whom his legions were recruited, he selected and trained in his camp and court a school of great soldiers and great statesmen, who supplied the armies with able commanders, and the provinces with capable governors, and the Empire with great Emperors—the chief personages of the period whose history we have undertaken to write.

In this introductory sketch we can only simply state how a succession of great princes—Claudius, Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, Carus, all, except Tacitus, Illyrian peasants trained in the Illyrian armies—in the space of seventeen years after the death of Gallienus, repulsed and punished the barbarians on every side; suppressed the internal divisions of the Empire; reduced the turbulence of the soldiers to strict discipline; corrected the crimes and disorders which had grown rank during the period of confusion; and restored the Empire to something of its ancient power and grandeur.

A few words about the last of this series of princes is necessary to the introduction of our special story. Carus, before undertaking a campaign against the Persians, nominated his sons Carinus and Numerian as his colleagues and successors. He left Carinus in possession of the armies and provinces of the West, while Numerian accompanied him in his expedition. The intelligence which the Emperor soon received of the misconduct of Carinus led him to resolve upon removing him, and adopting in his place the brave and virtuous Constantius, who at that time was Governor of Dardania; but he deferred the change until the conclusion of the Persian war.

Carus died in the midst of his successful Persian campaign. Numerian, leading the legions home from the Tigris to the Bosphorus, died on the march; his death was concealed by Aper, the Prætorian Præfect, who was also Numerian's father-in-law, in the hope probably of securing his own

succession. On reaching Chalcedon, Numerian's death became known to the troops; they accused Aper of his murder. A general assembly of the army was held at Chalcedon. A tribunal was erected in the middle of the camp, and the generals and tribunes formed a council to elect an Emperor and present their choice to the ratification of the legions; while Aper, a prisoner in chains, awaited his fate at their hands. The great officers speedily announced that their choice had fallen on Diocletian, the Count of the Domestics (*i.e.* commander of the imperial body-guard), as the person most worthy of empire. Diocletian ascended the tribunal, commanded Aper to be brought before him, and at once plunged his sword into the prisoner's heart; thus convincing the impulsive legions of his own zealous sympathy with their prejudgment; but giving occasion for the suspicion that he thus prevented disclosures which might have established the former complicity of the Count of the Domestics with the plans of the Prætorian Præfect. The assembled troops, however, signified by their acclamations their approval of Diocletian's act, and ratified his appointment as Emperor.

Carinus, at the head of the forces of the West, marched against Diocletian, and an engagement took place at Margus, in the course of which Carinus, like Gallienus, was killed by one of his own tribunes. Diocletian was accepted by the West as by the East, and remained sole master of the Empire (A.D. 284).

CHAPTER II.

THE DIOCLETIAN CONSTITUTION.

THE history of the reign of Diocletian is the indispensable introduction to the history of the reign of Constantine. The principal personages of the time of Constantine are all brought upon the political stage in the former reign. The political revolution which was wrought out by Constantine was initiated by his predecessor. It is a necessary duty, therefore, to the historian of Constantine to take pains to elucidate the somewhat complex history of Diocletian; and it is a duty which brings its own reward, for it makes us acquainted with a very remarkable man.

Diocletian had won his way upwards from the lowest to the highest rank by his military services; for military service was then the only channel, as the Church was in the Middle Ages, through which low-born men could rise to eminence; but his genius was that of a statesman rather than that of a soldier. Once at the head of affairs, he set himself to the task of reorganizing the constitution of the Empire,



so as to eliminate the two causes which for a hundred years had produced a series of calamities and revolutions, and at length had brought the Empire to the very brink of ruin. Claudius and Aurelian had, indeed, freed the Empire from the barbarians and put down the usurpers, but the reign of Probus had shown that both maladies were chronic. Diocletian conceived the idea of giving a new constitution to the Empire, which should apply a permanent cure to both.

We all have a natural desire to know the outward form and features of great men; and the Roman mints supply us, in their series of coins and medals, with a complete gallery of authentic contemporary portraits of every one of the imperial personages who appear in the history, of which we shall avail



DIOCLETIAN.

ourselves. The art of the moneyer had indeed shared the general decadence of art since the days of Augustus, but the mere portraiture was still vivid and reliable, and indeed some of the medals are very creditable works of art. The coins and medals of Diocletian represent a full

heavy face, with a low forehead deeply furrowed with horizontal wrinkles, and a retreating chin. The hair, beard, and moustache are cut quite close.

We should be disposed to judge from the physiognomy that the hair was black, the complexion sallow, and the expression brooding and melancholy.

The plans of Diocletian developed themselves gradually. A few months after his accession to the imperial power, he took the first step—a step which it required a very magnanimous self-abnegation to take—of sharing his power with a colleague. Other Emperors had associated their sons with themselves, in the hope of securing the succession to their families; Diocletian shared his power and dignity with another, solely in order to promote the welfare of the State.

He selected from among his old companions in arms Maximian, who, born a peasant in the neighbourhood of Sirmium, had risen to high rank in the army by military talents displayed on every frontier of the Empire. All authorities are agreed that Maximian was altogether devoid of cultivation or refinement. Rough and stern and cruel, his features and general aspect are said by his historians to have been a true index to the coarseness and harshness of his character. His coins confirm the description of his contemporaries. They represent a broad vulgar face, with a concave profile, and a short mean nose, which partakes of the general outline of the face. But, whatever his other deficiencies or faults, his whole history during this stormy period gives proof of his great military talent. And it was for this, and for the tried friendship between them, that Diocletian



chose him. One of the Gallic panegyrists of the day celebrates the two Emperors as a new Romulus and Remus, twin rulers—not by chance, but choice—of the Roman State. Diocletian's idea of this twin rule is indicated by the titles which he assumed to himself and his colleague. Himself he styled Jovius; Maximian, Hercules: one the governing brain, the other the strong arm, of the Empire. It was a hazardous, but a successful experiment. So long as their joint rule lasted, Maximian did well the military work for which he was chosen, and allowed himself to be guided in affairs of State by the political genius of his great colleague. The friendship between them sustained the strain of their remarkable relations, and continued to the end.

After six years of this joint reign, urged by the pressure of affairs and encouraged by the successful results of the partition of empire, Diocletian resolved upon a further development of ideas which, no doubt, had long been revolved in his politic mind. During those six years the twofold danger of the Empire had again made itself felt. A great peasant revolt had broken out in Gaul, and had set up two pretenders to imperial power. This had no sooner been suppressed, than Carausius, the admiral of the fleet in the British seas, had assumed the purple and declared himself independent; and the Emperors, after a mortifying defeat in a sea-fight, were glad to prevent the chance of his invasion of Gaul by recognizing the successful rebel as a colleague in Empire, and ceding to him the sovereignty of

Britain. We shall have further occasion to refer to the usurpation of Carausius, and to relate the sequel of his history. In the East, Tiridates, the *protégé* of the Empire, had been expelled from the throne of Armenia by the Persians, who, under Narses, were again assuming a threatening attitude. The barbarians—Germans, Sarmatians, Goths—were in agitation, and were ready to pour in through any weak or unguarded point all along the long frontier from the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube.

Each frontier of the Empire needed the vigilance of an Emperor; the civil affairs of the Empire were too multitudinous for the efficient administration of one man. Diocletian resolved again to divide the cares of power by giving to each Augustus a lieutenant, with the title of Cæsar, and the expectation of succession. Thus he would provide on each frontier of the Empire a great army, under the command of one who wielded all the resources of sovereign power. Thus he would secure the fidelity of the commanders of these armies, by conferring upon them a share of imperial dignity, with the prospect of succession to its highest rank. Thus he would train the future possessors of the highest authority of Augustus, by a previous apprenticeship in the duties of the Cæsar. Thus he would prevent the doubt and difficulty which attended every vacancy of the sovereign power, by a regular system of succession.

The two who were chosen to be Cæsars were again

taken from among the highest officers of the Illyrian army, Galerius and Constantius.

Galerius was the son of a Dacian peasant, who had himself in youth followed his father's humble calling ; but he had entered the ranks of the legions, and, rising gradually through all its grades, had acquired a great military reputation. Lactantius describes him as of great height, and huge and bloated bulk, a barbarian in nature, and of a ferocity of disposition un-



GALERIUS.

known to the Romans, derived from his Dacian parentage,* with a fierce countenance, and in his appearance, his voice, and his gestures an object of fear to every one.† He was appointed to share the labours of Diocletian, and to indicate this relation, the title of Jovius was assigned him. He was appointed to the command of Illyria and Thrace ; Diocletian retaining charge of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Syria. In order to multiply the ties which bound together the interests of the Augusti and the Cæsars, Diocletian required that the Cæsars should become the sons-in-law of the elder Emperors. Galerius accordingly repudiated his first wife,‡ by whom he had a daughter, and married Valeria, the

* It is only fair to say that the head and face represented on his coins do not agree with this description.

† "De Mort. Persec.," ch. ix.

‡ Her name is unknown.

daughter of Diocletian and Prisca, of whom we shall hear more in the sequel of the history.

Constantius, the other Cæsar, was also a native of Illyria, and had risen to high office in his province, but not from so humble an origin as the other great men of whom we have had to speak. His father, Eutropius, was one of the principal noblemen of the district of Dardania, who had married Claudia, a niece * of the Emperor Claudius Gothicus. We have already had occasion to mention that in the reign of Carus, Constantius was Governor of Dardania, and stood so high in the general estimation that Carus had contemplated raising him to the dignity of the purple, in place of his unworthy son Carinus. Constantius was mild and amiable in character, simple and temperate in habits; a believer in one supreme God, and a disbeliever in the ancient polytheism. In short, he was one of those devout heathen who believed the great truths of natural religion, and tried to fashion their lives according to them, who in an earlier generation are illustrated by the good centurions of the Gospel history. The character of Constantius, his refined appearance and manners, touched † with the delicacy of feeble health, made him altogether a striking contrast to the coarse and burly giant his fellow Cæsar. Constantius was to share the labours of Maximian, which was indicated by the title of Hercules. The defence and govern-

* Daughter of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius.

† His traditional name of Chlorus, "the Sallow," seems to imply this.

ment of Gaul, Spain, and Britain were his special task ; while Maximian retained the easier provinces of Italy and North Africa.

It is very important to observe that, in these allotments of power, the territory of the Empire was not divided. The legislative power and administrative authority of the two Augusti extended conjointly over the whole Empire ; all edicts ran in both their names. The Cæsars had only administrative power in the provinces allotted to them, practically unchecked in details, but subject to the general direction and supervision of the Augusti.

Constantius had, while a very young man, formed a connection with a young woman of mean position ; she is said to have been the daughter of the keeper of an inn. It would seem that he took her into the relation of concubinage—a state not so honourable as that of marriage, but recognized by the Roman law, and not implying any moral disgrace. She had borne him a son at Naissus, a town of Mœsia, on the 27th of February, probably in the year 274 A.D., to whom his father gave the name of CONSTANTINE ; and on the birth of this son, it would seem that Constantius had raised the mother to the higher dignity of marriage. Constantius now, after twenty years of wedded life, divorced Helena in order to marry Theodora, the daughter, or rather stepdaughter, of Maximian ; and Diocletian required that his son Constantine, then a youth of sixteen, should be left at his own court, to serve as a hostage for the Cæsar's fidelity. The Cæsars were formally nominated March 1, 292.

Diocletian, seeking a place for the capital of the eastern half of the Empire, selected Nicomedia, the chief city of Bithynia, on the Asiatic coast of the Propontis (Sea of Marmora), as a central place whence the provinces of Egypt, Asia, and Illyria could be most conveniently ruled. Magnificent in his tastes and lavish in his expenditure, he proceeded to make the city not unworthy to be the seat of the imperial power and dignity. He collected builders from the provinces; he erected a magnificent palace for himself, another for his wife, and another for his daughter; a mint, an arsenal, a circus; and otherwise adorned the new capital, as if he desired to rival the magnificence of Rome.

Diocletian's plans were not limited to seeking help in the administration of the Empire; he introduced considerable changes in the entire system of administration. His aims went much further than this, even to the establishment of a new idea of the source of power. The Cæsars had transmitted the imperial power through several generations, and the Antonines and the Flavian House had made a similar approach to the idea of the hereditary transmission of power; but centuries of revolutions had thoroughly re-established the idea that the Emperor was the elect of the people, whether represented by the Senate or the Prætorians or the provincial armies; and that his character was that of the foremost of the equal citizens, and the commander-in-chief of the armies



of the republic. Diocletian aimed at substituting the Persian idea of a monarch, and providing for a regular succession by a nomination and adoption of successors; and not in vulgar ostentation, but in pursuance of this policy, he assumed the outward symbols of royalty, the jewelled diadem and sceptre, and surrounded himself at Nicomedia with all the pomp and etiquette of a royal court.

He did not change the title of sovereignty. The Roman world had a hereditary and deep-rooted prejudice against the title of king. Moreover, it had come to pass that the titles Imperator, Cæsar, Augustus, conveyed grander ideas of power, and power of a nobler type, than any other which history had coined to represent the idea of sovereign authority. Retaining the title of Imperator as the generic expression of sovereign power in the State, he appropriated the title Cæsar to represent the delegated military and administrative power of the junior Emperors; while he reserved the title Augustus to represent the beneficent legislative and controlling authority which, like an earthly providence, swayed the destinies of the Roman world.

Rome was not allowed to retain even the diminished glory of being the capital of Italy and the West. The republican traditions of the Eternal City, the jealous feeling of the great Roman Houses, the whole spirit of Rome, were antagonistic to the new imperial policy. Milan was chosen as the residence of Maximian. By the munificence of the Emperor it was strongly fortified, and adorned

with splendid palaces, basilicas, temples, theatres ; and its streets and public places were soon filled with the busy, brilliant life of a great capital.

Sirmium was the head-quarters of the Emperor of the Illyrian, and Treves of the Emperor of the Gallic provinces.

For thirteen years this disposition of the imperial power continued. The politic and cautious Diocletian, the rude but able Maximian, the huge ferocious Galerius, and the mild and amiable Constantius carried on this remarkable partnership in the imperial power, in harmony among themselves and to the advantage of the State. "The Cæsars, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the Emperors, and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged by their gratitude and obedience the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious jealousy of power found no place among them, and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist." *

It was necessary to the main purpose of our history to describe with some completeness this partition of empire and the characters of the Emperors, for these are important personages in the history of Constantine, and that led up to a further modification of the constitution of the Empire ; but we need not dwell long upon the general history of the thirteen years of this fourfold administration.

* Gibbon.

Galerius so vigilantly guarded the Danubian frontier with his Illyrian armies that the barbarians never made an incursion across the boundary. But both the elder Emperors found employment simultaneously on the southern confines of the Roman world. A confederacy of five Moorish nations was accompanied by revolts in Egypt, where Achilleus assumed the purple and obtained possession of Alexandria; and in Africa, where Julianus assumed the purple at Carthage. Maximianus speedily defeated the Moors and reduced the province to obedience; Diocletian only recovered Alexandria at the cost of an eight months' siege.

The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by a war with Persia. Diocletian fixed his head-quarters at Antioch, and sent Galerius in actual command of the legions of the East. In a first campaign the Roman arms suffered a great defeat, which was attributed to the rashness of Galerius, and we have a curious illustration of the real subordination of the Cæsar to the Augustus in their subsequent meeting. "Diocletian met the returning legions at the gate of Antioch, received the defeated general with the indignation of an offended sovereign, and left the haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, to follow the Emperor's chariot on foot, and to exhibit before the whole court the spectacle of his disgrace." * In a second campaign, however, at the head of his Illyrian

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," ch. xiii.

armies, Galerius surprised the Persian camp, inflicted a great defeat, and reduced Narses to sue for a peace, which the wisdom of Diocletian granted at the price of Mesopotamia and five provinces beyond the Tigris.

The doings of Constantius during these thirteen years have a special bearing on the subject of our history, and a special interest for us as Englishmen, and we feel justified in detailing them at disproportionate length, and even devoting to them a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROVINCE OF BRITAIN.

BRITAIN, overrun by Julius Cæsar in two successive expeditions (B.C. 65 and 64), and conquered in the reign of Claudius (A.D. 43), a hundred years later, had, by the end of the third century, become a valuable and important province of the Empire. The skilful labours of recent archæologists, added to the notices of ancient historians, have together given us a considerable body of trustworthy information as to the condition of our country at that time.

The Roman province extended only as far northward as the narrow isthmus between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde, including all England and Wales and the lowlands of Scotland, but leaving to the wild Caledonian tribes the rude freedom of their forests and mountains. To the southward of this boundary the island presented all the characteristics of a flourishing province of the Empire. The better classes of the native popu-



lation had readily adopted the dress and manners, the language, arts, and religion—in short, the whole civilization of their conquerors; the lower classes were to be found chiefly in the country districts, tilling the soil and tending the flocks on the estates of great landholders. This province, well inhabited and well cultivated, was thickly studded over with walled cities and smaller towns, connected by a network of the straight, well-constructed roads with which the genius of Rome was accustomed to bind its vast territories together. There were thirty-three great towns, each with a district about it, which from the first enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship. Each had a government of its own, republican in form, resembling the ancient constitution of Rome, and exempt from all control of the imperial officers; its citizens defended their own walls, and were not liable to serve in the imperial armies. There were two municipal towns—St. Albans and York; nine *coloniæ*—London, Colchester, Richborough, Bath, Caerleon, Chester, Gloucester, Lincoln, Cambridge; ten cities under the Latian law—Castor, Catterick, Slack, Ribchester, Carlisle, Burghhead, Dealgin Ross, Dumbarton, Cirencester, Old Sarum; and twelve stipendiary towns of less consequence—Caerwent, Winchester, Caistor near Norwich, Caer Segont, Caermarthen, Leicester, Canterbury, Dorchester, Exeter, Rochester, “Vindonum,” which was somewhere in Hampshire, and a second Rochester. These towns were fortified with walls and gates, and adorned with temples



and basilicas; some of them had theatres and amphitheatres. Rutupiæ (near Sandwich) was the principal port of entry from the Continent; the Pharos of Dover showed its light by night to the navigators of the Channel. Eboracum (York) was the capital; London was already a great emporium of trade; Verulamium a fashionable residence; Bath (*Aquæ Solis*) was already famous for its waters. There were besides a considerable number of smaller towns and military stations.

Modern discoveries have shown us that the country was also—at least, in its most fertile districts—thickly studded with villas or country mansions, many of them magnificent palaces, covering as much ground as a whole town.* These were the residences of great landed proprietors, who, by means of gangs of slaves, were wealthy growers of corn and masters of flocks. The number of these villas already accidentally discovered, and more or less completely examined, amounts probably to not less than a hundred, and these chiefly in the south-western and midland districts; and their number, extent, and magnificence give us an extraordinary notion of the condition of the island. The orator Eumenius, in a panegyric on Constantius, speaks of the extent of this noble island, provided on every side with convenient harbours; praises the temperature of its climate and the fertility of its soil, alike adapted for the production of corn and of

* "The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon," pp. 96, 186, 199, 359, etc.

vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded, its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, he speaks of the large revenue of Britain, and admits that such a province deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy.* Gibbon† suggests that the orator may have exaggerated the value of the province to enhance the merit of its recovery; but the facts at which we have glanced prove that the description was hardly overdrawn.

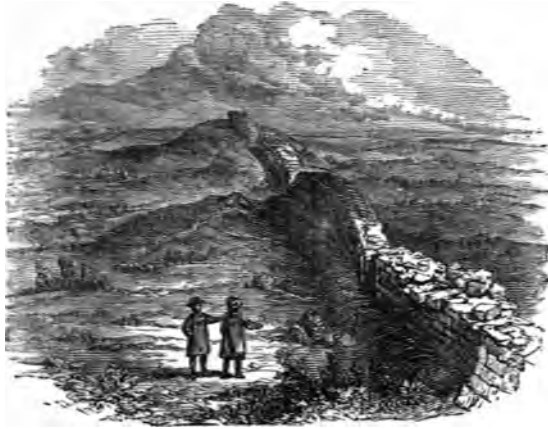
Some knowledge of Christianity must have reached the island from the earliest times, and there were probably isolated Christians; but it seems probable that the planting of the Church here was not earlier than about A.D. 250, and that it was a part of a great missionary effort which about that period extended the Church throughout the northern part of the province of Gaul.

The province was under the rule of a *proprætor*, who was the head of both the military, civil, and fiscal departments of government. It was garrisoned by three legions, who, with their wives and families, permanently occupied the same stations; the Second Legion was stationed at Isca (Caerleon), the Twentieth at Deva (Chester), the Sixth at Eboracum (York). The frontiers were also carefully guarded by bodies of auxiliaries. Agricola (A.D. 84) had curbed the Caledonian tribes by a chain of forts across the narrow isthmus between the Forth and Clyde,

* "Paneg. Vet.," v. 11, vii. 9.

† Gibbon, 271.

which, in the time of the Emperor Antoninus, had been further strengthened by an earthen rampart. Hadrian, when he visited the island, had erected a second and stronger line of fortification across the southern isthmus, between the mouth of the Solway and the mouth of the Tyne. This was a continuous wall, of which many portions still remain, stretching for miles over hill and dale; eighteen feet high,



ROMAN WALL OF HADRIAN.

with a fosse thirty-six feet wide and fifteen feet deep; with stations, which were in fact small fortified towns, at short intervals; garrisoned by strong bodies of auxiliaries, permanently stationed there with wives and families; forts at intervals of a mile, with watch-towers at every quarter of a mile. The south-eastern coasts were also defended against the piratical incursions of Franks and Saxons by

military posts, which were really small fortified towns, at the mouths of the rivers and other most accessible parts of the coasts. Bradwell (Othona), Burgh (Brancaster), Dover (Dubræ) with its light-house, Lymne (Lemanis), Reculver (Regulbium), Richborough, Pevensey (Anderida), Porchester,* formed a chain of fortresses, guarding the coasts from the mouth of the Blackwater, in Essex, all round to Portsmouth.

The Proprætor of this valuable and important province, holding all the reins of government in his own hand, surrounded by troops permanently settled in the country and devoted to their commander, with a population which seems always to have been ambitious of independence, favoured by the isolation and inaccessibility of the island province, was under specially strong temptation whenever circumstances seemed to offer an opportunity for assuming independent sovereignty.

Thus, on the death of Pertinax, when other generals aspired to the succession, Albinus assumed the purple in Britain, seized upon Gaul, but succumbed to the superior genius or fortune of Severus, the rival claimant of empire, in a great battle near Lyons (A.D. 197).

Amid the disorder and anarchy of the reign of Gallienus, out of the nineteen usurpers already mentioned, six seem to have assumed the sovereignty of Britain—Lollianus, Victorinus, Postumus, the two Tetrici and Marius; and another

* Roach Smith's "Richborough, Reculver, and Lymne."

nameless proprætor of the island assumed the purple in the reign of Probus.

Only a year after the accession of Maximian to a share of imperial power, occurred a more successful usurpation, which has already been alluded to.



CARAUSIUS.

To curb the incursions of the pirates of the northern seas, a considerable fleet had been created, whose headquarters were at Gessoriacum (Boulogne), and of which Carausius was the admiral. Accused of enriching himself by allowing the pirates to make their expeditions unmolested, and then intercepting their return and appropriating their plunder, and hearing that Maximian had given orders for his death, he anticipated the sentence by a revolt. The sailors were attached to their admiral, and readily obeyed his orders. Sailing with the whole fleet to Britain, he induced the legions and auxiliaries there to embrace his cause, assumed the title of Emperor, and defied the power of Diocletian and Maximian.

The Emperors had first to build a new fleet, at great expense of time and labour, before they could attempt to reduce the usurper; and when, at the end of two years, this was accomplished, the new fleet, with its raw crews, was easily defeated by the veteran sailors of Carausius. The two Emperors, dreading the ability and enterprising spirit of the usurper, consented to recognize him as a colleague in empire, and ceded to him Britain as his province.

His coins, bearing the effigies of three Augusti, are evidence of his status in the Empire during the remainder of a vigorous reign of seven years.

But when the Empire had been strengthened by the adoption of the Cæsars, and Constantius assumed the charge of the Gallic provinces, he proceeded at once to take steps to recover this great province of Britain, and to punish the usurper.

Having collected a powerful force, he marched rapidly upon the great naval station of Gessoriacum (Boulogne), which Carausius had all along retained, and laid siege to it. Carausius, who was there at the time, sailed out of the harbour and escaped to Britain with his fleet. Constantius constructed an embankment of piles and stones across the harbour mouth, which intercepted the hope of his returning with succours, and, after an obstinate defence, the town at length surrendered (A.D. 292). Four years followed, during which Constantius, while reducing the French and German tribes to order, strengthening the frontier of the Rhine, and regulating the affairs of Gaul and Spain, was also engaged in constructing a new fleet and making preparations for an invasion of Britain. Meantime another revolution had occurred in Britain. In A.D. 294 Allectus, to whom Carausius had entrusted the chief command of the fleet, murdered his master, seized upon his authority, and wielded it undisturbed for two years.

At length, in A.D. 296, Constantius had completed his preparations. He had divided his forces into two squadrons. He himself commanded one

division assembled at Gessoriacum, while the Prefect Asclepiodatus * commanded another division assembled at the mouth of the Seine. The latter division sailed first, directing its course towards the western coast of Britain. A thick fog enabled it to evade the enemy's fleet, which was stationed off the Isle of Wight; and when it had safely landed its men, the commander burnt his ships, so as to leave his troops no alternative but victory. Allectus, marching in haste to meet the invaders, was defeated and killed in the first battle. And when Constantius landed with his division on the coast of Kent, the province at once submitted to him, and was restored, after its separation of ten years, to the body of the Empire.

The following ten years of the administration of Constantius were not marked by any great event, but under his wise and beneficent rule the magnificent provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain enjoyed seventeen years of tranquillity and progress. He retained the unpretending simplicity of his personal habits. "He did not," says Eusebius, "like his colleagues in empire, oppress his subjects by grievous exactions, but governed them with a mild and tranquil sway, and exhibited towards them a truly parental and fostering care."

Eusebius relates a story which admirably illustrates the character of the rule of Constantius. Diocletian, on one occasion, sent to reproach him

* Another of the group of Illyrian peasants who had risen to high command.

with neglect of the imperial interests, in that he left his treasury empty against any emergency. Constantius sent for the wealthiest of his subjects, told them that he was in want of money, and appealed to them for a voluntary proof of their affection for their prince. They cheerfully offered large donations, which quickly filled the treasury. Then Constantius bade the messengers of the Augustus to examine the treasury and report what they found to their master, bidding them say that this money, which he had now taken into his own hands, had been kept, for his use, in the custody of the owners as securely—and more profitably, he perhaps intended to imply—than if under the charge of faithful treasurers: a further intimation, perhaps that a good deal of the taxes wrung out of the people stuck to the fingers of unfaithful fiscal officers, and did not find its way to the prince's treasury. Then, when the messengers were gone, he restored their contributions to the donors.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE EMPIRE.

THE course of our history now brings us to consider the policy and conduct of Diocletian and his colleagues towards Christianity; and since this touches the main subject of this work, it seems desirable to take a brief preliminary survey of the condition of Christianity in the Empire at this time.

The Holy Scriptures themselves tell us how the Church of Christ, commencing with 120 persons in the upper room at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, gradually spread among the Jews, until in A.D. 58 the heads of the Church could say to St. Paul, "Thou seest, brother, how many ten thousands of Jews there are which believe" (Acts xxi. 20).

Meantime Antioch, the capital of the Asiatic provinces of the Empire, had become the centre of a zealous propaganda among the Gentiles, and by the year 68* the labours of St. Paul and his companions had established Churches in Asia Minor,

* The date of the death of St. Paul.

Greece, and possibly in Spain. The labours of other Apostles, not recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and only briefly indicated by other evidences, had founded Churches in other parts of the world ; *e.g.* St. Peter in Alexandria, St. Thomas in Persia.

The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan, A.D. 112, states that in Bithynia and Pontus many were accused to him of being Christians, "of every age and rank, and of both sexes ;" "that the contagion of the superstition had spread not only through cities, but even villages and the country," so that the temples had been almost desolate, "and the sacred solemnities long intermitted." That is, Christianity was all but universally prevalent in these two provinces ; and there is reason to believe that this was the case at this period throughout the whole of Asia Minor.

The account of the journey, a little later in the reign of the same Emperor, of Ignatius from Antioch to Rome, gives us further evidence of the spread of Christianity. From Antioch he was carried to Seleucia, and sailed thence to Smyrna. While there, deputations, consisting of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and lay people, came from the Churches of Asia to express sympathy with him. After some stay he sailed to Troas, and thence to Neapolis ; thence across Macedonia to the coast of Epirus, then across the Adriatic and round to Puteoli, and so by Ostia to Rome. It was a kind of triumphal procession. Everywhere the Churches sent their bishops and clergy and others to greet him and do him honour.



Tertullian's first Apology, written about A.D. 197, in the time of the Emperor Severus, first reveals to us the progress of Christianity in the Province of North Africa, then a populous and flourishing province, crowded with wealthy cities, and forming, together with Egypt, the granary of the Western world. He says, "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province are greater." In a second defence, a few years later, he says to Scapula, the Præfect, "Thousands of both sexes, of every rank, will eagerly crowd to martyrdom, exhaust your forces, and weary your swords. Carthage must be decimated; the principal persons in the city, even perhaps your most intimate friends and kindred, must be sacrificed."

The Church which St. Peter had founded at Alexandria, of which St. Mark is said to have been the first bishop, had given rise to a school of Christian teaching which by the middle of the second century had attained a great reputation, to which even heathen students came, as they did to the great Platonic or the great Stoic teacher of the day, to learn the Christian philosophy; and Christianity had spread throughout the towns of Egypt. Hadrian, in a famous letter, shows that the Christians and their bishops formed a notable feature in the society of Alexandria.

Into Gaul the gospel seems to have penetrated by the ordinary channels of trade, coming from Asia Minor to Marseilles, and thence by the great waterway of the Rhone to Lyons. The first distinct glimpse of this Church is given us by the account of a persecution which broke out at Lyons and Vienne, in the latter part of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and we gather from the narrative that these Churches had only been lately founded. A few other scattered Churches were planted between A.D. 150 and 170, which did not extend far northward of Lyons. The Christianizing of Gaul as a whole is due to a great missionary effort in the time of the Emperor Decius, about the middle of the third century; and the scanty and contradictory evidence seems to indicate that from Gaul the Church spread into the neighbouring province of Britain at the same period.

When the new religion which was mysteriously spreading among them—like the leaven of the parable—first attracted the attention of the heathen, it incurred their suspicion and dislike. Rome was tolerant enough of the religions of the conquered nations; but a religion which was not national was a phenomenon, a religion which was new was *ipso facto* suspicious, a religion which had no temples or gods appeared to be an atheistic superstition; its active and irreconcilable opposition to all other religions seemed to the tolerant Romans like insufferable arrogance and impiety.

The abstinence of Christians from public affairs,

from the public shows, from the civil festivals, and even from ordinary social intercourse with their neighbours, gave them an air of moroseness and misanthropy. Rumours of their Eucharistic services, to which only the initiated were admitted, with strange misunderstandings of the feeding on the sacred Flesh and Blood, and of the kiss of peace, led to a charge of monstrous rites and impure orgies. So that to the superstitious vulgar, always credulous of horrors, the pure and harmless followers of the religion of love seemed to be dark and dangerous men, deniers of the gods, haters of men, addicted to some dreadful superstition with unnatural and impure rites, which aimed at the subversion of society.

The fact that Christianity was not one of the ancient religions tolerated by the State, made it an unlawful religion and its followers liable to punishment. And this was the vulnerable spot through which all the assaults of the first two centuries were made. All the earlier persecutions of Christians were local outbreaks of popular fanaticism, stirred up, perhaps, sometimes by designing men; which the local magistrates sometimes sternly checked, sometimes managed and moderated, sometimes sympathized with and helped with all their power. But the early Emperors issued no persecuting decrees, and when the subject was brought to their notice, their influence was used on the side of toleration. Trajan, in reply to Pliny, decreed that the Christians should not be sought out;

Hadrian, that they should not be punished merely for being Christians, *i.e.* that Christianity in itself should not be accounted punishable.

Marcus Aurelius was the first of the Emperors who issued an edict against the Christians. Septimius Severus, towards the close of his reign, attempted to restrain the spread of Christianity by an edict, which was the occasion of partial persecution. The thirty-eight years' calm which succeeded the death of Severus was followed by the persecution of Decius, which was without example for its severity and extent. The dangers which threatened the very existence of the Empire seemed to thoughtful men to be owing to the decay of the old Roman spirit and manners, and the able and upright Emperor set himself to restore them. It was not without reason if Christianity appeared to him to be one of the chief agencies which was more or less consciously undermining the old state of society. Accordingly he waged a universal and unsparing war against the new religion. An imperial edict was posted throughout the Empire, ordering the punishment of Christians, and threatening the judges who should spare them. The results of the edict were frightful, and brought to light the extent of the evil which it sought to cure. The Christians, it soon appeared, were no longer a small number of men scattered among the people, but whole populations, including women and children, people of every age and rank. Besides the Christians who suffered, there were a great number who saved

themselves by some concession. Some yielded entirely, and offered the sacrifices required of them to the gods of Rome or the divinity of the Emperor; some purchased of the officials a certificate that they had sacrificed, though they had not done so; some feigned madness or imbecility; some made a slave represent them and sacrifice in their place. Of the clergy, some gave up the sacred books on demand, some gave up some heretical writings instead. A considerable number of people were involved in these various lapses, and the question of their subsequent restoration to the Church, when the persecution ceased, led to a controversy which greatly troubled the Church for a very long period. The history of this persecution is enough to indicate the great growth of the Church in the times immediately preceding. It was no longer composed only of people who had embraced the faith under strong personal conviction of its truth, and were prepared to maintain it at the risk of life. It was composed, as every long-established Church must consist, of many who had been educated in it, as the hereditary faith of their family, or who had accepted it from mixed motives which would not stand the terrible test of persecution.

Again, in the last three years and a half of the reign of Valerian, that Emperor, out of similar motives, imitated the severity of his predecessor. But in spite of these occasional persecutions, nay, partly as the result of them, the Church increased very largely. Several of the Emperors not merely



tolerated it, but regarded it with more or less of favour. Severus, in the earlier part of his reign, protected the Christians. Alexander Severus had a statue of Christ in his oratory, and honoured Him as one of the chief founders of the religions of the world, and numbered bishops and Christians among his friends and servants. Philip the Arabian showed so much favour to Christians, and so much respect for their clergy, as to lead to the suspicion that he was himself secretly a believer in their faith. Even Aurelian condescended to take cognizance of the dispute, when Paul of Samosata, deposed by a Synod, refused to yield the temporalities of the see of Antioch; thus affording proof that the Church did not fear to appeal for justice to the Emperor, and that the Emperor did not disdain to interpose in its affairs.

For twenty years of his reign Diocletian had not only tolerated Christianity, but had shown considerable favour to its professors. Eusebius speaks of the freedom accorded to the faith, and the honour in which it was held during this period among all, both Greeks and barbarians. He tells us that the clemency of the Emperors went so far as to entrust the government of provinces to men who were known to be Christians, and to exempt them from the customary sacrifices which their office required them to attend, "on account of the singular good will which they entertained towards the faith." He speaks of "those in the imperial palace, and the sovereigns themselves" (probably meaning Prisca, the wife of Diocletian, and Valeria their

daughter, the wife of Galerius), "who granted their domestics the liberty of declaring themselves freely in word and deed on religion." Nay, he says that these Christians in the imperial household were more highly valued and trusted on account of their faith. "Such was Dorotheus, the most devoted and most faithful of all of them, and on this account exceedingly honoured beyond all those that had the charge of government and the most honourable stations in the provinces." A letter from Theonas, Bishop of Alexandria, to Lucian, another of the great officials of the imperial household, gives us a further interesting glimpse into the life of the palace. Lucian, the grand chamberlain, would seem to have been the centre of the Christian influences at work there. "I do not think," writes the bishop, "that you will give way to vainglory because of the happiness which has befallen you in being the means by which many of the palace of the prince have come to the knowledge of the truth; you will rather render thanks to God, who has made you the good instrument of a good work. . . . For since the prince, though not yet himself enlisted in our religion, has nevertheless entrusted the care of his life and person to Christians, as the most faithful servants whom he could select, you ought to show yourselves all the more watchful and active in the fulfilment of this trust, that the name of Christ may be glorified in you. . . . One of you, I hear, has received the charge of the prince's privy purse, another of the imperial vestments and ornaments,

another of the precious vases, another of the books. He ought to be the most diligent of all. Let him not fail to make himself well acquainted with secular learning, and to study the heathen works of genius, which may please the prince. Let him, in his conversations with the prince, praise the poets for the grandeur of their invention and the interest of their plot; let him praise the orators for the appropriateness of their expressions and the greatness of their eloquence. Let him praise the philosophers each for his special characteristic merit; let him praise the historians who relate to us the course of events, the manners of our ancestors, and the origin of our laws. . . . Sometimes let him try to introduce the praise of the sacred Scriptures, translated with so much pains and expense into our language by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus; let him, as opportunity may offer, cite the Evangelists and Apostles, the depositaries of the divine oracles. The name of Christ may glide thus into his conversations, and he may find the opportunity of making it apparent that divinity resides only in Him. By the help of Christ all these things may have good success.* Eusebius adds, "Gorgonius equally celebrated with Dorotheus," and afterwards names Peter, "and many others who were equally honoured with the same distinction as these on account of the Divine Word." These, he says, were "honoured

* Galland, "*Bibliotheca Patrum*," cit. t. iii. "*Sancti Theonæ episcopi Alexandrii Epistola ad Lucianum cubiculorum propositum*."

with the highest dignity by their masters, and treated by them with not less affection than their own children."

It may be necessary to explain that the great nobles of Rome, whose vast possessions included provinces and cities, had been accustomed for centuries to entrust the management of their household, their estates, their affairs generally, to freedmen attached to them by past benefits and dependent upon them for their future fortunes. The early Emperors, affecting still to be citizens, and keeping the machinery of their personal government out of sight, had used the services of their freedmen in the wider affairs of the Empire. The governors of provinces and the commanders of armies were the great nobles of the Empire, but the freedmen of the Emperor's household virtually fulfilled the duties of the secretaries of State.

The palace of Diocletian offers us an interesting spectacle. The politic Emperor, surrounding himself with the pomp and etiquette of an Eastern court; maintaining the old heathenism as the established religion; but, mild in disposition and with a philosophical unbelief in all religions, allowing his family to adopt whatever religion they pleased. The amiable Empress Prisca and the equally amiable Empress Valeria, holding much the same relation to Christianity which the great ladies of the Eastern cities used to hold towards Judaism in the time of the early Cæsars; attracted by it, persuaded generally of its truth, and secretly practising

some of its observances, but restrained by a thousand circumstances from openly embracing it. The great officers of the household—the grand chamberlain, the treasurer, the keeper of the wardrobe, the librarian—Christians, and trusted the more because they were Christians; and, with the toleration of the Emperor and the favour of the Empresses, spreading the faith among the crowd of male and female domestics of the palace, and using their powerful influence in favour of their faith and their brethren throughout the world; speculating—not without reasonable grounds—upon the possible conversion of the Emperor himself and the triumph of Christianity.

“The same privileges,” he goes on to say, “were conferred on the rulers in every Church, who were courted and honoured with the greatest subserviency by all the rulers and governors.

“And who,” he asks, “could describe the vast collections of men who flocked to the religion of Christ, and the multitudes crowding in from every city, and the illustrious concourse in the houses of worship?” The numbers of the frequenters of the churches had so increased, that they pulled down the ancient churches and rebuilt them from the foundation in all the cities, and these buildings were insufficient to contain the increasing multitudes of worshippers, and in their place more spacious and stately edifices were erected. At Nicomedia itself the church was a “magnificent”* building, erected on

* Lactantius, “De Mort Persec.,” ch. xii.

an elevated site, in the midst of other great buildings of the city, and in full view from the imperial palace.

The phenomena we have described are not to be regarded as the results of the sporadic spread of an "inorganic Christianity;" they were the work of that divinely organized and divinely aided Church to which the Lord had committed the Word and Sacraments, and which He used as His great agency in the evangelization and regeneration of the world. In its external organization it was admirably adapted to the work. With its graduated hierarchy of three orders, deriving their authority from the Lord Himself, yet not appointed without the concurrence of the people: with an articulation wonderfully elastic, each Church complete in itself, and possessing all the vigour of independent action, yet all united by a bond so sacred that to rend it was to rend the Body of Christ: combining for mutual counsel and support in groups which wisely followed the political organization of the Empire, which itself had been dictated by the natural exigencies and conveniences of geographical and national divisions.

The individual members of this Church, of every age and rank, were bound together by a bond of sacred fraternity, were possessed by a spirit of self-devotion to the cause, and a burning zeal of proselytism. They regarded the laws of the gospel as of more binding obligation upon them than the

laws of the State, and their highest allegiance as due to Christ their King.

This vast confederacy derived a large revenue from the voluntary offerings of its people, which was devoted to the maintenance of the clergy, the erection of churches, the support of widows and orphans, and large charities to the poor. As it rapidly grew in numbers and influence in every city and province of the Empire, this *imperium in imperio* could not but present a grave problem for the consideration of the statesman. To let it alone implied a friendly willingness that society should be entirely remodelled on a Christian basis; to resolve to oppose this moral reconstruction of society was to enter upon a contest with a power which was already so formidable that the result of the contest might well seem doubtful.

For the last twenty years, we have seen, the profound tranquillity had encouraged the multiplication of Christians. They no longer made any secret of their religious profession; their churches, in every city, daily increasing in magnitude and splendour, "were not hindered by any hostility or ill will."

The bishops were treated by the magistrates with the consideration due to men of high character and influence. In some cities the bishop was one of the foremost of its citizens. At Antioch, so far back as the days of Paul of Samosata, his ostentation of wealth and dignity had caused some scandal to the Church. The Bishop of Alexandria, with great revenues, great popularity in the city, and the

bishops of the country towns at his disposal, was regarded by the Præfect of the city as his rival in power and influence. The Bishop of Rome was overshadowed by the wealth and dignity of the great Houses, but he administered large revenues, and maintained considerable state; and his influence over the Christian ladies of these great Houses, and among the citizens generally, made him a person of influence in Rome.

Even the faults of the Christians, which the historian * enumerates as the causes which kindled God's anger against them, bear witness to the external peace and prosperity of the Church; for, "through excessive liberty, they had sunk into sloth and negligence, envying and reviling one another, prelates inveighing against prelates and people rising against people, hypocrisy and dissimulation having risen to the greatest height of malignity."

It was after all these years of toleration and favour, in the midst of this success and hope of still greater successes, while the conversion of Diocletian himself was considered to be possible, that the last, most extensive, and most terrible persecution burst upon the Church.

* Eusebius.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAST PERSECUTION.

It is difficult to ascertain clearly, among the various accounts, what were the causes which produced so sudden and violent a change in the policy of Diocletian towards the Church.

Constantine tells us, in a letter which we shall have to quote hereafter, that the oracle of Apollo declared that "the righteous men on earth" prevented the utterance of true oracles, and threatened the world with the entire loss of the oracular spirit; and that when Diocletian inquired who were meant by "the righteous men," one of the pagan priests present replied that they were the Christians; and that this was the origin of "those sanguinary edicts."

Lactantius tells us that the augurs failed to find the usual signs in the entrails of the victims, and that one of them declared that the heavens were deaf to their prayers because of the presence of "the profane," which sullied the purity of the sacrifices; whereupon Diocletian commanded all

the assistants and all in the palace to sacrifice, on pain of being beaten, and ordered the generals to compel the soldiers to sacrifice; but that his action at this time went no further.

Lactantius further tells us that the mother of Galerius, a zealous worshipper of her barbarian gods, was offended because some of her Christian servants refused to take part in the religious festivals of her household.

Eusebius gives us a deeper insight into the causes of the change of policy, when he tells us that Galerius "was the original cause of the miseries of the persecution, as he had, long before the movements of the other Emperors, attempted to seduce the Christian soldiers of his own house from their faith, degrading some from their military rank, insulting others, and at last exciting his associate Emperors to a general persecution against all." *

Galerius spent the winter of A.D. 302-3 with Diocletian at Nicomedia, and took the opportunity to urge him against the Christians. On his representations others were brought into their consultations, and the first persecuting edict was decided upon.

From all this we gather that the consent of Diocletian to this lamentable change in the tolerant policy of his long reign was due to the ascendancy which Galerius had latterly gained over the mind of the elder Emperor. The success of the last Persian campaign had greatly added to the prestige

* Eusebius, "Eccl. Hist.," book vi. ch. 17.

of the Cæsar, and filled him with arrogance and ambition. When a letter from Diocletian met him on his return, addressed to him under the title of Cæsar, he exclaimed, with fierce look and terrible voice, "How long is it to be 'Cæsar'?"* Diocletian was afraid of his ferocious temper. The mental vigour, as well as the bodily health, of Diocletian seems to have become enfeebled. Besides, Galerius was the husband of his daughter and only child, and the destined successor of his power. Had Diocletian died and Galerius succeeded, the change of policy would have been sudden and its causes manifest; but the authority of Diocletian gradually waned, while that of Galerius gradually increased, and the impolitic cruelties which stained the end of Diocletian's reign were really due to the growing influence of his successor.

But the motives which induced Galerius, as well as Diocletian, were probably not merely the warnings of priests and oracles to the Augustus, and the fanaticism of the barbarian mother of the Cæsar. These are probably only evidences that the pagan party was striving to influence the minds of the Emperors by its peculiar methods of superstition, as the Bishop of Alexandria was trying to influence one of them in the opposite direction by the innocent agency of Lucian.

It was the last great effort of the pagan party to arrest the progress of the Christian faith. It was spreading so rapidly that all could see that,

* "Quousque Cæsar!" (Lactantius, "De Mort. Persec.," ch. ix.).

unless its progress were speedily arrested, it would soon become dominant; and statesmen—all men—might well ask, with grave interest, what would be the results of a dominant Christianity.

The refusal of the domestics of the mother of the Cæsar to join in the religious festivities of their mistress; the refusal of Maximilianus, an African youth, to serve in the legion, on the ground that his conscience would not permit him to bear arms; the fanaticism of Marcellus, the centurion, who on the day of a public festival threw away his belt, his arms, his ensigns of office, and declared that he would obey none but Jesus Christ, the Eternal King, and no more serve an idolatrous master;—such events as these might well make statesmen fear that this new faith was undermining the obedience of servants, the fidelity of soldiers, the whole principle of authority. The increasing numbers, the growing wealth—above all, the admirable organization of the Church, might well make the statesman regard this *imperium in imperio* as a danger to the State. The claim of Christianity to be the only true religion, which seemed to the pagan mind so full of intolerant arrogance; the open avowal of the Christians that it was their aim to bring all the nations of the world within their “kingdom of God;” might well make the adherents of the old religions ask whether a dominant would not be also a persecuting Christianity. In fine, it did not need much profound thought to see that the principles of Christianity were opposed to the

principles on which the social system of the Empire was based, and that the prevalence of Christianity must lead to a reconstruction of society.

Such thoughts as these might influence minds which could despise portents and oracles. There was no denying that unless the Emperors were willing to see these new Christian principles leaven the whole of society, and this powerfully organized Church grow to dimensions still more formidable, it was necessary to adopt strong measures of repression, and that without delay. These probably were the kind of arguments used in the secret councils of that winter in the palace of Nicomedia. After long unwillingness to enter upon a new course, inconsistent with the policy of his whole reign and repugnant to his own habit of mind, the consent of the Emperor was gained to measures of repression against the Christians; but on condition *rem sine sanguine transigi*, that there should be no bloodshed.

The first edict ordered that the churches should be destroyed and the Christian assemblies discontinued; that the sacred books should be burnt; that the property of the churches should be confiscated; that those who were in honourable stations, and who persisted in Christianity, should be degraded, and that those who were freedmen should be reduced again to slavery.

The first blow was struck at Nicomedia itself, under the eyes of the Emperor and the Cæsar. The church of Nicomedia, we have seen, was a large and magnificent building, on an elevated site,

in full view of the palace of Diocletian. There had been a long dispute between the two Emperors, who watched the scene from their palace, as to the mode of its destruction. Galerius wished to burn it; Diocletian feared lest the flames should extend to the neighbouring buildings, and so set half the city on fire. On the 23rd of February, 303, at day-break, a company of the imperial guard marched to the church, broke down the doors, burnt the Scriptures, pillaged and destroyed the furniture, and finally the pioneers set to work with their tools, and, attacking it as if it had been a hostile fortress, in a few hours razed it to the foundations.

On the following day the persecuting edict was posted on the walls of the capital. "One with more boldness than prudence," says Lactantius—"of high birth and official station," says Eusebius—an officer of the imperial guard, says the tradition—pulled down the edict, and tore it to pieces with some contemptuous observation. To tear down an imperial edict, to insult the Emperors, were acts of treason. The rash offender was seized and put to death with cruel tortures—a stern warning of the spirit of the new policy towards the Christians.

The brunt of the edict fell upon officials of the State and officers of the army. There were Christians in all ranks, from governors of provinces downwards, who had now to choose between apostasy and resignation.



But these measures did not satisfy the enemies of the Church, and means were taken to inflame the mind of Diocletian, and urge him forward in the unhappy policy upon which he had unwillingly entered. A fire broke out in the palace of Nicomedia. Galerius accused the Christian domestics of it, while the Christians were persuaded that it had been instigated by Galerius himself. A fortnight after a second fire occurred, which burnt down part of the palace. Galerius ostentatiously removed from the palace, affecting to believe his life in danger. Diocletian was at length persuaded that the Christians of the palace and the city had really plotted the burning of the palace and the death of the Emperors, and proceeded to punish their treason.

The ancient Roman policy had always regarded domestic treason as a crime so dangerous that it was necessary to punish every instance of it with a severity calculated to excite general terror; *e.g.* if one slave in a fit of revenge for ill treatment assassinated his master, the law required that the whole family of slaves should be put to death.

The more entirely trusted the criminals had been, of course the greater their guilt. This may help us to understand the horrible domestic tragedy which followed. The great officials of the household of whom we have just read, Dorotheus, Gorgonius, Lucian, Peter, and "many others of the imperial freedmen," were tortured and killed; and Lactantius says that the Emperor himself sat in

his chair and witnessed the horrible scene.* The executions extended to the city. Anthimus, the bishop, was beheaded, with a "multitude of believers." Whole families were slain in masses by the imperial command, some by the sword, some by fire, some were cast into the sea.

Diocletian was then induced to consent to the issue of a second edict, which, still shrinking from bloodshed, aimed a politic blow at the Churches by commanding the imprisonment of their clergy.

* We hesitate to transcribe even a specimen of the horrors of these executions, which Eusebius relates with a good deal of rhetorical colouring, and which extend, with fiendish varieties in their horrors, over pages of his book. But the modern disposition to turn away from these horrors makes it the more necessary that we should not allow them to be altogether ignored. We therefore raise one corner of the curtain and disclose this first example of the tragedies of this ten years' persecution :—

"He was led into the middle of the aforesaid city (Nicomedia), before those Emperors already mentioned (Diocletian and Galerius). He was then commanded to sacrifice; but as he refused, he was ordered to be stripped and lifted on high, and to be scourged with rods over his whole body, until he should be subdued in his resolution, and forced to do what he was commanded. But as he was immovable amid all these sufferings, his bones already appearing bared of the flesh, they mixed vinegar with salt and poured it upon the mangled parts of the body. But as he bore these tortures, a gridiron and fire was produced, and the remnants of his body, like pieces of meat for roasting and eating, were placed on the fire—not at once, but by little and little; whilst his torturers were not permitted to let him alone, lest after these sufferings he should breathe his last before they had completed their task. He, however, persevered in his purpose, and gave up his life, victorious in the midst of his tortures. Such was the martyrdom of one of the imperial domestics, Peter by name."—"Ecc. Hist.," viii. C.

“Then the dungeons destined for murderers and the vilest criminals were filled with bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, and exorcists, so that there was no room for those condemned for crime.”

It was easily seen that it was wise policy to deal with the clergy, who were comparatively few and easily laid hold of. Their imprisonment must have thrown the Churches everywhere into confusion, for it left the Church like an army without its officers. If they could be induced to abandon their faith, the people might be led to follow their example; at least, the apostasy of the clergy would strike a heavy blow at Christianity. Accordingly the second edict was soon followed by a third, which, still abstaining from ordering the punishment of death, directed that the clergy should be compelled by torture to offer sacrifice.

“Then vast numbers of the prelates of the Church endured, with a noble resolution, the most appalling trials, and exhibited instances of illustrious conflicts for the faith. Vast numbers, however, of others, broken and relaxed in spirit by timidity before the contest, voluntarily yielded at the first onset. But of the rest, each encountered various kinds of torments. Here was one that was scourged with rods; there another tormented with the rack and excruciating scrapings, by which some at the time endured the most terrible death; others, again, passed through other torments in the struggle.” Of others, it was pretended that they had sacrificed when they had not, and if they protested against

the assertion, the soldiers struck them in the face and drove them away, for it was the object of the authorities to have it believed that the bishops had complied.*

In A.D. 304, in the second year of the persecution, Maximian issued another edict, known as the fourth edict—"traced as if with a sword's point dipped in blood," is Constantine's description of it. It was probably issued during an entire collapse of Diocletian's health, and with the concurrence—probably at the instigation—of Galerius. It was a "thorough" attempt to root out the Christian faith, for it made death the penalty of persistence in the profession of Christianity, and took elaborate measures to bring all its professors to the test.

Eusebius gives some detailed account of the martyrs in Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, and alludes to those in Illyricum, Italy and Sicily, Gaul and Spain, who suffered torture and death. The officials were stimulated to invent new tortures to overcome the resolution of the Christians, and the pages of Eusebius tell us of inventions of fiendish ingenuity. It is clear that the crisis produced an intense excitement of mind on both sides. The judge became enraged with the obstinacy which would not yield either to remonstrance, or threat, or torture, and heaped one horrible cruelty after another upon his victim, in what had become a contest between two wills; the executioners caught the spirit of the judge, and buffeted,

* Eusebius, "Eccl. Hist.," bk. viii. c. 4.

scourged, raked, and scraped off the flesh of men, women, and children without pity. Of the tortured, some, indeed, gave way at the first touch of pain ; others endured with wonderful fortitude. Some drew their fate upon themselves by some bold word or deed of disapproval. The historians of the period tell us of great numbers in this province and great numbers in that who perished, and show us that the persecution extended more or less over the whole Empire, affected all ranks and classes, and filled the Empire with misery and horror.

The conduct of the Cæsar Constantius has a special interest for us. His own religious belief in one God, his knowledge of the character of the Christians, and his natural clemency of disposition, made him entirely averse from the persecution ; but his duty as Cæsar was to carry out the orders of the Augusti. Lactantius tells us that "so as not to seem to dissent from the orders of his superiors, he allowed some conventicles to be burnt which could be rebuilt, but the true temple, which is in men, he preserved ;" *i.e.* he ordered the churches to be destroyed in obedience to the first edict. He is said to have acted on the remainder of the edict in a peculiar way. He gave the officials of his government and the officers of his army, according to the terms of the edict, the choice of offering sacrifice or resigning their preferments ; but those Christians who complied he at once dismissed, saying that he could not trust the fidelity of men who were unfaithful to their God. It is commonly

assumed, and Eusebius seems to say, that the Christians who were faithful were continued in their posts; but it seems more in accordance with all the circumstances that he obeyed the edict by dismissing the Christians who were faithful; then, in the case of the apostates, exercised his own right to dismiss any of his officers; and then unostentatiously took care of the interests of those whose fidelity had won his approval. Lactantius, we have seen, implies that Constantius did not proceed against the persons of the Christians; Eusebius also says that he was not a persecutor like the rest. A statement of the Donatists, which will be found hereinafter, bears the same testimony; and Gallic bishops were appointed as the judges of the Donatist controversy on the very ground that they had not suffered in the persecution. It would seem, therefore, that in the interval between the issue of the later edicts and the abdication of the Augusti, Constantius had been able to disregard the orders sent him. As soon as he succeeded to the supreme dignity of Augustus, he at once put a stop to all action hostile to the Church.

On the other hand, the well-known story of the martyrdom of St. Alban seems to belong to the period after the issue of the second and third edicts, and Bede tells us that this was only one out of many examples. "At length the persecution reached Britain also, and many persons, with the constancy of martyrs, died in the confession of their faith." And again, after the story of St. Alban,

he adds, "At the same time suffered Aaron and Julius, citizens of Chester, and many more of both sexes in several places, who, when they had endured sundry torments, and their limbs had been torn after an unheard-of manner, yielded their souls up, to enjoy in the heavenly city a reward for the sufferings they had passed through." *

* Bede, "Eccl. Hist.," bk. i. cc. 6, 7.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ABDICATION.

IN the year 304 Diocletian completed the twentieth year of a great and prosperous reign. It had been the custom of all the Emperors since Augustus to celebrate the entry upon each decennial period of their reign with great public solemnities. Diocletian, on this great occasion, visited Rome for the first time, it is supposed, in his whole reign, and there exhibited the magnificent pageant of a solemn triumph, in which his colleague in empire was allowed to share.*

The Emperor seems to have regarded this Roman triumph, ending in the customary thanksgiving offerings to Jupiter of the Capitol, as the solemn

* No account of the triumph has descended to us; but a coin of Diocletian, evidently struck on the occasion, represents on the reverse the two Emperors in a triumphal car, drawn by four elephants, with a group of soldiers bearing palm branches following. In the effigies of the Emperors, on the obverse, Diocletian is represented wearing a radiated diadem, Maximianus with laureated head (Akerman's "Rare and Unedited Roman Coins," vol. ii. pp. 135 and 148).

conclusion of his imperial work. He had given the Empire peace and security; he had given it a constitution which, he hoped, would ensure the continuance of its tranquillity and prosperity; he resolved upon the unprecedented step of voluntary abdication of the imperial authority, and he exacted from Maximian an oath, before the altar of the Jupiter of the Capitol, to make a simultaneous abdication. It was a resolution of extraordinary magnanimity, not the less so because it seems to have been not the result of conscious incapacity to bear the burden of power, or of philosophical indifference to it, but a deliberate part of his great plan for putting an end to chance elections to the purple and civil wars of succession, by the establishment of a regular succession to the imperial authority. In the first flush of power, he had shared his authority with another, and established such partnership as a part of the constitution; with similar self-abnegation he now proposed to lay down his authority altogether, after a twenty years' reign, in order to establish a precedent which might give the State a regular succession of vigorous rulers. When we find him imposing abdication on Maximian, and still more when we presently find Galerius contemplating abdication after a twenty years' reign, we are led to infer that Diocletian's system was not only that the rulers of the Empire should serve an apprenticeship to power as Cæsars, but that, after a term of service as Augusti, they should retire before age began to affect their vigour; and he seems to have contemplated not

merely that the *Augusti Emeriti* would, in their dignified retirement, enjoy the veneration of their late subjects, but there are indications of his intention that in great emergencies they should act as moderators between, or counsellors of, the actual sovereigns.*

Diocletian did not remain long in Rome. Accustomed to the courtly observances of his Eastern court and capital, the republican spirit and familiar tone of the Romans offended him; and he left the city abruptly after a two months' stay, ordering, however, the erection of the vast Baths whose ruins still bear his name, as his gift to the Roman people and a monument of his reign.

Returning from Rome through Illyricum amidst the snow and rain of an inclement winter, his health failed. Travelling slowly in his litter, he did not arrive at Nicomedia till the end of summer, and in such broken health that he was not expected to live.

* Coins were struck with the effigies of Diocletian and of Maximian after their abdication, in which they are styled Augustus Senior, and new titles are given them, such as Beatus, Felicissimus (Akerman's "Roman Coins," vol. ii. pp. 128, 135, 139).

We shall see hereafter that Diocletian assisted at the nomination of Severus. Constantine invited him to assist at the new arrangement of the Empire on the death of Maxentius. Maximian resumed an active share in empire at the invitation of the Italians, and invited Diocletian to follow his example. Constantine accepted the rank of Augustus from Maximian. All these facts assume a more legitimate aspect upon this theory, that the retired Emperors had still certain indefinite rights of intervention.

At length a rumour got abroad that he was dead, and that his death was being concealed till the arrival of Galerius, for fear of public commotions. The Emperor, to dispel the rumour, showed himself in public on the 1st of March, so altered by his illness as to be hardly recognized. Lactantius tells us that his mental as well as bodily health had been shattered, and that he suffered at intervals an entire loss of reason.

When Galerius arrived at Nicomedia, he urged on Diocletian the immediate fulfilment of his contemplated abdication. He had already held communications with Maximian on the subject, and met some apparent unwillingness on his part with the threat of civil war in default of his compliance. Galerius made it no secret that, after fifteen years of active service in the inferior position of Cæsar in the rude provinces on the borders of the Danube, he was impatient to enjoy the dignity, splendour, and luxury of the sovereignty of the fairer and wealthier provinces of the East.

The ferocious urgency of Galerius soon overcame the hesitation of the enfeebled Diocletian, and the abdication of the two Augusti was arranged to take place simultaneously on the 1st of the following May. Then came the selection of the new Cæsars. Diocletian suggested Maxentius and Constantine as the natural successors to the imperial dignity. But his wishes were again overborne by the imperious will of the Cæsar. Galerius objected to the first that his vices made him unfit to be entrusted with

the imperial power; and to the second, that his character and ability would make him impatient of control. He avowed that he wished for lieutenants who would fear him and be obedient to him. He himself suggested Severus, another of the series of Illyrian adventurers, a dissolute but capable soldier, who was devoted to himself, and Daza, an altogether insignificant person, but his own nephew. He had his own plans for the future. Constantius was in ill health, and not expected to live long; on his death Galerius would be first in rank. He intended then to nominate his old companion in arms, Licinius, to be the second Augustus. Thus he would himself hold the same position of supreme authority which Diocletian had held among those on whom he had bestowed the purple. He even looked still further forward into the future, and proposed to himself, after having completed twenty years, to retire from the cares of government; to elevate Daza to the higher rank of Augustus; and to nominate as Cæsar his own natural son, Candidian, at present a boy of only nine years old, whom he had acknowledged, and whom the childless Empress Valeria had had the complacency to adopt.

On the 1st of May, A.D. 305, this striking act of imperial self-abnegation was carried out, with a solemnity worthy of so remarkable an occasion. The troops were mustered, and the people of the capital assembled, on a plain three miles outside the walls of Nicomedia. On a knoll in the midst of the plain a throne was erected, on which the Emperor sat.

surrounded by the great officials, and in a speech full of dignity announced his own abdication; divested himself of the imperial ornaments, the jewelled diadem and purple robe; and invested the



THE ABDICATION.

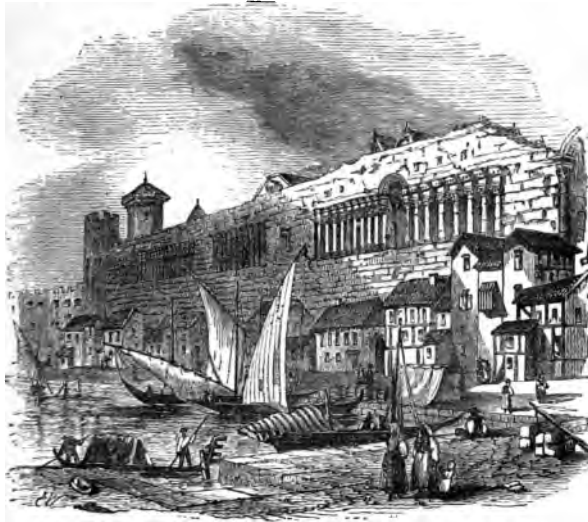
huge person and crowned the ferocious countenance of Galerius, as his successor. Then, mounting his chariot, he drove straight through the streets of the capital, and proceeded at once to the magnificent palace of Spalato, near Salona, on the coast of Dalmatia, which he had chosen as the place of his retirement. It adds another trait to our conception

of the character of Diocletian, that, through all his great career, he had retained a kindly remembrance of the bright, picturesque Dalmatian coast, where he had begun life as the son of a freedman ; that, among the magnificent works of his reign, he had adorned with public buildings the fair town of the "long Salona," near which he had been born ; that he had built himself a palace close by ; and that, after the long years of his eventful career, he returned at last to pass the evening of life among the scenes of his boyhood.

This palace of Diocletian at Spalato is the only palace of the Roman world of which sufficient remains to enable us to judge of its extent and magnificence. It gives us a most exalted idea of the splendour of these palaces, since this was built for a marine villa, not for the principal residence of the Emperor and his court. It is a vast square building, of almost the same size as the Escorial—700 feet $\times$ 590 feet, covering $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ground. Three of the internal walls are plain and solid, with towers at intervals for security, a gateway in the centre of each face ; the fourth side, which faces the sea, has a grand portico. The area is divided into four equal squares by streets, which cross at right angles in the middle, ornamented with pillared porticoes on each side. The northern squares appear to have contained the lodgings of the household and officers. The southern squares contained each a temple, one to Jupiter,* the other to Escu-

* Mr. Freeman conjectures that this supposed second temple

lapius; and south of the temples, entered by a circular vestibule, are the principal apartments of the palace. The most striking feature of the design is the grand covered portico, 500 feet long and



DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE AT SPALATO.

24 feet wide along the sea front, which commands a splendid view of picturesque country, with distant mountains, and of the sea with islands—a landscape worthy of such a gallery for its enjoyment.

The building is a very interesting illustration of the change of architectural style from the Greco—was in truth a mausoleum, which Diocletian had prepared for his own last resting-place.

Roman. Here, for the first time among existing buildings, the Greek mask which had hitherto concealed Roman construction was thrown aside, and the Roman arch stands out as the main feature of a great artistic design. Mr. Fergusson, in his *History of Architecture* (second edition), gives a plan of the palace, vol. i. p. 365; a view of one of the "streets," p. 304; of the Temple of Jupiter (or mausoleum), at p. 312; and of the "golden gate" or principal entrance, at p. 306. Mr. E. A. Freeman gives a



▲ BRACKET FROM DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE AT SPALATO.

description of the palace in his "*Historical Essays*," 3rd Series, p. 61.

On the same day that Diocletian abdicated at Nicomedia, Maximian also publicly performed the same ceremony at Milan, and retired to a villa in Lucania,* not, however, long to rest contented with his enforced seclusion.

Constantius and Galerius succeeded the two Augusti.

* In the south of Italy.

Constantius, though taking rank as the first of the princes, received no addition of territory. Severus Flavius Valerius received Italy, Africa, and Upper Pannonia. Daza, who received the names of Galerius Valerius Maximinus, was assigned Egypt and Syria as his provinces; Galerius, therefore, retained his former provinces of Illyricum, with the addition of Asia Minor, making together some three-fourths of the Empire.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSTANTINUS CÆSAR.

IN all which has gone before we have been sketching the scenes and circumstances in which the young Constantine was brought up, and in which he was about to play so important a part.

We have seen that when Constantius was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, his son, then a youth of sixteen, was retained at the court of Nicomedia as a hostage. He was regarded as the son of the Cæsar, and treated with consideration and kindness. He accompanied the Emperor Diocletian in his Egyptian campaign. Eusebius describes him as he himself saw him as the armies passed through Palestine:—

“He stood at the right hand of the senior Emperor, and commanded the admiration of all who beheld him by the indications he gave even then of royal greatness. For no one was comparable to him for grace and beauty of person, or height of stature and greatness of strength. He was even more conspicuous for his mental qualities, being gifted with a sound and temperate judgment, and

having reaped the advantages of a liberal education" ("Vita Const.," bk. i. c. xix.).

The young prince was more or less consciously in training for a great future. He was studying from the vantage ground of his position behind the scenes the policy of the imperial statesman. He was learning the art of war under the great Illyrian captains in the Egyptian campaign of Diocletian, in the first unsuccessful and the second successful Persian wars of Galerius—the first probably not less instructive than the second—and in the *petite guerre* of the Danubian frontier. His anomalous position as a hostage was calculated to make him prudent, reticent, patient. His birth and princely position from boyhood, first in the petty court of his father, then amidst the splendour and etiquette of the court of the Eastern Emperor, gave him naturally the princely bearing which some of the successful Illyrian adventurers never learnt to assume. He was probably present when the trembling Empresses freed themselves from the accusation of being Christians by sacrificing to the ancient gods; and stood, perhaps, behind the Emperor's chair when the domestics of the palace were tortured to death; and was an auditor of the tales of horror which came to the capital from all the Eastern provinces during the first two years of persecution.

On the abdication of the Emperors it seemed to the people natural that Constantius, succeeding to the highest rank, should himself be succeeded as Cæsar by the young prince his son, whose character



and abilities made him worthy of the office. When the names of the new Cæsars were proclaimed to the soldiers and citizens at the remarkable scene at Nicomedia, they thought for a moment that some mistake in the names had been made; and all eyes were turned upon Constantine, who stood, according to his dignity, among the group of imperial personages, until Galerius put him aside with his hand to make way for the unknown Severus, who was invested with the imperial ornaments, and presented as the Herculean Cæsar.

However Constantius might resent it, that the choice of one Cæsar had not been given him, whatever disappointment Constantine might feel at the disappointment of his prospects, it was necessary to act with prudence. Galerius had long regarded the able and popular young prince as a dangerous rival, and would have been glad of a pretext against him. Not daring to take any open measures against the son of the Emperor of the West and the favourite of the legions of the East, he had surrounded him with spies and intrigues, in which the prudence of the young prince kept him from entanglement. He had thrust upon him services of danger in which the young hero won a still higher reputation. Once, in the public games, he piqued him into entering the arena against a lion, which he slew. In expeditions against the Sarmatians, at one time he entered into single combat with a gigantic barbarian, whom he slew and dragged by his long hair to the feet of Galerius;

another time he was the first to press his horse into a dangerous morass, and all the army crossed in safety in his track.

Constantius, as soon as he succeeded to the rank of Augustus, demanded that his son should be restored to him. Galerius interposed delays under various pretexts; but at length, late one evening, he gave Constantine permission to depart, and the necessary permit to make use of the imperial posts in his journey, but bade him not depart next day without receiving his final orders.

Since we shall have to speak of these imperial posts again, when employed in the peaceful work of conveying bishops to attend Councils of the Church, and since they help us to realize the condition of the Empire, it may be worth while to describe them here a little more particularly. Along all the great high-roads which connected the chief cities of the Empire with Rome, and with one another, the service of posts was maintained at the cost of the State. At regular distances were post-houses, and at each post-house were kept a number of horses, and even carriages and litters. The primary object of the imperial posts was that couriers might convey reports from all the provinces to head-quarters, and orders from head-quarters to all the provinces, as fast as constant relays of good horses could carry them. But besides couriers, officers in the service of the State, and even ordinary travellers, were allowed by special



permission to make use of the service of the imperial posts. This mode of travelling with post-horses and carriages, which the genius of Rome was the first to organize, lasted throughout the civilized world down to our own day. The railroad and locomotive have superseded the old high-road and post-horses on most of the frequented routes. But they who have travelled in Russia have seen in the military roads of the great modern military empire, and in its service of posts, a very exact reproduction of those of the great military empire of Rome. For example, it has been the writer's fortune to travel, first as the patriarchs travelled, carrying tents and food, across the pathless wilds of Turkey and Persia; and then, crossing the Araxes, to find, on the other side of the boundary river, the extremity of the great military road which the Russian Empire has long since extended to the last mile of its latest conquest; and at that extremity to find its ultimate post station. A special permit from a Russian consul having been duly examined, the postal service of the State was at the traveller's service. And the imperial post, even along so unfrequented a route, was wonderfully well served. Three horses yoked abreast to a light troitka, a reminiscence of the old Roman chariot with its three or four horses abreast, was soon ready; and from that moment, from post to post, at the rate of some ten miles an hour, the traveller might rush across the leagues of desolate country, thinly inhabited by



half-civilized tribes, with towns at long intervals; but along a magnificent high-road, engineered with the best modern science; with a chain of post-houses, each with its handful of military occupants, good horses, and disciplined drivers. And so, from earliest dawn until far into the night, the traveller might cover a great extent of ground; the imperial courier, lightly equipped, travelling night and day, might now across Russia, as then across the Roman Empire, travel so fast that nothing could overtake him.

Constantine feared that although he had "received his passports," some further pretence might yet be found to delay his journey. Accordingly, as soon as he had left the imperial supper table, he mounted at once, and, with a handful of attendants, commenced his journey.

Conjecturing that Severus might have had orders to stop him in his passage through Italy, he travelled through the Illyrian provinces. Fearing pursuit, he made the journey as rapidly as possible from stage to stage, mutilating the horses he left behind in order to delay those who might come after. He did not pause in his rapid ride till he had entered the province of Gaul, and found himself safe among a population, soldiers, and officials who were devoted to his father.

The Emperor was not at Trèves, his capital and usual abode. The barbarous tribes in the north of the island of Britain had made an incursion into



that province, and Constantius, notwithstanding his failing health, had hastened in person to repel and chastise them. Constantine had to cross the whole breadth of Gaul to Gessoriacum (Boulogne), where he joined his father on the eve of his embarkation.

The campaign was successful; but its fatigues exhausted the Emperor's strength, and death overtook him at Eboracum * (York), on the 25th



CONSTANTIUS.

of July, A.D. 306. Before his death he designated Constantine as his heir; recommended the six children of his second marriage to the care and kindness of their elder half-brother; and commended him to the affection and choice of his soldiers as his successor.

Constantine made some show of unwillingness;

* His supposed tomb at York was shown to the curious traveller until the Reformation. But Gaul also had its rival traditions, and claimed Trèves as the birth-place of Helena and the burial-place of Constantius.

enough to enable him to plead to Galerius that the purple had been thrust upon him; but the legions persisted in electing him as Emperor and Augustus. A German king in command of a contingent of barbarous allies joined in the recognition. Constantine yielded and accepted the nomination. Then he hastened to send messengers to all the Emperors, bearing, according to etiquette, his image crowned with laurel; and to Galerius he sent letters couched in conciliatory language, soliciting his recognition of his election.

Galerius was enraged, and his first impulse was to insult the image of the new Emperor and put his messengers to death. But he feared, in case of civil war, the fidelity of his own officers and soldiers, already displeased with the choice of the new Cæsars, and inclined to favour the pretensions of Constantine; he feared the ability and power of Constantine, who was strong in the attachment of his father's troops and subjects. Galerius therefore dissimulated his vexation and consented to recognize Constantine—not as Augustus, but as Cæsar, taking rank after those who were already Emperors. The legal effect of this was to bring Constantine under the supreme authority of the Augusti. To this Constantine, with politic moderation, agreed. Galerius nominated Severus to the vacated rank of Augustus.

Thus, with but a short delay, our hero, at the age of thirty-two, attained the position to which his birth and merits entitled him.

We Englishmen take a natural interest in the fact that it was here, in our northern capital of York, that Constantine was elected to the imperial dignity. Constantine was one of those great men whom the popular imagination surrounds with legends, and with whom it delights to find or feign the special interest of some local tie. To this feeling we doubtless owe the origin of our island traditions that Helena, the mother of the Emperor, was a British princess, the daughter of the Christian King Coel of Colchester, whom the Roman Cæsar Constantius had espoused ; that the great Emperor was born in our island ; and that he owed his Christian predilections to his Christian mother.

The expectations entertained of the character of the young Emperor were not disappointed. He continued the vigorous, just, economical, paternal administration of his father, and for the next six years the provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain continued to enjoy peace and to make progress under his rule.

At the very beginning of his reign, indeed, while he was still in Britain, the Franks crossed the Rhine in great numbers, and began to devastate Gaul ; but the Emperor hastened to meet them, defeated them in two battles with great slaughter, and, making his first entry into his fallen capital in triumph, celebrated his accession to empire and his recent victory by a splendid exhibition of games, in which two kings of the Franks, with a great number of their warriors, were exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Trèves.

The Emperor so added to the defences of the Rhine frontier by the erection of strong castles, and so vigilantly guarded the frontier by its numerous garrisons and the fleet which patrolled the river, that the barbarians were effectually curbed for the remainder of his reign.

To this period must be assigned many works with which the cities of the Gallic provinces were strengthened and adorned. We may briefly mention those of the capital.

Trèves (Augusta Trevirorum) is situated on the right bank of the Moselle, surrounded by gentle hills whose slopes, when Ausonius described the city in the latter part of the reign of Constantine, were already covered with vines, as they are to this day. It was the capital of the northern division of Gaul, the head-quarters of the commander of the Rhine frontier, and the usual residence of the Emperor. Ausonius seems to attribute to Constantine the rebuilding of its walls; he mentions also its basilicæ and its forum as royal works, and alludes to its schools (university) and its mint. The Roman bridge which connected the city with the suburb on the opposite bank of the river—a bridge of eight arches, seven hundred feet long and twenty-four wide—existed till the wars of Louis XIV.; and its massive piers still support the present bridge. The Porta Nigra (*Porta Martis*), which is in the line of the ancient walls, still exists, and may be a portion of the work of Constantine.* It is a

* The local traditions assign to it a fabulous age. Some anti-

gigantic and imposing monument. The city still also possesses remains of the amphitheatre, in which the Cæsar presented the bloody games above mentioned, and of baths and other traces of the Roman age.

It also possesses remains of a church whose roof is supported by monolithic columns of granite forty feet high, which Hübsch considers to be a work of the third century.

We gather from the history and these remains that Constantius and Constantine bestowed wealth and the best art of their time in making Trèves a not unworthy capital of the vigorous and flourishing provinces over which they ruled.

quaries think it earlier, some (among them Mr. E. A. Freeman) think it later, than Constantine. See Mr. Freeman's "Historical Essays," 3rd Series; and Mr. C. R. Smith's "Collectanea Antiqua," vol. ii. p. 72.

CHAPTER VIII.

REVOLUTIONS.

BUT while the Gallic provinces were enjoying peace and prosperity under the firm and wise rule of an able Emperor, the other portions of the Western Empire were suffering under revolutions, wars, oppression, and misery.

When Galerius nominated his nephew Daza and his dependent Severus as Cæsars, we have seen that he not only passed over the claims of the son of Constantius, whose merits excited his jealousy, but he also passed over the claims of the son of Maximian, whose demerits were the pretext of his exclusion from the succession. The elevation of Constantine stirred up Maxentius to aim at empire also. A favourable opportunity soon occurred.

For the few short years of the reigns of Tacitus and Probus it had seemed as if the Senate might yet again recover the political power whose shadow only had so long remained to them, and Rome might again be the centre of the world's affairs.



The policy of Diocletian had deliberately removed the seats of power to Nicomedia and Milan, Sirmium and Trèves, and left the great families of Rome without even a shadow of political influence. But he had at least left the great Houses their wealth, and Rome the prestige of its ancient greatness, and Italy its privileges as the mother of the Empire. Even these seemed now to be threatened. The financial officers of Galerius had lately visited Rome and Italy, making a strict investigation into the landed and personal property of the people, and employing torture to extract true statements. It was clear that the privilege which Italy had long enjoyed of exemption from personal taxes was about to be taken away, and that the Emperor was about to stretch out his hand towards the wealth of Rome.

The natural dissatisfaction broke out into rebellion. The Senate encouraged it; the Prætorians embraced the popular cause. In Maxentius, living at his villa a few miles from Rome, the conspirators hoped to find a prince ready to embrace their offer of the purple, and willing to show his gratitude by making Rome his residence, restoring its dignity, and protecting the privileges of his Italian subjects.

The design succeeded. Maxentius embraced the offered dignity, and, on October 28, A.D. 306, was formally invested with the imperial ornaments. It is uncertain whether the old Emperor Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy, but, as soon as it broke out, he left his retirement and

came to Rome; at the request of his son and of the Senate, gladly reassumed the purple; and gave them the aid of his experience of affairs, his influence with the soldiers, and his military skill.

The substitution of Constantine for his father in the Empire of the West had been distasteful to Galerius, but it was a succession which commended itself to the world's approval, and he did not feel himself strong enough to challenge it. But the revolt of Italy, the setting up of Maxentius by the mutinous province, the resumption of authority by Maximian at their invitation, could hardly be accepted by Galerius, though one rebel was his son-in-law and the other his ancient chief.

He despatched Severus with a numerous army against the usurpers. Severus marched hastily upon Rome, expecting an easy victory; but he found the city, lately strengthened by the Wall of Aurelian, well manned, commanded by an experienced general, and prepared to stand a siege. When he sat down before it, emissaries of the enemy found their way among his troops. Many of these were veterans who had served under Maximian, and had much more attachment for their old general than for the worthless Severus; and a large body of them deserted to the enemy, headed by the Prætorian Præfect. Severus retired precipitately to the strong city of Ravenna. Maximian followed him, and laid siege to the place. Severus was persuaded to surrender at discretion; was carried prisoner to Rome; and there obtained the favour



of an easy death and an imperial funeral (February, A.D. 307).

It was evident that the Empire was to be distracted by another great period of civil war. The experienced and energetic Maximian prepared for it by seeking an alliance with the young and able Emperor of the West. He crossed the Alps in person, taking with him his youngest daughter, Fausta; repaired to Arles, and negotiated an alliance with Constantine. The hostility of Galerius to both naturally drew them together. Together they were strong enough to hold their own; divided, Galerius might conquer one, and then take advantage of his increased strength to assail the other. Maximian, assuming the character of Senior Augustus, offered to recognize Constantine as Augustus of the West, *i.e.* to recognize him as supreme in his own provinces; and proposed to cement the alliance by giving him his daughter in marriage.

The history of the father repeats itself in the son. Constantine had already contracted an alliance with Minervina, similar to that of Constantius and Helena. He, too, had one son, Crispus, by this alliance. He, too, consented to sever his first ties in order to strengthen his political position by a royal marriage. One of the panegyrists tells us that years before, at the Court of Nicomedia, there had been talk of an alliance between the princely youth and the beautiful child; and that it was not merely a *mariage de convenance* which Maximian proposed as the bond of a treaty, but the bribe of a romantic



love-match, which he offered to the young Emperor, when he carried his beautiful daughter with him in his winter journey across the Alps.

The marriage was celebrated with great magnificence at Arles, March 31, A.D. 307; and Maximian returned to Rome, assured that Constantine would not ally himself with Galerius and attack him in the rear, and that Constantine would acknowledge him as his colleague in empire should he triumph over Galerius, but having failed to obtain any very definite assurances of material aid in the impending war.

The contest was decided without need of his interposition. Galerius, at the head of a powerful army of the troops of Illyricum and the East, entered Italy, and marched upon Rome; but he found every city hostile, fortified, and inaccessible. He marched on as far as Narni, within sixty miles of Rome; then, convinced of the difficulties of his undertaking, and insecure of the fidelity of his troops, he made advances towards a reconciliation. His overtures rejected, he abandoned his enterprise and retired, plundering and devastating the country through which he passed.

On his return from this unsuccessful attempt to put down the usurpers of Italy, Galerius sought to strengthen his position by raising Licinius to the dignity of Augustus in place of the dead Severus, entrusting to him the government of Illyricum (November 11, 307); thus, ignoring the usurpers, and recognizing Constantine as only Cæsar,



he completed the Diocletian constitution. This was done at a meeting of Galerius, Maximian, and Diocletian, held at Carmentum (near Pressburg); and it is one of the indications—we shall meet with another presently—that the concurrence of the *Augusti Emeriti* was sought at great crises.

Licinius was, like Galerius, an old companion in arms, a Dacian peasant,* a man whose considerable talents as a general and a statesman were tarnished by licentiousness and avarice. When Maximin Daza learnt that Licinius had thus been raised over his head to the higher dignity of Augustus, he assumed to himself the same rank, in spite of the representations and entreaties of his imperial uncle and benefactor; and Galerius, to prevent dissension between the Emperors of the East in presence of the hostile and allied Emperors of the West, was obliged to concede it to him.

There were thus six Emperors in the field, three allied against three, the Emperors of the East against the Emperors of the West; and already, in each alliance, there were jealousies at work which speedily led to further dissensions. The father and son, who were partners in the rule of Italy and Africa, disagreed. Maximian endeavoured to depose his son in a general assembly of the people. Maxentius threw himself upon the protection of the soldiers, whose good-will he had cultivated by allowing them great latitude of licence, and expelled his father from Rome. The old Emperor took refuge with Galerius,

* He affected to be descended from the Emperor Philip.

but there engaging in plots and finding them discovered, he formally resigned the purple again. He tried in vain to induce Diocletian to follow his own example and reassume the sovereign power.* At length he sought an asylum at the court of Constantine. The Emperor of the West received his father-in-law with friendship, lodged him in his palace, treated him with imperial consideration, and sought his advice in the conduct of affairs.

But while Constantine was absent on an expedition against some Frank tribes, Maximian, believing or affecting to believe a rumour of the Emperor's death, seized the imperial treasures at Arles, and bribed the soldiers there, by a large donation, to elect him Emperor. When the news reached Constantine, he returned by forced marches, and followed Maximian to Marseilles, where he had sought refuge. When the Emperor appeared before it, the city opened its gates to him, and gave up the usurper to his mercy. With great moderation the Emperor only deprived him of the purple and treated him as before.

But the restless intriguer could not remain long satisfied in a private station, and a sense of gratitude did not prevent him from plotting against the life and crown of his son-in-law. He tried to enlist his daughter in the plot, who feigned to enter into

* It is of this occasion that Victor relates the famous anecdote, that in reply to Maximian's importunities to return to power, Diocletian replied, "Would you could see the cabbages which I have planted with my own hands at Salona; you would no longer ask me to return to the cares of empire."



it, but only in order to reveal it to her husband. The plot was simple enough : she was to leave her husband's chamber door unsecured, he was to enter in the night and slay the sleeper. The Emperor allowed the attempt to be made, but placed a slave in his bed. In the course of the night Maximian entered the room, plunged his sword into the heart of the sleeping man, and rushed out with a cry of triumph. But while he spoke, Constantine appeared, at the head of a guard of soldiers, and seized the murderer red-handed. Maximian was strangled that night in prison—by his own hand, it was said. It was a miserable end to a great and eventful life, but it would be difficult to say that his death was other than an act of justice (February, A.D. 310).

Maxentius, left uncontrolled, soon developed all the vices of the worst of the line of Cæsars. He



MAXENTIVS.

was puffed up with ideas of his own dignity, affecting, as the elect of the Senate and sovereign of Rome, to be the chief of the Empire, and to regard the other Emperors as his lieutenants. He was really powerful in the number and quality of his troops, increased by the veterans who had come over to him from Severus, and in the wealth which he had wrung from his subjects. He led a life of luxurious and dissolute

idleness. He encouraged the excesses of the troops, and disregarded the rights of the citizens; encouraged delations against the wealthy nobles in order to confiscate their possessions; carried off the wives even of the noblest, and only returned them dishonoured to their husbands. It is curious that, in the series of authentic portraits furnished by the coins of the Emperors, the physiognomy of the worthless Maxentius presents us with the finest head of the whole series: regular, well-cut, striking features of the old Roman type, with aquiline nose, firm mouth and forceful chin, and an expression of haughty power.

Maxentius misgoverned Italy and Africa, Constantine strengthened himself in the affections of his subjects, for six years, before the next great event occurred, which affected the fate of both of them.



CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF GALERIUS.

FROM the day of Constantine's election to the imperial power the Christians of the Gallic provinces were safe from fear of persecution. The one redeeming trait of the reign of Maxentius was that, on his accession to power, he also put a stop to the persecution; so that in the West the persecution, never so violent as in the East, lasted only about two years.

But in all the provinces of the East the ferocious Galerius and the tyrannical Daza continued, without pity, their "civil war" against the Christians; and since in the East the Christians were most numerous, the number of sufferers was proportionally great. It is almost incredible that men could endure such horrible torments as we read of, almost as incredible that men could inflict them on their fellow-men. They were scourged till the bones were laid bare; they were racked; they had melted lead poured on their bodies; the flesh was pinched out of their bodies with iron pincers; it was scraped off in long



furrows with toothed iron scrapers; they were burnt at slow fires; were cast to the wild beasts, were beheaded, drowned. The dead bodies of some were cast out without burial, so that "wild beasts and dogs and birds of prey scattered the human limbs here and there in all directions, and the whole city was spread with the entrails and bones of men; so that it was dreadful even to those who before had been most hostile to us; they did not, indeed, so much lament the calamity of those against whom these things were done, as the nuisance against themselves, and the abuse heaped upon our common nature." *

But the horrible cruelties created general disgust. Some of the great officers refused to lend themselves to the vile work; the pagans cried out against it. The popular feeling was shown in superstitious fancies. At Cæsarea the columns of the porticoes which adorned the streets and squares exuded drops of moisture, and it was immediately rumoured that the very stones wept over the horrors which they had witnessed. At one place it was said that groans issued from the earth. At another the sea cast up the bodies of the martyrs thrown into it.

The popular feeling had its influence on the Emperors, and, in the early part of the year 308, mutilation was substituted for torture. It was ordered that the Christians should be mutilated in the right leg by hamstringing or cauterizing the tendons, and blinded of the right eye by digging it out

* Eusebius, "Martyrs of Palestine," ch. ix.



with the point of a sword and searing the socket, and be sent to the mines. But in the autumn of the same year new orders were given for a resumption of the old cruelties, and a perfect reign of terror ensued, which lasted for two full years. These two years were the most prolific of bloodshed of any in the whole history of Christian persecutions; and the vast majority of persons in the East who are celebrated as martyrs in "the Diocletian persecution" really suffered between A.D. 308 and 311. This part of the persecution was the work of Maximin Daza more than of Galerius.*

Among the martyrs, the most celebrated for station or character were—Peter, Bishop of Alexandria; Lucian, a presbyter of Antioch, distinguished for his labours on the Scriptures; Pamphilus, the founder of the library at Cæsarea, the master and friend of Eusebius; Methodius, Bishop of Tyre. In addition to those whose names are recorded in authentic history, a great number of martyrs enjoying a general or a local celebrity are referred to this period; as St. Sebastian and St. Agnes, who are said to have suffered at Rome, and are commemorated by churches and catacombs without the walls of the city; St. Januarius, of Naples; SS. Cosmas and Damian, two Arabian brothers who are said to have suffered at Cilicia, and are regarded as patrons of the medical art; † St. Vincent of Saragossa; St.

* Smith's "Dict. of Eccl. Biography," article "Galerius."

† A tomb is shown as theirs in the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, in the possession of the Jacobites, at Diarbekr, to which

Denys of Paris ; St. Clement of Metz ; St. Quentin, from whom a town in Normandy takes its name ; St. Victor of Marseilles, and many others in France ; St. Gereon and his 318 companions, whose relics are shown in the church of that name in Cologne ; St. George, who is supposed to have suffered at Nicomedia, and who in some unexplained way has become the patron saint of England.*

What at length checked the persecution was that Galerius was seized with a horrible malady—the same which had killed Sulla and Herod Agrippa. We abbreviate Eusebius's loathsome description of it: a tumour in the lower part of the body ; ulcerations ; horrible pain to the patient ; effluvia so offensive to the attendants that only the fear of death compelled physicians or servants to come near him. Galerius himself was persuaded that it was the God of the Christians who had thus stricken him. The pagans generally assented to his view, and the Christians also very naturally regarded it as an interposition of Divine Providence on their behalf. He issued an edict,† admitting that persecution had failed to crush Christianity, and therefore putting a stop to it ; allowing the Christians to rebuild their churches and enjoy freedom of worship, provided they did nothing con-

people still resort for marvellous cures ("Christians under the Crescent," p. 101).

* Robertson's "History of the Christian Church," vol. i. p. 211.

† It is given by Lactantius and by Eusebius ("Ecc. Hist.," viii. 17).

trary to good order; requiring them to offer prayers for the well-being of the Emperor and the State. In short, the edict recognized Christianity as a *religio licita*. It said nothing about the restoration of the confiscated property of the Church.

This tardy repentance was followed by no alleviation of the Emperor's malady. The edict was posted in Nicomedia on the 30th of April, A.D. 311, and within a month the sufferings of the instigator of the persecution had terminated in death. Galerius had added the names of Constantius and Licinius with his own in the edict of toleration, probably without previous communication with them, but in accordance with their well-known opinion on the subject; he had not added the name of Maximin Daza, but that Emperor also found it expedient to put a stop to the persecution in his own provinces, not so much perhaps out of compliance with the edict of the dead Galerius as out of a politic fear of opposing the authority of the living Emperors, Constantine and Licinius.

But Daza adopted other means of opposing Christianity. He tried to discredit it by having false accounts of Christ, and histories of the wonders wrought by Apollonius of Tyana, circulated among the people and taught in the schools. He tried, at the same time, to resuscitate paganism by having the temples repaired and sacrifices celebrated regularly at the expense of the State. He also borrowed a suggestion from the Christians, and organized a pagan hierarchy after the model of the

Church organization, which had been found to be so powerful an agency in the propagation of the gospel; he appointed a priest in each town, with a pontiff in the metropolitan city, who were chosen from the most influential of the citizens, and encouraged by honours and emoluments.



ROMAN SACRIFICE.

CHAPTER X.

THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE.

ON the death of Galerius, Licinius and Maximin Daza, though jealous and hostile, came to an arrangement by which they divided the provinces of the dead Emperor. Daza added Asia Minor to his former provinces of Egypt and Syria; Licinius added Macedonia and Thrace to Illyricum; *i.e.* one took the Asian, the other the European provinces of the dead Emperor, and the Bosphorus, the Propontis, and the Hellespont formed the boundary between them.

The Emperors were again reduced to four in number, but all claiming the rank of Augustus, and exercising, practically, independent sovereignty in their several dominions. This was not the partnership in the imperial power which the Diocletian constitution sought to establish; it was a territorial disruption of the Empire among four rivals, and already the rivals were looking forward to and preparing for great eventualities.

The tragical end of Maximian offered Maxentius

a reason or pretext for assuming a hostile attitude towards Constantine, whose statues he ordered to be thrown down, and announced his intention to avenge his father's death. Licinius and Daza, notwithstanding their late interview and amicable partition, were secretly hostile. Each sought to strengthen himself by the alliance which these mutual hatreds suggested. Constantine sought the alliance of Licinius, and promised him his half-sister Constantia in marriage; Maxentius and Daza were also in secret communication.

The series of contests which had so important an issue was begun by Maxentius. When a revolt in Africa had been suppressed by his lieutenant there, and the spoils of the wealthy cities of Africa had been plundered, and Maxentius had celebrated a triumph on account of his lieutenant's victories, he set himself seriously to prepare for the conquest which he contemplated. His forces, swelled by the accession of the legions of Severus, were sufficiently formidable, and his wealth, augmented by unscrupulous confiscations and exactions, was great. His plan was to march into Rhætia, so as to interpose his forces between Licinius and Constantine, and then, holding the one in check, to strike at the other.

But Constantine did not allow him to take his own time or conduct the war after his own plans. As soon as he saw that Maxentius was determined upon war, he resolved not to act on the defensive, but to carry the war into his enemy's country.



Obliged to leave ample forces to guard his frontiers and garrison his provinces during his absence, Constantine could only muster an available force of twenty-five to thirty thousand legionaries, and some sixty thousand barbarian allies and eight thousand cavalry. Maxentius had at least eighty thousand Roman and Italian soldiers, forty thousand from Africa, and a contingent from Sicily; his forces amounted to one hundred and seventy thousand foot and eighteen thousand horse. But Constantine's military skill, the discipline of his troops, their confidence in their general and attachment to his person, did much to compensate for the inequality in numbers. Besides, the British fleet was already a considerable power, and Constantine used it, for the first time perhaps in European warfare, by sending a squadron round into the Mediterranean to seize Sardinia and Corsica and some of the Italian ports, and effect a diversion in his enemy's rear. The tyranny of Maxentius had made his subjects anxious to exchange his oppression for the mild rule of his enemy; and if it is not certain, as some say, that the Senate formally sent ambassadors to Constantine, praying him to deliver them from their tyrant, at least it seems certain that Constantine kept up a correspondence with the disaffected people in Rome and elsewhere, and could calculate upon their friendly disposition.

By assuming the initiative, and by the celerity of his movements, Constantine gained a great advantage. While Maxentius believed him to be

still on the banks of the Rhine, the Gallic armies marched through the pass of the Cottian Alps, and gained the Italian side of the Alpine range, in full march for Rome. Segusium (Susa), the town which defends the Italian embouchure of the pass, closed its gates.* It was easily carried by assault, and was treated with politic lenity. The march continued without opposition to Turin. There a considerable force, strong in heavy cavalry, was drawn up before the city. Constantine, weak in cavalry, ordered his foot to open their ranks to receive the formidable charge of the hostile squadrons, and then, facing about upon them, enclosed them as in a square, threw them into confusion with the unexpected manœuvre, and destroyed them. Turin surrendered; all the other towns between the Alps and the Po, incapable of effectual resistance, submitted; and the way was open to Milan. On his appearance before it, Milan received him as a deliverer, with sincere, though not perhaps disinterested, rejoicings. The removal of the court and government to Rome had left the immature glories of Milan to wither away; the victory of Constantine offered her the prospect of the recovery of her dignity and prosperity.

While giving his troops some days' repose at Milan, Constantine learnt that the Prætorian Præfect,

* One of them still remains, fine in its general design, of Corinthian order, but with rude sculpture as if by native artists. It was erected by Julius Cottus, the native king, about B.C. 8, in honour of Augustus, and in memory of a treaty by which the king submitted to the Emperor and received the confirmation of his authority, under the humbler title of præfect.

Ruricius Pompeianus, held Verona, and guarded with ample forces, well directed, the lower course of the Adige and the Po. Constantine could not safely march forward to Rome leaving this danger in his rear; he promptly turned aside with his whole force to deal with it.

The city of Verona is protected from an assault from the west by the Adige, which surrounds it on three sides with steep banks and a strong current. Constantine, however, effected an unopposed crossing higher up the river, descended the left bank upon the city, and laid siege to it. The præfect having first tried a sortie, which was repulsed, made his own escape out of the city secretly; gathered his scattered forces, and marched to raise the siege. Constantine, leaving part of his army to continue the siege, marched with the rest to meet the relieving force. The two armies met towards the close of day. The engagement continued into the night. The forces of Constantine were inferior in number; and he was obliged to extend his front in order not to be outflanked; and to compensate for the thinness of his line by throwing himself into the fight, and inspiring his men at every point of danger by his presence and example. It was only when morning dawned that the results of the desperate engagement could be ascertained. The enemy was defeated and dispersed; the Prætorian Præfect was left dead on the field, with many thousands of the combatants. Verona surrendered to the conqueror. His generals kissed their hero's hands with tears, and begged

him not again so rashly to risk a life so precious. No force now intervened between the invader and Rome.

Maxentius, meantime, whether from natural indolence or over-confidence, gave himself no anxiety, and did not interrupt his usual round of dissipations. He seems to have entertained the belief that when the invader actually appeared before the Eternal City, he would be baffled, as Severus and as Galerius had been. For he had not troops enough to invest the city; he was not strong enough to assault it; if he sat down before it, his troops would soon melt away. Perhaps he judged rightly, but he did not persistently act upon this view of the situation.

As Constantine approached by rapid marches along the broad, easy Flaminian Way, Maxentius sent out his forces to meet him. He did not himself march with them, because the oracles had predicted his ruin if he went out of the city. His captains marched out by the Flaminian Gate, crossed the Milvian Bridge, by which the great road spans the Tiber about three miles from the city, and formed their troops on the plain beyond. Their long front filled a spacious plain; their rear rested on the bank of the deep and rapid river. To facilitate the crossing of the stream, a bridge of boats had been constructed beside the Milvian Bridge.

On the 28th of October, A.D. 312, fifty-eight days after their departure from Verona, the hostile forces appeared. The great road emerges from the hills,



where they sink into the plain of the Tiber, at a distance of nine miles from the city; some crags of red tufa had given the name of Saxa Rubra to a village which had sprung up here at the first post-station on the great northern road.

As the troops defiled through the hills and descended upon the plain, Rome lay in sight. Before them was the plain of coarse pasture, dotted over with cattle. The white road running across it, straight as a line, directed the eye towards the city. The road on each side was bordered for the whole distance with funereal cypresses and the tombs of many generations. Half-way, gleams of the Tiber might be seen winding through the plain. Between them and the river lay the troops of Maxentius. Beyond the river the group of seven hills was seen, crowned with the temples and palaces of the city, from which it might seem that all the gods and all the heroes of Rome looked down on the battlefield on which the eagles were about to flee before the standard of the cross.

Who can conceive the elation with which Constantine must have gazed upon the scene? He saw that Maxentius had foregone all his advantages, except that of superior numbers, in coming out to meet him, and staking his fate on the issue of a battle. The eye of the great general saw that the hostile forces, without space to manœuvre and with a deep river in their rear, were in such a situation that a partial check would throw them into confusion, and that defeat would involve disaster. And

glancing beyond the field of battle, Rome, the great prize of victory, lay full before him.

The narrative of Lactantius seems to imply that it was on this last day of the march on Rome that the sign of the cross appeared in the sky to Constantine and his army; and that it was on this last night before the battle that he saw the vision of Christ, who bade him mark the sacred monogram on the shields of his soldiers, and promised him victory. The incident shall be more fully narrated, and the time of its occurrence discussed, in a subsequent chapter. If not now, it had already taken place at an earlier period of the expedition. It is certain that the soldiers did go into the battle of the following day with the sacred sign on their shields, and did fight under the standard of the cross.

The morrow was the seventh anniversary of Maxentius's elevation to the Imperial dignity, and Lactantius tells us that, in spite of the near approach of the enemy, he was engaged in the celebration of games in honour of the occasion, till the cries of the indignant crowd in the amphitheatre shamed him into going forth to the field of battle. Before exposing himself, however, he had the Sibylline books consulted, and received the ambiguous oracle that "the enemy of Rome would that day perish miserably."

Constantine arranged his forces with consummate skill, and commenced the battle with a brilliant charge of the Gaulish cavalry, which the young hero led in person, conspicuous to friend and foe, in



jewelled helmet and gilded armour. That charge determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius gave way before the fury of the onset. The badly disciplined Italian foot broke and fled. The Prætorians, in this their last battle, showed themselves, pampered and dissolute as they were, not unworthy of their ancient fame. They alone resisted to the last, and "covered with their dead bodies the ground which their living ranks had occupied." When they were slain, all resistance was at an end. The rest was rout and massacre. The Milvian Bridge, and the bridge of boats beside it, were choked with the flying mob. As Maxentius, surrounded by his guard, pressed through the fugitives upon the bridge of boats, the structure gave way beneath the weight of the chargers and the swaying of the crowd. The Emperor was precipitated into the strong and turbid stream. The weight of his armour, and the confusion of the moment, left no chance of escape or rescue. Like Pharaoh and his horsemen, "The depths covered them: they sank to the bottom as a stone."

The body of the dead tyrant was recovered from the stream; the head, struck from the body, was carried about the streets of the city on the point of a soldier's pike, and the sight relieved the people from their fears. Rome opened her gates. Constantine defiled his troops by the Campus Martius and by the Pantheon of Agrippa, through immense crowds of the people, who lined the streets and thronged the public places; the Senate, with their wives and

children, received the conqueror; and the whole population of the city hailed him with general acclamation, delighted at their deliverance from the tyrant, delighted at having escaped the horrors of a siege. The other cities of Italy hailed him as their deliverer. A few days afterwards, the conqueror sent the Proconsul Anulinus to Africa, bearing the head of Maxentius, a ghastly evidence of their tyrant's death, to demand the submission of that province. The Africans, like the Italians, gladly accepted him as their Emperor; and Constantine, at the age of thirty-eight, was undisputed master of the West.

The imagination seizes with avidity upon the dramatic interest of the contest between Constantine and Maxentius. First, the points of likeness: both princes of about the same age, sons of emperors, and brothers-in-law; both disappointed, at the same time, of their reasonable expectation of succession to empire, but for quite different reasons; both attaining it, but by different means, within a few months of one another. Then the points of contrast: one prince a dissolute, incapable tyrant; the other severe in morals, just and wise in rule. One about to invade the other, but finding himself vigorously invaded by him. One opposing rashness and incapacity to the other's energy and skill. One consulting his soothsayers on the eve of decisive battle and receiving the ambiguous Sybilline oracle; the other receiving the vision of the cross and the promise of victory. In fine, the one declaring that, if

victorious, he would destroy Christianity ; the other avowing himself a believer in Christ. The one taking his seat in the Capitol, amid the acclamations of all parties, as Emperor of the undivided West, while the head of the other is being exhibited on a soldier's pike to the execrations of the crowd.



ROMAN URN.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE.

THE alleged supernatural conversion of Constantine has afforded a subject of doubt and debate from that age to the present.

Up to the date of his war against Maxentius, the Emperor believed, like his father, in one god, whom he represented to himself, not with the attributes of Jupiter, best and greatest, father of gods and men, but under the form of Apollo, with the attributes of the glorified youth of manhood, the god of light and life.* And as Diocletian had assumed something of the character of Jove, and Maximian of Hercules, and Galerius of Mars,† so it was the fashion of the courtiers to attribute to the handsome and cultured young Emperor something of the character of his patron god.‡

* Apollo was considered to approach nearest in his attributes, of all the pagan deities, to the representation of Christ; so that such a conception of God might be a preparation for the belief in Christ.

† In his later days he gave countenance to a story that the war god, under the form of a dragon, had been his father.

‡ In the coins of the Emperors, many of Diocletian have on the

His conversion to Christianity took place at the period of the war with Maxentius. The chief contemporary authorities on the subject are Lactantius* and Eusebius.

Lactantius, an African by birth, was a rhetorician (or, as we should call him, professor) at Nicomedia, of such eminence that Constantine entrusted to him the education of his eldest son, Crispus.

Writing before the death of Licinius, *i.e.* before the year 314 A.D., or within two, or at most three, years of the event, Lactantius says, "Constantine was admonished in his sleep to mark the celestial sign of God on the shields, and so to engage in the battle. He did as he was commanded, and marked the name of Christ on the shields by the letter X drawn across them with the top circumflexed. Armed with this sign his troops proceed," etc.

Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, the historian of the early Church, the most learned Christian of his time, was, after Constantine's conquest of the East, much about the court, in the confidence of the

reverse Jupiter wielding the thunder-bolt. One medal of Maximian represents him, like the coins of Alexander, with the lion's skin over his head; many of his coins have on the reverse the various Labours of Hercules. Akerman only mentions one of Galerius with Mars on the reverse (vol. ii. p. 194). Several of Constantine have Apollo on the reverse; in one Apollo is placing a garland on the Emperor's head (*Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 234).

* We assume the correctness of the opinion commonly received by competent scholars that the work *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, bearing the name of *Lucius Cæcilius*, is identical with the work *De Persecutione* mentioned by Jerome among the works of *Lucius Cæcilius Formianus Lactantius*.

Emperor, and one of his chief advisers in ecclesiastical matters. In his *Life of Constantine*, published twenty-six years after the Emperor's death, he gives us an interesting account of the moral process of the Emperor's conversion. Reflecting on the approaching contest with Maxentius, and hearing of the extraordinary rites by which he was endeavouring to win the favour of the gods, "being convinced that he needed some more powerful aid than his military forces could afford him, on account of the wicked and magical enchantments which were so diligently practised by the tyrant, he began to seek for divine assistance. . . . He considered therefore on what god he might rely for protection and assistance. While engaged in this inquiry, the thought occurred to him that, of the many Emperors who had preceded him, those who had rested their hopes in a multitude of gods, and served them with sacrifices and offerings, had in the first place been deceived by flattering predictions, and oracles which promised them all prosperity, and at last had met with an unhappy end, while not one of their gods had stood by them to warn them of the impending wrath of Heaven. On the other hand, he recollected that his father, who had pursued an entirely opposite course, who had condemned their error and honoured the one supreme God during his whole life, had found Him to be the Saviour and Protector of his Empire, and the Giver of every good thing. Reflecting on this, and well weighing the fact that they who had trusted in many gods had also fallen

by manifold forms of death, without leaving behind them either family or offspring, stock, name, or memorial, among men; and considering further that they who had already taken up arms against the tyrant, and had marched to the battle-field under the protection of a multitude of gods, had met with a dishonourable end (for one of them [viz. Galerius] had shamefully retreated from the contest without a blow, and the other [viz. Severus], being slain in the midst of his own troops, had become, as it were, the mere sport of death); reviewing, I say, all these considerations, he judged it to be folly indeed to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and, after such convincing evidence, to wander from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honour no other than the God of his father.

“Accordingly, he called on Him, with earnest prayer and supplications that He would reveal to him who He was, and stretch forth His right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvellous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been difficult to receive with credit, had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious Emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honoured with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to credit the relation, especially since the testimony of after time has established its truth? He said that at mid-day,

when the sun was beginning to decline, he saw, with his own eyes, the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, CONQUER BY THIS. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which happened to be following him on some expedition, and witnessed the miracle.

“He said, moreover, that he doubted within himself what the import of this apparition could be. And while he continued to ponder and reason on its meaning, night imperceptibly drew on; and in his sleep the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to procure a standard made in the likeness of that sign, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies.

“At dawn of day he arose, and communicated his secret to his friends; and then, calling together the workers in gold and precious stones, he sat in the midst of them and described to them the figure of the sign he had seen, bidding them represent it in gold and precious stones. And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing.

“Now, it was made in the following manner:—A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a piece transversely laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a crown, formed by the intertexture of gold and precious stones; and on this two letters, indicating the name of Christ, symbolized the Saviour’s title by means of its first characters, the letter P being



intersected by X exactly in its centre; and these letters the Emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period. From the transverse piece which crossed the spear was suspended a kind of streamer of purple cloth, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones, and



CONSTANTINE WITH LABARUM.

which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, which in its full extent was of great length, bore a golden half-length portrait of the pious Emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross and immediately above the embroidered streamer. The Emperor constantly made use of this salutary sign as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power,

and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies." *

Eusebius goes on to relate: "These things," viz. the making of this elaborate standard, "were done shortly afterwards." But at the time above specified, Constantine sent for some Christians and inquired who the God was who had appeared to him, and was told that "He was God, the only begotten Son of the one and only God," and they went on to explain the leading facts and doctrines of the Christian religion. He "resolved henceforth to study the inspired writings, and made the priests of God his counsellors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honour the God who had appeared to him with all devotion. And after this he undertook to quench the fury of the fire of tyranny."

Eumenius was a rhetorician at Trèves, to whom was assigned the duty of pronouncing the customary complimentary address to the Emperor on the occasion of his return to the Gallic capital, after the triumph over Maxentius, viz. in the year 313.

In the panegyric delivered on that occasion, the pagan rhetorician asks, "What God, what present Deity, encouraged thee, that when nearly all thy companions in arms and commanders not only had secret misgivings, but had open fears, yet against the counsels of men, yet against the warnings of the diviners, thou didst by thyself perceive that the

* Eusebius, "Vita Constantini," xxvii.-xxxi.



time of delivering the city was come?" (Migne's *-Patrologia Cursus*, vol. viii. p. 655).

Other writers, pagan as well as Christian, speak of appearances in the sky previous to the engagement.

When the vision of the cross and the dream took place, neither Lactantius nor Eusebius clearly defines. The language of the former and the order of his narration would lead us to infer that it was shortly before, if not on the very eve of, the decisive battle. The language of the latter would lead us rather to suppose that it was in the earlier part of the undertaking, though it is not absolutely inconsistent with a later date.

The question is how far we are to credit the assertion that the conversion of Constantine, whatever its date, was determined by a supernatural appearance in the sky and a subsequent dream.

Eusebius is a careful and trustworthy historian, reporting very few wonders, and those usually with some qualifying "it is said," which indicates anything but a credulous turn of mind. There is no apparent reason why he should have put this story into the mouth of Constantine, if the Emperor had not told it. Constantine, again, was not untruthful. There is no apparent reason why he should, years afterwards, have told Eusebius such a story, if nothing of the kind had happened.

Eusebius's story is partially confirmed by the quite independent testimony of Lactantius, who mentions the dream, though not the vision.

The panegyrist alludes to some omen which was known to everybody, was unfavourably interpreted by the diviners and excited the fears of the officers, and was accepted in a favourable sense by Constantine alone, who acted upon it in spite of the general fears.

The other writers show, at least, that there was a general belief in the occurrence of portents in the heavens. The inscription on the Arch of Constantine, and still more his statue holding a cross and its inscription, hereafter mentioned, are also, so far as they go, contemporary witnesses to the story.

It is only the "antecedent incredibility" of what are called ecclesiastical miracles which makes us hesitate to believe an occurrence so strongly attested ; and, in spite of this incredulous attitude of mind the evidence constrains us to believe that some cruciform appearance was seen by Constantine in the sky ; that he had a subsequent dream ; that the occurrence did decide his hesitating mind in favour of the truth of Christianity ; that he did thereupon have a new standard made, and had the shields of his soldiers marked with the monogram of the name of Christ ; that he attributed his victory over Maxentius to the aid of Christ, and that he did thereupon declare himself a convert to the Christian faith. The cruciform sign above the mid-day sun may have been an instance of a very striking natural phenomenon, called a "parhelion," not unfrequently witnessed, in which the sun is the centre of brilliant cruciform rays, surrounded by a circular halo. There



may possibly be some inaccuracy in the details as related by Eusebius; *e.g.* the inscription, "Conquer in this," may have been inaccurately transferred from the dream to the vision. Assuming that such a sign in the sky and such a dream did occur, it still remains that we shall regard them as a miracle, or as a providential interposition, or as a remarkable but entirely natural coincidence, according to our habitual way of regarding God's relation to the order of human events.*

* See J. H. Newman's "Two Essays on Scripture and Ecclesiastical Miracles."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE was very fortunate in not having been compelled to act hostilely against the city by siege or storm ; he was able with the better grace to assume the character which the people were the more ready to concede to him, not of conqueror of Rome, but of its deliverer from a hated tyranny.

No wholesale conscription followed upon the defeat of Maxentius. His young son, who had been raised to the rank of Cæsar, was put to death, and a very few of those who were most closely identified with the acts of the dead tyrant. Constantine also disbanded the Prætorian guard, and dismantled its fortified camp. The rest of the army of Maxentius he sent to the Rhine frontier, where, amidst his faithful Gauls, there was no fear of their disturbing the internal peace of the Empire, and where they would add to its strength against its barbarian enemies. This done, the Emperor reassured the fears of former opponents, and restored



general tranquillity by an edict forbidding delations on pain of death.

The Emperor also wisely set himself, by acts of policy and by personal graciousness, to secure the attachment of his new subjects. The situation was not free from difficulties for him. The reign of Maxentius had restored to Rome the dignity and the material advantages of being the actual capital of Italy and Africa, the seat of the court, and the centre of the government. But Constantine intended to continue the policy of Diocletian, and again to remove the seat of government from Rome.

The Senate, in embracing the conspiracy which gave the empire of Italy to Maxentius, had regained some of its political importance, and it had now used its recovered influence in favour of Constantine. The Emperor, intending again to reduce its political power to nothing, was careful to soothe its sense of dignity. One of the panegyrists says that he restored to the Senate its ancient authority; and it seems probable that he made some recognition of its ancient rights, by seeking the Senate's formal approval of his sovereignty. The Senate, on its part, repaid the Emperor's deference by giving to his new sovereignty over Italy and Africa the appearance of a better title than that of conquest, and, moreover, did him the further service of recognizing him as first in rank of the existing Emperors. The Emperor added to the senatorial body a considerable number of new members, taken from among the most illustrious persons of the

western half of the Empire ; thus he made it more representative of the highest aristocracy of the whole of his Empire, while he gratified many a subject prince of the native nations of the Gallic provinces, and many a great general who had perhaps risen from the ranks, who were proud of the titular dignity of Senator of Rome.

To the people of Rome he showed himself accessible and gracious. In honour of his victory he exhibited games in the amphitheatre for several successive days ; the preparations made for the septennalia of Maxentius served to celebrate his fall, and in the seat from which the clamours of the crowd had driven the tyrant forth to the field of battle, his conqueror sat to show himself to the curiosity of the people of Rome and of Italy, and to receive their acclamations. He also gave the great largesses among the people customary on the accession of a new prince. But, if we may believe the Christian historians, these largesses were not, as in former times, flung among the degraded populace, who, clinging to their fading dignity as Roman citizens, maintained existence out of the public doles, and spent their days in the taverns, amphitheatres, baths, and public places ; his donations were distributed—under what influence and guidance it is easy to conjecture—in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the widows and orphans, seeking out the poverty which does not clamour in the streets, but hides its misery in self-respect.



If, as seems most probable, the conversion of Constantine preceded by only a short time the victory of the Milvian Bridge, then the three months which he spent in Rome would form a very important period in his religious life.

We must not fall into the anachronism of supposing that Constantine found himself at Rome in the presence of a Church whose external grandeur could command his respect, or that he found in the Bishop of Rome one who could treat with him as the acknowledged head of the Church. The Church was still comparatively a small and insignificant body in Rome, and the pretensions which its bishops gradually put forth in subsequent centuries had not yet been even thought of.

Rome was still, and for another two centuries continued to be, the stronghold of the ancient gods. Their temples still occupied the most commanding situations, and were among the great architectural glories of the city. Their worship was still kept up with all its wonted splendour. The great nobles adhered to the old religion as a part of the ancient order to which they were attached. The citizens as a body shared the same attachment. At the same time, the vast population of the greatest city of the Empire afforded converts enough to make up the most numerous Church * of any city in Christendom. Already, in the time of Diocletian, the

* Gibbon (whose tendency is to depreciate the numbers of the Christians) estimates those of Rome at fifty thousand out of a population of one million.

Roman bishop had forty-six priests, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters, under his obedience.

The episcopal jurisdiction of the bishop did not extend beyond the boundaries of the city; his metropolitan presidency was limited to the civil "diocese" of Rome, which comprised the provinces of Middle and Lower Italy, with the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. In the north of Italy, Milan and Aquileia were independent centres of metropolitan organization. The patriarchal dignity of the Bishop of Rome was recognized over great part of the Western Empire; and everywhere in the Roman world a precedence of honour would have been conceded to the bishop of the capital of the Empire.

But the Church of Rome was at this time overshadowed by the dominant State religion of Rome, and presented nothing externally imposing to the eye of the imperial convert. Nor was the Church of the capital among the foremost of the Churches in theological learning or ecclesiastical statesmanship. The Churches of the East constituted by their numbers, wealth, learning, and civilization, the most important portion of Christendom, and for many generations to come they looked down upon the comparatively recent, rude, unlearned Churches of the West. Indeed, the Churches of all Western Europe had not yet produced one man of eminence in the Church. Melchiades, at this time Bishop of Rome, was a respectable prelate, but not a distin-



guished man. The only man who stands out from the rest at this period is Hosius, Bishop of Cordova in Spain. His age and integrity, we are told, had at this time won for him general respect. We see him from time to time exercising great influence throughout his life, which extended beyond the reign of Constantine, and yet we know very little about him personally.* From all that we do know, we conclude that he was not one of those men of brilliant parts who are active and conspicuous in the forefront of affairs, but one of those men of tried integrity, sound knowledge, and good judgment, on whom men rely in times of difficulty, and whose character gives them a preponderating influence in the decision of questions and the conduct of affairs.

Eusebius tells us that from the time of the Emperor's conversion he began to study the Scriptures, to seek instruction in the Christian religion, and that he admitted some bishops among his intimate friends. It seems not unlikely that Hosius happened to be at Rome at this time, and that he was among the intimates who exercised an influence on the mind of the imperial neophyte; for the very next year

* Athanasius, many years after this time, says of him, "He is not an obscure person, but of all men most illustrious, and more than this. When was there a Council held, in which he did not take the lead, and convince every one by his orthodoxy? Where is there a Church which does not possess some glorious monuments of his patronage? Who has ever come to him in sorrow, and not gone away rejoicing? What needy person ever asked his aid, and did not obtain what he desired?" ("Library of the Fathers: Historical Tracts," p. 191).

we find him already high in the confidence of the Emperor, and sent by him on a mission to the Churches of Africa.

It has been asserted that Constantine's attitude towards Christianity was at this time ambiguous, and gives cause to doubt his sincerity or his boldness. It is alleged that whereas we should naturally expect his baptism to follow speedily upon his conversion, we know that he was not baptized till twenty years after, when at the point of death. But Constantine's delay of baptism is not inconsistent with his sincere belief in Christianity; for we know that for two hundred years after this period it was a very common practice not only for converts to delay their baptism, but even for Christian parents to delay the baptism of their children, until some spiritual crisis or the approach of death urged the catechumen to the important step.

It is pointed out that he continued to the end of his life to bear the title of Pontifex Maximus, "High-priest of the gods of Rome." And so did the Christian Emperors, his successors, for a century afterwards. We shall see in the sequel that there were sound reasons of policy for retaining the office, and the legal rights which attached to it, in the Emperor's own hands.

It is remarked also that the coins and medals of the Emperor bear pagan symbols to the end of his reign. In examining the series of coins and medals, it is easy to see that, at certain times, orders were



given to the mints throughout the Empire to strike a coin with Christian symbols upon it; but it certainly appears that the mint masters were usually allowed to follow the old precedents.

It is very probable that there were often startling incongruities in this period of transition, and it is probable that Constantine was not scrupulous to avoid them. It was his policy to reassure the public mind. It was important at this crisis to maintain the vigorous, steady working of the vast administrative machinery which regulated the life of the Empire, by giving the official world the assurance that they would not necessarily be disturbed in their offices because they were not of the religion of the Emperor. Perhaps it was necessary to reassure the world at large that it need not fear from Christianity in power any retaliation for past persecutions.

We are very willing to admit that Constantine's Christianity at this early period was probably a very vague and imperfect religion; but that he sincerely accepted Christ as a divine Person, the representative of the one God, and staked his life and fortunes on his belief, and made no secret of it, this is beyond question. When a Roman Emperor set up the standard of a new deity in the midst of his army, and marked the symbol of the deity on the shields of his soldiers, he had certainly made up his own mind; and there was no way in which he could more openly have published it.

Another similar proof is found in the statue of

himself which Constantine set up in Rome immediately after his accession. Eusebius says, "He immediately ordered a lofty spear, in the figure of a cross,* to be placed in the hand of a statue † representing himself, in the most frequented part of Rome,‡ and the following inscription to be engraved upon it in the Latin language:—

"By this salutary sign, the symbol of true valour, I have delivered your city from the yoke of a tyrannical rule. I have given liberty to the Roman Senate and people, and restored them to the glory of their ancient dignity."

It is impossible not to see in this "spear in the form of a cross" a representation of the *labarum* under which Constantine had fought at the Milvian Bridge, and an allusion to the "In hoc signo vinces" in the phrase that "in this salutary sign" the victory had been won.

Besides the statue which Constantine caused to be placed in the Forum, the Senate decreed him a triumphal arch, which appears not to have been finished and dedicated till his next visit to Rome, on the occasion of his decennialia, in the year 316; but which we may conveniently describe in this place,

The Arch of Constantine still stands near the

* Δόρυ σταυροῦ σχήματι (Eusebius, "Vita Constantini," i. 40).

† It seems to imply that the spear was placed in the hand of an existing statue.

‡ Probably the Forum.

Coliseum, and is one of the most imposing and best preserved of the monuments of ancient Rome. It was perhaps the last of the architectural monuments with which the Emperors and nobles, from Augustus downwards, had delighted to adorn the Eternal City ; it is like some vision of an architect's



ARCH OF CONSTANTINE.

paradise when we try to realize the magnificence of the city as Constantine saw it. The arch is so well known from engravings and photographs that we do not attempt to describe it in detail ; but we notice one remarkable feature of its construction. Portions of the monument, notably the bas-reliefs and statues

which adorn its faces, are of the age of Trajan, and probably belonged originally to an arch dedicated to that Emperor. There are two ways of accounting for their presence here. One is that an arch of Trajan was plundered of its statuary in order to adorn this Arch of Constantine. Another and perhaps more probable conjecture is that an arch dedicated to Trajan had a few new sculptures and a new inscription inserted in it, and was then re-dedicated to Constantine. The fine design and pure details of this noble monument seem to be beyond the capabilities of the debased art of the beginning of the fourth century. It would seem as if the Senate took the grandest of the existing arches which adorned the Forum, and making some necessary alterations in it, were thus able to dedicate to the glory of Constantine a nobler monument than they could otherwise have given him.

The inscription on the south front is as follows :—

IMP . CAES . FL . CONSTANTINO MAXIMO
 P . F . AVGUSTO . S . P . Q . R .
 QVOD . INSTINCTV DIVINITATIS . MENTIS .
 MAGNITVDINE . CVM . EXERCITV . SVO .
 TAM . DE . TYRANNO . QVAM . DE . OMNI . EIVS .
 FACTIONE . VNO . TEMPORE . IYSTIS .
 REMPVBLICAM . VLTVS . EST . ARMIS .
 ARCVN . TRIVMPHIS . INSIGNEM DICAVIT .

“To the Emperor Cæsar Flavius Constantinus, Maximus, Pius, Felix, Augustus, who, by the inspiration

of the Divinity and by the greatness of his genius, together with his army, has avenged, by his just arms, the Republic at the same time from the Tyrant and from all his faction, the Roman Senate and People have dedicated this distinguished arch of triumph." Bas-reliefs representing Apollo, Diana, and sacrifices are sculptured under this inscription. The ambiguous phrase *Instinctu divinitatis* is remarkable; it may mean Apollo or Christ. Some of the old antiquaries have said that the marble shows traces that these words have been substituted for others which were originally there; suggesting to us the conjecture that Constantine directed some phrase in which the Senate had attributed his victory to a heathen deity to be replaced by the present ambiguous phrase. But the Chevalier de Rossi, the learned and trustworthy authority on the antiquities of Rome, after careful examination of the monument, pronounces that there are no traces of any alteration in the inscription, and that such an alteration was almost impossible, since the letters are cut in high relief on the slabs of marble which form the arch.

The vague theism of the inscription is common in pagan writings of this period; *e.g.* the Panegyrist on this victory of Constantine over Maxentius contrasts the influences under which they acted—*te divina praecepta, illum superstitiosa maleficia*; and again Constantine is spoken of as *divino monitus instructu*, almost the same phrase as the inscription on the arch; and this deity is addressed in lan-

guage like nothing so much as Pope's Universal Prayer—"Therefore Thee, the great Author of things, who hast as many Names as Thou hast willed that there should be languages among men, and what therefore Thou desirest to be called we know not; whether there is in Thee a certain Force and divine Mind, by which, infused in the whole world, Thou minglest Thyself with all the elements, and, without any impulse coming from without, movest by Thyself; or whether Thou art some Power above all heavens, who lookest down from the highest pinnacle of nature upon this Thy work;—Thee we pray and beseech that Thou wouldst preserve this our Prince for ever." *

Inside the centre arch are also the inscriptions "LIBERATORI VRBIS" on one side, and on the other "FVNDATORI QVIETIS."

Another very important consequence of the conversion of the Emperor was the immediate issue of an edict of toleration. The document has not come down to us; it is alluded to in the subsequent Edict of Milan; and it is of the less importance because it was so soon superseded by that memorable document—the Magna Charta of the liberties of the Church.

* An uncertain Panegyrist (Migne's "Patrologiæ Cursus," vol. viii. p. 657).

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EDICT OF MILAN.

CONSTANTINE remained less than three months in Rome. In January, 313, he went to Milan, where he had invited Licinius to meet him to confer on the future of the Empire, to confirm the alliance between them, and to seal it by the marriage of Constantia to Licinius, which had been promised before the campaign.

Constantine sought to give greater solemnity to the new arrangement of the Empire by inviting the presence of Diocletian ; * and when he excused himself on the plea of his age, Constantine accused him of concert with his enemies. In the midst of the negotiation Diocletian died. Aurelius Victor gives utterance to the current suspicions that the aged father of the Emperors had evaded the dreaded consequences of Constantine's anger by a voluntary death. The justice and mildness of Constantine's character forbid us to entertain the idea that Dio-

* A fourth instance of the contemplated intervention of the *Augusti Emeriti* in great crises.

cletian had any violence to fear at his hands; but it is not out of harmony with the character of Diocletian to seek the old Roman refuge of a voluntary death when life could no longer be held with Roman dignity; and Lactantius says* that Diocletian starved himself to death, in his grief and mortification at the misfortunes of his wife and daughter, and the refusal of Maximin to listen to his remonstrances, of which we shall have to speak shortly.

The result of the meeting of the two Emperors which has most interest for us is the famous Edict of Milan, which finally recognized Christianity, and placed it on a footing of perfect equality with the ancient religions of the Empire:—

“We, Constantine and Licinius, Augusti, in council at Milan under happy auspices, earnestly considering everything which affects the well-being of the State, among many things which we have judged to be useful, or rather before all other things, have judged it necessary to establish ordinances respecting the worship of the Divinity.† Be it known that we grant to the Christians, and to all other persons, full liberty to follow the religion which they choose, that the Divinity who resides in heaven may be propitious to us and to those who live under our Empire. By this wise and salutary counsel we make known our will, in order

* “De Mortibus Pers.,” cc. xli. and xlii.

† “Hæc enim in primis ordinanda esso credidimus quibus divinitatis reverentia contineretur.”

that the liberty to follow or to embrace the Christian religion be denied to no one, but that it may be lawful to every one to devote his soul to the religion to which he belongs. . . . This concession which we make to Christians, absolutely and expressly, your wisdom will understand that we grant equally to all who wish to follow their own worship or peculiar rites. For it is evidently conducive to the peace of our times that every one should be at liberty to follow in matters of religion the mode which he prefers."

But having thus established an entire legal toleration of all religions, the special influence of Constantine is visible in the further concessions in favour of the Christians.

"But we decree, moreover, in favour of the Christians, that the places where they have been accustomed heretofore to assemble . . . if they have been confiscated, whether by the imperial treasury or by any other, shall be restored to them without any payment, and without any claim for increased value, immediately, without any restriction; and they who have received these properties in gift shall restore them immediately to the Christians. They who have received them from the first parties, if they desire to obtain any indemnity of our clemency, let them apply to the præfect of their province, and our benevolence will take their loss into consideration. The properties themselves must be restored without delay to the Christian body. And as these Christians have to

our knowledge lost, not only their usual places of assembly, but also possessions which belong, not to individuals, but to their community (*ad jus corporis eorum*), you will direct without hesitation that such possessions be restored to each body and each congregation of Christians . . . following, with respect to the recovery of the cost and to indemnity, the course above indicated . . . in order that, as we have said above, the divine goodness, which we have already experienced on several occasions, may continue firm and steadfast towards us for ever."

In the Edict of Milan, Constantine's influence secured for Christianity in the East the toleration which it had long practically enjoyed in the West. Licinius's co-partnership in empire secured a like toleration for the pagan worship in the West as in the East. The relation of the State to the Church was therefore one of simple sufferance ; it recognized Christianity as one of the *Religiones licitæ*—the recognized religions—of the Empire.

While this prevented either Emperor from persecuting the religion with which he did not sympathize, it did not prevent either of them from showing special favour to the one in which he believed ; and Constantine began immediately to confer benefits upon the Church in his own dominions. The edict itself had restored to the Christian communities the property of which they had been deprived by the first edict of Diocletian ; but it did not rebuild the spacious and costly churches which had been

pulled down, or compensate the Christians for all the losses they had sustained. Constantine proceeded to supply the defect. He encouraged the bishops to rebuild their churches, and supplied them with funds for the purpose; and at the same time he conferred a great boon on the clergy by exempting them from the obligation to serve in municipal offices, and the cost of the public burdens which such offices entailed.

Eusebius has preserved for us, at the end of his "Ecclesiastical History," several of the documents which were received in Africa at the time; * similar documents, *mutatis mutandis*, were probably sent to other provinces of the West. The first is a letter to Anulinus, the proconsul, and seems to have accompanied the edict; it urges the immediate and complete fulfilment of the part of the decree which relates to the restoration of Church property. "It is our will that when thou shalt receive this epistle, if any of those things belonging to the Catholic Church of the Christians in the several cities or other places are now possessed either by the decurions † or any other, these thou shalt cause immediately to be restored to their churches. . . . Make all haste to restore as soon as possible all that belongs to the churches, whether gardens, or houses, or anything else."

Apparently at or about the same time a letter

* There is reason to believe that Eusebius was then in Africa.

† The officers of the municipal corporation.

was sent to Cæcilianus, the Bishop of Carthage, the metropolitan city of North Africa, as follows :—

*“ Constantine Augustus to Cæcilianus, Bishop of
Carthage.*

“ As we have determined that in all the provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, something should be granted to certain ministers of the legitimate and most holy Catholic religion to defray their expenses, I have given letters to Ursus, the most illustrious lieutenant-governor of Africa, and have communicated to him that he should provide and pay to your authority three thousand folles.* After thou shalt have obtained this sum, thou art to order these moneys to be distributed among the aforesaid ministers according to the abstract addressed to thee from Hosius; but if thou shalt find perhaps that anything is wanting to carry out this my purpose with regard to all, thou art authorized, without delay, to demand whatever thou mayest find to be necessary from Heraclides, the procurator of our possessions. And I have commanded him in person, if thy authority shall demand moneys, to see that they be paid without delay. And as I ascertained that some men who are of no settled mind wished to divert the people from the most holy Catholic Church by a certain pernicious adulteration, I wish thee to understand that I have given, both to

* The amount of a follis is very uncertain; some say 208 denarii, which would make the sum thus granted rather more than £2000.

the proconsul Anulinus and to Patricius, the vicar-general of the præfects, personally, the following injunctions: that among other things they should particularly pay the necessary attention to this, nor should by any means allow that it should be overlooked. Wherefore, if thou seest any of these men persevering in this madness, thou shalt, without any hesitancy, proceed to the aforesaid judges and report it to them, that they may animadvert upon them as I commanded them when present."

Another letter to Anulinus, on the exemption of the clergy from public offices, is as follows:—

"Health to the most esteemed Anulinus. As it appears from many circumstances that when the religion in which the highest reverence of the heavenly Majesty is observed was despised, our public affairs were beset with great dangers, and that this religion, when legally adopted and observed, afforded the greatest prosperity to the Roman name and distinguished happiness to all men, as it has been granted by the Divine Beneficence, we have resolved that those men who gave their services with becoming sanctity, and the observance of the law, to the performance of divine worship, should receive the recompense of their labours, O most esteemed Anulinus; wherefore it is my will that these men in the Catholic Church over which Cæcilianus presides within the province entrusted to thee, who give their services to this holy religion, and whom they commonly call clergy, shall be held totally free and exempt from all public offices, to

the end that they may not by any error or sacrilegious deviation be drawn away from the service due to the Divinity, but rather may devote themselves to their proper calling without any molestation. Since that, whilst they exhibit the greatest possible reverence to the Deity, it appears the greatest good will be conferred on the State. Farewell, most esteemed and beloved Anulinus."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEFEAT OF MAXENTIUS.

THE magnificent marriage festivities of Licinius and Constantia, and the grave conferences of the imperial brothers-in-law, were rudely interrupted. The barbarians beyond the Rhine had heard of the march of Constantine and his troops to Italy, and, according to their customary policy, had considered it a favourable opportunity for gathering their tribes together and making a raid into Gaul. But the civil war was terminated, by Constantine's great victory and Maxentius's death, sooner than they anticipated; they were too long in making their own preparations; and when at last they invaded the province, the Emperor had completed his arrangements in Italy, and was ready with his usual energy to devote himself to this new call. To defeat them, with great loss in killed and captives, and drive the survivors back across the river frontier, occupied him only a few weeks.

A more formidable enemy at the same time demanded the attention of Licinius. As Constantine and Licinius had entered into an open alliance

before the march on Rome, so a secret compact had existed between Maxentius and Daza, of which, during his sojourn in Rome, Constantine had obtained conclusive evidence. The Eastern Emperor might very reasonably suppose that the conferences of Milan threatened his own security. It was probable that Licinius would be induced by the success of Constantine to seek to make himself sole master of the East. Daza also resolved to profit by the example of the successful Emperor of the West, by anticipating the attack while his enemy was unprepared.

Therefore, taking advantage of Licinius's absence at Milan, notwithstanding the inclemency of a long winter, he hastened by forced marches across Bithynia; crossed the strait; and laid siege to Byzantium, which was taken in eleven days. Thence he marched against Heraclea, the chief city of the province, which detained his advance for a still longer period. This gave Licinius time to gather troops together and advance to Adrianople. Here the rival forces met. Daza had greatly the advantage; his troops numbered sixty thousand, while Licinius had only been able to bring together thirty thousand to oppose him.

The battle took place on the first day of May, A.D. 313. Lactantius, who is the sole authority for the details of the day, relates them with so striking a resemblance to the circumstances of the great battle between Constantine and Maxentius, as to raise the suspicion that he has allowed his imagi-



nation to embellish the actual similarity of the two great battles, or that there was some intentional imitation on the part of the great actors in the latter series of events. He tells us that Licinius had a mysterious dream on the eve of the battle, which determined him to place himself, as Constantine had done, under the protection of the God of the Christians.* It is certain that Daza, the last of the persecuting Emperors, had, like Maxentius, avowed himself the champion of the ancient gods, and had been encouraged by the pagan priests and diviners to expect a victory. On the morning of the battle, when the two armies were drawn up ready for the combat, Licinius ordered his soldiers to lay aside their shields, take off their helmets, and lift their hands towards heaven, and to repeat after him, and after their officers, who had been supplied with written copies, the following prayer:—"O supreme God, we invoke Thee; holy God, we pray to Thee. We commit the justice of our cause to Thee. By Thee we live; by Thee may we come off victorious and prosperous. O God, holy and supreme, hear our prayers. We lift up our hands to Thee. Hear us, O God, holy and supreme."† And this was repeated thrice by the whole army.

* This favours the opinion that the vision of Constantine occurred on the eve of the battle of the Milvian Bridge.

† "Summe deus, te rogamus. Sancte deus, te rogamus. Omnem justitiam tibi commendamus. Per te vivimus, per te victores et felices existamus. Summe sancte deus preces nostras exaudi. Brachia nostra ad te tendimus. Exaudi sancte summe deus" (Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.").

Licinius, before the engagement began, made some advances towards a conference with his rival. But Maximin was confident in his superior numbers. He entertained, besides, the hope that some of his adversary's soldiers would desert to his side on the field of battle, and in this hope made his first attack so feebly that his enemy gained some advantage. The result was the very opposite of that which Maximin had expected. Some of his own troops went over to the enemy; the rest were thrown into confusion. Maximin, deficient in courage as in skill, lost heart, disguised himself, and fled. The historian tells us that so greatly did his fears hasten his flight, that within twenty-four hours he arrived, pale and trembling, at Nicomedia, having in that time recrossed the Bosphorus and ridden 180 miles. Even in his capital he made no stand, but, taking his wife and children and a guard, he continued his headlong flight to Cappadocia. There, finding some reserves, he took up his residence and began to prepare for a second struggle.

Licinius followed him without delay, entered his abandoned capital on the 13th of June, and caused the famous Edict of Milan to be posted on the walls of Nicomedia—ten years, within a few months, of the day when the edict of Diocletian had given the signal for the commencement of the greatest and last of the persecutions.

Too able a commander to give his enemy leisure for assembling another army, Licinius continued his pursuit. Maximin, leaving a force to defend

the mountain passes through the Taurus, retreated to Tarsus; and when Licinius, having cleared the passes, still advanced upon him, he resolved to seek the Roman's last refuge in a voluntary death. After a grand banquet, in which he indulged to excess, he took poison; but the excess caused his stomach to reject a part of the poison, and the remainder, acting on a constitution ruined by habitual excesses, brought on a frightful malady, accompanied by dreadful sufferings and terminating in loathsome corruption. In this condition he revenged himself on the pagan priests, who had encouraged him to hope for victory, by ordering their death. He, like Galerius, came to the conclusion that his sufferings were the punishment of the God of the Christians, and tried to propitiate him by issuing a decree of toleration.* But his malady increased, and his sufferings soon terminated in death.

Licinius, continuing his march, entered Antioch without opposition, and proceeded to regulate his new conquests. He declared Maximin a public enemy, threw down his statues, and obliterated his inscriptions. Not content with such symbolic acts, he gave the wife of his dead enemy, and his two children, a boy of eight and a girl of seven, to death. Maximin's chief ministers also were put to death by torture.

With the conquest of the East, the relics of several of the elder imperial families fell into the

* Given *in extenso* by Eusebius, "Ecol. Hist.," ix. 10.

hands of Licinius, and his jealous and cruel disposition was illustrated in their treatment.

"The melancholy adventures of the Empress Valeria," says Gibbon, "would furnish a very singular subject for tragedy." We have already seen her in Diocletian's palace of Nicomedia, at the beginning of the persecution, compelled by fear to abjure her Christian convictions and return to the worship of the heathen gods. She had fulfilled, and even surpassed, the duties of a wife to the coarse, ferocious Galerius. Having herself no children, she had adopted his natural son, Candidianus, to whom she invariably showed all the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. On the death of Galerius, his successor Maximin, who coveted her ample possessions, and was attracted by her beauty, proposed with indecent haste to divorce his wife and marry her. A dignified refusal converted the tyrant's love into hatred. He attacked her reputation; put her most devoted friends and servants to death with tortures; confiscated her estates; and condemned her and her mother, the Empress Prisca, to exile in a remote village in the deserts of Syria. Diocletian made several ineffectual attempts to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter, and as a last favour, in return for the imperial purple which he had bestowed upon Maximin, entreated that Valeria might be permitted to share his retirement at Salona. The pride of Maximin was gratified by treating the prayer of the father of the Emperors with cold

disdain, and continuing to revenge himself on the woman who had rejected his offered alliance.

If the death of Diocletian had plunged his wife and daughter into new griefs, the death of their persecutor, a few months after, seemed to open up new prospects to the unfortunate princesses. Licinius at first treated Candidian with apparent kindness, and the Empresses had every reason to expect to be received by him with similar consideration. They accordingly quitted their place of exile, and repaired, though in disguise, to the court of Antioch. But the jealousy of Licinius soon broke out in acts of violence. The young prince Severianus had nothing in his character or conduct to provoke suspicion, but he was the son of the Emperor Severus, and the possibility of rivalry was extinguished in his blood. The prince Candidian, now twenty years of age, the son of his own benefactor, also soon fell under Licinius's suspicion, and was put to death. The Empresses sought safety in flight, and evaded discovery for fifteen months, but, being at length found at Thessalonica, were at once beheaded and cast into the sea.

The series of events which had occupied the last ten years, culminating in this group of tragedies, very strongly impressed the popular imagination. The Christians saw in them a striking manifestation of the providential intervention of God, and their view found forcible expression in the work of Lactantius which we have so often quoted. Its title,

"The Deaths of the Persecutors," gives the keynote of its contents. And, indeed, the facts which he had to relate are sufficiently strange and startling. Just before the opening of the persecution, Diocletian and Maximian celebrated their triumph at Rome in honour of twenty years of a great and prosperous reign. Then came the ten years of persecution. By the end of this second period Diocletian had died in melancholy and unhonoured seclusion, not without suspicion of escaping from his troubles by his own act; Maximian had died the violent and ignominious death his crime had brought upon him; Galerius had perished in horrible torment, believing himself that he was punished by the wrath of God; Severus had been defeated and died by the hand of the executioner; Maxentius had been drowned, after his utter defeat; Maximin, defeated and on the brink of ruin, had died a death almost as horrible as that of Galerius, believing, like him, that he was smitten by the hand of God. And now a like tragical fate had overtaken their families. The wives of Diocletian, of Galerius, of Maximin, the daughter of Diocletian, the son of Galerius, the son of Severus, the son and daughter of Maximin, had all been put to death; while, on the other hand, the uniform prosperity and happiness of Constantius and all his children, of Constantine and all his children, and of Licinius afforded a contrast of the most impressive force.

It was not only the Christians who saw in these



events the hand of God ; the heathen themselves, equally impressible by the argument from the divine interposition in the affairs of men and nations, were constrained to admit that the course of events was strangely in favour of Christianity.



CHAPTER XV.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.

THE life of Constantine divides itself into five well-defined portions: (1.) From his birth to his election as Emperor (A.D. 274-306). (2.) His reign over the Gallic provinces (A.D. 306-312). (3.) His reign over the whole West, from the battle of the Milvian Bridge to the first defeat of Licinius (A.D. 312-314). (4.) His reign over three-fourths of the Empire, from the first to the second defeat of Licinius (A.D. 314-323). (5.) His reign over the whole Empire, from the second defeat of Licinius to his death (A.D. 323-337).

We are engaged in the consideration of the third period, during which he reigned over the whole western portion of the Empire, viz. his old provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, with the addition of the provinces of Maxentius, viz. Italy and North Africa. Licinius during the same period reigned over the whole East. The two Emperors maintained the Diocletian theory of a partnership in empire;



all edicts ran in their joint names. They were also, according to the Diocletian policy, united by domestic ties; Constantia, the sister of Constantine, was the wife of Licinius. On the birth of a son to Licinius and Constantia, the youth Crispus, the infant Constantine II., and the baby Licinianus were together raised to the dignity of Cæsars. The period is a very brief one; it only extends over two years; no important political events occur within it; but we study it with profound interest as the period in which the right relations of a Christian State and the Church of Christ were defined and adjusted.

The Empire and the Church were almost coeval. The Empire was only a few years the elder; for the Empire was the work of Augustus, the birthday of the Church, on the great Pentecost, was in the time of Tiberius, his successor. There was this mighty difference in the two cases: Augustus had a world ready conquered to reduce to a homogeneous state; the Church started on the day of Pentecost with "a hundred and twenty," and had to conquer its world. But it had its divine code of laws and its divine principles of organization to begin with; and the "mustard seed" had a principle of divine life and growth within it.

The Empire and the Church had now lived side by side for nearly three hundred years, independently of each other. The Church, with its divine principles and its wonderful organization, had begun among the lower strata of civil society, and had

gradually spread through those strata, and worked up into the upper strata of society, till this *imperium in imperio* had become a formidable political phenomenon, which compelled the rulers of the Empire to determine what the relations of the State towards it must be. Diocletian and Maximian, Galerius and Maximin, had resolved to destroy it; had tried; and had failed—confessedly failed. Then Constantine became Christian, and the Christian Emperor had to determine from this new point of view what were to be the relations of the State to the Church.

It is easily seen that the problem was a grand one. On one side, the Roman Empire, with its immense military strength, its admirable code of laws, the magnificent administrative machinery by which its life was regulated, was the grandest organization of human society which the world had ever seen. The two cardinal principles of this organization were the sacred authority of the law, and the subordination of the individual to the State. The Roman world was fully possessed with a sense of the grandeur of the Empire; Roman statesmen had a deep sense of their duty to maintain it for the welfare of the human race. The great Illyrian princes, from Claudius to Diocletian, had laboured, with a full appreciation of the grandeur of the achievement, to save this world of law and order, of civilization and refinement, of human happiness and progress, from being torn to pieces by internal dissensions or overwhelmed by the barbarians.



Diocletian, with amazing magnanimity, had shared his imperial power, and again subdivided it, and at length abdicated it, in order to amend the chief obvious defects in the constitution, and to secure the permanence of this great imperial system.

Constantine had been brought up in the school of these great princes. He had inherited their lofty ideas. The period of the reign of his father and his own reign in the Gallic provinces had afforded one of the highest illustrations of the capabilities of this imperial organization to secure the happiness—the progressive happiness—of mankind. Constantine had no thought of abandoning the great traditions of the Empire.

By a strange fatality, it was the most virtuous and high-minded of the Roman princes who, in their solicitude for the maintenance of Roman ideas, as those on which the welfare of the world depended, had been the persecutors of the Church—the philosophic Aurelius, the public-spirited Decius, the virtuous Valerian, the politic Diocletian.

The problem was a grand one which awaited the solution of Constantine: What should now be the relations of the Empire to the Church?

It will be observed that it was not an inorganic Christianity which the Emperor had to deal with, which he could mould so as to fit it into existing institutions, and modify so as to accommodate it to the temper of the times. He had to deal with a Church—an organized community, as old as the Empire, with its own organization, laws, officials—

an *imperium in imperio*. The hostile Empire had already tried to conquer the Church, and failed. The question now was, What were the right relations between the friendly Empire and the Church?

The Church set up claims which appeared to be in direct rivalry with the idea of the Empire. It claimed to be—and was—the kingdom of God on earth; with Christ, the Incarnate God, for its living Sovereign; with its laws divinely given; with an organization developed under divine inspiration; with its hierarchy of officials claiming divine authority; with its revenues largely and willingly contributed under a sense of divine obligation. It claimed to be a spiritual empire set up in the world in order to confer upon the human race a reign of law and order, of civilization and refinement, of human happiness and progress, far beyond anything which the world had witnessed since the golden age, far beyond anything which was attainable by any other means. The Church claimed to be a real kingdom. To call it a heavenly kingdom was not to say that it claimed no dominion upon earth, but to say that its King was God, that its laws were divine, and that the King was therefore infinitely above all earthly rulers,* and His laws superior to all human laws. To say that it was a spiritual kingdom was not to say that it did not claim to regulate the ordinary affairs of domestic and civil life, but to say that it claimed to rule

* "The prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. i. 5.)



over men's inmost being; over their thoughts, words, motives, aims; over the very principles which regulate the whole life of man.

Past experience for three hundred years had proved that the State and its claims upon every citizen of the Empire, and the Church and its claims upon every citizen of the kingdom of God, were two different things. Experience had shown that where the claims of the State did not infringe upon the claims of God, there were no more peaceful, dutiful subjects than the Christians; but that when the claims of the State were contrary to the laws of God, the Christian held that his obedience to God was his first duty. And from the days of the amiable Pliny to those of the wise and tolerant Diocletian, it had perplexed and amazed and provoked the Roman mind to find these Christians so intolerant, so unreasonable, so obstinate, that they would suffer the flesh to be scourged or dragged off their quivering bodies, or be burnt in a slow fire, rather than commit the slightest act of customary State ceremonial or homage to the Emperor which seemed to them to involve unfaithfulness to their Heavenly King.

The problem was a grand one—how these opposite claims could be reconciled; what relations could be established between the Empire and the Church. The problem has acquired a new and living interest for us in these days, because the principles of its solution, which have satisfied men from the time of Constantine to the present, have now ceased to



satisfy. Almost throughout Christendom the old relations between the Church and the State are disturbed. In some countries the State and the Church have assumed an attitude of open hostility. In others the State ignores the Church, and carries on the affairs of civil government without relation to it. In others, again, the State and the Church have retained the most part of their old historic relations, but questions have arisen between them. And the antagonisms between the Church and modern society elsewhere have introduced, where the same causes of antagonism do not exist, a feeling of jealousy and apprehension on the side of the Church, a feeling of unsettlement and expectation on the part of society, calculated to lead to further alienation. There is no grander problem before us at this day, none charged with more important consequences, than this which forms the transcendent interest of the history of Constantine, the establishment of right relations between the Church and the State.

The problem of the relations of the State to the Church was greatly simplified then by the fact that the Emperor was the State. The constitution of the Empire, ever since the time of Augustus, made the Emperor the source of all power and authority, legislative and executive, civil, military, and religious. Again, the problem was simplified by the fact that the Church was as definitely organized and as completely autonomous as the State itself. They were two equal powers, each claiming a certain authority among the same society of men.



The great principles which ought to regulate their relations are easily seen. The State and the Church are co-ordinate powers. They occupy the same field of human society, but fulfil different functions, and each is incomplete without the other. The Church has nothing to do with civil government: "My kingdom is not of this world." The defence of the commonwealth from foreign enemies, the maintenance of internal security and order, the promotion of commerce and the arts of life, the punishment of crime—all this belongs to Cæsar. But where the power of the State fails, there that of the Church begins. Cæsar can only maintain external obedience by the sword; the Church bids the citizen recognize the "powers that be," as "ordained of God," and bids him pay a willing obedience, not only out of fear, but "for conscience' sake." The civil power can punish crime, but it fails to repress vice, and it cannot touch sin; the Church especially deals with sin, which is the root of all social and civil disorder. In short, the State can deal only with the material interests and the external life and order of society; the Church deals with the internal life—the beliefs and hopes and aims of the soul, which are the inner springs and regulators of the external life of man. Between a Christian State and the Church of Christ there need be no opposition; there ought to be no jealousy. But these happy relations can only exist where each of these independent powers is willing to recognize the rights of the other within its own

sphere. The State, while acting as a "nursing father" to the Church, must abstain from interference with its spiritual functions; the Church, while it cannot surrender the things which are God's, must scrupulously "render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's."

Constantine seems to have apprehended the situation with great perspicacity, and to have adopted from the first sound principles in his relations to the Church. This is to be attributed partly to his own statesmanlike apprehension of the situation from his own point of view, partly to the clearness with which the Church's position and claims were set forth, and maintained by her representatives. And here again we have some ground for believing that we owe very much to Hosius at this most important crisis. It was years after this, and in defending the Church's rights against the son of Constantine, that he wrote the following sentences; but they, no doubt, convey the principles which he had held from the beginning, and which Constantine himself had accepted. "Intrude not yourself," writes Hosius to Constantius, "into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands unto us concerning them; but learn them from us. God hath put into your hands the kingdom; to us he hath entrusted the affairs of His Church; and as he who should steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear on your part, lest by taking upon yourself the government of the Church you become guilty of a great offence. It is written, 'Render unto Cæsar

the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' " *

The Emperor clearly apprehended his right and duty, as a Christian sovereign, to exercise that kind of authority in matters of religion which godly kings exercised in the Old Testament. He did not scruple to make his personal influence felt. He was by no means a timid or a superstitious man, acting only under the direction and control of his ecclesiastical advisers. Yet his action was so carefully restrained within limits as to prove that the due limits of his action had been carefully considered and were scrupulously observed. He convenes a General Council, and formally opens its sittings, but then he gives way to its ecclesiastical presidents. And this attendance is not a merely personal incident, it is a matter of principle; for, when not able to be personally present at a Council, he deposes some great officer of State to represent him. In his action against parties or individuals he ordinarily acts upon the decision of the synods or other proper ecclesiastical authorities. In his great ecclesiastical works, such as the building of churches, he leaves the whole plan and execution in the hands of the bishop of the place, and contents himself with encouraging the undertaking and supplying the funds.

The merit of Constantine's relations with the Church lies in what he abstained from doing, as much as in what he did. It was a proof of the highest genius in the Emperor and Pontifex

* Athanasius, "Hist. Arian," p. 44. "Library of the Fathers."

Maximus, to realize as he did the position of the Church as an *imperium in imperio*; to appreciate as he did the true relations of the Emperor to the Church; and to take his line as he did, not shrinking from initiative and intervention, yet so rarely overstepping the due limits of his prerogative. It is not pretended, indeed, that Constantine's history is free from infringements of these right relations, but such exceptions are very few; and it is, on the whole, very remarkable that the true relations which ought to regulate the co-ordinate action of Church and State were so immediately and fully established, and on the whole so scrupulously observed, as they were by the first Christian Emperor.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NEW CHURCH AT TYRE.

THE Christians were so numerous and so universally spread over the Empire that there was not a place in which the Edict of Milan was not the cause of general rejoicing. The venerable confessors returned from exile and the mines, and were welcomed back to their churches with every token of honour; those who had dissimulated their religion or compromised themselves by some act of compliance hastened to avow their faith, and to seek reconciliation. The effect of the past persecution and the present security would naturally add many new converts to the faith.

Everywhere the congregations once more assembled openly, and the sacred rites were performed with solemn splendour. The bishops held synods to regulate the disordered affairs of the Churches. The sites of the churches were restored to the Christian communities, and steps were taken to rebuild them on a still larger scale, and with greater splendour than before.

It is a popular error to suppose that churches were now for the first time built. Lactantius has already told us that the number of the Christians had so greatly increased during the forty years of peace which preceded the outbreak of the Diocletian persecution, that in many places the old churches had been taken down, and larger ones constructed in their place; and that those new churches were not hidden away in corners, but stood in conspicuous places, and were not destitute of the architectural design and ornament which became them. In many places, therefore, the church which was rebuilt after the persecution would be the third of a series of churches erected on the same site.

We are fortunate in having an elaborate description from the pen of Eusebius of one of the churches which was now erected. It is that which was rebuilt at Tyre, between A.D. 313 and 322, on the old site, not by help of imperial bounty, but by the private donations of the Christians themselves, under the pious care of Paulinus, the aged bishop. It is specially interesting as the earliest church of whose architecture we have any distinct account. It is not to be supposed that all the churches were of like magnitude and splendour, for Eusebius expressly tells us this was by far the most noble church, at that time, in Phœnicia. We give a paraphrase* of Eusebius's account, as more generally intelligible than the somewhat rhetorical and obscure original:—

* From "The Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," art. "Church."

"Eusebius states that the bishop surrounded the site of the church with a wall of enclosure; this wall, according to Dr. Thomson ('The Land and the Book,' p. 189, ch. xiii.), can still be traced, and measures 222 feet in length, by 129 in breadth. In the east side of this wall of enclosure he made a large and stately portico (πρόπυλον), through which a quadrangular atrium (αἶθριον) was entered; this was surrounded by ranges of columns, the spaces between which were filled by netlike railings of wood. In the centre of the open space was a fountain, at which those about to enter the church purified themselves [washed their hands and feet].

"The church itself was entered through interior porticoes (τοῖς ἐνδοτάτω προπύλοις), perhaps a narthex, but whether or not distinct from the portico which bounded the atrium on that side does not appear. Three doorways led into the nave; the central of these was by far the largest, and had doors covered with bronze reliefs; other doorways gave entrance to the side aisles. Above these aisles were galleries, well lighted (doubtless by external windows) and looking upon the nave; these galleries were adorned with beautiful work in wood. The passage is rather obscure, and has been variously translated; the above is the sense of Bunsen's paraphrase ('Basiliken des Christ. Roms.,' v. 31). Hübsch ('Alt. Christ. Kirchen,' s. 75) thinks that the word εἰσβολαῖς (entrances) stands for windows, and that the woodwork was in them. It seems, however,

more probable that the *εισβολαί* were the openings from the galleries into the nave, and the woodwork the railings or balustrades which protected their fronts [or the screen in front through which the women could see without being seen, as in Eastern churches at the present day].

“The nave, or central portion (*βασίλειος οἶκος*), was constructed of still richer material than the rest, and the roof of cedar of Lebanon. Dr. Thomson states that the remains of five granite columns may still be seen, and that ‘the height of the dome was eighty feet, as appears by the remains of an arch.’ Nothing which Eusebius says leads to the supposition that it was covered by a dome, and the arch was probably the so-called triumphal arch through which, as at St. Paul-without-the-Walls at Rome, and many other Basilican churches, a space in front of the apse, somewhat like a transept, was entered. Hübsch has made a conjectural restoration of the church thus arranged.

“The building having been in such manner completed, Paulinus, we are told, provided it with thrones (*θρόνους*) in the highest places for the honour of the presidents (*προέδρων*), and with benches or seats (*βάθροις*), according to fitness, and, placing the most holy altar (*ἅγιον ἄγιων θυσιαστήριον*) in the midst, surrounded the whole with wooden netlike railings of most skilful work, so that the enclosed space might be inaccessible to the crowd. The pavement, he adds, was adorned with marble decoration of every kind. Then on the outside he

constructed very large external buildings (ἑξέδραι) and halls (οἴκοι), which were attached to the sides of the church (τὸ βασιλῆον), and connected with it by entrances in the hall lying between (ταῖς ἐπὶ τὸν μέσον οἶκον εἰσβολαῖς). These halls, we are told, were destined for those who still required the purification and sprinkling of water and of the Holy Ghost."

Eusebius, as the metropolitan bishop, gave the sermon, or address, at the consecration of this church, in the course of which the foregoing description occurs. This address is too long for the patience* and too rhetorical for the taste of the present day, but it has some passages which we may think fine; and it is interesting as a specimen of a sermon of the time of Constantine. He begins with an elaborately complimentary address to the various classes of his audience:—

"Friends and priests of God, you who are clad in the sacred tunic† and wear the crown of celestial glory, anointed with the divine unction and covered with the sacerdotal mantle† with which the Holy Spirit has clothed you. And thou [the Bishop Paulinus], an excellent ornament of this new and holy temple of God, who hast the wisdom of age, and yet hast exhibited the precious works of youthful and vigorous virtue, to whom God, who comprehends the universe, has granted the distinguished privilege

* It would occupy 18 of these pages.

† This seems to imply the use of special vestments. See also p. 181, *infra*.

of rebuilding and renewing it to Christ, His first and only-begotten Word, and to His holy and divine Spouse. Whether shall we call thee a new Bezaleel, the architect of a divine tabernacle, or a Solomon, the king of a new and better Jerusalem, or a new Zerubbabel, rebuilding a temple of God of greater glory than the former. And you, O holy flock of Christ, sanctuary of wisdom, school of modesty, pious and religious auditory ; hear me.

“Long since you have learned in the lessons of Holy Scripture the wonders of God’s hand and His goodness towards men. In our hymns and canticles we have been accustomed to sing these words, ‘O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, the wonders which thou hast done in the times of old.’ But now it is not only by hearing, by word and report, that we have known the mighty hand and stretched-out arm of our mighty God and omnipotent King ; we have seen in deeds, and with our own eyes, the truth and certainty of the things which we have read in the records of the old times, and we can sing this other song of triumph : ‘Like as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.’ And in what city, but in this newly raised up and restored by God, ‘the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth’? Concerning which another passage of the Holy Scripture declares : ‘Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God.’ Into which city the all-gracious God having gathered us by the grace of His Only-Begotten, let

each one here assembled sing, cry aloud, and say, 'I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord,' and again, 'I have loved the beauty of Thine house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.' And not only individually, but altogether, let us with veneration exclaim, 'Great is the Lord and highly to be praised, in the city of our God, even upon His holy hill.' For He indeed is truly great, and high is His dwelling-place. . . .

"'Great is the Lord, Who only doeth wondrous things and things past finding out, glorious and wonderful things past finding out.' 'Great is He Who changeth the seasons and times; Who setteth up and putteth down kings;' 'Who raiseth the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble from the dust. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and hath broken in pieces the arm of the proud.'"

This may serve as an illustration of the way in which the mind of the preacher, saturated with the Holy Scriptures, clothes every thought in a text, and finds one text suggest another, so that the thought itself, and the train of thoughts, become obscured. We shall only sketch the outline of the rest of the sermon, and extract one or two striking passages.

He goes on to speak of the destruction of the persecutors, and of the deliverance of the Christians, and embellishes his text with a quotation from

some Greek poem which has not come down to us. He speaks with admiration of the results of the conversion of the Emperors :—

“They also confess Christ, the Son of God, as the universal King of all, and proclaim Him the Saviour in their edicts, inscribing His righteous deeds and His victories over the impious, with royal characters, on indelible records, and in the midst of that city which holds the sway over the earth.* So that our Saviour Jesus Christ is the only one ever acknowledged by the supreme rulers of the earth, not as a common king among men, but worshipped as the Son of God and very God. And all this justly too; for what king, at any time, has ever advanced to such a height of excellency as to fill the ears and the tongues of all men with his name? What king ever ordained laws so pious and wise, and promulgated them so as to be read from one end of the earth to the other? Who has ever abrogated the fierce and barbarous customs of savage nations by mild and beneficial laws? What hero, assailed by all men through ages, has ever exhibited such might as to increase and flourish day after day throughout the whole world? Who is there who has ever founded a nation, not before heard of, not in a corner of the earth, but spread over every part of it under the sun? Who has given his soldiers arms of piety, harder than adamant, against their enemies? What king has ever had power, even after

* This seems to refer to the statue of Constantine at Rome and its inscription, and perhaps to the arch and its inscription.



his death, to lead armies, to win conquests, to fill with his palaces, his sacred temples, all places, all countries, all cities, both among Greeks and barbarians?"

After the minute description of the building which we have quoted elsewhere, he goes on to an elaborate parallel between the material and the spiritual church of Tyre:—

"It would require special leisure to survey and explain each particular minutely . . . the living temple of the living God formed of yourselves is the greatest and truly divine sanctuary, whose inmost shrines, though invisible to the multitude, are really holy, a holy of holies. . . .

"Wonderful and great and beyond all praise is this work [the church in which they were assembled], even to those who attend only to the outward appearance. But more wonderful than wonders are those archetypes, the mental prototypes and divine exemplars, the renewals of the divine and spiritual buildings in our souls, which He, the Son of God, Himself framed and fashioned according to His own image, and to which, everywhere and in all respects, He imparted the likeness of God: an incorruptible nature, incorporeal, reasonable, separate from all earthly mixture and matter, an intelligent existence. And having once created her and brought her into being from that which was not, He also fashioned her into a holy spouse, a completely sacred and holy temple for Himself and the Father. Which, indeed, He Himself plainly declares in

the words, 'I will dwell in them and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be My people.' And such, indeed, is the perfect and purified mind, having been made such from the beginning, as to bear the image of the heavenly Word."

He goes on to a minute allegorical comparison of the material and spiritual fabrics : the exterior wall he compares to the great mass and multitude of the people ; the doors to the ostiaries who admit the people into the building. "These he has supported by the first pillars which are placed without around the quadrangular hall, by initiating them in the first elements of the literal sense of the four Gospels. Then he also stations around, on both sides of the royal temple, those who are yet catechumens, and that are yet making progress and improvement, though not very far separated from the inmost view of divine things enjoyed by the faithful. Receiving from among these the souls that are cleansed like gold by the divine washing [Baptism], he likewise supports and strengthens these with columns, far better than those external ones, viz. by the inner mysteries and hidden doctrines of the Scriptures. He also illuminates them, by the openings to admit the light, adorning the whole temple with one grand vestibule (?) of adoration to the one only God, the universal sovereign ; exhibiting, however, as the second splendour, the light of Christ and the Holy Spirit on each side of the Father's authority, and displaying in the rest, throughout the whole build-



ing, the abundance and the exceeding great excellence of the clearness and the brilliancy of truth in every part. Having also selected everywhere and from every quarter the living and moving and well-prepared stones of the mind, he has built a grand and truly royal edifice of all, splendid and filled with light within and without. And in this temple there are also thrones, and many seats, and many benches [for the bishop, priests, and deacons], and in all the souls in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit reside, such as anciently were seen in the holy Apostles and their followers, to whom cloven tongues as of fire appeared and sat upon each of them. But in the chief of all [the bishop] Christ Himself, as it were, resides in His fulness. In those that rank next to him [the priests] each one shares proportionately in the distribution of the power of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. The souls of those to whom are committed the care of instruction [the deacons, &c.] may be seats for angels. Nobler and grand and unique is the altar, such as should be, sincere and most holy, the mind and spirit of the priest of the whole congregation [the celebrant]. That great High-Priest of the universe, Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, Himself standing at His right hand, receives the sweet incense from all, and the bloodless and immaterial sacrifices of prayer, with a bright and benign eye; and with extended hands bears them to the Father of Heaven and God over all. He Himself first adoring Him, and the only one that gives to the Father the worship that is His

due, and then interceding with Him for us, that He may always continue propitious and favourable to us."

Notwithstanding a little obscurity of language here and there, we easily catch the meaning of this interesting early example of ecclesiastical symbolism. We can imagine how full of lively interest it must have been, as the preacher pointed to the various parts of the building to which he alluded, and to the various persons of whom he spoke.

But he reaches the climax of his sermon when he proceeds to remind his hearers that this material temple of which he has spoken is itself but a figure of the universe, and this worship of the Church on earth but a faint echo of the worship which all His intelligent creatures offer through Christ to God.

"Such is the character of this great temple, which the mighty creative Word hath established throughout the whole world, constituting this again a kind of intellectual image on earth of those things beyond the vault of heaven. So that in all His creation, and by all His intelligent creatures on earth, the Father should be honoured and adored. But those regions beyond the heavens are also displays of what are here; and that Jerusalem above, and that heavenly Sion, and that city of the living God beyond our earth, in which are the innumerable choirs of angels and the assembly of the first-born written in heaven, extol their Maker and the universal Sovereign of all with praises and hymns

inexpressible. These surpass our comprehension; neither would any mortal tongue be adequate to declare that glory: 'For eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, those things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'"

Then comes his peroration, which we also transcribe: "Of which things, as we are already made partakers in part, let us never cease, men, women, and children, small and great, all united together, and with one breath and one mind, to proclaim and celebrate the Author of such great mercies to us, 'Who forgiveth all our sins and healeth all our infirmities; Who redeemeth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindnesses; Who filleth our soul with good things. For He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our iniquities from us. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' Rekindling such views now, and for all future times, in our minds, and beside this present festivity and this illustrious and most glorious day, contemplating God as its Author and the universal Author of all festivity, night and day, in every hour, and with every breath we draw, let us love and adore Him with all the powers of the soul. And now, rising, with the most earnest expression of our love and devotion, let us beseech Him that He would continue to shelter and save us, as those of His flock,

until the end, and grant us His peace for ever,
inviolable and immovable, in Jesus Christ our
Saviour, through Whom the glory be to Him,
through all ages. Amen."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WORSHIP OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

It is part of the object of this book to give a general view of the condition of the Church at this crisis of its history, before its alliance with the State had exercised any influence upon its organization, doctrine, discipline, or customs. The history of its organization and its growth is sketched in chapter iv.; its doctrine and discipline will be found illustrated in the acts of the Councils of Arles and Nicæa (chapters xix. and xxvi.). The last chapter (xvi.) gives us a description of the plan, arrangement, style, and sumptuousness of one of its churches before the encouragement and the wealth of Constantine stimulated the prelates to still greater magnificence; the present chapter may conveniently contain some account of the services of the ante-Nicene Church.

A study of all the ancient Liturgies which remain in various branches of the Church, shows conclusively that just as all known languages spoken among men can be traced back to three original forms of speech, so all Liturgies can be traced back

to four ancient Liturgies, from which all others that are known have evidently branched off. They are the Liturgies which are known by the names of St. James, St. Mark, St. Peter, and St. John; the first was the Liturgy of Jerusalem, the second of Alexandria, the third of Rome, and the fourth of Ephesus.

These four great Liturgies seem to have been different from each other from a very remote period, and do not seem to have been derived from one common document. Yet they all contain the same liturgical elements, and therein bear evidence of some kind of common origin. The substance of each of these Liturgies can be traced back independently to the primitive age of Christianity. "It seems difficult," says Mr. Palmer, "to place their origin at a lower period than the apostolic age." The Liturgies were not at first committed to writing, but were preserved by memory and practice; and that each Church preserved the same Liturgy is certain. The order of the parts was always preserved; the same rites and ceremonies were continually repeated, the same ideas and language, without material variation, transmitted from generation to generation. "The baptized Christians were supposed to be familiar with every part of the service. The people always knew the precise points at which they were to repeat their responses, chant their sacred hymn, or join in the well-known prayer."

Now, the book called the "Apostolical Constitu-

tions," which contains interesting monuments of the first three ages of the Church gathered together about the Nicene age, gives us, in its eighth and last book, a Liturgy which the majority of liturgical scholars are agreed is not of later date than the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. Mr. Palmer says it is not to be regarded as an accurate transcript of the Liturgy in actual use in any Church, but "in its order and substance, and many of its expressions, it is identical with that of St. James. But the author has evidently permitted his learning and devotion to enrich the common formularies with numerous ideas full of piety and beauty." We may perhaps venture to say that it is such an elaborate form of the ordinary Eastern Liturgy as a man like Eusebius of Cæsarea might have used on some such great occasion as the dedication of the new church at Tyre, of which we spoke in the last chapter, or the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, of which we shall have to speak in a subsequent chapter.

It is so full of interest as a contemporary representation of the divine service of the anti-Nicene Church, and, besides, it incidentally gives us such a mirror of the devout mind of the Church of that age, that we have thought it worth while not merely to summarize it, but, notwithstanding its length, to put it before our readers as a whole.

Let the reader first imagine to himself a great Basilican church, such as the last chapter puts so picturesquely before us. Let him imagine the

people assembled on some high festival—the penitents in the place assigned them outside the building, the catechumens of various degrees in the narthex, the faithful in the nave, the singers in the chancel, the bishop and clergy in their seats behind the altar.

According to the Liturgy of the “Apostolical Constitutions,” first the lessons from the Old and New Testaments were read, and then the sermon was preached, the whole congregation standing to listen. Then, apparently, the bishop, attended by a deacon, left his throne and went down the whole length of the church to the west door; and the deacon said a bidding prayer for each class of those who were not admitted to the sacred mysteries—for the catechumens, energumens, competentes, penitents.

First, the prayer for the penitents. To each petition of the prayer the whole congregation responded, “Lord, have mercy upon them,” so that the general structure of the prayer was that of a short Litany. Then the bishop gave a rather lengthy benediction, to which all responded, “Amen.” And the deacon bade the penitents depart.

Then the bishop went eastward and turned again to the competentes. The deacon said a prayer for them, to which the people responded; the bishop added a benediction, and they were dismissed. And so with the energumens and the catechumens; lastly, a similar prayer for the faithful.

Then the bishop returned to his place, and the Communion Service, as we should call it, began.



And here we take up the document contained in the "Apostolical Constitutions;" only dividing it into paragraphs, and putting the rubrics into different type, in order more clearly to present its structure to the reader's eye.

"Immediately after the first prayers for the faithful are ended, the deacon is ordered to give a solemn admonition, saying:

"Let us give attention.

"Then the bishop or priest salutes the Church, saying:

"The peace of God be with you all.

"To which the people answer:

"And with thy spirit.

"After this the deacon says to them all:

"Salute ye one another with a holy kiss.

"Then the clergy salute the bishop, and laymen their fellow-laymen, and the women the women; the children standing before the bema, with a deacon attending them to see that they keep good order. Others of the deacons walking about the church and inspecting the men and women, that there be no tumult, nor making of signs to one another, nor whispering, nor sleeping; and others standing at the men's gate, and the sub-deacons at the women's gate, that the doors be not opened for any to go in or out in the time of oblation. After this the sub-deacon brings water to the priests to wash their hands, as a sign of the purity of those souls which are consecrated to God.*

"Immediately after this, a deacon cries out:

* *i.e.* Either the reading desk or the altar.—Bingham.

“Let no Catechumen be present, no Hearer, no Unbeliever, no Heretic. Ye that have made the first prayers, draw near. Ye mothers, take your children and bring them with you. Let no one come with enmity against another, no one in hypocrisy. Let us stand upright before the Lord, with fear and trembling, to offer our sacrifice.

“This said, the deacons bring the elements (τὰ δῶρα) to the bishop at the altar, a priest standing on either hand of him, that the disciples may help the master; and two deacons on either side the altar hold fans of thin membrane, or peacock’s feathers, or linen, to drive away the flies, lest they should fall into the chalice.

“Then the bishop, making a silent prayer with the priests, and having put on a shining vestment, standing at the altar and making with his hand the sign of the cross on his forehead, says:*

“The grace of God Almighty, and the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.

“And the people answer with one voice:

“And with thy spirit.

“Bishop. Lift up your hearts.

“Answer. We lift them up unto the Lord.

“Bishop. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

“Answer. It is meet and right so to do.

“Bishop. It is very meet and right above all things to praise Thee, the true God, Who art before all Creatures, of Whom the whole family in heaven, and earth is named; Who art the only Unbegotten

* Probably this only means that it was white.

without original, without King, without Lord ; Who hast need of nothing ; Who art the Author of all good ; Who art above all cause and generation, and always the same, of Whom all things have their original and existence. For Thou art original Knowledge, Eternal Light, Hearing without beginning, and Wisdom without teaching ; the first in Nature and the Law of Existing, exceeding all Number.

“Who madest all things to exist out of nothing by Thy Only-begotten Son, Whom Thou didst beget before all ages by Thy will and power and goodness, without the intervention of any ; Who is Thy only-begotten Son, the Word that is God, the living Wisdom, the First-born of every creature, the Angel of Thy great counsel, Thy High-Priest, but the King and Lord of all the creatures both visible and invisible ; Who is before all things, and by whom all things consist.

“For thou, O Eternal God, didst create all things by Him, and by Him Thou dost vouchsafe to rule and govern them in the orderly ways of Thy Providence. By Whom Thou didst give them being, by Him also Thou didst give them a well-being, O God and Father of Thy only-begotten Son, Who by Him didst create the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Ages and Hosts, the Dominions and Powers, the Principalities and Thrones, the Archangels and Angels, and after them didst by Him create this visible world and all things that are therein.

“For Thou art He that hast established the heavens as an Arch, and extended them like a Curtain ; that

hast founded the Earth upon nothing by Thy sole will; that hast fixed the Firmament and formed Night and Day; that hast brought the Light out of Thy treasures, and superadded Darkness for a covering, to give rest to the creatures that move in the world; that hast set the Sun in the heaven to govern the day, and the Moon to govern the night, and ordered the course of the Stars to the praise of Thy magnificent power; that hast made the Water for drink and purification, and the vital Air both for breathing and speaking; that hast made the Fire to be a comfort in darkness, to supply our wants, and that we should be both warmed and enlightened thereby; that hast divided the great Sea from the Earth, and made the one navigable and the other passable on foot; that hast filled the one with small and great living things, and the other with tame and wild Beasts; that hast crowned the Earth with Plants and Herbs of all sorts, and adorned it with Flowers and enriched it with Seeds; that hast established the Deep, and set a great barrier about it, walling the great heaps of Salt Water and bounding them with gates of the smallest Sand; that sometimes raisest the same Deep to the magnitude of mountains by Thy Winds, and sometimes layest it plain like a field—now making it rage with a Storm, and again quieting it with a Calm, that they which sail thereon may find a safe and gentle passage; that hast begirt the world that Thou createdst by Christ with Rivers, and watered it with Brooks, and filled it with Springs of living water always flowing, and



bound up the earth with Mountains to give it a firm and immovable situation.

“Thou hast filled thy World and adorned it with odoriferous and medicinal Herbs ; with a multitude and variety of Animals weaker and stronger, some for meat and some for labour, some of a mild and some of a fiercer nature ; with the hissing of Serpents and sweeter note of Birds ; with the revolutions of Years, and numbers of Months and Days, and order of stated Seasons ; with flying Clouds producing rain, for the procreation of Fruits and preservation of Animals, and with Winds to blow at Thy command, and a multitude of Plants and Herbs.

“Neither hast Thou only made the World, but created Man in it to be Citizen of the World, and made him the ornament of Thy beautiful Structure. For Thou saidst to thy Wisdom, Let Us make man in Our own Image and Likeness ; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air. And therefore Thou madest him of an immortal Soul and a dissolvable Body ; creating the one out of nothing and the other out of the four Elements ; and gavest him in his soul a rational knowledge, a power to discern between piety and impiety, and a judgment to distinguish between good and evil ; and in his body the privilege of five several Senses, with the power of local motion.

“For Thou, O God Almighty, didst by Christ plant Paradise in Eden towards the East, adorning it with all kinds of plants meet for food, and placing man therein as in a well-furnished house. And in

his creation Thou gavest a natural Law implanted in his mind, that thereby he might have within himself the seeds of Divine Knowledge. And when Thou hadst placed him in the Paradise of delights and pleasures, Thou gavest him power to eat of all things, only forbidding him to taste of one kind, in expectation of something better; that if he observed that command, he might attain to immortality as the reward of his obedience.

“But he neglecting this command, and by the fraud of the serpent and the counsel of the woman taking the forbidden fruit, Thou didst justly drive him out of Paradise; and yet in goodness didst not despise him when he had destroyed himself, for he was Thy workmanship; but Thou, Who didst put the creatures in subjection under him, didst appoint him to get his food by labour and sweat, Thy providence concurring to bring all things to maturity and perfection. Thou didst suffer him for a while to sleep the sleep of death, and then, with an oath, calledst him again to a regeneration; dissolving the bands of death, and promising him life by a resurrection.

“And not only so, but, giving him an innumerable posterity, Thou didst glorify such of them as adhered to Thee, and punishedst those that apostatized from Thee; receiving the sacrifice of Abel as a holy man, and rejecting the offering of Cain as abominable for murdering his brother. Thou didst also receive Seth and Enos, and translate Enoch. For Thou art the Creator of men, and the Author of life,

and the Supplier of all their wants—their Lawgiver, that rewardest those that keep Thy laws, and punishest those that transgress them. Thou didst bring an universal Deluge upon the world because of the multitude of the ungodly, but deliveredst righteous Noah out of the flood, with eight souls, in Thy Ark, making him the end of the preceding generation and the father of those that were to come. Thou didst kindle a dreadful fire against the five cities of the Sodomites, and turn a fruitful land into a vale of salt for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, but didst deliver righteous Lot from the burning. Thou art He that didst deliver Abraham from the impiety of his ancestors, and madest him to become heir of the world, and didst manifest Thy Christ unto him. Thou didst appoint Melchizedek to be the high-priest of Thy service. Thou didst declare Thy servant Job, after many sufferings, to be conqueror of the serpent, that first author of evil. Thou madest Jacob to be the father of twelve children, and his offspring to be innumerable, and broughtest threescore and fifteen souls into Egypt. Thou, Lord, didst not despise Joseph, but for his chastity madest him to rule over the Egyptians. Thou, Lord, didst not forget the Hebrews when the Egyptians oppressed them, because of the promise made to their fathers, but didst punish the Egyptians and deliver Thy people. And when men had corrupted the Law of Nature within their minds, and some began to think the creatures had their existence of themselves.

and honoured them above what was meet, placing them in the same rank with Thee, the God of all, Thou didst not suffer them to wander in error, but, raising up Thy holy servant Moses, Thou didst by him promulge a Written Law to revive and support the Law of Nature, showing the creatures to be the work of Thy hands, and thereby expelling the error of Polytheism out of religion. Thou didst honour Aaron and his posterity with the dignity of the priesthood. Thou didst chastise the Hebrews when they sinned, and receive them into favour when they turned unto Thee.

“Thou didst punish the Egyptians with ten plagues, and, dividing the sea, madest the Israelites to pass through it, drowning the Egyptians that pursued them. Thou madest the bitter water sweet with wood; Thou broughtest streams out of the Rock when Thou hadst divided the top of it; Thou didst rain down manna out of heaven, and give them food out of the air, a measure of quails for every day; setting up a Pillar of Fire to give them light by night, and the Pillar of the Cloud to shadow them from heat by day. Thou didst constitute Joshua the captain of Thy armies, and by him destroy the seven nations of the Canaanites, dividing Jordan and drying up the rivers of Etham, and laying flat the walls (of Jericho) without any engines of war or concurrence of human power.

“For all these things we glorify Thee, O Lord Almighty; the innumerable armies of Angels adore

Thee ; the Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Dignities, Powers, Hosts of Angels, the Cherubim and Seraphim also with six wings, with two of which they cover their feet, and with two their faces, and with two fly, saying, with thousand thousands of Archangels and ten thousand times ten thousand Angels, all crying out without rest or intermission—

“And let all the people say together with them :

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts ; Heaven and Earth are full of Thy glory. Blessed art Thou for ever. Amen.

“And after this let the bishop say :

“For Thou truly art Holy, the Most Holy, the Most High, far exalted above all things for evermore. Holy also is Thy Only-begotten Son our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, who ministering to Thee, the God and Father, in all things, both in various works of creation and providence, did not despise lost mankind, but after the Law of Nature, after the Admonitions of the Written Law, after the Reprehensions of the Prophets, after the Administrations and presidency of Angels ; when men had corrupted both the Natural and Written Law, and erased the memory of the Flood, and the burning of Sodom, and the plagues of Egypt, and devastations and slaughters of Palestine, and were now all ready to perish, He Who was the Creator of man, chose by Thy will to become man ; the Lawgiver to be under the Law, the High-Priest to be the Sacrifice, the Shepherd to be made a Sheep ; whereby He

appeased Thee, His God and Father, and reconciled the world, and delivered all men from the wrath that hanged over their heads, being born of a Virgin and made Flesh, God the Word, the beloved Son, the First-born of every creature, according to the prophecies which He Himself predicted of Himself, made of the Seed of David and of Abraham, and of the Tribe of Judah; He Who was the Former of all things that are made was formed Himself in the Virgin's womb, He Who is without flesh was made Flesh, and He Who was begotten before * all time was born in time; He lived a holy life and taught a holy doctrine, expelling all manner of sickness and infirmities from the bodies of men, and working signs and miracles among the people; He Who feeds all that have need of food, and fills every living creature of His own good pleasure and bounty, did Himself partake of meat and drink and sleep. He manifested Thy Name to them that knew it not; He put ignorance to flight and revived true piety and godliness, fulfilled Thy will, and finished the work which Thou gavest Him to do.

"And when all things were thus set in order and rectified by Him, He was betrayed by the incurable malice of one of His own disciples, and apprehended by the hands of the wicked, Priests and High-Priests falsely so called, together with a sinful people, of whom He suffered many things, and underwent all manner of indignities by Thy permission; He was delivered to Pilate, the Governor; the Judge

* ἀχρόνως.

Himself was judged ; the Saviour of the world condemned ; He Who is impassible was nailed to the cross ; He Who is immortal by nature was made subject to death : the Author of Life, Who quickens all things, was laid in the grave, that He might deliver those from suffering for whose sake He came, and set them free from death, and break the bonds of the devil, and deliver men from his frauds and impostures ; He rose again the third day from the dead, and conversed forty days with His disciples, and was taken up into heaven, and set at Thy right hand, His God and Father.

“We therefore in commemoration of these things which He suffered for us, give thanks to Thee, Almighty God, not as Thou deservest and as is our duty, but as far as we are able, so fulfilling His command. For in the same night that He was betrayed, He took bread in His holy and immaculate hands, and looking up to Thee, His God and Father, He brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, ‘This is the Mystery of the New Testament ; take of it, and eat it ; this is My Body which is broken for many for the remission of sin.’ Likewise He mixed a cup of wine and water, and, sanctifying it, He gave it unto them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This do in remembrance of Me, for as often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do show forth My Death till I come.’ We therefore, being mindful of His Passion and Death and Resurrection from

the dead, and His Return into heaven; and also of His second coming, when He shall return with glory and power to judge the quick and dead, and to render to every man according to His works, do offer unto Thee, our King and God, this Bread and this Cup, according to His appointment, giving thanks to Thee by Him, for that Thou dost vouchsafe to let us stand before Thee and minister unto Thee; and we beseech Thee to look propitiously upon these gifts here set before Thee, our God, Who hast need of nothing, and to accept them favourably to the honour of Thy Christ, and to send Thy Holy Spirit upon this Sacrifice, Who is the Witness of the suffering of our Lord Jesus, that it may make this bread the Body of Thy Christ, and this cup the Blood of Thy Christ, that they who partake of it may be confirmed in godliness and obtain remission of sins, may be delivered from the devil and his impostures, may be filled with the Holy Ghost and be made worthy of Christ, and obtain eternal life, Thou being reconciled to them, O Lord Almighty.

“ We beseech Thee further, O Lord, for thy holy Church from one end of the earth to the other, which Thou hast purchased with the precious Blood of Thy Christ, that Thou wouldst be pleased to keep it unshaken and immovable by any storms or tempests to the end of the world. We pray also for the whole Episcopacy rightly dividing the Word of Truth. We pray for me, Thy unworthy servant who am now offering unto Thee; and for the whole

Presbytery and Deacons, and all the Clergy, that thou wouldst give them all wisdom and fill them with Thy Holy Spirit. We pray thee, O Lord, for the King and all that are in authority, and for the whole army, that our affairs may be transacted in peace; that, passing our time in quietness and concord, we may glorify Thee through Jesus Christ, our hope all the days of our life.

“We offer unto Thee for all thy Saints that have lived well-pleasing in thy sight from the foundation of the world, for Patriarchs, Prophets, Holy Men, Apostles, Martyrs, Bishops, Confessors, Presbyters, Deacons, Sub-deacons, Readers, Singers, Virgins, Widows, Laymen, and all whose names Thou knowest.

“We offer unto Thee for this people, that Thou wouldst make them, to the glory of Thy Christ, a royal Priesthood and a holy Nation; for all that live in Virginity and Chastity; for the Widows of the Church; for all that live in honest marriage and procreation of children; for the Infants of Thy people, that none of us be a castaway. We pray Thee for this city and all that dwell therein; for those that are in sickness, in cruel bondage and slavery, in banishment or under confiscation or proscription; for all those that travel by sea or by land, that Thou wouldst be their Succour, and a universal Helper and Defender to them all. We pray Thee for those that hate us and persecute us for Thy Name, for those that are yet without and wandering in error, that Thou wouldst convert them to good and mitigate their fury. We pray Thee for the

Catechumens of the Church, the Energumens that are tossed and tormented by the adversary the devil ; for all our brethren that are doing penance ; that Thou wouldst perfect the former in faith, and cleanse and deliver the second from the power and agitation of the wicked one, and receive the repentance of the last, and pardon both them and us whatever offences we have committed against Thee.

“ We offer unto Thee likewise for the temperature of the air, and the increase of the fruits of the earth, that we, continually partaking of those good things which Thou bestowest on us, may without ceasing praise Thee, Who givest food unto all flesh. We also pray for those who upon any just and reasonable cause are now absent, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to preserve us all in godliness, and keeping us without change, blame, or rebuke, to gather us into the kingdom of thy Christ, the God of all things in creation, visible and invisible, and our King.

“ For to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is due all glory and worship and thanksgiving and honour and adoration, now and for ever, throughout all ages, world without end.

And let all the people answer : Amen.

Then the bishop says again :

“ The peace of God be with you all.

“ To which the people answer :

“ And with thy spirit.

“ And then the deacon calls on the people to join with

him in another prayer, which is called a Bidding Prayer for the faithful after the divine oblation :

“Let us pray yet again and again to God, by His Christ, for this gift which is offered to the Lord God; that the good God would receive it to His altar in heaven, for a sweet-smelling savour, by the mediation of His Christ. Let us pray for this Church and people; for the whole Society of Bishops and Presbyters and Deacons and Ministers, and the whole Catholic Church, that the Lord would keep and preserve them all. Let us pray for Kings, and all that are in authority, that our affairs may go on in tranquillity, and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Let us commemorate the holy Martyrs, that we may be thought worthy to have fellowship in their conflicts and engagements. Let us pray for those that rest in faith. Let us pray for the temperature of the air, and increase of the fruits of the earth, that they may grow to perfection. Let us pray for those that are newly baptized, that they may be confirmed in faith. Let us all exhort and excite one another. Let us rise and commend ourselves to God by His grace.

“Then let the bishop say :

“O God, Thou art great; great in name, great in counsel, mighty in works, the God and Father of Thy holy Son Jesus, our Saviour; look favourably upon us and this Thy flock, which Thou hast chosen in Him to the glory of Thy Name. Sanctify our bodies and souls; and grant that we, being pure

from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, may obtain the good things that are set before us; and that Thou mayest judge none of us unworthy, but be our Helper and Defender and Protector, through Thy Christ, to Whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, be glory, honour and praise, doxology and thanksgiving, for ever. Amen.

"And when all the people have said, Amen, let the deacon cry again: Let us give attention.

"Then the bishop shall speak to the people, saying:

"τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις—Holy things for those that are holy.

"And the people shall answer:

"There is One Holy, one Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, blessed for ever. Amen. Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. Hosannah to the Son of David. Blessed be the Lord God that came in the Name of the Lord and manifested Himself unto us. Hosannah in the highest."

Then (to judge from the present practice of the Churches of the East) the people came up and stood to receive the bread from the priest, and crossed to the other side to receive the cup from the deacon, and returned to their places. When all had communicated, it was usual for the deacon to admonish the people to return thanks for the benefits which they had received. The form of this exhortation in the "Apostolical Constitutions" is as follows:—

"Now that we have received the precious Body and the precious Blood of Christ, let us give thanks

to Him that hath vouchsafed to make us partakers of His holy mysteries ; and let us beseech Him that they may not be to our condemnation but salvation, for the benefit of our soul and body, for the preservation of us in piety, for the remission of our sins and obtaining of the life of the world to come."

Then the bishop adds a few words, commending the silent prayers of the people to God's acceptance, and giving thanks : " . . . Thou . . . Who knowest the supplications of those that in silence pray unto Thee ; we give Thee thanks that Thou hast vouchsafed to make us partakers of Thy holy mysteries," etc., and concludes with a long benediction :—

" Almighty God and true, with Whom none can compare ; Who art everywhere, and present unto all, yet not in them as things of which they consist ; Who art circumscribed by no place, nor grown old with time, nor bounded by ages ; Who art without generation, and needest no preserver ; Who art above all corruption, incapable of change, and unalterable by nature ; that dwellest in light that no man can approach unto, and art invisible by nature ; that art known to all rational creatures that seek Thee with an upright heart, and art apprehended by those that seek after Thee with a pure mind ; O thou God of Israel, the Israel that truly sees Thee, and the people that believe in Christ, show Thyself propitious, and hear me for Thy Name's sake. Bless this people that bow their wills to Thee, and grant them the petitions of their heart that are expedient

for them, and suffer none of them to fall from Thy kingdom, but sanctify them, keep and protect, hold and deliver them from the adversary and from every enemy; preserve their houses and defend their going out and their coming in. For to Thee belong glory, praise, majesty, worship, and adoration; and to Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and God and King; and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, world without end. Amen.

"And the deacon dismisses the assembly with the words:

"Go in peace."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DONATIST SCHISM.

WHEN the Emperor, in his letter to the Proconsul of Africa, named Cæcilian of Carthage as the head of the Catholic Church in Africa, and when he wrote to Cæcilian and made him the channel through which the Emperor's favours were to be distributed to the churches and clergy of the African Churches, he no doubt acted upon the information given him by Hosius and others, his advisers in ecclesiastical matters.

But when these letters were made known in Africa, they led to an immediate appeal to the Emperor from a rival body, which claimed to be recognized as the Catholic Church, and put forward Majorinus as the true Bishop of Carthage.

The question thus raised assumes a good deal of importance in our history, and it is desirable, to a clear comprehension of it, to have some knowledge of the antecedents of this schism.

One of the characteristics of these African Christians was a fiery zeal which was very apt to run

into fanatical extremes. The zealots not only disdained to save themselves in time of persecution by any concealment or evasion, but they even courted martyrdom, and indulged very extravagant notions of the personal merits of the martyrs. On the other hand, they were severe in their judgment of those whom the fear of torture or death had forced to any compliance or evasion; refusing even to receive them back into the communion of the Church.

After the persecution of Decius, 150 years before the present time, the prelates of this church, by receiving back the lapsed, after penance, to communion, had offended a fanatical party which had seceded and set up a rival Church under the leadership of Novatus.

And now again, when the Novatian schism had hardly died out, the case of those who had lapsed under the Diocletian persecution revived the old questions, and gave rise to another and greater schism.

During this last persecution Mensurius, the Bishop of Carthage, had strongly discountenanced the fanatical spirit which courted and provoked martyrdom, and refused to recognize as true martyrs those who thus suicidally drew their death upon themselves. He himself, it was said, had escaped torture by the common evasion (often winked at by the authorities) of giving up some heretical books when summoned to surrender the sacred Scriptures to the flames. When the persecution was

over, he had followed the example of his predecessors and the rule of the Church by admitting the lapsed to penance, and restoring them in due time to their privileges in the Church. His arch-deacon, Cæcilian, had been a supporter of Mensurius's policy.

The storm which was gathering in Mensurius's lifetime broke out when, upon his death (A.D. 311), Cæcilian was elected to succeed him. There were two parties against Cæcilian: first, some of the clergy of Carthage, who held the stricter views, and who had kept quiet in Mensurius's time, in the hope of procuring one of their own number and their own principles to be his successor; secondly, some of the Numidian bishops, who claimed a right to be consulted in the election of a bishop to their metropolitan see. Donatus, Bishop of Casa Nigra, was the leading spirit of the movement.

The shape which their opposition took was that of a technical objection to the validity of the consecration of Cæcilian, on the ground that his consecration had been performed by Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, who, it was alleged as matter of fact, was a traditor,* and whose ministerial acts, it was assumed, were therefore invalid.

In reply to a formal representation to this effect, Cæcilian suggested that if they considered his consecration insufficient, they might remedy that defect by re-consecrating him themselves.

But their object was not at all to confirm his

* One who had given up the sacred books to be burned.

title, but to get rid of him. This they resolved to do by a rival election and consecration. Seventy Numidian bishops met at Carthage—not in a church, but in a private house belonging to one of their party—declared Cæcilian's election void, and proceeded to elect and consecrate Majorinus as bishop of the capital see. They thus converted their opposition into a formal schism, and commenced a strife which distracted the Churches of North Africa for several centuries.

It will be observed that the two parties held like views on all questions of the faith; that the difference arose entirely out of a question of discipline; and that it arose entirely on the side of the Donatists. Between these two claimants the other great divisions of the Church in Europe, Asia, and Egypt universally recognized Cæcilian as the rightful bishop.

This was the state of affairs in the North African Church when the Edict of Milan and the accompanying letters of Constantine arrived. The Donatist party at once took steps to protest against the imperial recognition of Cæcilian. They drew up a statement, and placed it in the hands of Anulinus, the præfect, to be forwarded to the Emperor. "We address ourselves to you," said the petitioners, "O most excellent prince, because you are of a just race, and the son of a prince who has never persecuted, like the other Emperors his colleagues. . . . There are disputes between us and the other bishops of Africa; we supplicate your piety to appoint

judges among the Gauls." The letter is dated April 15, A.D. 313.

The canons of the Church of Africa expressly forbade appeals "beyond the sea." and Cyprian, half a century before, had strenuously defended the rights of his Church against an attempt at interference on the part of the Bishop of Rome. But the Donatists had some show of reason in their wish that the Gallic bishops should act as judges in this case. The African Church was divided into two parties, headed by the two rival claimants to its chief see. This division extended throughout North Africa. In nearly every town the Christians were divided into two parties; in many there were rival bishops. Half the African Church, therefore, was on its defence against the other half, and there was no impartial tribunal left within itself; whereas the Gallican Church stood quite outside both parties; it had not suffered from the persecution, and could approach the matters in dispute with calmness and impartiality. The Catholic party, all through the long-protracted litigation, displayed great moderation and desire to come to an amicable arrangement with their assailants; and it seems probable (though we have no express statement to that effect) that they readily assented to this reference of the matter to the judgment of the bishops of Gaul.

There seems to be no doubt that at this time Hosius was the Emperor's counsellor in religious matters. It is to be regretted that we know so

little about him; for the venerable Bishop of Cordova appears to have been the only prelate of statesmanlike capacity whom the Western Church was able to place about the person of the first Christian Emperor, and it is to him that the shaping of Constantine's ecclesiastical policy at this important period is mainly due. Constantine, anxious to establish concord in the important province which had so lately come under his rule, agreed to the request of "the party of Majorinus," and nominated the Gallic bishops, Maternus of Cologne, Reticus of Autun, and Marinus of Arles, to be judges. He forwarded to them the documents which had been sent to him, and bade them meet at Rome, whither he summoned Cæcilian, with ten bishops of his communion, and Donatus of Casa Nigra, with an equal number of bishops of the other party.

The scheme grew under consideration. When the two and twenty African prelates arrived at Rome in October, they found that the tribunal which was to hear and determine between them had assumed great weight and dignity by the addition to the three Gallic bishops originally named of fifteen others of the chief bishops of Italy and Rhetium. They were—Merocles of Milan, Florian of Cesere, Zoticus of Quintana (? Kintzen in Bavaria), Stemnius of Rimini, Felix of Florence, Gaudentius of Pisa, Constantius of Faenza, Proterus of Capua, Thophilus of Beneventum, Savinus of Terracina, Secundus of Preneste, Felix of Cisterna (?),

Maximinus of Ostia, Evander of Ursinum, and Donatian of Forum Claudii; and, sitting in Rome, the bishop of the city was, in accordance with the ancient ecclesiastical custom—a custom as ancient as the Council of Jerusalem—the president of the synod.

A letter addressed by the Emperor to the Bishop of Rome on the subject of this Council has come down to us. Probably it is an example of similar letters written to the other bishops who were summoned to attend it.* It is not addressed to him alone, but “to Melchiades (or Miltiades), Bishop of Rome, and Marcus,” and the letter runs throughout in the plural number, *vos*, instead of the *tu* with which a single individual would have been addressed. Who Marcus was is entirely unknown; that he was coadjutor to Melchiades is an improbable conjecture, since Melchiades was succeeded by Sylvester; that he was the Marcus who succeeded Sylvester is another conjecture unsupported by any evidence. All we know is the fact that, in writing to the Bishop of Rome, the Emperor associates Marcus with him in a way which cannot possibly be reconciled with the modern pretensions of the see of Rome. The letter is as follows:—

“Constantine Augustus to Miltiades, Bishop of Rome, and to Marcus.”

“Several documents have been sent to me by the most illustrious Anulinus, the Proconsul of Africa,

* See the similar letter summoning the Bishop of Syracuse to attend the Council of Arles, at p. 212, *infra*.

from which it appears that Cæcilian, the Bishop of Carthage, is accused on several grounds by his colleagues of Africa. It is a great grief to me that the province which the Divine Providence has voluntarily confided to my pious care, and which contains a great multitude of inhabitants, should be so embroiled in a lamentable dispute that their bishops are not able to agree. . . . I have resolved that the same Cæcilian, together with ten bishops who appear to accuse him, and ten others whom he may consider necessary to his cause, should be sent to Rome; that you being present there, as also Reticus, Maternus, and Marinus, your colleagues, whom I have commanded to hasten to Rome for this purpose, the case may be heard. . . . Let your gravities, then, having read the documents, decide how to terminate in conformity with justice the controversy of which I have spoken; for you will not have failed to observe that I have so great a regard for the regular and legitimate Catholic Church, that I am unwilling to see any schism or dissension in it. And thereupon, my very dear friends, may the Divinity of the most high God preserve you for many years."

The synod sat for three days in the palace of the Empress Fausta, on the Lateran Hill, which the Emperor lent them for the occasion. The Donatist party failed to prove any of their charges against Cæcilian, while it appeared that Donatus of Casa Nigra, the leader of his opponents, had by his own confession, committed irregularities contrary to the

canons. The object of the synod was, however, if possible, to terminate the schism and to re-establish peace in the African Church. With this view, while they confirmed the validity of Cæcilian's election, they abstained from condemning his opponents; they even decided that the Donatist bishops might retain their sees on returning to the unity of the Church, and that where there were two rival bishops in the same place, he of the eldest consecration should retain the see, and the other be provided with another diocese. And this decision they communicated to the Emperor.

By a coincidence, this same year was the anniversary of the Secular Games, one of the great solemnities of the political religion of Rome. But, whether Constantine had expressed his disapproval or whether the Senate anticipated it, the usual observances were omitted; the great amphitheatre of Vespasian remained empty, while a synod of Christian bishops sat in the Palace of the Lateran. The Romans did not fail to note it. It served to mark in the imperial city the change which already, in six months, had taken place in the imperial policy.

The Donatists refused to be satisfied with the decision of the synod, and appealed again to the Emperor, begging him to send two bishops in his confidence to Carthage, to make inquiries on the spot which of the rival parties was entitled to be considered the Catholic Church (*ubi esset Catholica*).

Constantine's great object in this and all the



other interventions in the affairs of the Church, which occupy more or less the remainder of his reign, was to obtain peace, and he was anxious to satisfy this party, which was keeping every city of the African province in confusion, if it were possible to do so. Accordingly he acceded to this second request. Detaining Cæcilian and Donatus in Italy, he sent two commissioners, who spent forty days in Africa, and, as the result of their enquiries, declared Cæcilian duly elected and rightful Bishop of Carthage. Cæcilian and Donatus were now allowed to return home; and the schism went on as before.

The Donatists now represented that neither the synod nor the commissioners had dealt with the question which lay at the bottom of their opposition to Cæcilian; they had not taken into consideration the case of Felix of Aptunga, on whose character as a traditor, and therefore incapable of giving valid consecration, the whole matter in dispute really turned. It was, no doubt, maintained, on behalf of Cæcilian, that, as a matter of fact, Felix was not a traditor; and that if he were, still his ministerial acts would be valid.

The Emperor again, with great longanimity, listened to their representations; and in the following spring (A.D. 314) he directed Varius, the Vicarius Præfectorum, to make a judicial enquiry as to the question of fact whether Felix had, as was alleged, given up the sacred books in the late persecution. The Vicarius Præfectorum being in feeble health, the Proconsul himself undertook the inquiry. The



letter which was supposed to have established the lapse of Felix was declared to be a forgery. Alpheus, the Edile of Aptunga, the officer who had actually conducted the proceedings there under the persecuting edict, was examined as a witness, and gave testimony that when he visited the church to demand the sacred books, Felix was not present, and that some books which were found there, and were seized and burnt, turned out not to be the sacred writings. The proconsul therefore formally declared Felix innocent of the charge of being a traitor. The Donatists were no more content with this than with the former decisions. It is manifest that since these steps failed to conciliate, they must have inflamed the contest; and, in fact, the length and breadth of Africa was in confusion.

In this nineteenth century it is, perhaps, fifteen centuries too late to consider whether the policy which the Emperor pursued towards the Donatists was a wise one, but it may be necessary to explain that it was a much more remarkable policy than we in the nineteenth century can easily appreciate. The Roman constitution made the Emperor the sole source of legislation. He was the irresponsible chief of the whole administrative machinery; he wielded the entire military force; and he was, as Pontifex Maximus, the head of the religion of the Empire. His will was law, and his power was irresistible; and for centuries no Roman had dreamed of disobeying an imperial mandate, however iniquitous or however fatal—if the Emperor sent a man

a command to put himself to death, he did it. Free as the rule of Constantine had been from any abuse of power, it had never been wanting in vigour; and it must have been not without some self-amazement, as it must have been an amazing spectacle to the Empire, that the Emperor should thus patiently endeavour to win these fanatical recusants to good sense and dutiful submission. This patience of the Emperor, which must have looked to the old Roman world like weakness, was a wonderful admission of the rights of the individual conscience.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COUNCIL OF ARLES.

It does not appear that the Donatists appealed to another Council. The idea of summoning a General Council of the Church of the West seems to have originated with the Emperor or with his advisers. When we call to mind that, about eight years before, Hosius had been one of the leading bishops at a synod of the Spanish province held at Illiberis for the settlement of a number of ecclesiastical questions, we may reasonably conjecture that Hosius was now the suggester of another synod; and what we know of Constantine makes it not improbable that the grand conception of making it a Council of all the Churches of his dominions was the imperial enlargement of the bishop's suggestion.

The Emperor's motives are set forth in his own letters, which have been preserved. To the Vicar of Africa he writes:—

“We had hoped that these seditions and disputes, which appear to the rest of men not to have in reality any serious ground, would have at length

come to an end. But I learn from your recital . . . beyond any doubt, that these men will neither consider the interests of their own safety, nor, what is more important, the respect which is due to Almighty God. They continue to act in such a way that not only they cover themselves with shame and infamy, but also they give occasion to blaspheme to those who still keep themselves aloof from the holy observance of this religion." After having indicated the place and date of the Council, he adds, "You will make the bishops understand that, before their departure, they are to take precautions that during their absence regular discipline shall be observed, and that none shall engage in seditions or disputes. . . . Certain as I am that you also are a worshipper of the supreme God, I admit to your gravity that I do not think myself at liberty to tolerate or to neglect these scandals, which may anger the Divinity not only against the human race, but against myself, since by an act of His heavenly goodness He has entrusted to me the government of the whole earth; but provoked against me, He might take some other course. I cannot therefore be really and completely tranquil, and promise myself complete happiness from the good-will of the Almighty God, until I shall see all men united in bonds of brotherhood, rendering to the all-holy God the regular worship of the Catholic religion."

The persistency with which the idea conveyed by these last words is put forward again and again by Constantine in the subsequent course of his life,



is enough to convince us that the Emperor was not here merely adopting a sentiment suggested by his ecclesiastical advisers, but that he was strongly persuaded that he was an agent in the hands of the supreme Governor of the world; and that as his secular mission was to complete the Diocletian policy, and so establish the unity and peace of the Empire on a permanent basis, so it was his religious mission to bring the whole Empire to acknowledge the one God in the unity of the Catholic faith. That unity of religious sentiment which had been the strongest bond of national union in the ancient nations of the world; which Rome had lost when it absorbed the nations; which the Empire had tried to regain by adopting some of the foreign gods and identifying others with the gods of Rome; which the patriotic Emperors had sought to maintain by persecuting Christianity as a disturbing element, and encouraging the revival of the ancient religion; —that unity of religious sentiment Constantine now sought to attain in the universal adoption of the Christian religion as the religion of the Empire; first, because he believed in it himself, and next, because he saw in it the strongest bond of that permanent unity and peace and prosperity which it was the object of his life to secure for the Roman world.

One of the letters of the Emperor, summoning the bishops to this Council, has been preserved for us,* and is doubtless an example of the rest. It is addressed

* Eusebius, "Vita Const."

to Chrestus, Bishop of Syracuse. The Emperor mentions the former reference of the African question to "certain bishops from Gaul," but states that the Donatists were "unwilling to conform to their decision, asserting that they were very few that advanced their sentiments and opinions, or else that all points which ought to have been first fully discussed not being first examined, they proceeded with too much haste and precipitancy to give publicity to their decision. Hence those persons who ought to exhibit a brotherly and peaceful unanimity are, on the contrary, disgracefully and detestably at variance with one another, and thus give occasion of derision to those that are without, and whose minds are averse to our most holy religion. Hence it has appeared to me necessary to provide that this matter, which ought to have ceased after the decision was arrived at by their own voluntary agreement, now at length should be fully terminated by the intervention of many. . . .

"Since, therefore, we have commanded many bishops to meet together from different and remote places, in the city of Arles, towards the kalends of August, I have also thought proper to write to thee that, taking a public vehicle from the most illustrious Latronianus, Corrector of Sicily, and taking with thee two others of the second rank [priests] whom thou mayest select, and three servants to afford you services on the way, I would have you meet them within the same day at the aforesaid place, that by the weight of your authority, and the prudence

and magnanimity of the rest who shall assemble, this dispute, which has disgracefully continued until the present time, in consequence of certain disgraceful contentions, may be discussed, by hearing all that shall be alleged by those who are now at variance, whom we have also commanded to be present; and thus the controversy be reduced, though slowly, to that faith and observance of religion and fraternal concord which ought to prevail. May Almighty God preserve thee in safety many years!"

No doubt Arles was chosen by the Emperor as the place of meeting of the Council because, of all the great cities of the Western Empire, it was the most central, and therefore the most convenient for the clergy, who had to come from places so wide apart as York in the north and Carthage in the south, from Cadiz in the west and Aquileia in the east. This city, situated on the left bank of the Rhone, where it divides into two branches, was the chief city of the southern division of Gaul—Gallia Narbonensis. The city owed much to Constantine, so much that he had taken to himself the honour of a second founder, and called it after his own name, Constantina. He had enlarged the city and adorned it with public buildings. It is probable that to him was due the building of a new suburb on the other side of the river, the two towns being connected by a bridge of boats. The remains of a great amphitheatre, capable of holding twenty thousand persons, still exist; and an ancient cemetery outside the town still contains

both pagan and Christian tombs of the Roman age. In those days, as in these, Egyptian obelisks were objects of vast antiquity and interest, and were carried away from their original sites to adorn far-away cities. And just as Cleopatra's Needle lay many years half buried in the sand at Alexandria because of the difficulty of handling it, so an Egyptian obelisk still lies on the river bank at Arles, as it was landed from the raft which had brought it up the river from Marseilles, still awaiting the hand which shall set it up. Perhaps the bishops stood and speculated upon it, as they took their evening ramble beside the "arrowy Rhone," when the day's sitting of the Council was done.

We must try to realize the idea of a great Council of the Church. It was not merely a gathering of individual bishops of high personal reputation or influence; it was an assembly of the Churches, represented by their clergy. In the synods of the second century only bishops seem to have sat, but towards the middle of the third century a new custom was introduced, and in many synods of that and the following centuries priests and deacons also were present. It had been so at Elvira, eight years before; it was so at Carthage in A.D. 397, and at Toledo in A.D. 400. In some cases where its bishop was unable to come, the Church was represented by one or more of its priests, or even deacons; ten Churches were thus represented at Arles. Priests and deacons thus representing Churches had a vote on behalf of



their Church, and subscribed the decision of the Council with the formula *Definiens subscripsi*.

The bishop of the city where they met presided, according to the precedent of the apostolic Council of Jerusalem, where James, the bishop of the Holy City, presided. The rest of the bishops sat in a circle; behind each bishop sat the priests of his Church, and before him, on a lower seat, his deacon. Each little group represented one of the Churches * —the units of which the Church universal was composed; each complete in itself and capable of independent life, each articulated to all the rest in indissoluble joints and bands.

The sacred Scriptures were throned in the midst, and represented the invisible presence of the Head of the Church, whose promise, "Lo, I am with you always," was considered to be specially applicable to such an assembly of His Church; so much so that as the Council of Jerusalem headed its synodical letters with the phrase, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," so the Council of Arles in its synodical letter says, *Placuit ergo, presenti Spiritu Sancto et Angelis ejus*.† Authorities differ greatly as

* In the subscriptions to the *Acta* the signatures are grouped together in the same way; the priests and deacons signing immediately after their own bishop. The signatures are arranged in provinces, first the Italian Churches, then those of the Gauls, and lastly those of the African provinces.

† So Cyprian wrote in the name of the Council of Carthage, over which he presided A.D. 252, to Pope Cornelius: "It seemed good to us under the guidance of the Spirit" (Hefele, "Hist. of Christian Councils").

to the number of bishops who met at Arles. Some say two hundred ; Hefele says only thirty-three ; but all agree that the prelates were summoned from and represented all the provinces of the Empire of the West. We may therefore regard the assembly at Arles as a General Council of the West.

The deliberations of the Council were opened on August 1, 314. The question of the African schism was first considered. The validity of Cæcilian's consecration was again established ; his accusers were, in the words of the synodical letter, *aut damnati aut repulsi*.

But the Council did not limit itself to this question. There were various other matters needing authoritative solution, which were taken in hand. We can only indicate them by a brief quotation of the subjects of the twenty-two Canons in which the decisions of the Council were embodied.

Next in importance to the African question was that of the time of the observance of Easter, which for two centuries had held an importance which we, whose fasts and festivals differ so very little in their outward observance, find it so difficult to understand. The Council decided that the same day should be observed for the Easter festival everywhere, and that day should be, not the day of the Jewish Passover, but the Sunday next after.

Canon 1. That the same day should be observed for Easter *per omnem orbem*, and that the Pope should send letters to all as usual. This latter clause needs

explanation. "The Pope" was not the Bishop of Rome, but the Bishop of Alexandria, to whom the title was usually appropriated, at least from the middle of the third century. The Bishop of Rome was not known as "the Pope" for three centuries afterwards. Alexandria was the seat of the astronomical learning of the time ; and it had been the custom for its bishop to have the time of "the first full moon after the vernal equinox" for the following year calculated, and to send word to the bishops of Rome and Antioch, who informed the other bishops.

2. That every one should remain where he was ordained. This forbade translations of bishops, and even the transference of priests and deacons, from one diocese to another. A Canon which the convenience of the Church and the interests of individuals have constantly overruled.

3. Excommunicates those *qui in pace arma projiciunt*. Of this obscure phrase several explanations have been suggested ; the two likeliest are (1) that it excommunicates gladiators, and (2) that it is an assertion of "the lawfulness of Christian men to bear arms."

4 and 5. Excommunicate those who take part in the games of the circus and amphitheatre.

6. Allows sick converts to be received by imposition of hands.

7. Christians becoming governors are to take *literas ecclesiasticas*.

8. Those baptized by heretics are not to be

rebaptized, but received with imposition of hands. A most important Canon, repealing the decision of the Church of North Africa under Cyprian.

9. Those who hold letters of confessors to give them up, and receive letters of communion instead.

10. He whose wife has been divorced for adultery is not to marry another in her lifetime.

11. Women who married heathen to be separated from communion for a time.

12. Clerics receiving usury to be excommunicated.

13. Dealt with the case of those who, in the persecution, had given up the sacred Scriptures, the holy vessels (*dominica vasa*), or the names of the brethren: if clerics, they were to be degraded, but only if their guilt was proved by the public acts (excluding verbal evidence); and it affirmed that any one ordained by a traditor was validly ordained.

This touches the heart of the African schism, since it affirms that the ministerial acts of lawfully ordained ministers, though heretical or schismatical, are valid.

14. Those falsely accusing brethren are to be excommunicated to the end of their life.

15. Deacons not to "offer," *i.e.* to celebrate Holy Communion.

16. Wherever any one was excommunicated, there also he is to be reconciled.

17. No bishop is to molest another (by interference within his diocese).

18. City deacons to do nothing without the knowledge of the priests.

19. Foreign bishops to be allowed a place for celebrating Holy Communion.

20. A bishop not to be ordained without the concurrence of three bishops.

25. A cleric not to marry an unchaste woman, and if a layman have done so, he is not to be ordained.

The usual course was for the Council to communicate these Canons to the Churches. The letter of the synod which accompanied the copy of the Canons to the Bishop of Rome is extant, and has given occasion to defenders of the Roman pretensions to say that the Council submitted its decisions for the sanction of, and promulgation by, the Roman see. The words of the letter are conclusive. It begins thus:—

“To the most holy lord our brother Sylvester, Marinus and the assembly of bishops who have been invited together in the city of Arles. What we have decreed by common counsel, we make known to your charity, that all may know what they ought to observe in future.”* They politely regret the absence of their brother of Rome, and assure him that his assistance at their counsels would have given them great pleasure.† But there

* “Domino sanctissimo fratri Silvestro, Marinus vel cœtus episcoporum qui adunati fuerunt in oppido Arelatensi. Quid de crevimus communi consilio caritatæ tuæ significamus, ut omnes sciant quid in futurum observare debeant.”

† “Et te pariter nobiscum judicante, cœtus noster majori lætitia exultasset.”

is not a word which implies that his absence had diminished the authority of their decisions; not a word which seems to submit their decisions for his approval. The close of the letter, which is obscurely worded, seems to request the bishop to use his larger opportunities of making these decrees known:* which may allude to the opportunities his residence in the capital gave him for frequent intercourse with Churches throughout the Empire; or it may be a request to him, as the proper channel of such communication, to make known these decisions of the Western Church to the other great divisions of the Church.

The names appended to this synodical letter show us who were the leading prelates in the Council. With Marinus the letter names Agræcius of Trèves, Theodore of Aquileia, Proterius of Capua, Vocius of Lyons, Cæcilian of Carthage, Reticus of Autun, Ambitausus of Reims, Merokles of Milan, Maternus of Cologne, Liberius of Emerita in Spain.

All who were present signed the Acts of the Council, and a list of these subscriptions has come down to us. Among the subscriptions are the following:—

“Eborius Episcopus de civitate Eboracensi provincia Britannica.

“Restitutus Episcopus de civitate Londinensi provincia supra scripta.

* “Placuit ergo a te qui majores dioceses tenes per te potissimum omnibus insinuari.”

"Adelfius Episcopus de civitate Colonia Londinensium; exinde Sacerdos presbyter, Arminius deacon."

"Colonia Londinensium" has been variously conjectured to be Colchester, Lincoln, and Caerleon-on-Usk.*

This is the first indisputable evidence we possess with respect to the existence of the Church in Britain. Several safe deductions may be made even from this scanty evidence. It is certain, then, that the Church in Britain had diocesan bishops, priests, and deacons, and that it was in full communion with the rest of the Church of Christ. We may infer that a Church thus spread over the land from York to London and from London to Caerleon, and thus fully organized, and summoned to send its representatives to the Council, was not a new Church. We may safely conjecture that these three bishops were only representatives, and that there were other bishops in other cities of Britain. The probability is (as already said) that the planting of the Church in Britain was due to an extension of the great missionary effort which spread the Church through the north of Gaul, about the middle of the third century.

When the decision of the Council of Arles was made known to the Donatists, they formally

* The probability is that it was Caerleon; if so, the three bishops came from the capital cities of the three provinces into which Roman Britain was then divided, and at this period York was the first in rank (Haddan and Stubbs).

appealed from it to the judgment of the Emperor. He was at this time at the head of his armies in Illyricum, operating against Licinius, but followed with interest the course of these ecclesiastical affairs. On receipt of the decision of the Council and the Donatist appeal, he wrote a letter to the bishops, which has several points of great interest. He begins by reciting how "God does not suffer humanity to wander longer in darkness, but revealing anew, with brilliant light, the way of salvation, seeks to convert men to the rule of righteousness. This we have seen in many examples; and I estimate myself as one of them. For in me at first were things contrary to righteousness, and I did not believe that the heavenly power knew the secrets of my heart; and I deserved all evils. But the Almighty God dwelling for ever in the heavens gave me what I did not deserve; for, indeed, the things cannot be told or numbered which His heavenly goodness has granted to me His servant, O holy prelates of Christ the Saviour, my beloved brethren." He tells them that the Donatists have appealed to him. "They demand my judgment, who myself expect the judgment of Christ." He declares that "the judgment of the Council ought to be accounted as if the Lord Himself, sitting with them, had judged." What do these malignant men mean? "Leaving heavenly decisions, they seek earthly ones. They make an appeal, as heathens do in secular causes. The heathens, indeed, where they fear that justice may be denied in a lower court, appeal to a



higher; but these men refuse the judgment of Heaven, and appeal to mine. So they think of the Saviour Christ." He begs the Fathers to be patient, and to make a last attempt to persuade the recusants. That failing, he dismisses them to their sees, and asks for their prayers. He has given orders that those who persist in their disobedience be brought to his court, where condign punishment awaits them.

Some of the leaders of the Donatists were accordingly sent to court, and were detained there a whole year. During that time the Emperor again sent two envoys to Africa, who tried in vain to bring their followers to submission.

Everything else failing, the Emperor at length consented to entertain their appeal, and to hear their cause himself. He could not, after all, divest himself, or others, of the idea that the Emperor was the source of justice, and that every one of his subjects, whoever he might be, who believed himself to be wronged, had a right of ultimate appeal to him. He had the complaisance to excuse himself to the bishops for hearing the appeal, and explained that he did it only to deprive the troublers of the peace of the Church of all excuse. He heard the cause, and finally determined that the consecration of Cæcilian was valid.

But the question of Cæcilian's consecration had never been the real ground of the separation; therefore the final decision that it was valid did not, in the least degree, tend to heal the schism.

The Donatists still refusing to obey the imperial judgment, which they had themselves invited, the habits of Roman law seemed to leave nothing possible but death, as the punishment of such contumacy: and this was the fate to which the Emperor would have consigned them; but the Bishop of Cordova interposed to mitigate the imperial anger. Some of the chiefs were sent into exile; some were punished with confiscation of goods; the sectaries were forbidden to hold assemblies, their churches were transferred to the Catholics.

But this rigour had no effect, and it was soon mitigated—again, it would appear, on the representations of the orthodox party; for the Emperor writes to the bishops, “I recognize you as priests and servants of the living God, in that you do not desire any punishment against these impious, wicked, sacrilegious, profane, irreligious men, ungrateful towards God, and enemies of the Church, but that you rather ask mercy for them.” The Præfect Ursacius received orders to hold his hand, and Cæcilian was exhorted to try persuasion. “All schisms,” wrote the Emperor, “are from the devil. These separatists proceed from him. What good can you expect from those who are the adversaries of God, and the enemies of the holy Church? Such men must split off from the Church and attach themselves to the devil. Surely we act most wisely if we leave to them what they have wrenched from us. By patience and kindness we may hope to gain them. Let us leave vengeance to God. I rejoice

to think that you meet their brutality with gentleness and good temper. As I understand that these men have destroyed a church in Cirta,* I have ordered my finance minister to build you a new one. God grant that these mistaken separatists may at last see their error, and return to the one true God."

The controversy will appear no more in the pages of the history of Constantine; but it continued to trouble the Church of Africa for centuries afterwards, and it may be well to bestow a concluding sentence upon it. Condemned by all the rest of the Church, the Donatist schism, quite logically, held that it alone was the Church. It did not spread outside the province of Africa, but there it not only continued to exist, but it even increased, until it became more numerous and powerful than the Catholic body, and in nearly every city there were rival bishops and rival Churches. Bands of fanatical ascetics ran to the wildest excesses. In their desire for martyrdom, they courted death, violating altars and images, insulting the pagans at their festivals, challenging all whom they met to kill them. They made themselves feared by their lawless violence against Catholics, especially in the remoter parts of Numidia and Mauretania, districts hardly yet thoroughly subject to the Roman law. They went about in predatory gangs, armed with clubs instead of swords, which a superstitious prejudice prevented them from using, calling themselves "avengers of

* The modern town of Constantine is built on its site.

God," and making themselves formidable to all peaceable people. The bishops of their own party were obliged to appeal to the Roman officers for military protection against these *circumcelliones*. At Bajai they had the temerity to stand a contest with the Roman cavalry, in which they received defeat and chastisement. In the time of Augustine, in A.D. 411, another attempt was made to effect a reconciliation. An imperial commissioner was appointed to conduct a conference between the two parties. The bishops of each side assembled in great numbers. A debate of several days' duration was held. Augustine was the chief advocate on the side of the Catholics. They offered that if it were proved that the Church had failed, except in the Donatist communion, they would submit and enter that communion; and, on the other hand, they promised that if they should be able to convince the Donatists, they would receive them into communion, acknowledge their bishops and clergy, and agree to an arrangement for the joint government of the Churches. The imperial commissioner gave his decision against the Donatists. They appealed to the Emperor Honorius, who confirmed the decision, and enacted penalties against them. Little is known of the history of the sect after this time; but it was not extinguished till the Saracenic invasion of Africa, in the seventh century, swept away Catholic and Donatist together into a common ruin.

For the sake of convenience we have told the

story of the Donatist schism consecutively; but in the latter part of the time occupied by this incident great political events had been occurring, and we must now go back to take up the thread of the history.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FIRST DEFEAT OF LICINIUS.

THE death of Maximin made Licinius master of the East, as Constantine was master of the West. They were old allies; their alliance was newly strengthened by domestic ties. The arrangement might have seemed a satisfactory settlement of the Empire, but it lasted only for a year.

The cause of quarrel between them is obscure. Bassianus, of whose antecedents nothing is known to us, had married Anastasia, the second daughter of Constantius Chlorus, and thus become the brother-in-law of both the Emperors. It would seem that Constantine had intended to raise Bassianus to the rank of Cæsar, and that Bassianus, dissatisfied with the non-fulfilment of his expectations, gave occasion for a charge of conspiracy against the Emperor. Constantine condemned him



LICINIUS.

to death. Bassianus and his wife fled to the court of Licinius; and when Licinius refused to give up the fugitives, Constantine accused him of having had part in the conspiracy. Licinius replied with an open defiance, and prepared for war. This happened about May, A.D. 314. Constantine gathered together his forces, and taking the offensive, according to his usual policy, marched into Illyricum. Early in October the opposing armies met near the town of Cibalæ, in Pannonia, on a plain which extends between the Save and the Drave. Both the commanders were skilful and experienced; the troops on both sides fought with determination. The engagement lasted all day, when the personal valour of Constantine defeated the enemy's left, and decided the fortune of the fight. Licinius abandoned his baggage, and left twenty thousand of his soldiers on the field of battle; but he effected an orderly retreat, crossed the Save near Sirmium, breaking the bridge behind him, and retired towards Thrace. Constantine, cautiously following, arrived at Philippi; when ambassadors came to him from Licinius, seeking terms of peace. But at the same time Constantine learnt that Licinius, endeavouring to strengthen his position, had raised Valens, one of his generals, to the imperial dignity. He was greatly offended that Licinius had taken upon himself to make a modification of the first importance in the arrangement of the imperial power without his concurrence, and refused to treat. A second engagement took place on the plain of Mardia, in Thrace,

Again the day was fiercely contested, and again Constantine gained a considerable success, but not a decisive victory. Licinius again, on the following day, sent ambassadors to offer terms. Constantine refused to recognize Valens as a colleague in empire. It seems that Valens was unwilling to retire into a private station, and Licinius solved the difficulty by putting him to death. Then terms were arranged by which Licinius ceded Illyricum, Macedonia, Greece, and a great part of Mœsia to the conqueror, retaining Egypt, Asia, and part of Mœsia. Constantine thus became master of three-fourths of the Empire.

We are the more disposed to believe that Constantine had not provoked the late war for the sake of territorial aggrandizement, when we find that he did not, now that he was incontestably the more powerful, follow up his advantage by a new aggression. On the contrary, the peace now concluded lasted uninterruptedly for a period of nine years.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHRISTIAN LEGISLATION.

WE turn next to examine with interest the results of the conversion of the Emperor upon the social and civil life of the Empire. The Emperor, we have seen, was the sole source of legislation, the uncontrolled chief of the executive, the official head of the religion of the Empire. A Christian legislator will feel bound to make laws in accordance with the laws of Christ; a Christian administrator will act on the principles of the gospel. We are interested in watching the gradual action of this new factor. Especially we are anxious to see how a Christian Pontifex Maximus will deal with the religious difficulties of the situation.

It is perhaps with a little surprise that we find, among the very first of the series of laws which clearly show a Christian influence, one which is due to the sentiment of the sacredness of the individual man because he was made in the image and likeness of God, a sentiment so foreign to the Roman habits of thought.

On March 2nd, A.D. 314, the Emperor decreed that if a slave condemned to the games or mines be branded, it should not be on his face, "that the face, which is fashioned in the likeness of the divine beauty, be not marred."

Apparently about the same time, and out of a similar sentiment of reverence, he abolished the punishment of crucifixion and of breaking the legs, once the infamous punishment of criminal slaves, now glorified for ever in the recollections of Calvary.

The benevolent spirit of Christianity soon makes itself felt in the statute book. In November, 314, judges are forbidden to inflict capital punishment unless the accused confess his crime, or the witnesses are unanimous.

The prevention of infanticide and the reckless exposure of children, a very common practice of those days, early engaged the Emperor's attention. Imperial solicitude on the subject was not indeed new. Augustus and Nerva had given public aid for the support of children; Trajan, Antoninus, and Marcus founded institutions for their nurture, especially for that of girls, in Italy. Alexander Severus followed their example, and the names of other like benefactors are known. But their charities were of partial or local extent. Constantine issued a law in A.D. 315, dated from Naissus, his own birth-place, which was to be placarded in all the cities of Italy. This law made the *fiscus* and private estate of the Emperor liable for the sustenance of all children whose fathers declared their inability to

rear them. It was followed, in A.D. 322, by another addressed to Africa, but apparently extending its provisions to other provinces. It may be doubted how far such indiscriminate benevolence is useful. But the pressure of public destitution was, no doubt, then very great. It seems to have been the reason for another and still more doubtful measure. This was one legalizing the sale of children (forbidden under Diocletian), and securing the possession of exposed children to their preserver against the claims of the parents. The object, no doubt, was a good one, to give children of destitute parents a better chance of life. Exposure of children was, it is believed, not *punishable* by law till 374, by a law of Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian.

The influence of Christian principles and feeling is seen also in a law of A.D. 316, and another of A.D. 334, for the saving of female modesty in judicial proceedings.

A still more important law in A.D. 320 abolished the special taxes which the ancient Roman policy had laid upon celibate and childless persons of both sexes, and thus, as Eusebius points out, removed a slur and a disadvantage from the profession of celibacy, which was so highly esteemed among Christians.

Other laws were directed to protect female chastity. In 316 the right of appeal from the provincial courts possessed by *clarissimi* (the nobles) was taken away in certain specified criminal cases, the first named of which is rape. In 320 followed a law of

Draconian severity. In cases of illicit intercourse, it pronounced the penalty of death upon both parties; even if the woman were not a consenting party, she was punished with disinheritance, while nurses and servants abetting the crime were to be executed with circumstances of great atrocity. Another law of A.D. 326 condemned to death any free woman who had committed adultery with a slave, and condemned him to be burnt. In 321 and 325 cohabitation with a concubine was forbidden to a married man. The right of divorce, exercised very freely under the Roman laws, was limited by Constantine to the cases of murder, poisoning, and violation of sepulchres in the man, and adultery, poisoning, and acting as a conciliatrix (procuress) in the woman. He also discouraged the use of the old relation of *concubinatus*, but gave facilities for legitimizing children born under it, after wedlock, in the case of freeborn women.

A law issued at Berytus, A.D. 325, prohibited the murderous pastime of the gladiatorial games. It is general in its terms, but by some special privilege Rome was exempt from its provisions, for combats continued to be exhibited in the Flavian Amphitheatre till 404, when the monk Telemachus, leaping into the arena to separate the combatants, was killed by them, and thus, by his self-sacrifice, brought about their immediate and final prohibition.

A series of laws sought to ameliorate the condition of slavery, which occupied so large a space in the social arrangements of the Empire.

In 319 and 326 masters were forbidden wantonly to kill or torture their slaves. In 334 it was forbidden, in dividing estates, to separate families of slaves. In 316 facilities were given for the emancipation of slaves. Side by side with the civil process, carefully guarded and limited, by which a slave might be raised to the dignity and privileges of a free man, it was decreed that in the Catholic Church masters might give liberty to their slaves, provided it was done in the presence of the congregation and with the assistance of the priests, and that there should be a written statement of the fact signed by the actors and witnesses. In 321 leave was given to masters to emancipate their slaves by their last will, so that on the day of the publication of the will the enfranchisement should take immediate effect, without the intervention of witnesses or magistrates.

In 322 it was decreed that if any one held as a slave declared himself to be a free man, a notice should be posted calling upon all who could give evidence in his favour to do so under severe penalties; and providing further that, if he failed to prove it then, the sentence should not be final, but he might reopen the question at any time should fresh evidence be forthcoming.

This series of edicts was more important than perhaps appears. The ancient Roman spirit was as jealous as the spirit of the Southern States of America in our time of interference with the domestic institution on which, in one case as in the other, the prosperity of the community was based; and the

Roman law interposed numerous difficulties in the way of the master who wished to enfranchise a slave. A sudden and general abolition would have destroyed the ancient society. Yet slavery was contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The legislation of Constantine on the subject entrusts the Church with a kind of official patronage for the enfranchisement of the human race. The task was to encourage emancipation, but to regulate it, to enfranchise the world without revolutionizing it; and throughout its history the Church has more or less fulfilled this beneficent mission. It has taught patience to the slave in the blessed consciousness that he is Christ's freedman, and forbearance to the master in the recollection that he too has a Master in heaven. It has pressed the claims of justice on the consciences of individuals, and cultivated a sense of it in the general conscience. It has taught the equality of all men before God, the brotherhood of men with one another, and the sacredness of the subordinations of society.

The Roman prisons were as horrible as they have been in modern Europe until quite recently.* In 320 two laws were directed to an amelioration of the prison discipline. The first forbids debtors to the State to be beaten or otherwise tortured; they are to be kept in military custody. The second provides that persons under accusation should be

* And even now, in England, the police cell in which an innocent man is detained in custody until he can prove his innocence is hardly in accordance with our pretensions to an advanced civilization.

allowed light and air, and should be chained only for purposes of security, while all despatch should be used in bringing them to trial. Again, in 326, it was provided that no one should be committed to prison without first being examined; and, in 328, that a copy of the *Acta* should be given to the parties accused, in criminal as well as in civil cases.

In 321 appeared two laws not less striking in their external result, and not less important in their effects upon society, than any of the preceding. They adopted the Christian Lord's day into the public life of the Empire, by forbidding on that "venerable" day any other labours than the pressing labours of the field, and any civil act—with an exception in the true spirit of the gospel, of the emancipation of a slave. On that day, Eusebius tells us, Christian soldiers were at liberty to attend divine service; those who were not Christians were paraded and marched outside the city, and there, in the open country, with eyes uplifted and hands stretched towards heaven, they repeated the following prayer:—

"We acknowledge Thee the only God: we own Thee as our King, and implore Thy succour. By Thy favour have we gotten the victory; through Thee are we mightier than our enemies. We render thanks for Thy past benefits, and trust Thee for future blessings. Together we pray to Thee, and beseech Thee long to preserve to us, safe and triumphant, our Emperor Constantine and his pious sons." *

* Eusebius, "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 20.

As chief of the administration, Constantine gradually filled all the great offices with Christians, and did not altogether escape the obvious danger of promoting men who had only embraced Christianity in order to recommend themselves to favour.

Eusebius says that his administration was also charged with an excessive leniency in the punishment of crime.

When we inquire into Constantine's action as the official head of the religion of the Empire, we soon find good reasons for his having retained the title of Pontifex Maximus, with all the legal rights which belonged to it. In the beginning of A.D. 319 he issued a decree which is somewhat obscure, but its purport seems to be to suppress all private heathen ceremonies, and divinations, and superstitious practices, while leaving the customary sacrifices of the recognized public temples untouched, in accordance with the edict of toleration. But the religion of the heathen had come to consist more in these private unauthorized superstitions than in the public worship of the gods. The Emperor was specially severe against the very common practice of divination by which the haruspices—like modern fortune-tellers—encouraged and lived upon the credulity of the people: "Let no haruspex venture to cross the sill of any private house, not even under the pretext of friendship, on pain of death by fire." "As for you," he says in another edict in the following May, "who think that these practices are of use to you, you have only to repair to the public altars and temples,

allowed light and air, and should be chained only for purposes of security, while all despatch should be used in bringing them to trial. Again, in 326, it was provided that no one should be committed to prison without first being examined; and, in 328, that a copy of the *Acta* should be given to the parties accused, in criminal as well as in civil cases.

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and to celebrate the solemnities of your religion. We do not forbid the offices of the ancient use to be celebrated in open day." In the following June, A.D. 321, he found it desirable to make an exception in favour of some harmless ancient superstitions, such as remedies applied to the human body, invocations against rain or hail, and generally all customs which do no harm to the honour or the health of men.

In December of the same year 321, another edict dealt with public oracles in a way which needs explanation ; it was very possibly called forth by some especial occasion. " If the lightning have struck one of our palaces or any public building, let care be taken to consult the haruspices as to the meaning of the omen, according to the custom of the ancient use, and let the response be scrupulously kept and brought to our knowledge." Such an accident as that indicated created general consternation, as presaging some misfortune to the Emperor or the State, and might be used by the haruspices, who were naturally hostile to his *régime*, for political purposes. It would seem that the Emperor did not forbid the usual reference to the augurs, but, as Pontifex Maximus, he required that the response should be communicated in the first place to himself. This would check the malicious invention and propagation of sinister predictions.

But, after all, the public omen which had most weight with the minds of all men, both heathen and Christian, was the fate of the persecuting Emperors, compared with the ever-increasing prosperity of

Constantine, and that omen was about to gain a new and overwhelming force.

At a later period of his reign, as we shall see, the rapid growth of Christianity and the corresponding rapid decadence of the old heathenism enabled the Emperor to deal with the ancient temples and the public religion with a stronger hand.

In this same year, 321, an edict of great importance to the Church's welfare was issued, by which it was made lawful for any one at his death to bequeath by will what part of his goods he pleased to the Church.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONSTANTINE SOLE EMPEROR.

DURING nine years the relations between Constantine and Licinius were outwardly such as became co-partners in empire. In the very year after the battle of the plain of Mardia, Constantine and Licinius advertised their amity to the whole Empire by nominating themselves as joint consuls for the year. When, in A.D. 318, Constantine raised his sons Crispus and Constantine to the rank of Cæsar, the young Licinianus, still an infant, was honoured with the same title. But under these professions of friendly concurrence in empire lay a real difference of policy, which gradually widened until it produced another and final breach.

Licinius was a skilful soldier and an able administrator, but his rule had more of the harsh character of that of Maximian or Galerius, than of the paternal character of that of Constantius and Constantine; he was as dissolute, old as he was, in his private life as Maxentius, and hardly less scrupulous in his lusts. Moreover, he continued a heathen

while the world about him was rapidly becoming Christian. The result was that his rule contrasted unfavourably with that of Constantine. Men said that the difference between the East and the West of the Empire was like that between night and day. The Christians of the East, where the Christians were most numerous, learned, and wealthy, could not but feel their sympathies drawn towards the Christian Emperor of the West. Licinius could not but feel that this large portion of his subjects was but lukewarm in its loyalty. This almost necessitated a policy of suspicion towards the Christians, and threw him into the arms of the pagan party.

In the face of the Edict of Milan, and still more in the face of his powerful colleague, he could not recur to the open persecution of the time of Galerius, but he did fall back upon the more covert policy which Maximin Daza had followed under similar circumstances.

He professed that the frequent meetings of bishops disturbed the good order of the State, and forbade them therefore to hold synods. He pretended that, for reasons of the public health, it was undesirable to have large assemblies in the cities, and thereupon shut up the churches, and required the Christians to meet for worship in the open air outside the walls. He dismissed Christians from his own household, and from the great offices of State, and from commands in the army. He found pretexts for inflicting indignities, punishments, even death upon some of the bishops and clergy and

other Christians. He destroyed some of the churches. In short, he carried on a covert but harassing persecution against the Christians. On the other hand, the pagan party rallied round him and regarded him as the last hope of their cause.

It must be confessed that there was a certain resemblance between the policy of Constantine towards the "old usage," and that of Licinius towards the "new superstition:" but on one side this policy was moderated by the mild character of Constantine, by the fact that there existed no bitter animosity against the old religion, and that the new religion was only pushing the other out of the way of its own victorious progress; on the other side the policy was embittered by a rancorous hatred of Christianity, by the fact that the old religion was consciously making its last desperate struggle for existence, and by the harsh, tyrannical temper of Licinius.

It was evident on both sides to what these opposite lines of policy must ultimately lead, and both sides made preparations for the event. Some campaigns against the Sarmatians and Goths gave Constantine a reason for collecting troops and engaging in military operations. In the course of these operations his troops found it convenient to pass and repass through the territory of Licinius, without permission asked. Licinius sent angry complaints of this violation of his dominions. Constantine replied with complaints of his treatment of his Christian subjects. Licinius treated with indignity

some medals which Constantine had struck in celebration of his Sarmatian victories; and such a public insult, in those days, amounted to an open rupture of friendly relations. Constantine accepted the challenge; and the two Emperors were a second time at war.

Both sides gave to the contest the character of a religious war. The pagan priests and pythonesses, the magicians and pretenders, of all the old religions of Greece, Asia, and Egypt rallied to the camp of Licinius; they besieged the gods with prayers for his success; they assured the Emperor of the favourable presage of the omens, and gave him oracles to the same effect, "in copious and elegant verses," says Eusebius with an unusual touch of humour. The images of the gods were carried at the head of his armies.

Constantine, on the other hand, was accompanied to the field by bishops and priests. The *labarum*, the chief standard of the army, was kept in a special tent, which was used as a field chapel; and there Constantine frequently resorted for prayer. He believed himself, and his followers believed him, to be fighting in the cause of Christ.

In September, A.D. 323, the two armies met near Adrianople, with a river between them, and passed several days in mutual observation. Licinius had determined to await the attack, and to leave to his opponent the hazardous passage of the river. Constantine collected materials and prepared a bridge, by which he might make the passage.



On the morning of the battle—the 3rd of July, 323—when Licinius had seen his troops all ready for the engagement, he offered a solemn sacrifice, which gives us an interesting glimpse of one of the sacred groves of the classical worship. “It was a well-watered and shady grove, and in it were several marble statues of those whom he accounted to be gods. After lighting tapers and performing the usual sacrifices in honour of these, he is said to have delivered the following speech:—‘Friends and fellow soldiers, these are our country’s gods, and these we honour with a worship derived from our remotest ancestors. But he who leads the army now opposed to us has proved false to the religion of his forefathers, and adopted the sentiments of those who deny the existence of the gods. And yet he is so infatuated as to honour some strange and unheard-of deity, with whose despicable standard he now disgraces his army, and confiding in whose aid he has taken up arms, and is now advancing, not so much against us as against these very gods whom he has despised. However, the present occasion shall prove which of us is mistaken in his judgment, or shall decide between our gods and those whom our adversaries profess to honour, etc.’” *

On that same morning Constantine had prayer said at the head of his troops, and gave them “God our Saviour” as their watchword. Then he mounted on horseback with a few guards, and putting himself at the head of 5000 archers, marched up the river

* “Vita Const.,” bk. ii. ch. 5.

to a ford which had been made known to him, at a little distance, concealed from his enemy's observation by a little wooded hill. Returning by the opposite bank, he fell upon the enemy's right flank with an unexpected and impetuous attack, and thus disconcerting his enemy's arrangements, and taking up a position to cover the crossing of the river, the rest of his army was able to effect its passage unopposed.

A great battle ensued. Wherever the fight was thickest, thither moved the *labarum*, with its guard of fifty picked veterans, which gave courage to one side and struck terror into the other. Constantine used to relate in after years how, at one crisis of the fight, the soldier who carried the sacred standard, struck with fear at the shower of darts which hailed upon him, hastily transferred his charge to a comrade, and turned to seek a place of greater safety, but was immediately struck by a dart which laid him dead; while he who held the standard was unhurt, though several darts pierced the staff of the standard which he bore. Constantine himself received a wound in the thigh.

At length the troops of Licinius gave way; he retired, leaving 34,000 men on the field of battle, but again, like a capable commander, bringing off the remainder of his troops in good order. He fell back upon Byzantium, whither Constantine followed him, and laid siege to the town.

A naval engagement also took place at the entrance to the Hellespont, in which the navy of

Constantine, commanded by the Cæsar Crispus, gained the advantage; sailed through the straits before a strong south wind, which wrecked many vessels of the opposite navy, and so brought to his father welcome reinforcements of men and munitions.

Licinius left Byzantium with his principal officers and best troops, crossed the Bosphorus, and landed at Chalcedon. There, as in his former contest, he strengthened himself by the elevation of one of his best officers, Martinianus, to the rank of Emperor, and sent him to the defence of the Hellespont, while he charged himself with that of the Bosphorus.

But Constantine at once raised the siege of Byzantium; evaded both his enemies by marching northward and embarking on the shore of the Black Sea; and so effected an unopposed landing at the north-east corner of the Bosphorus, and offered battle on the heights of Chrysopolis. Licinius made a feint of entering into negotiations; but Constantine saw that he sought only to gain time for the arrival of the troops under Martinianus, and marched to the attack. The two armies again found themselves face to face on the 10th of September.

This time Licinius gave orders not to attack that wing of the army where the *labarum* was stationed. Constantine spent some hours in prayer in his field chapel, and at length issuing forth with excited mien and flashing eyes, and with his naked sword in his hand, gave the signal for an immediate advance. The victory was not a moment in suspense. Licinius fled, with a routed army of only 30,000 survivors, to

Nicomedia. But his partisans had lost faith in their cause, and his overthrow was complete. His Empress went out to the camp of the victor, and, throwing herself at her brother's feet, obtained by her prayers the life of her husband. Licinius was deprived of the purple and retired to live in Thessalonica; Martinianus paid for his unsanctioned elevation with his life.

It is convenient here to relate the end of the story of Licinius. Before a year had passed an imperial sentence followed him to his retreat, and he died of strangulation. The heathen historians assume an act of unprovoked bad faith on the part of Constantine, and Jerome joins in their condemnation. The other Christian historians assume that some conspiracy of Licinius must have drawn his fate upon him. Considering the whole character of Constantine, and the character and circumstances of Licinius, and calling to mind that Constantia does not seem to have resented her husband's death, any more than Fausta that of her father, we are much more disposed to believe that Licinius provoked his fate by some intrigue, than that Constantine, after sparing him in the moment of victory, murdered him a year afterwards in cold blood.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE AFFAIRS OF THE EAST.

THUS, at the age of forty-nine, Constantine remained sole sovereign of the undivided Empire. When he had conquered Maxentius, he assumed the title of Maximus. Now that his extraordinary career of victory had carried him from Britain to the Euphrates, conqueror in great wars against opposing Emperors, conqueror in a hundred engagements against the barbarians, he assumed the title of Victor—or rather he adopted the proud word as an addition to his proper name—and henceforth wrote himself VICTOR CONSTANTINUS, Maximus, Augustus.

It was at the age of thirty-two that he had been elected to the purple at York and became Cæsar of the Gauls. Six years afterwards, he defeated Maxentius and acquired Italy and Africa. Within less than two years more, his first victory over Licinius added Illyricum to his dominions. Now, after another nine years, he had acquired the remaining quarter of the Roman world.

It is curious to observe how exactly this is the

reverse of the process by which Diocletian, at first sole Emperor, after a year's experience of power, divided the Empire in half; then, after another seven years, subdivided it and limited himself to a quarter; and after another fourteen years entirely abdicated his power.

But in acquiring the East Constantine did not merely add a fourth quarter to the other three, and so round off his Empire. In passing from the West to the East he entered into a new world.

The Western world was Roman. The great cities of Africa, Spain, Gaul, and Britain were Roman colonies. The people had abandoned their barbarous condition, to embrace with facility the Roman language, dress, and arts, and had with them adopted a good deal of the Roman spirit, and regarded themselves as Romans.

It is difficult for us, who know what Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and the countries on the Euphrates and Tigris are now, to realize to ourselves what they were in those days. We must first call to mind that it was in these countries the first societies of men had grown numerous; had irrigated and tilled the fertile land, and grown wealthy; had cultivated literature, science, and art, and become civilized; had built great cities, and founded mighty monarchies. In short, these countries had been the seats of the civilization of the ancient world.

Then came the Greek, who conquered, but did not destroy, the ancient world; on the contrary, he infused new vigour into its life, and carried it

forward to a still higher degree of populousness, of wealth, and of culture. The upper classes of the conquered peoples adopted the Greek language, manners, philosophy, and art, and, mingling with the conquerors, formed a Hellenized aristocracy at the head of the old Eastern races.

Scores of cities standing at this moment, not



RUINS AT PALMYRA.

so much ruined as deserted, in the uncultivated and sparsely inhabited district of northern Syria and the country between the Jordan and Euphrates, are a striking evidence and illustration of the former prosperity of these provinces of the East. A few relics here and there, some groups of pillars at Palmyra,

a temple at Baalbec, suffice to show the elegant grandeur of its greater cities ; and it would occupy pages even to catalogue the names of Eastern cities then existing, populous and magnificent, compared with which Trèves and Arles, Eboracum and Londinium, Tarraco and Corduba, were mere Roman *bourgs*—cities which had been grand and flourishing for centuries before these Roman *bourgs* were built, while Gaul and Spain and Britain and the provinces of the Danube were still forests and wilds, over which a few scanty tribes of untamed barbarians roamed.

When these magnificent Eastern countries fell under the power of Rome, it was the oft-repeated experience of the submission of an ancient civilization, which had become unwarlike through its very wealth and culture, to the aggressive vigour of a bolder and ruder race. The tribes of North-Western Europe might forget that Rome was their conqueror in the recollection that she was also the benefactor who had given them civilization, and admitted them to the honour of citizenship in the greatest Empire of the world. But Rome could not influence this Oriental world as Greece had done ; she could do nothing to add to its intellectual or moral life. On the contrary, she had herself borrowed its culture. All that she could give in return was Roman law, which was just, and Roman administration, which was efficient for the preservation of order. A Roman garrison at some of the strategic points, and a handful of Roman officials in some of the principal



towns, who formed a foreign clique, speaking a foreign language, and looking down with contempt upon a subject people—this was all that Rome had added to the mixed life of the East.

A wonderfully mixed life. In Alexandria and Antioch, for example, the second and third cities of the Empire, the population consisted of a great substratum of the original inhabitants, Coptic in one case, in the other Syrian; then a body of Greeks and a body of Jews, side by side, with equal rights as citizens; lastly, a court of Roman officials, with their military and civil belongings. And thus it was in all the principal cities of the East.

There was a wonderful difference between the Western world with its comparative homogeneity, its primitive civilization, and the simplicity of its political conditions, and the Eastern world with its teeming population of various races and religions, and their complex social relations. The difference was strongly emphasized by the difference of language: the language of the East, including Macedonia and Egypt, was Greek; the language of the West, including North Africa, was Latin. Constantine was destined to unite these heterogeneous elements of the Eastern provinces into a new Empire, which should keep alive the Roman name, and preserve the Greek civilization, centuries after the Western Empire had perished; and the solvent by which he was to accomplish this was the Christian religion.

It was an advantage to Constantine that this

world of the East was not unknown to him. Probably he had not visited it once in all the seventeen years during which he had been Emperor in the West. But fourteen years of his early manhood—the years when a man is gathering his knowledge of men and affairs, and training himself for his career—the years from eighteen to thirty-two, he had spent at the court of Nicomedia, at the centre of the affairs of the East, and in the confidence of those who conducted them. His campaigns into Egypt with Diocletian, and against Persia under Galerius, had contributed to his knowledge of his new provinces and their inhabitants. And during all the years of his reign in the West, we may be sure that Constantine was kept well informed of all which a great statesman ought to know, both of the public politics and of the secret intrigues of the Eastern court.

The substitution of the rule of Constantine for that of Licinius was welcomed with a very natural enthusiasm by the harassed Christians of the East, and it is probable that it was accepted without repugnance, even by the adherents of the old religions. The rhetorical phrases of Eusebius seem to express, without exaggeration, the natural exultation of at least the Christian part of the population of the Empire. “The mighty and victorious Constantine thus restored the Roman Empire to its ancient state of one united body, extending his peaceful sway around the world, from the rising sun to the opposite regions, from the north to the south.

All fear of those who had previously afflicted them was now wholly removed. They celebrated splendid and festive days with joy and mirth. All things were filled with light, and all who before were sunk in sorrow beheld each other with smiling and cheerful faces. With choirs and hymns, in the cities and villages, they celebrated, first of all, God the universal King; then they also celebrated the praises of the pious Emperor, and, with him, of his divinely favoured children. There was a perfect oblivion of past evils, and past wickedness was buried in forgetfulness. There was nothing but enjoyment of the present blessings and expectation of those yet to come. Edicts were published and issued by the victorious Emperor full of clemency, and laws were enacted indicative of munificence and genuine religion." *

The edicts to which Eusebius alludes in the last sentence were indeed of a remarkable character. They were not mere edicts, but elaborate proclamations addressed to his new subjects; entering at length into the history of the course of events which had led him step by step to the sovereignty of the East; giving a general exposition of his policy; extending to the Christians of the East the remission of unjust sentences, and restitution of rights, and restoration of property which he had eleven years before given to their co-religionists in the West; but, at the same time, promising toleration to the adherents of the old religion. The edicts

* "Ecc. Hist.," bk. x. ch. 10.

are so remarkable as a revelation of the mind of Constantine that we give them almost complete—only omitting a little verbiage here and there which adds nothing to the meaning—and in his own words, which frequently have the eloquence of genuine feeling.

“Victor Constantinus, Maximus, Augustus, to the inhabitants of the province of Palestine.”*

“To all who entertain just and wise sentiments respecting the character of the Supreme Being, it has long been most clearly evident, and beyond the possibility of doubt, how vast a difference there has ever been between those who maintain a careful observance of the hallowed duties of the Christian religion and those who treat the religion with hostility or contempt. But at this present time we may see, by still more manifest proofs and still more decisive instances, both how unreasonable it were to question the truth and how mighty is the power of the supreme God; since it appears that they who faithfully observe His holy laws and shrink from the transgression of His commandments, are rewarded with abundant blessings, and are endued with well-grounded hope, as well as ample power, for the accomplishment of their undertakings. On the other hand, they who have cherished impious sentiments have experienced results corresponding to their evil choice. For how is it to be expected

* Copies of the same document were, no doubt, sent simultaneously to the other provinces of the East.

that any blessing would be obtained by one who desired neither to acknowledge nor duly to worship that God Who is the source of all blessing? Indeed, facts themselves are a confirmation of what I say.

“But besides this, whoever will mentally retrace the course of events from the earliest period down to the present time, and allow himself to reflect on what has occurred in past ages, will find that all who have made justice and probity the basis of their conduct, have not only carried their undertakings to a successful issue, but have gathered, as it were, a store of sweet fruit as the produce of this pleasant root. Again, whoever observes the career of those who have been bold in the practice of oppression or injustice, who have either directed their senseless fury against God Himself, or have conceived no kindly feelings towards their fellow men, but have dared to afflict them with exile, disgrace, confiscation, massacre, or other miseries of the like kind (all this without any sense of compunction or wish to direct their thoughts to a better course), will find that such men have received a recompense proportioned to their crimes; and these are results which might naturally and reasonably be expected to ensue.

“For whoever have addressed themselves with integrity of purpose to any course of action, keeping the fear of God continually before their thoughts, and holding fast an unwavering faith in Him, without allowing present fears or dangers to outweigh their hope of future blessings—such persons, though

for a season they may have experienced painful trials, have borne their affliction lightly, being supported by the belief of greater rewards in store for them; and their character has acquired a higher lustre in proportion to the severity of their past sufferings. With regard, on the other hand, to those who have either foully slighted the principles of justice, or refused to acknowledge the Supreme God themselves, and yet have dared to subject others who have faithfully maintained His worship to the most cruel insults and punishment; who have failed equally to recognize their own vileness in oppressing others on such grounds, and the happiness and blessing of those who preserved their devotion to God, even in the midst of such sufferings;—with regard, I say, to such men, many a time have their armies been slaughtered, many a time have they been put to flight, and their warlike preparations have ended in total ruin and defeat.

“From the causes I have described, grievous wars arose and destructive devastations. Hence followed a scarcity of the common necessities of life and a crowd of consequent miseries; hence, too, the authors of these impieties have either terminated the extremity of suffering by a disastrous death, or have dragged out an ignominious existence and confessed it to be worse than death itself, thus receiving, as it were, a measure of punishment proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes. For each experienced a degree of calamity according to the blind fury with which he had been led

to combat and (as he thought) defeat the divine will; so that they not only felt the pressure of the ills which could reach them in this present life, but were tormented also by a most lively apprehension of punishment in a future world.

“And now, with such a mass of impiety pervading the human race, and the commonwealth in danger of being utterly destroyed, as if by the agency of some pestilential disease, and therefore needing powerful and effectual aid, what was the relief and what the remedy which God provided for these evils? (I need not say that we are to understand Him Who is alone and truly God, the possessor of almighty and eternal powers; and surely it cannot be deemed arrogance in one who has received benefits from God, to acknowledge them in the loftiest term of praise.) I myself, then, was the instrument whose services He chose and esteemed suited for the accomplishment of His will. Accordingly, beginning at the remote Britannic Ocean and the regions where the sun sinks beneath the horizon in obedience to the law of nature, through the aid of divine power I banished and utterly removed every form of evil which prevailed, in the hope that the human race, enlightened through my instrumentality, might be recalled to a due observance of the laws of God, and at the same time our most blessed faith might prosper under the guidance of His almighty hand.

“I said under the guidance of His hand; for I would desire never to be forgetful of the gratitude due to His grace. Believing, therefore, that this

most excellent service had been confided to me as a special gift, I proceeded as far as the regions of the East, which, being under the pressure of severer calamities, seemed to demand still more effectual remedies at my hands. At the same time, I am most certainly persuaded that I myself owe my life, my every breath, in short my very inmost and secret thoughts, entirely to the favour of the supreme God. Now, I am well aware that they who are sincere in the pursuit of the heavenly hope, and have fixed this hope in heaven itself as the peculiar and predominant principle of their lives, have no need to depend on human friendship, but rather have enjoyed a higher degree of dignity in proportion as they have separated themselves from the vices and evils of this earthly existence. Nevertheless, I deem it incumbent on me to remove, at once and most completely, from all such persons the hard necessities laid upon them for a season, and the cruel and unjust infliction under which they have suffered, though free from any stain of guilt. For it would be strange indeed that the fortitude and constancy of soul displayed by such men should be fully apparent during the reign of those whose first object it was to persecute them on account of their devotion to God, and yet that the glory of their character should receive no accession of lustre, and be viewed in no more exalted light under the administration of a prince who is His servant.

“Let all, therefore, who have exchanged their



country for a foreign land, because they dared not abandon that reverence and faith toward God to which they had devoted themselves with their whole hearts, and have, in consequence, at different times been subject to the cruel sentence of the judge, together with any who have been enrolled in the registers of the public courts, though in time past exempt from such office—let these, I say, now render thanks to God, the Liberator of all, in that they are restored to their hereditary property and the tranquillity they once enjoyed. Let those also who have been despoiled of their goods, and have hitherto passed a wretched existence, mourning under the loss of all that they possessed, once more return to their former homes, their families, and estates, and receive with joy these proofs of the bountiful goodness of God.

“Furthermore, it is our command that all those who have been detained in the islands against their will should receive the benefit of this present provision, in order that they who till now have been surrounded by impassable mountains and the encircling barrier of the ocean, being now set free from that frightful and dreary solitude, may fulfil the fondest wishes of their hearts by revisiting their dearest friends. Those, too, who have prolonged a miserable life in the midst of abject and loathsome wretchedness, welcoming their restoration as an unlooked-for gain, and discarding henceforth all anxious thoughts, may pass their lives with us in freedom from all fear. For that any one could live

in a state of fear under our government, whose glory it is to feel confident that we are the servants of God, would surely be a thing most absurd even to hear of, far more to believe as true; since the natural desire of our heart would be completely to rectify the errors of our predecessors in this respect.

“Again, with regard to those who have been condemned, either to the grievous labour of the mines or to service in the public works, let them enjoy the sweets of leisure in place of their long-continued toils, and henceforth lead a far easier life, and more accordant with the wishes of their hearts, exchanging the incessant hardship of their task for a pleasing and quiet rest. And if any have forfeited the common privilege of liberty, or have unhappily fallen under any mark of infamy, let them hasten back every one to the country of his nativity, and resume with becoming joy their former positions in society, from which they have been as it were estranged by long absence in a foreign land.

“Once more, with respect to those who have previously been preferred to any military distinction, of which they were afterwards deprived for the cruel and unjust reason that they chose rather to acknowledge their allegiance to God than to retain the rank they held; we leave them perfect liberty of choice, either to occupy their former stations, should they be content again to engage in military service, or to live in undisturbed tranquillity, with an honourable discharge from all duty. For it is fair and reasonable that men who have displayed



such magnanimity and fortitude in meeting the perils to which they have been exposed, should be allowed the choice either of enjoying peaceful leisure or resuming their former rank.

“Lastly, if any have been deprived of the privilege of noble lineage, and subjected to a judicial sentence which has consigned them to the women’s apartments for weaving or spinning, there to undergo a cruel and miserable labour, or reduced them to servitude for the benefit of the public treasury, without any exemption on the ground of superior birth; let such persons, resuming the honours they had previously enjoyed, and their proper dignities, henceforward exult in the blessings of liberty and lead a life of happiness and joy. Let the free man,* too, whom the unjust and inhuman fury of his persecutors has made a slave, who has felt the sudden and mournful transition from liberty to bondage, and oftentimes bewailed his unwonted labours, return to his family once more a free man in virtue of this our ordinance, and seek those employments which befit a state of freedom; and let him dismiss from his remembrance those services which he found so oppressive, and which so ill became his condition.”

If martyrs, confessors, or fugitives for the sake of their faith have been deprived of their property, it is to be restored to them or go to their natural heirs; if there be no surviving relation, “in such

* That is, the free subject of inferior rank, accustomed to labour for his subsistence, but not to the degradation of slavery.

case we ordain that the Church locally nearest in each instance shall succeed to the inheritance. . . . If any have disposed of their property by will or gift, such disposition is to hold good."

He bids all "in possession of a piece of land, or a house, or garden, or anything else which had belonged to such persons as are above mentioned, to acknowledge the fact and make restitution without delay; but . . . we do not consider that justice demands the restitution of profits" accruing while in their possession. But they must make a declaration of the amount of such profits, and ask for the imperial pardon. "It is possible that they will assure us, by way of apology for their conduct, that it was not in their power to abstain from the appropriation at a time when a spectacle of misery in all its forms everywhere met the view; when men were cruelly driven from their homes, slaughtered without mercy, thrust forth without remorse; when the proscription of innocent persons was a common thing; when the fury of persecutors was insatiable, and property seized and openly exposed for sale."

Nor should the Treasury itself be exempt from this restitution. "We ordain, therefore, that all things whatsoever which shall appear really to belong to the Churches (whether the property consist of houses, or fields and gardens, or whatever the nature of it may be) shall be restored in their full value and integrity, and with undiminished right of possession.

"Again, with respect to those places which are honoured in being the depositories of the remains

of martyrs, and continue to be memorials of their glorious departure,* how can we doubt that they rightly belong to the Churches, or refrain from issuing our injunction to that effect. . . .

“All who had received the property by gift, or by purchase from the treasury, shall obtain our clemency so far as is possible and consistent with propriety in each case.”

It concludes :

“And now, since it appears by the clearest and most convincing evidence that the miseries which erewhile oppressed the entire human race are now banished from every part of the world, partly by the power of Almighty God, and partly by means of the counsel and aid which He is pleased on many occasions to administer through our agency, it remains for all, both individually and unitedly, to observe and seriously consider how great this power and how efficacious this grace are, which have annihilated and utterly destroyed this generation (as I may call them) of most wicked and evil men; have restored joy to the good, and diffused it over all countries; and now guarantee the fullest liberty, both to honour the divine law, as it should be honoured, with all reverence, and to pay due observance to those who have dedicated themselves to the service of that law, and who will now lift up their heads as it were after a period of profound darkness, and, with an enlightened knowledge of the present

* The heading of the chapter describes them as the tombs of martyrs and the cemeteries.

course of events, will henceforward render to its precepts that becoming reverence and honour which are consistent with their pious character.

"Let this ordinance be published in our Eastern provinces."*

"The provisions of this enactment," says Eusebius, "were speedily carried into effect."

One cannot fail to recognize the genuine sympathy of the Emperor with his persecuted co-religionists, and the pleasure with which he realizes to himself the delight which his edict will spread abroad. One almost feels that it would be worth while to be an Emperor to be able to issue such an edict.

Another edict published about the same time, addressed to the inhabitants of every province, Eusebius says he has translated from Constantine's own handwriting, "in order that we may hear as it were the voice of the Emperor himself, uttering the following sentiments in the audience of all mankind:—

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus, Augustus, to the people of the Eastern provinces.

"That which is comprehended under the sovereign laws of nature is capable of conveying to all men an adequate idea of the forethought and intelligence which characterize the arrangements of God. Nor can any whose minds are directed in the true path of knowledge entertain a doubt that the just

* "Vita Const.," bk. ii. § xxiv.-xlii.

perceptions of sound reason, as well as those of sight itself, both tending to the same end, lead to the knowledge of God. And no wise man will be surprised to see the mass of mankind carried away by pursuits of an opposite character. For the beauty of virtue would be useless and unperceived, did not vice display in contrast with it the course of perversity and folly. Hence one is crowned with reward, while the most high God Himself administers judgment to the other.

“And now I will endeavour to lay before you all, as explicitly as possible, the nature of my own hopes of future happiness.

“The former Emperors I have been accustomed to regard as those with whom I could have no sympathy, on account of the savage cruelty of their character. Indeed, my father was the only one who uniformly practised the duties of humanity, and with admirable piety called for the blessing of God the Father on all his actions. For the rest, following the dictates of a perverted reason, they were more zealous of cruel than of gentle measures; and this disposition they indulged without restraint, and thus marred the course of the true doctrine during the whole period of their reign. Nay, so violent did their malicious fury become, that in the midst of a profound peace, as regards both the religious and ordinary interests of men, they kindled as it were the flames of a civil war.*

“About that time it is said that Apollo spoke

* The persecution inflicting on the Christians the miseries of war.

from a deep and gloomy cavern, and with no human voice, and declared that the righteous men on earth were a bar to his speaking the truth, and accordingly that the oracles from the tripod were fallacious. Hence it was that he suffered his tresses to droop in token of grief, and mourned the evils which the loss of the oracular spirit would entail on mankind. But let us mark the consequence of this.

“I call now on Thee, most high God, to witness that when very young I heard him who at that time was chief of the rulers of the Roman Empire (unhappy, truly unhappy as he was, and labouring under deep delusion of soul) make earnest inquiry of his attendants respecting these righteous ones on earth, and that one of the pagan priests then present replied that they were the Christians. This answer he eagerly received, like some honeyed draught, and resolved to unsheath the sword which was ordained for the punishment of crime against those whose holiness was beyond reproach. Immediately, therefore, he issued those sanguinary edicts, traced, if I may so express myself, with a sword’s point dipped in blood; at the same time commanding his judges to tax their ingenuity for the invention of new and more terrible punishments.

“Then, indeed, one might see with what perfect impunity those venerable worshippers of God were daily exposed, with continued and relentless cruelty, to outrages of the most grievous kind, and how that modesty of character which no enemy had ever treated with disrespect became the mere sport of



their infuriated fellow-citizens. Is there any punishment by fire, are there any instruments or modes of torture, which were not applied to all, without distinction of age or sex? Then, it may be truly said, the earth shed tears;* the all-circling compass of heaven mourned because of the pollution of blood; and the very light of day itself was darkened, as it were in grief and wonder at these scenes of horror.†

“But is this all? Nay, the barbarians themselves may boast even now of the contrast their conduct presents to these cruel deeds; for they received and kept in gentlest captivity those who then fled from amongst us, and secured to them not merely safety from danger, but also the free exercise of their holy religion. And even now that lasting stain remains which the flight of the Christians, at that time driven from the Roman world, and their reception by the barbarians, have branded on the Roman name.

“But why need I longer dwell on these lamentable events, and the general sorrow which in consequence pervaded the world? The perpetrators of this dreadful guilt are now no more: they have experienced a miserable end, and are consigned to unceasing punishments in the depths of the lower

* The Emperor seems to allude to the circumstance related at page 95.

† In the latter part of the sentence he seems to allude to some blood-red appearance in the sky, and to some eclipse or other darkness, which were supposed to be connected with the horror of the persecution.

world. They encountered each other in the fatal arena of civil strife, and have left neither name nor race behind. And surely this calamity would never have befallen them, had not those impious words of the Pythian oracle exercised a delusive power and influence over their minds.

“And now I beseech Thee, most mighty God, to be merciful and gracious to Thine Eastern nations, to Thy people in these provinces, bowed and broken as they are by protracted miseries; and vouchsafe them a remedy through Thy servant. Not without cause, O holy God, do I prefer this prayer to Thee, the Lord of all. Under Thy guidance have I devised and accomplished measures fraught with blessing; preceded by Thy sacred sign I have led Thy armies to victory; and still, on each occasion of public danger, I follow the same symbol of Thy perfections while advancing to meet the foe. Therefore have I dedicated to Thy service a soul duly attempered by love and fear. For Thy name I truly love, while I regard with reverence that power of which Thou hast given abundant proofs, to the confirmation and increase of my faith. I hasten then to devote all my powers to the restoration of Thy Church, which is Thy most holy dwelling-place, and which those profane and impious men have marred by the rude and destroying hand of violence.

“My own desire is, for the general advantage of the world and all mankind; that Thy people should enjoy a life of peace and undisturbed concord. Let those, therefore, who are still blinded by error, be



made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquillity which they have who believe. For it may be that this restoration of equal privileges to all will have a powerful effect in leading them into the path of truth. Let no one molest another in this matter, but let every one be free to follow the bias of his own mind. Only let men of sound judgment be assured of this, that those only can live a life of holiness and purity whom Thou callest to an acquiescence in Thy holy laws. With regard to those who will hold themselves aloof from us, let them have, if they please, their temples of lies; we have the glorious edifice of Thy truth, which Thou hast given us as our native home. We pray, however, that they too may receive the same blessing, and thus experience that heartfelt joy which unity of sentiment inspires.

“And truly our worship is one of no novel character, but such as Thou hast ordained in connection with the honour due unto Thyself from the time when, as we believe, this fair system of the universe was first fitly framed. And although mankind have deeply fallen, and have been seduced by manifold errors, yet hast Thou revealed a pure light in the person of Thy Son (lest the power of evil should utterly prevail), and hast thus given testimony to all men concerning Thyself.

“The truth of this is assured to us by Thy works. It is Thy power which removes our guilt and makes us faithful. The sun and the moon have their settled course. The stars move in no uncertain

orbits round this terrestrial globe. The revolution of the seasons recurs according to unerring laws. The solid fabric of the earth was established by Thy word. The winds receive their impulse at appointed times ; and the course of the waters continues with ceaseless flow. The ocean is circumscribed by an immovable barrier. In fine, whatever is comprehended within the compass of earth and sea is all contrived for wondrous and important ends.

“Were it not so, were not all regulated by the domination of Thy will, so great a diversity, so manifold a division of power, would doubtless have brought ruin on the whole course of this world’s affairs. For those agencies which have maintained a mutual strife would thus have carried to a more deadly length that hostility against the human race which they even now exercise, though unseen by mortal eyes.

“Abundant thanks, most mighty God and Lord of all, be rendered to Thee in this behalf, that the better knowledge of our nature is obtained from the diversified pursuits of man, the more are the precepts of thy divine doctrine confirmed to those whose thoughts are directed aright, and who are sincerely devoted to virtue. As for those who will not allow themselves to be cured of their error, let them not attribute this to any but themselves. For that remedy which is of sovereign and healing virtue is openly placed within the reach of all. Only let all beware lest they inflict an injury on that religion which experience itself testifies to be pure and un-

defiled. Henceforward, therefore, let us all enjoy in common the privilege placed within our reach—I mean the blessing of peace; and let us endeavour to keep our conscience pure from aught that might interrupt and mar this blessing.

“Once more, let none use that to the detriment of another which he may himself have received on conviction of its truth; but let every one, if it be possible, apply what he has understood and known to the benefit of his neighbour; if otherwise, let him relinquish the attempt. For it is one thing voluntarily to undertake the conflict for immortality, and another to compel others to do so from the fear of punishment.

“These are our words: and we have enlarged on these topics more than our ordinary clemency would have dictated, because we are unwilling to dissemble or be false to the true faith; and the more so since we understand there are some who say that the rites of the heathen temples, and the power of darkness, have been entirely removed. We should indeed have earnestly recommended such removal to all men, were it not that the rebellious spirit of those wicked errors still continues obstinately fixed in the minds of some, so as to discourage the hope of any general restoration of mankind to the ways of truth.” *

* “Vita Const.,” bk. ii. cc. xlviii.—lx.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE EAST.

WHEN Constantine promised toleration to the old religions, he did not propose himself to take up an attitude of neutrality between them and the new. He was too sincerely convinced of the truth of Christianity, and of his own mission as an instrument in the hands of God, to make it possible for him to abstain from making use of the advantages which his position gave him for encouraging the spread of the religion in which he believed, and supporting and strengthening the Church. To the Church of the fourth century, the transition from Diocletian to Constantine must have been like—though on a larger scale—the change in the first century from Saul the persecutor, “who made havoc of the Church,” to Paul the zealous Apostle of the Gentiles.

At the outset of his new administration of the East, circumstances necessitated the revision of the administrative staff of the Eastern provinces. Licinius had, as we have seen, driven Christians out from among the domestics of the palace, from the



offices of the administration, and from commands in the army; and had filled the palace, the army, and the offices with pagans. His defeat was the defeat of the pagan party, and the victory of Constantine was the victory of the Christian party. It was no more than a natural and necessary act of policy in Constantine to weed out from positions in which they might be mischievous, the men who had been most identified with the policy of Licinius, and generally all who were hostile to the new policy; and to replace them in the palace, in the administration, and in the army, by men whom he could trust. Accordingly, Eusebius tells us, he put Christians into most of the great offices and high commands; and where he still employed pagans, he forbade them to join in the public sacrifices, and so lend the countenance of their official position to the old religion as if it still continued to be the recognized religion of the State.

As time went on, the Emperor brought still further pressure to bear against the old religions. Eusebius unfortunately is not always careful to indicate the chronology of the events which he records, and he sometimes summarizes in a few brief sentences a course of events which was spread over years. And what he tells us in this connection of the destruction of the temples is probably really an anticipation of what took place in the later years of Constantine's reign. We know that Christianity prevailed much more generally in the East than in the West. We call to mind that, in the time of Trajan, Pliny testifies

that the temples were almost deserted in Bithynia and Pontus, and this decay of the old beliefs had been spreading throughout the East for the two centuries since. The desperate endeavours of the last twenty years to resuscitate the old religions seem hardly to have done more than arrest for a moment the progress of their decay ; and when the pagan party, artificially fostered by the encouragement of Diocletian and Galerius, Maximin and Licinius, found itself, on the accession of Constantine, in the cold shade of imperial disfavour, it seems to have dwindled rapidly away.

In truth, the final success of Constantine gave it its last blow. The deaths of the persecuting Emperors and the ruin of their families, and the continuous and remarkable prosperity of Constantius and Constantine, seem to have had a profound effect on the minds of men of both parties throughout the Empire. It is not, perhaps, an argument for the truth of a religion which would have the same weight with men in these days. Each age has its own evidences: one miracles, another morals, another Providence. The book of Providence is indeed a difficult one to read, and often needs an inspired interpreter ; but sometimes its lessons are writ large ; and in this instance the whole Roman world understood the public events of the last forty years in this sense—that the supreme God was making Himself known in the fortunes of the Emperors. Therefore the final success of Constantine was understood to be the crowning proof of the being and power of

the God of the Christians. Great numbers within a short period came over to Christianity; and the people who did not openly embrace the Christian religion, lost all faith in their own, and generally neglected its observances.

Constantine did not abstain from following up the retreating paganism, and completing the victory over it by the destruction of its strongholds. He sent a few officials, as a kind of commission, on a visitation of the temples throughout the provinces; and we are expressly told that they were attended by no military force, and that their acts excited no popular opposition. In some cases they directed the doors and roofs of the temples to be removed, and left the buildings to the process of gradual decay. In some cases they had the idols brought out into the light of day, stripped of their rich clothing and golden ornaments, until at last the barbarous block of wood or stone which had so long been regarded with superstitious veneration, was exposed to the gaze of the crowd. Some of the statues of the gods and ornaments of the temples, the work of great sculptors, were preserved as mere works of art; and so entirely had the belief in them worn out, that neither pagan nor Christian seems to have objected to their being used as mere statuary, to adorn palaces and public places. Thus we shall find in the sequel that the Pythian Apollo and the Sminthian Apollo were put up in two of the public places of Constantinople, in special compliment to Constantine; the Tripod of Delphi, from

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which the priestess delivered the oracles so famous in the old world, was put up in the centre of the Hippodrome in the same city; and the statues of the Muses adorned the Emperor's palace there.

In some special cases, where the worship had included customs which were injurious to the public morals, the Emperor acted still more peremptorily. A temple of Venus at Aphaca in Phœnicia, and another at Ægæ in Cilicia, had been famous for the horrible immoralities habitually practised there under the name of religion; another at Heliopolis had been little more than a place of public prostitution in honour of the goddess. These infamous cults Constantine put down with a strong hand; destroyed the buildings, and dispersed those who had ministered in them. For like reasons he also suppressed the priests of Isis in Egypt, and forbade their worship.

On the other hand, the Emperor encouraged everywhere the rebuilding and repairing of the existing churches, and the erection of new ones where they were needed, and contributed largely towards the work. In the later years of his reign the Emperor built several magnificent monumental churches, of which we shall have occasion to speak more particularly; but we may notice here, as another indication of the superior civilization of the East and of the Eastern Church, that all these greater churches were in the provinces of the East.

Of the circular letter sent by the Emperor at this time to the Eastern metropolitan bishops, encourag-



ing the building of churches, Eusebius gives us a verbatim copy of the one received by himself. The Emperor says that "forasmuch as the unholy and wilful rule of tyranny has persecuted the servants of our Saviour until this present time, I believe and am fully persuaded, best beloved brother, that the buildings belonging to the Churches have either become ruinous through actual violence, or have received inadequate attention from the dread of the violent spirit of the times. With respect, therefore, to the Churches over which you yourself preside, as well as the bishops, presbyters, and deacons of other Churches with which you are acquainted, do you admonish all to be zealous in their attention to the buildings of the churches, and either to repair or enlarge those which at present exist, or, in cases of necessity, to erect new ones. We also empower you, and the others through you, to demand what is needful for the work, both from the provincial governors and from the Prætorian Præfect, for they have received instructions to be most diligent in obedience to your holiness's orders." Eusebius says again that this imperial statute was speedily carried into effect.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

WHEN Constantine had become master of Italy, and embraced the Christian faith, he had found himself at once involved in the Donatist dispute in North Africa ; and when he took possession of the East he found the Churches of Egypt distracted, and the rest of the Churches of the East troubled, by a controversy raised by Arius on the Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. A few words are necessary to explain the nature and origin of this controversy, which formed a prominent subject of ecclesiastical interest during the remainder of the reign of Constantine and the reigns of his sons.

The primitive age had reverently believed that there were three Persons in the Godhead, and that Christ was God and man, without attempting to deal with the metaphysical difficulties involved in the doctrine. But it was not now for the first time that the traditional faith of the Church was questioned. A century before, in the early years of the third century, Sabellius, a Libyan presbyter, had

denied the distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and held that the Word Who was in Jesus Christ was a "manifestation" or "extension" of the Godhead. Fifty years afterwards (A.D. 270), Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, had been condemned and deposed for maintaining very similar opinions. Lucian, one of his presbyters, condemned with him, had afterwards modified his views, and been received back into the Church; but still held some peculiar opinions only imperfectly known to us,* which led up to those of Arius. The views of Arius sprang from the difficulty of reconciling a profound conviction of the unity of the Godhead with the doctrine of the true Deity of Jesus Christ. He maintained that the Saviour was totally and essentially distinct from the Father; that He was the first and noblest of those beings whom God the Father had created out of nothing, the instrument by whose subordinate operation the Almighty Father formed the universe, and therefore inferior to the Father both in *nature* and *dignity*.†

Arius was subtle in argument, and strove to present his views in a way which should make them acceptable to the orthodox mind; when they were not

* One point of his opinions seems to have been a denial of the co-eternity of the Son with the Father; another, that the Son took a human body only, not entire human nature.—Hefele.

† His opinions concerning the Holy Ghost are not so well known. None of the ancient writers has given us a complete and coherent system of the religious tenets really held by Arius and his followers; we have to gather them out of the controversial writings of the period.

accepted, he was dexterous in saving his reputation for orthodoxy by falling back under cover of ambiguous phrases.

A sentence will suffice to tell briefly the antecedents of Arius. He was a native of Libya, and had been connected with the schism of Meletius;* had abandoned it, and been ordained deacon by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria; had again taken the side of the Meletians, and been excommunicated by Peter; had been received into the Church again by Peter's successor, Achillas; ordained priest, and appointed to the care of one of the districts (= parishes) of Alexandria, called Baucalis, where his learning, eloquence, and asceticism had gained for him a considerable reputation.

Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, an aged man of apostolic virtues, learned that the able and popular priest of Baucalis was teaching some novel doctrines; conferred with him, and was satisfied with his explanations. But receiving further complaints, he summoned his clergy to a conference—or took the opportunity of some customary conference—and engaged them in a discussion of the subject. The Alexandrian clergy generally maintained the orthodox doctrine. Arius maintained his own views with freedom and warmth, that since the Son was begotten of the Father, He could not be co-eternal with

* A bishop of Lycopolis, deposed sixteen years before for sacrificing in the Diocletian persecution, who had refused to submit to the sentence of the Church, and had maintained a small schismatical party.

the Father, and therefore was not co-equal God; and when the bishop pronounced against his views, retorted upon him a charge of Sabellianism. The bishop tried to arrest the progress of the dispute; but Arius continued zealously to propagate his views.

The novel speculation fell on fertile soil. Alexandria for more than a century had been the philosophizing Church of Christendom; the people threw themselves with zest into all philosophical and theological controversies. Old controversies had left in the minds of some a certain latent hostility to the doctrine of the equality of the Son with the Father. Arius was much looked up to by many; he had especially a large following among the Church virgins, of whom there were hundreds in the Egyptian Church; and his opinions began to spread. The good old bishop had perhaps hardly enough strength, either as theologian or as bishop, to guide or to control the storm; but he had as his deacon a young man of some one or two and twenty years of age, who seems to have been raised up by God to meet this great crisis in the history of His Church. He was small and insignificant in person, but with a piercing intellect, a sound judgment, theological learning, great dialectic power, and an indomitable soul. Under the influence of this young deacon, Athanasius, the bishop began to take a more energetic line of action. Alexander decided to excommunicate Arius; but to obtain a more authoritative sentence, he convoked a Council

of the bishops of Egypt and Libya to the number of nearly a hundred, whose judgment confirmed that already delivered. Eleven deacons and two bishops, Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica, who adhered to the views of Arius, were included in his condemnation.

Other disaffected parties in the Egyptian Church rallied round Arius, who gladly strengthened himself by making common cause with them. The Meletians, with whom he had a friendship of long standing, and the disciples of Lucian of Antioch also, were drawn to him by common sympathies and antipathies. Whoever, in that city of metaphysical speculation, felt his "free thought" constrained by the limits of orthodoxy, naturally sympathized with Arius. All these formed a numerous following.

Arius used all his undoubted ability in popularizing his opinions and increasing his party. Although excommunicated, he continued to hold congregations for divine service; he laboured to attract adherents; he appealed to the populace and to the heathen authorities for support (Licinius was still Emperor). His followers, supplied with two or three specious arguments, zealously canvassed the faithful of Alexandria. At the same time he sought support in other Churches against the authority of his own bishop. When Origen had been under the displeasure of his bishop, he had sought refuge with the Bishop of Cæsarea; and now Arius appealed to the bishops of Asia for their countenance. Euse-

bious, Bishop of Nicomedia, protected by the Empress Constantia, had passed safely through the troublous years when Licinius was persecuting the Church, and on the accession of Constantine he had had the skill to conciliate the new Emperor, and to retain the influence which his position at the capital, and his learning and ability, naturally gave him. To him Arius wrote:—

“My lord, beloved, the man of God, the most faithful and most orthodox Eusebius, Arius persecuted by the Bishop Alexander for this Christian truth, of which you are the defender, salutation! . . . Our bishop oppresses and persecutes us, and sets all his organization to work against us. . . . They say that the Father and the Son are all one; that the Son co-exists with the Father without being begotten of Him, or rather that He is begotten without being so. . . . For us, we say plainly what we think and what we feel, which is that it is not true that the Son was not begotten, nor that He is part of a Being not begotten. . . . But by the counsel and will of God, He has existed before all time as perfect God, the only Son, unchangeable; nevertheless, He was not before He was begotten, or created, or determined. For He is begotten. . . . This is why we are persecuted. . . . Remember our troubles, O true fellow-Lucianist, my lord Eusebius.”

Eusebius of Nicomedia was of a character to be gratified by this appeal to him, and to be glad to exalt the dignity of his own see, and to lower that

of Alexandria; for a rivalry had already sprung up between the capital of the East and Alexandria, a rivalry which culminated in the formal recognition by the Council of Chalcedon of the precedence of Constantinople. Eusebius invited Arius to Nicomedia. Here Arius used his subtle skill in keeping back the aspects of his doctrine which were most startling to orthodox minds, and pressing the texts of Scripture which seemed to make for his views; his zeal for the fundamental doctrine of the Divine Unity was respectable; and he made the most of his being persecuted—not so much by the venerable bishop, as by the contentious and opinionated young deacon, who had gained the good bishop's ear. A synod of Bithynian bishops declared him orthodox.

It was while he was resident in Asia that Arius, in order to popularize his views, took the extraordinary step of writing a poem, which he called "Thalia" ("the Banquet"), written partly in prose, partly in verse, after the fashion of light gay compositions under the same title, which it was the custom to read on festive occasions. He also composed songs adapted to popular tunes—the "Sailor's Song," the "Traveller's Song," the "Miller's Song," on all kinds of subjects, introducing here and there a sentence upon the Trinity and the Word which embodied his peculiar opinions.

Some of the bishops of Asia considered that Arius was harshly treated, and wrote letter after letter to Alexandria, begging the bishop to withdraw his condemnation of Arius, and to restore

peace to the Church. Alexander, by the able pen of his young secretary, maintained his side of the controversy with wisdom and firmness. Some of these letters of Alexander which remain to us are marked by a tone of authority, and by a discretion full of humility, though not wanting in skill. The first chapter of St. John's Gospel formed the basis of all their reasoning: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There human thought is arrested on the edge of divine mysteries: "the holy John has not thought proper to discuss the generation of the Son . . . because the ineffable essence of the Word passes the subtlest comprehension not only of evangelists, but even of angels. Therefore I do not think that I should reckon among pious men those who ask anything beyond, and who do not attend to that which is written, 'Do not exercise thyself in matters too great for thee, nor in things too wonderful for thee.'"^{*} Thus each side sought to enlist the sympathies and secure the judgment of the bishops.

When Constantine entered upon the sovereignty of the East, he found this controversy engaging the minds of men. The two Churchmen on whom the Emperor chiefly depended for a knowledge of the affairs of the Eastern Church, were the clever and politic Eusebius of Nicomedia, who, as bishop of the capital city, was necessarily much about the

^{*} Psalm cxxxi. 1.

court, and Eusebius of Cæsarea, whose learning, high character, moderation, and the high esteem in which he was held by the Eastern Churches, justly recommended him to the Emperor's confidence. Both these bishops were among those who had taken an active part in the Arian controversy, and had endeavoured to induce Alexander to withdraw his condemnation of Arius.

The Emperor was greatly vexed to find these dissensions distracting the Eastern Church. At first, seeing the matter through the representations of the two Eusebii, he saw nothing more in the point under controversy than a curious metaphysical speculation, which lay beyond the legitimate sphere of Christian doctrine; and he attempted to terminate it by an invitation to both parties to desist from the controversy, to make mutual concessions, and to be reconciled.

“Victor Constantinus” (he writes), *“Maximus, Augustus, to Alexander and Arius.”*

. . . “Oh, divine goodness, what news has struck my ears, or rather has wounded my soul! I learn that there are among you still greater dissensions than those which divide Africa. . . . In reflecting on the origin of this division, I find that the cause is insignificant and unworthy of such contentions. Therefore I am induced to address to you this letter, and, invoking the help of the Divine Providence, I offer myself as the intermediary and arbitrator of your disagreement. . . . Your contro-

versy, as I learn, began thus: You, Alexander, sought to know of your clergy what they thought on a point of little importance; and you, Arius, advanced an opinion upon it which you ought not to have entertained, or if you did entertain it, ought to have kept silence about. Discord being thus raised between you, harmony was disturbed, the holy people divided, and the unity of the Church broken. But now let each of you pardon the other. There was no need for one to inquire, or the other to answer, on such a point. If you choose to discuss such questions to occupy your leisure and exercise your skill, yet they ought not to be discussed in public, and above all, indiscreetly, to be allowed to get to the ears of the people. For how many are there who can accurately comprehend such difficult questions, and adequately set them forth? And if any one thinks that he can do so, yet how many of the people does he think could understand him? Who can be sure, in such delicate questions, that he may not glide into error? On such subjects it is desirable to be silent, lest either the incapacity of the speaker should cause him to fail to express himself with sufficient clearness, or the slowness of mind of the hearer should make him misunderstand what is said, and, one way or the other, the people fall into blasphemies and schisms. The interrogation was imprudent, and the reply indiscreet. Let each forgive the other. For the question between you is not on one of the principal points of the faith, or a new dogma on

the divine worship. At bottom you both hold the same opinion; you could easily return to the same communion. . . . See the philosophers of a school, how they possess the same opinions, and yet they often have differences upon particular points. But though they differ on points which relate to the perfection of science, they continue united and form only one school. How much more does this become you, the servants of the most high God, to remain unanimous in the possession of the same religion? . . .

“Return, then, to your mutual charity. Restore to the people their brotherly love. . . . Restore to me, to me, my tranquil days and peaceful nights. Let me, like others, enjoy the pure light and a peaceful life. If I do not obtain this result, it will cost me groans and tears, and I shall have no more peace upon earth. For how can I have a peaceful mind while the people of God, my brethren in the service of God, are so divided by an evil and hurtful dissension?” He concluded by telling them that he had been on the point of visiting the province of Egypt, but delayed his visit that he might not be a witness of the dissensions he could scarcely bear to hear of; and graciously exhorts them to “open for me, by your reunion, that road to the provinces of the East which your dissensions have closed against me; and permit me speedily to see the happiness both of yourselves and of all other provinces, and to render due acknowledgment to God, in the language of praise and thanksgiving,



for the restoration of general concord and freedom to all."

It is an interesting letter as illustrating the attitude of the Emperor towards the Church. It is natural enough that, looking at the point in dispute as put before him by the friends of Arius, and regarding it with the mind of a layman, the dispute should seem to him upon a mere scholastic subtlety; and that he should be disposed to blame one side as much as the other, and be anxious only for compromise and peace. We are struck by the tone which he takes. It is one which entirely becomes his position. He does not attempt to decide the matter in dispute as a judge; he does not command as a master; but, while he tenders his good offices as a peacemaker between the disputants, he speaks with something of the authority of a Christian sovereign, whose right and duty it is to watch over the peace and well-being of the Church and Empire; and he gracefully tempers the tone of authority by the expression of his deep personal solicitude, and by his appeal to their loyalty to the Church and Empire to perfect by their concord the restoration of general toleration, peace, and unity.

The Emperor sent the letter by the hands of the trusted Hosius * (now sixty-seven years of age), bid-

* It is curious to see the straits to which the Roman writers are reduced to explain the transactions of all this period in the sense of their theory. The Duc de Broglie says of this mission of Hosius, which seems very natural when we remember that for years he had been Constantine's trusted counsellor in ecclesiastical affairs: "The common opinion, *though no authority expressly*

ding him make inquiries on the spot, and use his influence with the disputants. But even the Emperor's letter and the personal intervention of Hosius failed to effect anything towards a reconciliation; on the contrary, there were tumultuous assemblages in the streets of Alexandria, and some of the statues of the Emperor were broken. Hosius pronounced Arius and his supporters to be in the wrong, and returned to render his report to that effect to the Emperor.

Arius also wrote to the Emperor a letter, which has not come down to us, but whose contents and whose tone provoked Constantine to a reply:—"Constantine Augustus to Arius and the Arians," which was posted throughout the cities of the East. We have commended the tone of the former letter, we are bound to blame the tone of this. That Constantine, liable to outbreaks of irascibility when opposed, should lose his temper under an insolent reply to the gracious letter which he had addressed to Alexander and Arius was not unnatural, but it was an error that the Augustus should condescend to enter into the arena and engage in a personal controversy with Arius, under the eyes of the Roman world, heathen and Christian. He complains of the tone of his letter; he argues with him; he quotes the Scriptures and the Sybilline oracles against him; he vituperates him; he calls him a serpent and the

says so, is that Hosius, a simple Spanish bishop, would not have been charged with this mission, which put him above the Patriarch of Alexandria, if he had not been authorized by a delegation from the see of Rome" ("L'Eglise et l'Empire," i. 386).

image of the devil; he makes a bad pun on his name; he threatens him; and, finally, he dares him to come and meet him face to face: "If thou hast confidence in thyself, if thou hast a pure conscience, come, come to me, the man of God, and trust me that my interrogations will know how to get to the bottom of thy mind. If I find that this madness is ingrained in it, I shall ask the grace of God, and I shall know how to cure thee of this envenomed bite; if thou shalt appear to me of a healthy mind, recognizing in thee the light of truth, I shall thank God and congratulate myself on my piety."

The court friends of Arius virtually accepted the challenge on his behalf by urging the Emperor to cite the heretic before him. He came; and, with the skill in evasions and ambiguities which he displayed throughout the controversy, he succeeded in perplexing the untheological mind of Constantine. The Emperor, supposing him to abandon his erroneous views, contented himself with making him swear not to fall into them again; but showed that he was only half satisfied, by saying to him in conclusion, "I have this confidence in the Lord, that if you are deceiving me, and if you are concealing anything from me, God, the God whom you call to witness, will not fail to confound your imposture."

All this did not prevent Arius from continuing to believe as he had believed; nor hinder him and his followers from spreading their opinions; nor the controversy from growing louder and more bitter day by day.

Then the genius of Constantine, rising to the real magnitude of the crisis, conceived the idea of convoking a General Council of the bishops of all the world, to give the judgment of the whole Church of Christ upon the question which Arius had raised on the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In truth, the question was worthy of so solemn a solution. The controversy concerned the very life of the Christian religion. The belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of the living God was the very foundation upon which the Church rested.

There is no doubt what had been the Church's belief on the subject. It is true that, before the Arian controversy gave accuracy to men's thoughts and precision to the language which men held on the subject, some of the ante-Nicene Fathers used *language* which was sometimes uncertain and indefinite, and sometimes even inaccurate, with reference to the doctrine of the Logos; but, comparing such passages with others, and so arriving at the real mind of the writers, we find that the Church always held firmly the *substance* of the faith on the two fundamental parts of the doctrine, viz. the proper Godhead of the Son, and the personal distinction between Him and the Father.

It was most important that the controversy should not drag on. The Empire was just united under a Christian Emperor, who was inviting all his subjects to embrace the Christian faith with him, and so give to the united Empire the firm bond of a reli-



gious unity. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" was the question forced by circumstances upon the attention of the world. It was of the first importance that at such a time, of all others, the Church should not appear to be divided as to this vital point of the faith.

For it was not merely, as Constantine had hastily supposed, a subtle disputation which had no practical consequences. The question at issue was this : The Catholics asserted that Jesus Christ was very and eternal God ; the Arians, however high in creation they might place Him, yet placed Him among the creatures. If the Catholics were right, it was sin not to worship Him ; if the Arians were right, to worship him was idolatry. If Jesus must be brought down from the Catholic altitude of God to the Arian level of a creature, the whole Christian scheme must undergo a corresponding degradation. The notion of the sinfulness of sin ; of the value of the Atonement ; of the love of God in giving the Son to die for us ; of the exaltation of our humanity in Jesus ; of the power of Jesus to aid us ; must all be brought down from the height at which the Deity of Jesus Christ places them, to a level immeasurably lower. Moreover, it was not merely the specious, cautious, refined doctrine which was put forward by Arianism when seeking recognition from the Catholics, which had to be taken into account ; it was the grosser doctrines which lay beneath, and which came to light afterwards, when Arianism seemed for a while triumphant ; and it was, further, the con-

clusions to which Arianism naturally led—theism first, perhaps atheism in the end.

It may be—the sequel of the history makes it probable that it was so—that Constantine himself was not theologian enough to have any very precise and decided views on the doctrine in dispute. But to him belongs the merit of having comprehended the situation rightly from his own point of view, and of having conceived that solution which, more than all his conquests, more than his foundation of the Byzantine Empire, has contributed to his imperishable fame.

His position of Emperor of the undivided Empire gave him the key to the comprehension of the situation. The grand idea which occupied his mind was that of a united Empire, with one religion. Just when the rapid spread of Christianity and decadence of heathenism promised to terminate the “civil war” between the two religions, this heresy seemed about to divide the Christian world into two camps, and to kindle a new “civil war” of religion, hardly less hurtful than the other to the tranquillity of the Empire.

The Emperor's position also suggested to him the possibility of the solution. He was the centre of the Empire's unity, the whole administration of the Empire was daily under his review, and the idea, almost impossible to any one else, was natural to him, of assembling the chiefs of the ecclesiastical administration for a common decision, thenceforth to be carried into execution everywhere.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA.

THE site of the city of Nicæa is described for us by Dean Stanley * with his usual felicity: "Descending from the high wooded steep of one of the mountain ranges of Bithynia . . . beneath us lay the long inland lake—the Ascanian Lake—which, communicating at its western extremity by a small inlet with the Sea of Marmora, fills up almost the whole valley. . . . At the head of the lake appeared the oblong space enclosed by the ancient walls, of which the rectangular form indicated with unmistakable precision the original foundations of the city." It was built on the same general plan as the other cities with which the Greek dynasties had enriched their Syrian conquests—a square, intersected by four broad straight streets, adorned with long lines of columns, which turned the whole length of their footways into broad porticoes; where, screened from the fierce glare and heat of the Eastern sun, the mixed population thronged in all

* "Lectures on the Eastern Church."

that picturesque variety of type and costume which now makes the cities of the East so full of interest. "The chestnut woods were then, as now, green with the first burst of summer; the same sloping hills, the same tranquil lake, the same snow-capped Olympus from far brooding over the whole scene."

We can imagine the bishops arriving, mostly in groups, at intervals of a day or two; and the people sauntering beneath the long colonnades of the principal streets, gazing at the new arrivals as they pass towards the quarters allotted to them by the imperial servants. Many who have come, easily and without fatigue, by the sea and the Ascanian Lake, walk along the colonnades with shipmen and servants carrying luggage behind them; others arriving in a caravan, riders and packhorses mingled together, covered with the sweat and dust of a long journey, pace slowly and slipping about on the hot smooth stones of the street, with clattering of horses' hoofs and cries of their drivers.

We can imagine the interest with which they gazed on one another, these foremost men of the Church of Christ; men known to one another—many of them—by the fame of their sufferings, or of their learning, or of their sanctity; men fully conscious that their meeting was in itself an epoch in the history of the Church and of the Empire.

We borrow freely from the picturesque pages of Dean Stanley, in order to place the various groups before the eyes of our readers.

First in importance the group of Egyptian bishops



with their priests and deacons. Foremost in the group in dignity, though not in real weight and importance, was the aged Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, the duties of whose official position had made him the accuser of Arius, and the chief on one side of the long and momentous debate on which the assembled Fathers were to decide. "The shadow of death is already upon him: in a few months he will be beyond the reach of controversy. But close beside the Pope * Alexander is a small, insignificant young man, of hardly twenty-five years of age, of lively manners and speech, and of bright serene countenance." Although so young, already the Archdeacon of Alexandria; for this small, insignificant-looking deacon is the great Athanasius.

"Next after the Pope and Deacon of Alexandria, we turn to one of its most important presbyters. In appearance he is the very opposite of Athanasius. He is sixty years of age, very tall and thin, and apparently unable to support his stature; he has an odd way of contorting and twisting himself, which his enemies compare to the writhings of a serpent. His countenance is striking, and would be handsome, but for the emaciation and pallor of his face, and a downcast look imparted by a weakness of eyesight. At times his veins throb and swell, and his limbs tremble, as if suffering from some violent internal complaint—the same, perhaps, that will terminate one day in his sudden and dreadful death. There is

* The Bishop of Alexandria, we have before noted, was at this period the only bishop who was officially known as the Pope.

a wild look about him, which at first sight is startling. His dress and demeanour are those of a rigid ascetic. He wears a long coat with short sleeves, and a scarf of only half size, such as was the mark of an austere life; and his hair hangs in a tangled mass over his head. He is usually silent, but breaks out into fierce excitement, such as will give the impression of madness. Yet, with all this, there is a sweetness in his voice, and a winning, earnest manner, which fascinate those who come across him. Amongst the religious ladies of Alexandria he is said to have had from the first a following of not less than seven hundred. This strange and striking personage is the heretic Arius. Close beside him was a group of his countrymen, of whom we know little, except their fidelity to him through good report and evil: Saras, like himself a presbyter from the Libyan province; Euzoius, a deacon of Egypt; Achilles, a reader; Theonas, Bishop of Marmarica, in the Cyrenaica; and Secundus, Bishop of Ptolemais, in the Delta.

“These were the most remarkable deputies from the Church of Alexandria. But from the interior of Egypt came characters of quite another stamp; not Greeks, nor Grecized Egyptians, but genuine Copts, speaking the Greek language not at all, or with great difficulty; living half or the whole of their lives in the desert; their very names taken from the heathen gods of the times of the ancient Pharaohs. One was Potammon, Bishop of Herculopolis, far up the Nile; the other Paphnutius,

Bishop of the Upper Thebaid—both famous for the austerity of their lives. Potammon had visited the hermit Antony; Paphnutius had been brought up in a hermitage. Both, too, had suffered in the persecutions. Each presented the frightful spectacle of the right eye dug out with the sword, and the empty socket seared with a red-hot iron. Paphnutius, besides, came limping on one leg, his left having been hamstrung."

Next in importance the Bishops of Syria. The first in dignity was the orthodox Eustathius, who either was, or was on the point of being made, bishop of the capital of Syria, Antioch, then called "the city of God." He, too, had suffered in the persecution; "but he was chiefly known for his learning and eloquence, which was distinguished by an antique simplicity of style." "Next in rank, and far more illustrious, was his chief suffragan, the metropolitan of Palestine, Eusebius of Cæsarea," the most learned man in the Church; his learning and character had recommended him to Constantine, who used his services as Greek interpreter, and consulted him in the affairs of the Eastern Churches. With him were his suffragans, of whom the most remarkable were Paulinus of Tyre, Patrophilus of Bethshan (Seythopolis), Macarius of Ælia Capitolina, *i.e.* Jerusalem.

"From Neocæsarea, a border fortress on the Euphrates, came its confessor-bishop Paul, who had suffered recently under Licinius; his hands were paralyzed by the scorching of the muscles of all the

fingers with red-hot iron. Along with him were the orthodox representatives of four famous Churches, who, according to the Armenian tradition, came in company. Their leader was 'the Moses,' as he was termed, of Mesopotamia—James, or Jacob, Bishop of Nisibis. He had lived for years as a hermit on the mountains; in the forests during the summer, in caverns during the winter; browsing on roots and leaves like a wild beast, and, like a wild beast, clothed in a rough goat-hair cloak. This dress and manner of life, even after he became bishop, he never laid aside; and the mysterious awe which his presence inspired was increased by the stories of miraculous power, which, we are told, he exercised in a manner as humane and playful as it was grotesque." The second was Ait-allaha ("the brought of God," like the Greek Theophorus), who had occupied the see of Edessa, and had just finished the building of the cemetery of his cathedral.

The third and fourth of the group require special notice.

Armenia, converted by Gregory the Illuminator, had long since, under its king Tiridates, abandoned its Magianism and adopted Christianity as the national religion. It is a point of the first importance in the constitution of the Council that Constantine did not limit the assembly of the Fathers of the Church to those of his own dominions, but, desiring to make it a Council of the whole Church, sought the attendance of representatives of branches of it which were outside the limits of the Empire.



The King of Armenia and its chief prelate were both invited by the Emperor to the Council; and it was in answer to this invitation that Aristaces, the son of Gregory the Illuminator, was sent to represent them, bearing with him their written profession of faith.

In the Persian Empire also the gospel had been preached in apostolic times, and a branch of the Church had been founded there, whose chief see was at Ctesiphon, the capital of the Empire. There had been peace between the Empires ever since the conquests and annexations of Galerius, fortunately for the peace of the Church in Persia, whose religious sympathies and relations with the Churches of the Roman Empire laid them open, in time of war between the Empires, to the suspicion of disloyal leanings, if not of treasonable practices, and often brought persecution upon them. To this Church also Constantine's invitation had been addressed; and John, the Catholicos of the Church of the Further East, attended by eleven other members of his Church, accompanied his friends the Bishops of Nisibis and Edessa, with which sees his own Church was closely allied.

Among the Goths also, beyond the Danube, the gospel had been preached by Christian captives carried back in raids upon the Empire, and a Church had been organized. From this Church came Theophilus the Goth, with four others of his brethren, whose presence excited great interest among the Fathers.

As the caravan composed of the Persian, Armenian, and Mesopotamian prelates journeyed westward, they overtook the prelates of Asia Minor, with the chief of whom, Leontius of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, the Armenian Church had special relations. For, it was said, Gregory of Armenia had received ordination from his hands, and had desired that his successor should always seek ordination from the see of Cæsarea. For this reason, probably, Aristaces and his companions, not accidentally, joined the company of the bishops of Asia Minor. Among them Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris of Chalcedon, Menophantus of Ephesus, and Theognis the Bishop of Nicæa itself, were among the most resolute defenders of Arius. Eusebius, the bishop of the capital city of the Eastern Empire, was one of the most influential prelates of the Church. He claimed distant relationship with the imperial family; he had been a favourite of Constantia, the sister of Constantine and now the widow of Licinius, and had thus become a favourite of Constantine.

“Besides their more regular champions, the orthodox party of Greece and Asia Minor had a few very eccentric allies. One was Acesius, the Novatian — ‘the Puritan,’ summoned by Constantine from Byzantium, from the deep respect he entertained for his ascetic character. Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, was, amongst the bishops, the fiercest opponent of Arius, and when the active deacon of Alexandria was not present, seems to have borne the brunt of the argument . . . one of those awk-

ward theologians, who never could attack Arianism without falling into Sabellianism ; . . . in the present form of the Nicene Creed, one clause (that which asserts that 'the kingdom of Christ shall have no end') is said to have been expressly aimed at his exaggerated language."

From the island of Cyprus arrived the shepherd Spyridion, a shepherd both before and after his elevation to the episcopate. His embalmed body is still preserved in a shrine in the church called by his name in Corfu.

All these belong to the Eastern half of the Church, and number 310 out of the reputed total of 318 Fathers. The remaining eight represent the Western Churches. It is an illustration of the fact that Europe was then the least civilized, least learned, least important portion of the Church, that it was considered enough that Italy, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Illyricum, should be represented by eight delegates in a Council of the whole Church ; and the fact is further illustrated when we find that, of these eight, all but one are unknown to fame. Nicasius came from Gaul, Marcus from Calabria, Eustorgius from Milan, Capito from Sicily, Domnus from Strido ; Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome, too old to travel, was represented by two of his presbyters—as Metrophanes, Bishop of Byzantium, was for the same reason ; the one Western bishop of reputation and weight was Hosius of Cordova, who, as we have seen, had accompanied Constantine to the East, and who appears still to have been his most trusted counsellor in affairs of religion.

The authorities differ as to the exact number of bishops present, and, indeed, by some coming and others going, the number might probably differ at different times, but several concur in putting the number of bishops who subscribed the Creed at 318; and the total number of bishops, priests, and deacons present in Nicæa is computed at about 2000. The ancient authorities are not agreed as to the date or duration of the Council. Hefele proposes to reconcile the conflicting accounts by assuming that "the Synod was called for the 20th of May. The Emperor being absent at that time, they held only less solemn discussions and deliberations until the 14th of June, when the session properly so called began, after the arrival of the Emperor; that on the 19th the Creed was drawn up; and that the other business, such as the Easter controversy, was then continued, and the Synod terminated on the 25th of August."

The Emperor had been detained at Nicomedia, celebrating some festivities on the anniversary of his victory over Licinius, but on the 14th of June the session of the Synod was formally opened.

This remarkable assembly of the chiefs of the Christian Church from all parts of the world, for the discussion of some of the highest questions which interest the human mind, attracted others besides those specially invited. Some philosophers, even some pagan philosophers, swelled the number of those who were gathered in Nicæa. They would not, of course, be admitted to any formal sittings of the Council, but the manners of the East would



offer them abundant opportunities, in the casual groups gathered together under the pleasant shade of the colonnades in the public places, or in the crowd of visitors in the courtyard of the lodging of some distinguished member of the Synod, for the discussion of the questions in which all took so eager an interest.

The discussions between the Christian prelates and the pagan philosophers, at this turning-point of the two religions, must have been intensely interesting, and seem especially to have caught the imagination of the succeeding times. Gelasius of Cyzicum, a writer of the fifth century, gives a dialogue between the philosopher Phedo on one side, and the most learned members of the Council on the other—Eusebius of Cæsarea, Pamphilus, Hosius, Leontius of the Cappadocian Cæsarea, and Macarius of Jerusalem. It is clearly a literary device for the presentation, in a dramatic form and interesting way, of the arguments *pro* and *con* between philosophical heathenism and Christianity.

But Socrates, Sozomon, and Rufinus unanimously report an anecdote which is very characteristic of the discussions which must have taken place. In one of these, which had lasted a long time and had been keenly contested, the pagan philosopher, by means of his dialectic skill and his eloquence, had baffled his antagonists and assumed a tone of triumph, when an old man stepped forward from among the bystanders to take his part in the debate. He was a good, simple-minded old man, venerated for his

goodness and his constancy in the days of persecution, but he had neither learning nor skill, and the Christians feared, when they saw him prepare to speak, that he would only bring ridicule upon their cause. Still he was so much venerated that no one ventured to interpose, and the old man came forward and spoke: "Listen to me, philosopher, in the name of Jesus Christ. There is one God, Creator of earth and heaven, and of all things visible and invisible. He made all by the power of His Word, and confirmed all by the sanctity of His Spirit. It is this Word Whom we call the Son of God, Who, taking pity on the errors of men and their miserable life like that of the beasts, was willing to be born of a woman, to live with men, and to die for them. He will come again as Judge of all things which we have done in our lives. This is plainly what we believe. Do not waste so much trouble in seeking proof of what only faith can receive, or be seeking reasons why these things should or should not be; but answer me plainly, do you believe this?' The philosopher, in confusion, stammered out, 'Yes, I believe.' 'Follow me then;' and he carried him straight away to be baptized. The philosopher afterwards explained that he felt an impulse within him which forced him to confess the faith of Christ."

This anecdote at least illustrates the general idea which was entertained of the nature of the process of the Synod—that it was a triumph of faith aided by grace over a mere human dialectic. Not that dialectical skill was wanting on the side of the



faith. It was in this that Athanasius was of such value in the Council. He was not only the equal, but the superior of the Arians in that logical subtlety which was their strongest and most dangerous weapon. He followed them through every winding, exposed every ambiguous phrase and logical fallacy, kept a firm hold of the substance of the dispute, and put it at last plainly before the comprehension of all for their judgment upon it. But this is to anticipate.

The Emperor arrived from Nicomedia on the 4th or 5th of July, and the solemn opening of the Synod took place on the following day. This may be a convenient place for gathering together from the ancient authorities * what we can find to gratify our natural curiosity as to the personal appearance of the great Emperor.

The princely stripling whom Eusebius describes to us as standing on Diocletian's right hand, had

* There are abundant authorities. (1) A grand equestrian statue now under the portico of St. John Lateran at Rome. The Emperor is in military costume. The head of the figure is finely engraved, both in profile and in full face, in the "*Iconographie Romaine*" of le Chev. Mongez, at vol. iv. Plate LXI. Figs. 1 and 2.

The statue in the Capitol, whose pedestal is inscribed *CONSTANTINVS AVG.*, which is sometimes supposed to be Constantine the Great, is probably his son of the same name. It is engraved on Plate LXII. of the above work.

(2) A fine sardonyx cameo, with busts of Constantine and Fausta, is engraved in the same work on Plate LXI. Fig. 5.

(3) The series of medals and coins, some of which are large and fine.

grown into a man of tall stature and imposing presence. His features were slightly aquiline, regular, and pleasing; their most striking characteristic being a large well-opened eye, with a brightness which seemed to glow and flash in moments of excitement. Instead of the close-cut hair and beard of the last generation of Emperors, he wore his hair long, in separate wavy locks, which radiated from the crown and turned inward with a natural curl; and he wore neither beard nor moustache. Shall we bring a charge of vanity upon him if we point out that all this accorded with the resemblance to Apollo which the courtiers assigned to him, and which, to the last, he accepted? If, instead of etching his portrait in black and white, we were painting it on canvas, and were therefore obliged to give it colour, we should not hesitate to give our Apollo golden hair; and those large open eyes must surely have been blue.



CONSTANTINE.

Since his accession to the sovereignty of the East he had adopted something of the Eastern magnificence which Diocletian had introduced into the imperial surroundings, and which, no doubt, was politic. His purple robe was richly embroidered "with flowers and gold;"* he usually wore a light

* Several of the medals represent this mantle stiff with the ornamentation with which it is covered.

helmet,* encircled by the radiated jewelled diadem of the East. He was in the habit also of carrying a spear, the Roman *pilum*, some six feet long ; with its broad steel head ornamented with gold, and its gilded shaft terminated in a jewelled knob of gold, it would form no inappropriate sceptre for the Emperor who, as a youth, had commanded the admiration of the legions by single combats against the lion in the amphitheatre and the Sarmatian champion in the field ; who had won the day by obstinate hand-to-hand fighting at Verona ; had led the fiery chivalry of Gaul in the brilliant charge at the Milvian Bridge ; had headed the daring flank movement at Adrianople. We shall see hereafter how his habitual use of this spear is illustrated in the story which tells us how he marked out with it, on the marble pavement of his palace, the length and breadth of a grave, to enforce his lesson of moderation on his courtiers ; and when we see him pacing onward, with the expression on his face "of some bold seer in a trance," as he traces with the same spear the wide limits of the new Rome.

The Synod met in one of the great basilicas of the town. Eusebius describes minutely the interesting spectacle. Seats were ranged along the walls for the bishops, who probably sat in the order of their pre-

* The coin of Maxentius, p. 92, represents a light helmet of elegant shape, which may supply us with a pattern of that which Constantine wore. A medal of Constantine II., in the British Museum, represents him, full faced, in a helmet with a plume of feathers.

cedence, with their priests seated behind them, and their deacons on a lower seat before them. The clergy of those times seem to have been already distinguishable by their dress. The deacons wore the long tunic, the priests and bishops wore the pallium over the tunic, and these robes seem to have always been white, the colour proper in classical times to those who took part in a religious ceremonial. A low chair of gold had been set for the Emperor at the upper end of the hall, and on each side of him—so out of vague and not undisputed notices we gather—sat the Emperor's chief ecclesiastical advisers, Hosius of Cordova on his left, and Eusebius of Cæsarea on his right, as presidents of the assembly.

When all were seated in silence, the doors opened and the imperial procession entered. There was no armed guard. First came some of the officers of the household, then some of the court, then some of the imperial family; lastly, the officer who usually immediately preceded the Emperor appeared at the door, the whole assembly rose, and Constantine entered. His lofty, broad, imposing person was clad in a robe of purple embroidered with gold and colours, and sparkling with precious stones; his long, carefully arranged golden hair was partly covered by a light helmet, encircled by the jewelled diadem of the East. He advanced slowly up the centre of the hall, with his eyes cast down, with a slight blush upon his cheeks, with his customary majesty tempered by a Christian humility. His grand person, with his embroidered robes and flashing jewels, in the



midst of the white-robed assembly, was very striking and splendid, and, says Eusebius, was like the appearance of an angel. It must be borne in mind that the Byzantine ideal of an angel was—not like ours, an attenuated figure in white, but—an heroic figure expressive of power and majesty, attired in the hues of the rainbow, adorned with the jewels of the Apocalypse. Such an heroic figure, Constantine paced up the length of the hall amidst the profound silence and intent gaze of the assembly. Arrived at his seat, he turned and faced the Synod; made a slight gesture of salutation, as if inviting them to be seated. The whole assembly bowed, and when he had taken his seat they also sat down—the splendid embodiment of the power and majesty of the Empire, in the midst of the white-robed Fathers of the Church.

The bishop who was seated on his right, whom Eusebius does not name, apparently imitating the modesty of St. John in his Gospel, since there seems to be no doubt that it was himself, rose and, in the name of the assembly, uttered a few complimentary words to the Emperor, and thanks to God, which he has not more fully reported. The Emperor rose to reply; “amidst a breathless silence, with all eyes fixed upon him, he looked serenely round the assembly, and having collected his thoughts, in a calm and gentle tone” (Eusebius is careful to tell us) pronounced the following address in Latin, which was interpreted sentence by sentence into Greek, no doubt by Eusebius himself:—

“My very dear friends, it was the height of my vows one day to rejoice in your presence. Since to-day I have this good fortune, I render thanks to the Sovereign of the world; and I reckon among the greatest of His benefits the happiness of seeing you assembled around me, and disposed to be in all things of one mind. In future let not any enemy, jealous of our prosperity, dare to trouble it; and since the tyranny which had declared war against God has been destroyed from top to bottom by the help of this Almighty God, let us take care that the evil spirit does not find any other means of causing the divine law to be blasphemed. As for me, the internal division of the Church appears to me more terrible and more to be dreaded than any other war or strife; and nothing external causes me so much distress as this. When by the consent and aid of the Almighty I had triumphed over my enemies, I thought that nothing remained but to praise God, and to rejoice together with those whom He had delivered by my hand. But as soon as I learnt the division which had occurred among you, I came to the conclusion that the matter was urgent and ought not to be neglected, and desiring to find some remedy for this new evil, I have summoned you all without delay, and it is with great joy that I assist at your assembly. I shall not, however, have attained the complete satisfaction of my wishes until I shall have seen all your hearts settled in the same sentiments, and united by that concord which ought to reign among you, since it is your duty,



consecrated as you are to God, to preach this concord to others. Do not delay then, O my friends, O ministers of God, O servants of one Master and one common Saviour—do not delay to banish all cause of discord, and to reunite by peace the knot of your controversies. Thus you will do that which is pleasing to God supreme; and as for me, your brother in the service of God, you will make me your debtor beyond all that I can say.”

One regrettable incident of the Synod is that many of the prelates had taken the opportunity to present to the Emperor complaints against their brethren. The account of some of the historians leads to the conjecture that it was on this occasion that the Emperor dealt with them. Taking a bundle of papers out of the bosom of his dress, he gently reproached the writers for bringing accusations against their brethren; then, calling for a light and swearing that he had not read any of them, committed them to the flames, and again exhorted the assembly to brotherly concord.

The Emperor then, says Eusebius, “gave place to the presidents of the Council;” still, however, remaining and taking a lively interest and an occasional part in the proceedings.

No systematic report of the debates has come down to us, or seems to have been recorded. But from the accounts which Athanasius and others give us, we are able to gather a general idea of the proceedings.

To use language not unfamiliar to us in speaking

of the parties into which modern assemblies divide themselves, we might say that at Nicæa the great majority of the bishops formed the Right, with Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, as their nominal, and Athanasius as their real, leader. Arius and his more resolute adherents formed the Left, among whom the most important were the two bishops, Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais, already condemned with him by the Synod of Alexandria. The Left Centre, small in number, but of great importance from their learning and the importance of their sees, was composed of a group of bishops of Asia Minor and Syria, viz. Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theodotius of Laodicea, Paulinus of Tyre, Athanasius of Anazarbus, Gregory of Berytus, Metrophantes of Ephesus, Narcissus of Neronia, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, and Theognis of Nicæa. These are known as the Eusebian party. Eusebius of Cæsarea is usually classed with them, but his shade of opinion and his attitude in the Council will be more accurately defined if we place him by himself as forming the Right Centre. Hosius and Eusebius, as we have seen, seem to have acted as presidents; Hermogenes, then one of the deacons of Eusebius of Cæsarea, and subsequently bishop of the same see, acted as secretary of the Synod.

Arius, called upon for a statement of his opinions, seems to have thrown aside his customary reserve and prudence. He maintained that the Word was not co-eternal with the Father, nor of the same substance; that in the beginning the Father was

alone, and that He drew the Son out of nothing by an act of His will ; that the Father was invisible and incomprehensible, even to the Son, because he who has a beginning cannot know the eternal ; that the Son was God only as possessing an imparted divinity. These statements produced a great sensation in the Council ; the majority of the Fathers stopped their ears with the lively gesture of Eastern disapprobation, and cried out aloud against such blasphemies. Some extracts from the "Thalia" and the songs were read, and the grave Fathers were the more shocked, not only by the theological statements, but by the audacious levity with which they were put forth. From that moment the condemnation of Arius was a foregone conclusion ; and all that remained was to draw up an authoritative statement of the faith of the Church, which should exclude his errors and guard the true faith once for all delivered to the saints.

The interest of the rest of the debate centred in the Eusebians. They were, with all gentleness and courtesy, says Athanasius, invited to explain their views, and free themselves from complicity with the impiety of Arius. But this threw them into great embarrassment. They contradicted one another in a way which was almost laughable. They could not agree upon any formula which satisfied themselves and at the same time was satisfactory to the Synod. Eusebius of Cæsarea then rose and recited the ancient Creed of the Church of Cæsarea, which he said that Church had received from the bishops who preceded him, in

which he had been taught as a catechumen, and which he had accepted when baptized, which he himself had taught as priest and bishop. He also laid it before the assembly, in writing, as follows :—

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life, Son only-begotten, first-born of every creature, before all the ages, begotten from the Father, by Whom all things were made ; Who for our salvation was made flesh, and lived among men, and suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge quick and dead.

“And we believe also in one Holy Ghost.”

The most pious Emperor, he says, before any one else testified that it comprised most orthodox statements, confessed that such were his own sentiments, advised all present to agree to it, and to subscribe its articles with the insertion of the single word “One in substance.”

Then began a curious debate, described by Athanasius with the picturesque vivacity of an actor in the scene. Eusebius and his troop, as he calls them, accepted each phrase put forward by the orthodox, but gave it a meaning which took away all its force for the purpose for which it was proposed, and they abounded in texts of Scripture to support both their acceptance and their evasion. They were asked, Were they willing to write in the

Creed, of the nature of the Son, that He is "of God"? "We are willing," they said, "for we also are of God. The scripture says, 'There is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things;'^{*} again, 'All things are become new, and all things are of God.'[†] "Will you acknowledge," they continued, "that the Son is not a creature, but the Power, the Wisdom, the Image of the Father, and that He is truly God." They exchanged looks, and consulted in whispers; then answered, "We agree to that; for we also, we men, are called 'the image and glory of God,'[‡] and many things are called in Scripture His power. Thus, it is said in the Psalms, 'All the power of the Lord is come out of Egypt,' and the caterpillars and locusts § even are called the powers of the Lord. As for saying that He is truly God, we see nothing objectionable in that, since He has been made so." It seemed as if the one party could not find any phrase to express its thought, whose force the other party was not able to explain away.

Then some one suggested the word *ὁμοουσιος*, in Latin "consubstantial," in English "of the same substance," as a brief, clear, sufficient expression of the truth. The word was not new. It had been used by Origen in this sense; subsequently it had been abused by some heretics as a denial of any distinction between the Father and the Son; and Eusebius of Nicomedia, again, had lately used it in an orthodox

^{*} 1 Cor. viii. 6.

[†] 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

[‡] 1 Cor. xi. 7.

§ In the Septuagint version of Joel ii. 25, "my great army" is *ἡ δύναμις μου*, "my power."

sense in a letter which was passed round among the members of the Council, in which Eusebius condemned its use. The Eusebians vehemently opposed the adoption of this word—it was not scriptural, it was unsuitable, it was capable of a bad sense; but the more it was seen to be objectionable to them, the more it appeared to the majority that it was precisely the word for which they sought, as a word which distinguished between those who sincerely believed in the true Deity of Jesus Christ, and those who believed in something less. In fine, the word was adopted with only seventeen dissentient voices. The result was welcomed with general satisfaction. Acesius, the Novatian Bishop of Byzantine, added his testimony, valuable as standing outside both parties: “O Emperor, nothing which the Synod has determined is new; thus the Church has believed since the time of the Apostles.” The Creed which Eusebius had proposed was finally revised, and reduced to the following form:—

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made of things in heaven and in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, was made man, suffered, rose again the third day, ascended into the heavens,

and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

“And in the Holy Ghost.”

To the Creed was appended the following Canon : —“As for those who say that ‘there was a time when the Son was not,’ or that ‘He was not before He was begotten,’ or that He was ‘made out of nothing,’ or that He is of another ‘hypostasis’ or of another ‘substance’ than God, or that He is ‘created’ or ‘mutable,’ and ‘subject to change,’ those the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church of God declares to be anathema.”

At the same time the Synod anathematized the opinions of Sabellius, whose opinions Arius had accused his opponents of favouring; and thus made clear the two fundamental points in the doctrine of the Word, the distinction of Persons in the Godhead and the true Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then came the ceremony of subscribing to the decision of the Synod. There was an interval between the acceptance of the Creed by the Synod and the time for the formal subscription to it; and during this interval the seventeen who at first voted against it had time to reconsider the subject. The result was that the difficulties of most of them were removed, and all but five were prepared to subscribe without hesitation. Of these five, when it came to the point, Eusebius of Nicomedia, contrary to all reasonable expectation, subscribed. Eusebius of Cæsarea hesitated, but also signed, and then sent an explanation to his Church which is not quite

ingenuous. So that finally all the Fathers signed, with the exception of the two who had already been condemned at Alexandria, Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica. The former bitterly reproached the Bishop of Nicomedia for this desertion of his cause. "Eusebius," said he, "thou hast signed to avoid exile, but I tell thee from God that within a year thou wilt share my fate."

The Church having thus condemned Arius as a heretic, the Emperor proceeded to take steps against the disturbers of the peace of the Church and Empire. He banished Arius, and issued an edict branding him as infamous, and condemning his books to be burnt; and threatening those who should be found to have concealed them with capital punishment. The Synod, in its letter, alluded to this action of the Emperor in these words: "That which has been done against this man, you know, or will learn; it is not for us to insult an unhappy man who has expiated his crime by a just punishment."

The Easter controversy had been settled for the Western Churches at the Council of Arles, but the old diversity of practice had continued in the East. The Council of Nicæa therefore took the question in hand, and it was decided, "by the unanimous judgment of all," that the festival should be kept everywhere on the same day, according to the rule already agreed upon at Arles, and that the Pope of Alexandria should continue, as heretofore, to notify



to the other Churches on what day Easter would fall in the following year.

The Meletian schism was healed by the same kind of generous concession which had been offered at Arles to the Montanists.

This Council, like that of Arles, also dealt with a number of questions of discipline and order in twenty Canons, the subjects of which we may briefly state, for the sake of the indications they give of the Church questions of the day, with a note here and there on points of special interest.

Canon 1. A man self-mutilated not to be ordained priest, or if ordained to be deposed.

2. No one to be baptized, ordained priest, or consecrated bishop, without proper time for instruction and trial.

3. Clergymen not to have female inmates in their houses, except near relations, or such as are free from all suspicion.

4. A bishop to be consecrated, if possible, by all the bishops of the province, or at least by three, with the consent of the rest; the confirmation belongs to the metropolitan.

5. Excommunications to be examined by the next metropolitan synod, and, if confirmed, then to be accepted generally.

6. "The old custom in use in Egypt, in Libya, and in Pentapolis should continue to exist, that is, that the Bishop of Alexandria should have jurisdiction over all these [provinces]; and there is a similar relation for the Bishop of Rome (*καὶ τῷ ἐν ῤῥῷ*)

Ρώμῃ ἐπισκόπῳ τοῦτο σύνεθες ἐστὶν); the rights which they formerly possessed must also be preserved to the Churches of Antioch and to the other eparchies [provinces].” *

7. As custom and ancient tradition show that the Bishop of Ælia (Jerusalem) † ought to be honoured in a special manner, he should have precedence, without prejudice, however, to the dignity which belongs to the metropolis (viz. Cæsarea).

8. The Cathari (Puritans), if they wish to enter the Catholic and Apostolic Church, must submit to imposition of hands. (They were not to be re-baptized, but admitted by laying on of hands.)

9. The ordination of men who are afterwards found to have committed crimes is invalid; for the Catholic Church requires men who are blameless.

10. Lapsi ordained in ignorance, or in spite of a knowledge of the fact, to be excluded from the ministry.

11. Lapsi during the tyranny of Licinius to do penance three years among the audientes and among the substrati, and for two years more to take part with the faithful in divine service but without participation in the oblation.

* Hefele admits that the customary jurisdictions here spoken of are the patriarchal jurisdictions of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. The rights of the other eparchies, he says, relate to the superior eparchies of Pontus, Proconsular Asia, and Thrace.

† The fashion of pilgrimage to the Holy Places, which came in very shortly, served still further to add to the prestige of the Church of Jerusalem, and the Council of Chalcedon recognized this by assigning to its bishop the titular dignity of patriarch.

12. Those who have laid aside their belts, and afterwards returned to military service, to do penance three years as audientes and ten as substrati, but may be treated with greater leniency at the discretion of the bishop. (This seems to refer to military officers who retired when Licinius required them all to sacrifice, and who afterwards resought their old rank, and of course made the required sacrifice.

13. The old rule of the Church to be observed, that no one (under penance) dying be refused the viaticum (the Holy Communion). If, however, he recovers, he is to take his place among those who take part in the prayers without communicating.

14. Catechumens who have lapsed to be audientes for three years.

15. Forbids translations to bishops, priests, or deacons.

16. Priests and deacons leaving their own Church to be sent back to it; and no bishop to steal as it were a person who belongs to another bishop, and ordain him for his own Church: if he do so, the ordination to be null.

17. Clerics not to take usury or any sort of scandalous gain.

18. "It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great Synod that, in certain places and cities, deacons administer the Eucharist to priests, although it is contrary to the manner and custom to have the Body of Christ distributed to those who offer the sacrifice by those who cannot offer it. (This

relates to administration as assistants, not to celebration of Holy Communion.)

19. Paulianists wishing to return to the Catholic Church to be rebaptized. (Followers of Paul of Samosata, because not baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity.)

20. As some kneel on the Lord's day and on the days of Pentecost, the holy Synod has decided that, for the observance of a general rule, all shall offer their prayers to God standing (*i.e.* on those days).

We are told that an attempt was made to pass a Canon on clerical celibacy, but that it was prevented mainly through the opposition of Paphnutius, himself a celibate, who declared that too heavy a yoke ought not to be laid on the clergy, and that marriage is honourable in all.

The Emperor and the bishops fondly believed that the happy unanimity of the Nicene Synod had given lasting peace to the Church; and there seems to have been an idea abroad that the union of the Church and the world, so strikingly symbolized in this first General Assembly of the Church, marked the beginning of that last age when the kingdoms of the world should be the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ, and the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

We know that the Arian heresy was destined presently to shoot up again within the Church, and to spread, and almost to prevail against the truth. We know that the Christian Empire of the West

was destined, within a century, to be broken up and overwhelmed by a flood of barbarism, and that the invaders would be Arians. We know that the Christian Empire of the East also was destined, three centuries afterwards, to be conquered by the followers of Mohammed, and its Churches to slowly dwindle and deteriorate, to become persecuted, ignorant, and despised.

But the Nicene Council was not the less a great achievement, and did mark a most important epoch in the history of the Church.

Coming in just at the point of transition from those first ages to which the Church has ever since looked back as to its golden age of purity, and the subsequent period of Church history, it was the deliberate authoritative definition, by the Universal Primitive Church, of the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and handed down through a hundred streams, which here were brought together into one. The Nicene Creed was accepted by every branch of the Church, and continues to be the one Creed universally received.*

The Nicene Canons are also the authoritative witness to the primitive organization of the Church.

* "The Creed is still recited in its original tongue by the peasants of Greece. Its recitation is still the culminating point of the service of the Church of Russia. The great bell of the Kremlin tower sounds during the whole time that its words are chanted. It is repeated aloud, in the presence of the assembled people, by the Czar at his coronation. It is worked in pearls on the robes of the highest dignitaries of Moscow" (Stanley's "Lectures on the Eastern Church," p. 60.)

Within the compass of these twenty brief Canons we find a record of the classes into which the laity were divided—audientes, substrati, catechumens, preparing for baptism; the faithful who were baptized, confirmed, and communicants. We find the clergy divided into deacons, priests, bishops, with indications of their peculiar functions. We find that each Church was complete in itself; that the Churches were grouped into provinces, each with its metropolitan, and these again into larger districts, each with its patriarch. There are indications that this organization was of ancient date; that it had grown gradually; was still not completed, for the patriarchates of Jerusalem and of Constantinople were still to be formed; and that this graduated system of Church order was recognized by the whole Church as according to the spirit of the institution. But this system of subordination went no further. The great patriarchates continued independent of one another; and though the Church of Rome in after ages tried hard and long to carry the system one step further, and subordinate the other patriarchs to her authority as head of the whole Church, it is an incontestable fact of history that the other patriarchates have never to this hour recognized her claims. The Synod itself was the grand representation of the unity of the Church.

Again, the proceedings of the Synod sufficiently illustrate the fact that the Church of Christ has always been afflicted by the imperfect lives of her members, and lapses from her discipline and faith

and unity; by widespread heresies declaring themselves the truth, and organized schisms asserting themselves to be the Church; and they show the mind of the Church of those primitive times on these subjects, and its mode of dealing with them.

We have glimpses also of the belief of these primitive ages on the Sacraments, and its immemorial custom of observing the Lord's day and other great festivals, as Easter and Pentecost.

Lastly, the Synod is a very striking presentation of the relations into which this primitive Church thought it right to enter with the State, and of the relations which the Empire was content to hold with the Church. When Constantine, in his purple robe and glittering diadem, preceded by his heralds and surrounded by a group of his family and friends, stood in the midst of the white-robed assembly, the Empire and the Church were presented before the world in the most striking manner. Constantine represented the Empire—he *was* the Empire—all its legislative and administrative functions centred in him. Those white-robed prelates, seated in order according to their sees and provinces, were the official representatives of the whole Church of Christ—they *were* the whole Church by representation. The contrast between the two was remarkable: on one side the one absolute, irresponsible sovereign of the Roman world; on the other the representatives of an aristocratic confederation spread all over, and stretching far beyond the limits of, the Empire.

And their relations, anxiously discussed and care-

fully determined beforehand we may be sure, come out sufficiently in the narrative.

The temporal and ecclesiastical spheres were not co-extensive in the Synod, for, as we have seen, there were prelates there from Persia, Armenia, Sarmatia, over whom Constantine had no claim of sovereignty. Had Tiridates, the King of Armenia, accepted the Emperor's invitation to the Synod, it would have put more forcibly before the eyes of men that Constantine's authority as sovereign extended over only a part of the Synod; or, from the other point of view, that the territorial sphere covered by the authority of the Synod was larger than that which was covered by the authority of the Emperor.

We see that the Emperor opened the Synod with a speech declaring his reasons for inviting the assembly, viz. the hope, as sovereign, that it might give peace to his subjects, and as Christian, that it might give peace to the Church; and then "he gave place to the ecclesiastical presidents." He did not affect to be the official head of the assembly. He continued, indeed, to sit with it, and took part in its deliberations, but it was the part of an *amicus curiæ*, not even of an official member of the Synod.

Finally, when the Synod had arrived at its conclusions, Constantine as Emperor, of his own motion, acted upon them.

We happen to have a slight but valuable piece of evidence of Constantine's own view of his relation to the Church. "Once," says Eusebius, "when



entertaining a company of bishops, he let fall the expression that he himself too was a bishop; addressing them, in my hearing, in the following words:—"You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church; I, also, am a bishop, ordained by God to overlook whatever is external to the Church." And truly," continues his biographer, "his measures corresponded with his words, for he watched over his subjects with an episcopal care, and exhorted them, as far as in him lay, to lead a godly life." *

This has sometimes been read as if Constantine claimed some kind of authority in the Church; and one eloquent writer even seems to represent that he claimed to be "a bishop of bishops." Yet Eusebius's language is plain enough: he claimed no jurisdiction "within the Church," but an authority analogous to that of bishops† in things "external to the Church;" and he claimed that his authority had a divine sanction, as theirs had. We know that Constantine was strongly possessed with this idea, that his power and his success were of God. And St. Paul tells us that he was right: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God;" and so St. Peter, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as

* "Vita Const.," iv. 124.

† The word *ἐπισκόπος* would convey to the minds of men of the early part of the fourth century a less technically ecclesiastical sense than the word bishop does to ours, for it was also the title of a civil official.

supreme," when Nero was king. Constantine had rightly grasped the truth, that the secular and ecclesiastical powers are equally from God, and this is the key to His relations to the Church. It seems as if it were God's will that the two great powers which rule mankind, Force and Religion, should not be combined in one hand, but that the two hands which hold them should work co-ordinately. When He organized the chosen people, He made one man ruler and another man priest, but those men were brothers. The elder brother was the priest, but the younger was the abler man. And they worked concurrently throughout the history. Constantine exercised very much the same authority in matters of religion which godly kings in the Old Testament did; and this, in the second Canon of 1571 A.D. the Church of England says, is the rightful authority of Christian sovereigns in the Church of Christ.

The Synod was concluded with a grand banquet, which the Emperor gave to the Fathers of the Council on the day of the opening of the twentieth year of his reign, viz. the 24th of July. Eusebius, whose Eastern imagination delights in these splendid spectacles, describes how the soldiers of the imperial guard, with drawn swords, lined the court through which the Fathers passed—and thought as they passed how changed the times, since every soldier of the Emperor was a heathen and an enemy. The banquet had been arranged with a magnificence which surpassed all imagination. Some of the chief prelates sat with Constantine at the imperial



table; the rest were arranged at tables the whole length of the hall. Eusebius—with the actual Agapæ of the Church, and the symbolical Supper of the Lamb, in his mind—says that the spectacle of the Fathers of the Church sitting in peace and happiness at this splendid banquet, was like an image of the kingdom of Christ, and seemed to him more like a dream than a reality. The Emperor conversed cheerfully with his guests, and made them a farewell speech full of good sense:—

“Cultivate peace among yourselves; avoid jealousy and strife. What if one excel others in eloquence or in wisdom? let him not be proud, and let not them envy . . . for God only can judge truly of each one’s merit. Let the strong be indulgent to the weak, for there is nothing perfect in this world; we must forgive some weaknesses to humanity. . . . Avoid disputes; they give occasion for ridicule to those who are always ready to calumniate the faith. It is of them you must specially think; we shall gain them if everything which is done among you be irreproachable. . . . Not too much preaching; sermons do not do the same good to everybody. There are some people who want help for their necessities, and others want protection; . . . with some little presents, which show esteem, kindle affection; but there are few who love sermons, and fewer who love the truth. One must adapt one’s self to everybody, and, like a good physician, give each what his case requires.”

Before dismissing them Constantine distributed

presents among them, and also gave them letters to the proper officers of their provinces, ordering a certain quantity of corn to be put at the disposition of the Churches every year for the sustenance of the clergy, the Church widows and virgins, and the poor. Finally, he asked their prayers. He put the imperial posts at their disposal for their return to their sees.

The Council produced a great impression upon the popular imagination, which found expression of its conceptions in the invention of legends.

A fountain, it was said, sprang up in the square of Nicæa, where the Synod had united in a public prayer, whose waters had the gift of healing.

When it was attempted to reckon the number of the assembled Fathers, they always counted one more than the actual number; this One was the Holy Ghost.

Two of the bishops died during the Council, and were buried at Nicæa. When the Creed had been subscribed by the others, it was placed on the graves of these dead Fathers, with this invocation: "O fathers and brothers, you have fought the good fight, you have finished your course, you have kept the faith; if what we have done is pleasing to God, you who now see Him face to face, add your names to ours." The document was left there all night, and in the morning, it is said, their signatures were found added to the rest.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEATH OF CRISPUS AND FAUSTA.

AFTER a sojourn of nearly three years in the East, the affairs of the West needed the imperial attention, and Constantine resolved, as he had celebrated his decennalia, so also to celebrate his vicennalia in Rome.

Before quitting the East, however, he, by an exercise of his imperial authority, exiled Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicæa. Probably he had found, what was certainly the fact, that in subscribing the Creed of Nicæa, they had not abandoned their own views, and that their continued maintenance of those views threatened a renewal of the dissensions which seemed (for a moment) to have been happily terminated. By a stretch of imperial authority, he caused new bishops to be appointed to the two influential Bithynian sees. Having taken these precautions against the threatened revival of religious discord in the East, he turned his face again towards the West.

We are able to trace his journey, by the dates

of his edicts, from Naissus to Sirmium, to Aquileia, to Milan. At these cities he stayed long enough to look into the affairs of the Illyrian and Italian provinces, and he arrived at the ancient capital and took up his abode in the palace of the Cæsars on the Palatine Mount at the beginning of July, A.D. 326.

One of the edicts issued while at Milan restrains municipal corporations from imprudent expenditure of the municipal funds in public works, by requiring that one work shall be finished before another is undertaken; but from this general rule the edict makes an exception in favour of the building of temples. This exception brings our minds back again from the more Christian East to the less Christian West. It looks like a politic intimation from the Emperor, on the eve of starting for Rome, that the pagan party there need not fear any high-handed action against the ancient religion of the State as a result of his presence among them.

For, in spite of the Emperor's conversion to Christianity, Rome was as pagan as ever, and ill affected towards the Emperor. The great ancient families sullenly held aloof from the new order, which Diocletian had introduced, which Constantine had adopted and developed. The Roman populace equally resented the loss of the many advantages which they had enjoyed when Rome was really the capital of the world.

Fourteen years before, when Constantine had freed them from the tyranny of Maxentius, the Roman

Senate and people had welcomed him with enthusiasm. But in fourteen years they had had time to forget the tyranny of Maxentius; they had had time to find out again the consequences of the absence of an imperial court and the removal of the government to Milan; they had heard with profound dissatisfaction what Constantine had been doing during those fourteen years; they had heard of the dismissal of the adherents of the old religion from offices and commands, of the destruction of temples and the building of churches, of the Council of Nicæa. The result of these fourteen years of Constantine's rule was that Rome was dissatisfied and disaffected. And an incident soon occurred which, however unimportant in itself, supplied the spark which occasioned an explosion.

A few days after his arrival in the city occurred the Ides of Quintilis, the anniversary of the battle of Regillus, when, the ancient tradition said, the twin gods Castor and Pollux had fought for Rome, and had themselves brought the glad tidings of the great victory to the anxious city. On this day a grand muster and inspection of the Equestrian Order formed part of the ceremony in honour of the two equestrian gods.* All the knights, clad in purple and crowned with olive, assembled at a temple outside the city, rode in grand procession through the Forum and up the steep ascent of the Capitol, to offer a sacrifice in the central temple of Rome—the temple of the Capitoline Jupiter. It

* See Zosimus, ii. 2.

was considered one of the most splendid pageants of Rome. The cavalcade sometimes consisted of five thousand horsemen. It is this festival which Lord Macaulay has celebrated in his "Lay on the Battle of the Lake of Regillus." A few of his lines will place us more in the presence of the spectacle which Constantine saw than any lengthened prose description :—

"Ho, trumpets, sound a war note ! Ho, lictors, clear the way !
 The knights will ride, in all their pride, along the streets to-day.
 To-day the doors and windows are hung with garlands all,
 From Castor in the Forum to Mars without the wall.
 Each knight is robed in purple, with olive each is crowned ;
 A gallant war-horse under each paws haughtily the ground.
 While flows the Yellow River, while stands the Sacred Hill,
 The proud Ides of Quintilis shall have such honour still.
 Gay are the Martian Kalends : December's Nones are gay :
 But the proud Ides, when the squadron rides, shall be Rome's
 whitest day."

It was one of the most popular of the shows which still kept in memory the great days of the ancient republic. The people, no doubt, expected that the Emperor would take some part in the public festival : if he only lined the Sacred Way with the body-guard he had brought with him, and, surrounded by a brilliant staff, reviewed the cavalcade as it passed through the Forum, it would give *éclat* to the celebration. But, for some reason or other—whether he merely regarded the show with contempt, or whether he was displeased with the feeling the populace had already shown towards him—he kept himself entirely aloof. And not only

so, but as from the Palatine he saw the cavalcade pass by, he let fall some of the sarcastic sayings for which he was famous, which were reported throughout the city, and provoked a strong feeling against "the scorner of the gods." The Senate sympathized with the people. The Emperor was saluted with insolent clamours when he appeared in the streets. He held a consultation what course to take, and adopted the advice to treat these demonstrations with contempt. It was, perhaps, on this occasion that he uttered one of the "sayings" for which he had a talent, and which was remembered long after. A courtier ran in in a fright to announce that the mob were throwing stones at the statues of the Emperor. We know that, in those days, for one Emperor to throw down or insult the statues of another was equivalent to a declaration of war; and for the citizens of a town to insult the statues of the Emperor was an act of open rebellion and insult which was enough to expose the town to be given up to massacre and pillage. But Constantine had resolved upon a policy of disdain; so, passing his hand over his face, he said with a smile, "It is surprising, but I don't feel hurt." *

It was during this visit to Rome that the dark

* On the occasion of the overthrow of the statues of Theodosius by the mob of Antioch, when the Emperor gave orders for the destruction of the city, Chrysostom did not forget to urge this striking precedent for merciful forbearance with the petulance of a mob ("Hom. de Stat.," xxi. 11).

domestic tragedy occurred which forms the great blot on the prosperous splendour of Constantine's life. We must call to mind the heterogeneous elements of which the imperial family consisted,* and the various conflicting interests which they involved. There were first the two families of Constantius Chlorus: Helena, the Empress-Mother, and Constantine of the first family; the three sons and three daughters of Theodora, the step-daughter of the Emperor Maximian, of the second family. Then there were, similarly, the two families of Constantine himself: Crispus, the son of the obscure Minervina, of the first family; and Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, and her three sons, Constantius, Constantine, and Constans, of the second family.

It is easy to see the possibility of two distinct parties in these complicated relationships, and of bitter, if smothered, animosities. We can see the possibility of a great gulf between Helena and her son Constantine and his son Crispus, of a similar lowly connection, on one side; and on the other the children of Theodora and the children of her half-sister Fausta, all closely related through Maximian, all born in the purple. We can see the inevitable existence of bitter memories, the possibility of deadly hatreds, when we call to mind that Constantine had put to death the Emperor Maximian, the father or grandfather of all this second group of persons; had been the cause of the death of Maxen-

* See the Genealogical Table at the beginning of this book.



tius, the brother of Fausta; and had put to death the son of Maxentius, and Licinius, the husband of Constantia.

We can see the probability of intenser rivalries when we imagine the speculations as to the future disposition of the great heritage which Constantine had won. Would he retain the unity of the sovereign power, and transmit it to his eldest son, as Constantius Chlorus had made Constantine himself his heir, to the exclusion of his second family? He had already made Crispus Cæsar ten years ago, and given him the provinces of Gaul. He had lately given him the command of the fleet in the war against Licinius; and Crispus, by his character and his military achievements, had won for himself a brilliant reputation, and was a popular favourite. The Emperor had indeed made Constantine and Constantius Cæsars, and he had also allowed Licinianus to retain the title, and had contemplated giving it to Bassianus. But it was unlikely that the title of Cæsar given thus was intended to lead to the reality of empire, and that he would divide the Empire among them all.

It is a little remarkable that at the consultation we have just mentioned on the subject of the treatment of the Roman riots, two of the three half-brothers of Constantine were present. They had been brought up by the Empress-Mother with kindness, but had been kept in obscurity, and this is the first time we hear of their taking part in any matter of public interest. But while the Emperor was

thus surrounded at Rome by the members of one of these family groups, Helena and Crispus appear to have been absent.

It would seem that these opposite interests ripened into action now at Rome. The secret of the intrigue which led to such terrible results was well kept. Nothing but vague and inconsistent rumours got abroad at the time, and lapse of years did not lead to a divulgence of the details of the story.

One rumour which circulated through the city was that Crispus was accused by Fausta of treason. Another story was that the Greek tragedy of Phædra and Hippolytus found a repetition in the family of Constantine, and the more horrible story doubtless met with the readier acceptance. The fact that Fausta was a matron of mature years and unblemished character, that she was not put to death at the same time as Crispus, and apparently not till some months (perhaps not till two years) afterwards, seems inconsistent with the latter story. The fact that Licinianus, who was in the East, was put to death at the same time as Crispus, seems to indicate a political motive.* The



FAUSTA.

* Niebuhr ("History of Rome") says, "I do not see how it can be proved that Crispus was innocent. He had demanded the title of Augustus, which his father had refused. That a father should put his son to death is certainly repulsive to our feelings, but it is

former story is the more probable—that Fausta professed to bring to the knowledge of Constantine a conspiracy in which Crispus and Licinianus were concerned; that Constantine, surrounded by the domestic faction which was hostile to Crispus, and made suspicious by the disaffected attitude of the Romans, was wrought upon to believe the accusation, and to order the arrest and death of the two young princes, and a number of other persons believed to be their accomplices; that the Empress-Mother, Helena, then appeared upon the scene; that through her the falsity of the accusations which had proved fatal to the princes was established; that Constantine, wrought upon by remorse for the death of his favourite son, and by the denunciations of his mother, commanded the execution of his guilty wife. The facts which are certain are that Crispus was put to death at Pola, in Istria; that Licinianus was torn from his mother's arms in the East and slain; and all the authorities agree that Fausta was suffocated in a hot bath. The story rises to the very height of the grandeur of the ancient Greek tragedy, filling us with a huge pity, not only for the innocent victims, but also and still more for the great Emperor whose splendid fame is thus stained with involuntary crime, and his life embittered by such awful recollections.

The Romans were famous, then as now, for rash and inconsiderate to assert that Crispus was innocent. It is to me highly probable that Constantine himself was quite convinced of his son's guilt."

venging themselves on an unpopular master by a biting pasquinade. The following distich was fastened on the palace doors in bitter mockery of the tragedy we have described :—

“ Saturni aurea sæcla quis requirat ?
Sunt hæc gemmea—sed Neroniana.”

“ Who asks for the Saturnian golden age ?
This age is jewelled—but Neronian.”

In which is combined a sneer at the Emperor's Eastern splendour, which had much offended the Roman taste, and a malignant comparison of himself to Nero, who slew his wife and mother. Its authorship was popularly attributed to Ablavius, the Emperor's favourite !

A group of traditions, pagan and Christian, grew up about this series of events, which in their horror and their mystery appealed so forcibly to the vulgar imagination. Zosimus, the heathen historian, tells us that Constantine, tormented with remorse, applied to the pagan flamens for some purifying rite, and was sternly told that in the worship of the gods there existed no possible expiation for such crimes ; that he then applied to an Egyptian magician who was in the confidence of some of the ladies of the palace, who assured him that the Christian religion had lustrations for the forgiveness of all sins. Sozomen tells the story a little differently. According to him, it was the Neo-platonist philosopher Sopater who played the part of the austere pagan, and the Bishop of Rome that of the complaisant

Christian. Baronius has adopted this latter tradition, and added to it others, and made up a striking story, in which Constantine is struck with leprosy as the punishment of his crimes, is divinely directed to apply for cure to Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome, is miraculously healed on receiving baptism at the bishop's hands, and shows his gratitude by heaping riches, honours, and privileges upon the Roman bishop and Church. The mediæval imagination, putting together the facts that after the death of Fausta Constantine quitted Rome never to revisit it, and shortly after founded his new capital in the East, conceived the idea that Constantine abandoned Rome to the Pope, conferred on him the right of wearing a golden crown in token of sovereignty, and endowed the apostolic see with a territory which is variously stated as consisting of all the provinces of Italy, or of the Western regions. A subsequent age, rich in forgeries, professed to produce the very document by which the Emperor had formally effected this resignation, and "The Donation of Constantine" continued to be quoted as an authentic document from the end of the eighth to the end of the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HELENA'S PILGRIMAGE TO PALESTINE.

THE precise year is not known, and is not of much importance, but it was certainly after the fatal visit to Rome, and after the death of Fausta, that Helena, the Empress-Mother, made that pilgrimage to the Holy Land which—by setting the fashion of devotion to the Holy Places, and of pilgrimages generally—had such important results, in introducing a new cult, in promoting international intercourse, in producing the Crusades with all their great political consequences, in stimulating the spirit of religious romance and adventure.

First let us say a few words about the Empress-Mother herself. The glimpses which we get of Helena seem to show her a woman of strong sense and force of character, and lead us to think that Constantine, like most great men, owed much to his mother. Though of lowly birth, like Catherine of Russia, and at first taken in the lower relation of *concubinatus* by her aristocratic young lover, yet she won his respect so far that, after the bloom of passion was worn off, he raised her to the rank of wife. And



when, after twenty years of married life, she was divorced for political reasons, which, with the lax notions of the age, implied no unkindness on the part of Constantius, no disgrace to herself, she seems to have been handsomely dowered, and to have lived prosperous and respected as the late wife of Constantius the Cæsar. Constantine, on his father's death, entrusted to her care the education of his young half-brothers and sisters, a trust which obviously had its political as well as its domestic aspect. Ultimately he raised her to the dignity of Augusta;* and his respect for his mother adds to our estimation of her merit.

Eusebius puts her before us, when the Empress-Mother was nearly eighty years of age, as making



HELENA.

her pilgrimage to Palestine, still vigorous in body and mind, frequenting the churches, and mixing without any token of rank among the congregations. In short, the general impression produced upon our minds by all we read of her is that of a vigorous,

sensible, irascible, devout person. The mediæval tradition was that Helena undertook her pilgrimage to the Holy Places in order to seek the expiation of

* The coins of the Empress represent her with a face which has a good deal of character, and a head-dress appropriate to her age.

the dreadful events which had happened in the imperial family, in which she had been implicated. But this is an anachronism. Such ideas have, indeed, an historical connection with Helena's pilgrimage, but they sprang up much later in the development of the theory of the religious merit of pilgrimages.

We are here at the very birth of the age of superstition. Eusebius tells us a story which illustrates another feature of it. The Empress Constantia had heard of a painting of our blessed Lord and of the blessed Virgin by St. Luke, and commissioned Eusebius to procure them for her. He sent for them, examined them, and, with great good sense, first destroyed them, and then wrote to his correspondent to tell her that the paintings were old paintings of no particular merit, and had no real claim to be what they were pretended to be; and then administered a little lecture on the danger of superstition.

The time was come when the Christian world had begun to look back to the first ages of Christianity in an historical and antiquarian spirit. Eusebius himself had, with great learning and discretion, gathered up into his invaluable history the authentic records of those early ages; and a thousand others, with less learning and less judgment, were beginning to inquire into ancient traditions, and to allow their imaginations to fill in the outlines and supply the gaps of tradition. It was simply this spirit, we venture to think, which led Helena to undertake



her visit to the Holy Land, and her search for the Holy Places.

On the Empress's arrival at Jerusalem, she inquired for the places to which the heart of the Christian naturally turns first of all, for the site of Calvary and of the Sepulchre of the Lord. It is quite clear from the history that the sites were not commonly known, and that her inquiries first suggested a search for them. We can easily account for the fact. The Church of Jerusalem had been a Hebrew-Christian Church down to the time of the great rebellion. At that period the Christians had abandoned the city, and sought refuge at Pella. Hadrian had built a new city, *Ælia*, on the ruins of the ancient Jerusalem, and had forbidden the Jews to enter the place. The subsequent Church of *Ælia* was a Greek Church. The topography of the city had been obscured by the destruction and rebuilding, and the traditions interrupted by the introduction of a new dynasty of bishops. Still the localities of a rocky site are not easily obliterated, and local traditions are preserved through social revolutions. We know yet which was the Tarpeian rock, and the site of the martyrdoms of Smithfield will not easily be forgotten. Calvary was a hillock outside the ancient city, and an ordinary place of public execution; it seems improbable that the knowledge of its locality should have been irrecoverably lost; but it does seem that the Christians of *Ælia* had not hitherto taken any interest in the question.

By the Empress's desire, inquiries were made of

Christians and of Jews. A locality was indicated. It was found to be covered with buildings; a temple of Venus, built by Hadrian, occupied the very site. Excavations were made. An ancient grotto-tomb was discovered in the rock beneath; near it three crosses of wood.* The tradition says that a miracle decided which of the three was the cross on which the Saviour died: a dying person, say some—a dead person, say others—was laid upon the first cross and the second without effect, but on being laid on the third, was restored to health—or to life. Two great nails also were discovered, which were assumed to be those with which the Saviour had been fastened to the cross.

The Empress sent the news to Constantine, and at the same time sent a portion of the True Cross and the two nails, one fashioned into an ornament for his helmet, the other into a bit for his horse.†

Constantine received the intelligence, as the Christian world generally did, with joyful faith. Throughout the mediæval period all Christendom believed in

* Eusebius is perfectly silent as to the discovery of the True Cross; but the other historians upon whom we depend as trustworthy authorities for this period, mention it—Socrates, Sozomen, Rufinus; writers a little later, as Ambrose and Jerome, relate it as a well-known fact.

† The Duc de Broglie suggests that Helena intended to indicate to her son, by a well-known symbolism, that this iron, consecrated by the blood of Christ, ought to control the Emperor's passions! ("L'Église et l'Empire," ii. 122). We rather see in it a superstitious belief that the one nail in the Emperor's helmet might keep him from harm, and the other as the bit of his war-horse might make it equally invulnerable.

it. Devotees from all countries flocked to the Holy Sepulchre. When it fell into the possession of the Mohammedans, the nations of Europe engaged in great wars to recover it. In modern times grave doubts have been started whether the site traditionally known as that of the Holy Sepulchre could have been the site of Calvary, because it seems to fall within the walls of Herod's city. Mr. Fergusson goes further: he denies that the traditional site is the site of Helena's discovery. He maintains, on the contrary, that the Shakhra within the Haram area is the tomb discovered by Helena, and that the famous Dome of the Rock is the very building which Constantine erected over it.

On receiving the news of the discovery, Constantine wrote to Macarius, the Bishop of Ælia, expressing his sense of the miraculous nature of the event, that the sacred monument of the Saviour's Passion should have remained hidden so many years, and should come to light when the enemy of the human race is overthrown and the servants of the Cross are restored to freedom. He tells the bishop that he has nothing more at heart than to see this sacred place freed, by his pious care, from the disgraceful relics of idolatry, and to see it adorned with every kind of magnificence. He therefore commissions the bishop to take steps for the erection of a church near the Saviour's tomb, which shall excel all other churches in beauty, and expresses his desire that not only the building itself,



but all its accessories, should be such that they should not be surpassed by the fairest structures of any city of the Empire. He informs him that he has desired the præfect of the province to collect workmen and artists, and to supply funds; he desires to know what columns and other precious marbles his design will require, and promises to have them procured; and suggests that the ceiling



THE CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM.

should be ornamented with gold. Eusebius gives an elaborate description of the Sepulchre, and the Church of the Holy Resurrection near it, with an account of the grand ceremonial of its dedication.

The devout energy of the aged Empress engaged in the identification of two other of the Holy Places

—the grotto at Bethlehem in which the Saviour was born, and the spot on Olivet from which He ascended to heaven; and at each of these places also she laid the foundation of a noble church. The nave of the Church of the Nativity, which still stands at Bethlehem, is, in all probability, a part of the church thus founded, and is the only remaining example of these great churches * of the age of Constantine.

Very soon after her return from the Holy Land, the aged Empress died, surrounded by her son and her grandsons, and leaving among them her blessing and her last counsels. The Emperor showed his filial respect by a magnificent funeral, which moved slowly from stage to stage across the Empire to the ancient capital, and there at length Helena was deposited, says Nicephorus, in a porphyry tomb in a round church, which is conjectured to have been that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus in the Lavicanian Way.†

Another death in the imperial family forms the prelude to a very important change in the history of the relations of Constantine to the Church.

While the funeral pomp of Helena was still making its slow progress westward, Constantine was

* It is fully illustrated in the Count de Vogué's "*Les Églises de la Terre Sainte.*"

† D'Agincourt, in his "*L'Art par ses Monuments,*" Sculpture, Plate IV., engraves a sarcophagus, which he describes as that of Helena, which was found in the Catacombs of Torri-pignattara, two miles from Rome, on the road to Tusculum. It is now in the Vatican.

summoned to the death-bed of his ill-fated half-sister Constantia. Married, in order to cement a political alliance, to the rough, licentious heathen, Licinius; deprived successively of her husband, and of her son, by a bloody death; she appears to have



TOMB OF HELENA AT ROME.

borne her hard fate with resignation, and to have sought her consolation in religion. Eusebius of Nicomedia, probably partly through her influence, partly, it was said, through his own skilful manage-

ment of the Emperor, had continued unharmed through the persecutions of Licinius, and had been the Empress's spiritual guide. From him Constantia had imbibed the doctrinal views which Eusebius had defended at Nicæa, and which he had not abandoned when, under the pressure of circumstances, he had subscribed to its creed. When banished by Constantine, he had left beside the Empress a priest of like views, who had diligently kept alive her sympathies with the exiles. When Constantine sat by her death-bed, softened by the sorrow of an affectionate nature, and touched by some remorse for all the misfortunes he had caused his sister, she pleaded the cause of the exiles, assured Constantine of their innocence, begged for their recall, and commended her chaplain to his kindness and confidence.

Constantine consented to her last wishes; recalled the exiles, and, by a stretch of his authority, caused the Bishops of Nicomedia and Nicæa to be reinstated in their sees. The Eusebian party, thus revived, obtained an influence over the mind of the Emperor, and this influence soon led to results which will occupy a later chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

CONSTANTINE had for some time contemplated the erection of a new capital. The experience of nearly half a century had confirmed the sagacity of Diocletian's selection of a site on the confines of Europe and Asia as the whereabouts in which the political centre of gravity of the Empire rested. At one time Constantine thought of adopting the site of ancient Troy, and is said to have actually commenced building a new city there. The imagination counts for much in dealing with men, and the imagination might reconcile both Greek and Roman to the adoption of Troy as the capital of the new Empire. The "Iliad" had immortalized the ten years' siege of Troy, and made it the poetic monument of the early greatness of the united Hellenes. Rome—so the great Latin epic embodied the traditions of the Roman race—had been founded by a colony of fugitives from the ruined Ilium. It might palliate the affront to Rome, it might be made to bear the appearance of the crowning glory



of the Roman name, to carry back the seat of empire after a thousand years to the cradle of the Roman race, to rebuild the ancestral city, and make Ilium again the capital of the Empire her children had won.

More prosaic reasons ultimately prevailed. The practical genius of Constantine recognized in the town of Byzantium, on the European side of the border line between the continents, the site best adapted for his new capital. All subsequent ages have applauded his discernment, for experience has endorsed the wisdom of the choice. By land, with its Asian suburb of Chrysopolis, it practically spanned the narrow strait and joined Europe and Asia: by sea, it was open on one side to Spain, Italy, Greece, Africa, Egypt, Syria; on the other to the Euxine, and so by the Danube it had easy access to the whole of that important frontier between the Empire and the barbarians; and round all the northern coasts of the sea it took the barbarians in flank. Besides its political advantages as the capital of the Empire, were its commercial advantages as the natural emporium of the commerce between Asia and Europe; and these latter were so great as to make the city wealthy, powerful, and honoured centuries after the provinces of the Empire had been torn from it.

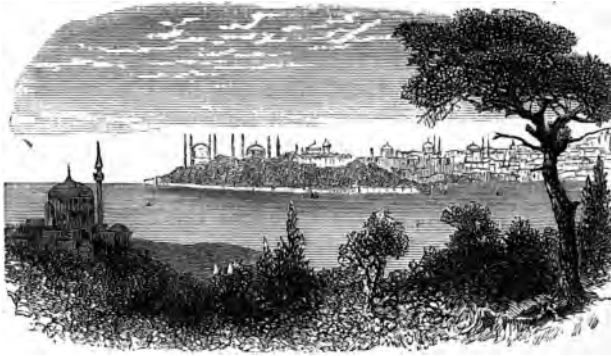
Its locality has often been described, and it deserves all the enthusiasm with which it inspires those who have described it from actual knowledge.

At the southern extremity of the narrow strait of

the Bosphorus, on the European shore, a narrow arm of the sea curves round towards the north-west, gradually narrowing to a point, and receives from its shape the name of the Golden Horn. Between this horn and the Propontis is a triangular piece of land, with a backbone of low hills which slope down with an easy curve on both sides to the water's edge. This triangle is the site of the city of Constantine. Its general external aspect must still be something like what it was. "The panorama of Stamboul is magnificent: I know nothing to compare with it." From the Golden Horn we see "the chain of low hills which slope down with an easy curve to the water's edge. The houses of the city rise one above another up the slopes, largely interspersed with trees and gardens, with here and there a dome and minaret; and each height is crowned with a monumental building. Beginning on the left, the first hill, which forms the point of the triangle, is occupied by the seraglio, the ancient palace and fortress, with its walls and towers and cypresses; then comes Santa Sophia, the grand church of Justinian; then the Mosque of Suliman; then the Mosque of Mahmoud—each group of buildings crowned with its beautiful dome and flanked with its tall, graceful minarets; then the ancient building called the Palace of Belisarius. And this grand architectural panorama curves round the shore of the Golden Horn, with its shores lined with shipping, and its bright waters alive with caiques." *

* "The Cross under the Crescent," p. 333. S.P.C.K.

The shores of the Bosphorus afford the most charming sites for the suburban residences of a wealthy aristocracy. "On each side of the narrow strait low hills rise with a gradual slope from the water, well wooded, with winding glens between. Every here and there is a village of good houses, and villas are scattered along the margin of the water and nestle among the woods on the hillsides.



CONSTANTINOPLE.

The European side especially is picturesque in its natural features and rich in handsome waterside villages and rural palaces. The straits between are studded with shipping, from the great Turkish ironclad war-steamers down to the caique with a single pair of oars. As we steamed down the straits, the rising sun illuminated this European side, and the panorama was beautiful." *

* "The Cross under the Crescent," p. 333. S.P.C.K.

There were not wanting stories of supernatural interposition in the choice and demarcation of the site. One was that the site was indicated to Constantine in a dream; another, that he saw an eagle fly across the straits from the Asiatic shore and drop a stone from its claws upon Byzantium. Another relates that as Constantine traced out with his spear the limits of the city, the area indicated by his onward march seemed so great that those about him ventured to ask how far he proposed to proceed. "I shall go on," he answered, "till he who goes before me shall stop;" and they gathered that some supernatural personage invisibly traced out the city walls.

Constantine proceeded to build his new capital, and more remarkable than anything else connected with it was the rapidity with which his design was accomplished. The authorities are not quite agreed. Some say that from the placing of the first stone to the solemn dedication of the completed city only nine months intervened. Two, or at the utmost three, years is the time which seems actually to have been occupied in the erection of the whole of a vast capital.

On the two sides defended by the sea a lofty and massive wall, thickly studded with towers, was considered sufficient; on the land side was a second line of wall, with towers at very short intervals, with moats at the foot of each wall; and still a third *avant mure*, with its moat, made a triple line of fortification.

The plan of the city included not less than three immense public places, ornamented with porticoes and surrounded by great buildings. The principal of these forums, which bore the name of Constantine, opened upon the site of an ancient rampart now in the centre of the new city. It was round in shape and surrounded by porticoes of two stages, and communicated with the rest of the city by two arches of the most beautiful marble. One of these arches gave access to magnificent baths, which included, as the Roman baths did, gymnasia, libraries, and every other convenience for the cultivated, luxurious loungers of a wealthy capital. On the south slope of the city was constructed a vast hippodrome, intended to amuse the people with chariot races instead of the bloody games of the amphitheatre of ancient Rome. Also, on the southern slope, the Emperor had built a magnificent palace, which was for ages afterwards the scene of all the domestic tragedies and all the palace revolutions of the Byzantine Empire. The palace extended to the seashore on one side, and on the other adjoined the circular Forum of Constantine in the centre of the city.

It was not only the fortifications and the public buildings which the Emperor built, but the whole city:—palaces for great nobles, shops for traders, more humble dwellings for a numerous populace. A description of the city written a century afterwards gives us some idea of its magnificence by enumerating among its buildings “a capitol, a

school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public and 153 private baths, fifty-two porticoes, five granaries, eight great aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the Senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and 4388 houses, which for their size and beauty deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations." *

The city was enriched with works of art. Other cities complained that they were robbed to contribute to the beauty of the new capital. The spoils of the temples were included among these works of art. The statues of Castor and Pollux, and the Delphic tripod from which the inspired priestess used to utter the oracles of Apollo, now served as ornaments, if not as trophies of victory over the old heathenism, in the Hippodrome. In two of the buildings adjoining the forum were the Cybele from Mount Dindymus, and a statue of the Fortune of Rome brought from the banks of the Tiber. The Palladium itself † was placed under a column of porphyry, erected in the centre of the great forum, and the column served as a pedestal for a statue of Apollo, with the head surrounded by golden rays, which was dedicated to the honour of Constantine by an inscription on its pedestal: "To Constantine, brilliant as the sun." Besides these specimens of ancient art, the best art of the day had done its best to add to the monumental interest

* Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," ch. xvii.

† Or a copy of it.

of the city. Statues of Constantine and of Helena appeared in several of the public places. Upon some of the fountains in the public places the gilded bronzes reproduced the history of Daniel in the den of lions, and the well-known symbol of the Good Shepherd. Over the entrance to the palace was an encaustic painting in wax, representing the Emperor holding the *labarum*, surrounded by his sons, treading under foot a dragon. In the central panel of the ceiling of the great hall of the palace was a cross ornamented with precious stones.

We have already said that there were numerous churches in the city, built no doubt with the sumptuousness which the Emperor delighted to bestow upon his religious works. We are assured that there were no temples—that the city was entirely a Christian city from the beginning.

One incident of the Emperor's care for the smallest details of his undertakings is preserved by Eusebius in a letter which the Emperor wrote to himself, ordering him to obtain fifty handsome copies of the Holy Scriptures for use in his churches. He directs that they shall be written on parchment and handsomely executed; he tells him that he has ordered the treasurer of the province to supply all that is necessary; he bids him send them when finished by one of his deacons, who shall receive proofs of the imperial liberality, and he encloses an authorization to use two of the public carriages for the purpose.

The Emperor showed his judgment in entrusting the commission to the Bishop of Cæsarea. He was not only one of the most learned men of his time in the Church, but he was in some sort the heir and representative of the Biblical scholarship of the previous ages of the Church. The Alexandrian school had always been the great school of Christian learning. Origen had gathered all its learning into his own capacious mind, and illustrated it with the brilliancy of his daring genius. Origen's place of refuge from an unfriendly bishop had been Cæsarea. There, among other books, was left his "Hexapla," the completest result of his critical examination of the text of the sacred Scriptures. This book had come into the possession of Pamphilus, the presbyter of Cæsarea, who had collected a library which was unrivalled in Christian circles. Like Origen, Pamphilus paid great attention to the reproduction of accurate copies of the Scriptures; there is more than one manuscript still extant which has been taken from, or collated with, some copy which he had transcribed or collated with his own hand (see Scrivener's "Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament," pp. 51, 59, 159, 223, 228). Eusebius was the scholar of Pamphilus, and so much attached to him that he adopted his name, and chose to be known as Eusebius Pamphili—Eusebius of Pamphilus. He was Pamphilus's assistant in these critical labours. Jerome, the next great Biblical scholar, speaks of the Palestinian manuscripts of the LXX., published by Eusebius

and Pamphilus from the text of Origen. A note in an extant manuscript in the Vatican Library brings all this before us in a very lively way; it says that the manuscript "was transcribed from the editions of the 'Hexapla,' and was corrected from the 'Tetrapla' of Origen himself, which also had been corrected and furnished with scholia in his own handwriting; whence I, Eusebius, added the Scholia. Pamphilus and Eusebius corrected this copy." * The Sinaitic manuscript of the Bible discovered in our own day in the library of the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, and now in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, is believed to be one of the fifty copies which Eusebius supplied and Constantine presented to the Churches.

But the city which thus sprang up, as if by enchantment, under the touch of those mighty talismans, power, energy, wealth, needed a population; and it was hardly finished before its palaces and houses were warm with inhabitants, its streets and forums and baths busy with loungers, its churches crowded with worshippers. The royal family and the great officers of state at once moved into the palaces and mansions allotted them, and with them came all the people who belong to and live upon a splendid court. Many great nobles were presented with a house, and invited to take up their occasional residence at court. A popular tradition illustrates

* Smith's "Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Biography," art. "Eusebius."

the way in which this section of the population was drawn to New Rome. It says that when Constantine began to build the city, he sent twelve patricians of Rome on an embassy to the King of Persia. At the end of sixteen months, their errand done, they returned to report to the Emperor, who was already residing in his new palace in his new capital. He entertained them at dinner, and in the course of conversation asked when they proposed to return to their palaces and their families in Rome. "Not for some weeks," they replied. "You will find yourselves there this evening," said the Emperor. On rising from table, each was conducted by the imperial servants to a palace built in exact imitation of his own in Rome. On entering, he found the rooms filled with his own furniture, his own servants received him, and his wife and family came forward to welcome him home. During their sixteen months' absence the Emperor had built these palaces for them, and prepared them this surprise.

Great privileges were offered to attract inhabitants of the middle class ; and finally the appointment of great periodical doles of bread and wine and oil, after the fashion of the ancient Rome, speedily drew a crowd of people who filled up the very necessary lower stratum of the population of a great city. The city was solemnly dedicated with religious ceremonies on the 11th of May, 330, and the occasion was celebrated, after the Roman fashion, by a great festival, largesses, and games in the Hippodrome, which lasted forty days. The Emperor gave to the



city institutions modelled after those of the ancient Rome, its own Prætorian Præfect, its Senate, its guilds, its privileges.

After all, the art of the day could not rival the architectural glories of the ancient capital; even the wealth and profusion of a Constantine could not suffice to erect buildings on the same scale of grandeur; nothing could give to a city built in three years, and a people swept together from all quarters, the prestige of ancient Rome. It must be admitted that the comparison which its builder forced upon everybody's notice only made more conspicuous the inferiority of the new Rome to the old. Still it was a great achievement. And New Rome became the capital of a Christian Empire in the East, which survived the Western Empire by a thousand years, and preserved the civilization of the ancient world for centuries amidst universal barbarism, and was the mother of the European Renaissance in the fifteenth century, and so of the civilization of the modern world.

This erection of a new capital of the Empire was the outward symbol of the erection of a new imperial constitution. This great transition from the ancient to the modern world had indeed been begun by the genius of Diocletian. As he was the first to select a city on the shores of the Propontis as the true political centre of the Roman world of his age, and to make it his capital, so he was the first to deliberately break with the ancient traditions



of the republican Empire, and lay the lines of a monarchical Empire. But if Constantine has not the merit of having conceived, he has the merit of having completed the revolution—for such it was. Diocletian moved his capital to Nicomedia; Constantine built New Rome. Diocletian indicated the lines of a new constitution; Constantine elaborated it and carried it into effect. In one respect Constantine reversed the policy of Diocletian, and that was his most original and successful act of policy. Diocletian endeavoured to preserve the ancient spirit of the Empire by exterminating Christianity; Constantine adopted Christianity not only as a personal faith, but as a means of infusing a new spirit into an effete society, and of giving the strongest bond of unity to its various races; and we can see that his policy was a grand and true one, though, through the force of circumstances, it was only partially successful.

We must content ourselves with indicating briefly the principles of the new constitution. The principle of the old constitution was to unite all the powers of government in one hand. The Emperor was sole legislator, administrator, and commander-in-chief. The Prætorian Præfect was the Emperor's *alter ego* throughout the Empire. Each provincial governor was the Emperor's representative in his own province—the chief judge, the commander of all the forces, the head of the finance. What Diocletian had done was to make four Emperors and four Prætorian Præfects, and so to diminish the

facility and the temptation to usurpation of imperial power. Constantine separated the civil administration from the military command altogether, and thus made it almost impossible for any great official to acquire the authority necessary for a successful usurpation of imperial power. Then he remodelled each of these two departments of government. Under the new constitution the four Prætorian Præfects, relieved entirely of their military functions, were simply the heads of the civil administration. Each of the four prefectures was divided into a number of dioceses; for example, the prefecture of the Gauls was divided into three dioceses, Spain, Gaul, and Britain, each administered by its vicar. Each diocese was again divided into a number of provinces; for example, the diocese of Britain was divided into five provinces. In all there were 14 dioceses and 119 or 120 provinces. There was thus a vast hierarchy of civil servants who formed an important class in the Empire, and who were entirely dependent upon the Emperor.

The revolution in the military organization of the Empire was still greater and more important. At first two, then four, then eight *magistri militum* held the chief command, with thirty-five generals, called *duces*, under them; the command of the cavalry was entirely separated from that of the infantry; and the charge of the arsenals and the commissariat was also made an entirely separate department. Constantine also changed the old legionary organization of the armies. Each legion used to be a

complete army in itself, 6000 strong ; with a strong *esprit du corps*, devoted to its own commander, and with the traditions of the centuries during which the legions elected the Emperors still fresh among them. Constantine retained the name of "legion," but he diminished the numbers of a legion to 1500, while greatly increasing the number of legions, and so reduced their status in the army to that of mere regiments of the line. Then the troops were divided into the *Domestics*, or imperial body-guard, about 16,000 strong, under two Counts of the Domestics ; the *Palatines*, who garrisoned the imperial residences ; the *Comitatenses*, scattered through the cities of the interior ; and the *Castriani*, or *Riparienses*, who guarded the frontiers. This reorganization of the military force was manifestly adapted to make it a serviceable force in the hands of the Emperor against the enemies of the Empire, and to deprive it of the power it had for so many centuries exercised of electing Emperors and overruling the destinies of the Empire.

It has been the fashion with historians to accuse Constantine of having by these changes secured the Empire against revolution at the cost of weakening it against its barbarian foes. The Duc de Broglie* eloquently and plausibly defends him against the charge. He points out that a master of the military art like the Victor Constantinus, who had spent ten of the best years of his life in defending the frontiers

* "L'Église et l'Empire."

of Gaul against the barbarians, was probably a better judge of the matter than his critics, who have merely re-echoed one of the cavils of the hostile historian, Zosimus. He suggests that it was only in periods of internal revolution that the barbarian invasions had been dangerous, and that to secure internal tranquillity and strength was the surest defence against the external danger.

There remains another sentence to be said about the new constitution. The magnitude of the army and of the staff of civil administration, and the lavish expenditure of Constantine in public works and otherwise, necessitated the raising of a large revenue by a vast body of fiscal officers. The taxation was consequently oppressive. It was the great grievance under which the inhabitants of the Empire suffered in those times; it caused much misery and not infrequent public disturbances.

The administration of justice in both civil and criminal cases was organized with great care, with a graduated system of appeals, and with stringent precautions for the honesty of the judges.

Lastly, the imperial household was organized on the model of the courts of the East. Its seven great officers were the *præpositus sacri cubiculi*, or lord chamberlain; the *magister officiarum*, master of the offices, whom we may call the home secretary; the *questor*, or lord chancellor; the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, or chancellor of the exchequer; the *comes rerum privatarum*, or keeper

of the privy purse; and, finally, the two *comites domesticorum*, or commanders of the guards.

All these great officers of State formed an official nobility with titles, and distinctive uniforms and insignia. The chief of them, in constant attendance on the person of the Emperor, formed, together with others specially chosen, the ordinary Council of State. The Emperor retained his absolute power undiminished. He was still the commander-in-chief, the sole source of legislation, the head of the whole administration, the ultimate court of appeal.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE COUNCIL OF TYRE.

EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia had been restored to his see, and had become the chief counsellor of the Emperor. Athanasius had succeeded to Alexander in the great see of Alexandria. These two facts prepare us for the new development of the Arian controversy which speedily commenced.

It was, no doubt, under the influence of Eusebius that Constantine summoned Arius to court, and gave him an opportunity of once more explaining his belief. Under the same influence, no doubt, it was that Constantine accepted his explanation as satisfactory. The Emperor was pleased with Arius for his submission, and prepared to be displeased with any one who showed a disposition to keep the controversy alive. Unhappily, more than one obstacle to the peace which the Emperor so ardently desired sprang up in the Alexandrian Church. Meletius had died, but before his death had, contrary to the agreement of Nicæa, consecrated a successor to himself; and thereupon the Meletian

schism broke out again, and the young Bishop of Alexandria found himself in a sea of troubles.

In the midst of them came a letter from Constantinople, from Eusebius, full of compliment, relating what had taken place in the matter of Arius, and praying Athanasius to receive his presbyter, now penitent and reconciled, into his good graces. But Athanasius was too clear-sighted to be satisfied with the explanation which had satisfied Constantine, and he simply refused to receive Arius back into his Church. Then the Emperor himself wrote, but he received the same reply. The Emperor was angry, and sent a second letter, bidding Athanasius, in most imperative terms, "leave the approach to the Church perfectly free to those who desire to re-enter it. If you oppose to them the slightest obstacle, I shall immediately send my servants to depose you from your office, and to remove you from the city." Athanasius firmly replied to the Emperor that "the Church of God could not have any communion with the heresy which made war against Jesus Christ." The Emperor was not prepared to carry out his threat; and there, for the present, the matter rested. But the dissensions in the Church grew daily. In Egypt the Meletians were violent in their opposition to the Catholics, and Athanasius was firmly enforcing the discipline of the Church against them. In Asia the Eusebians took action in defence of their party.

Eustathius, the Bishop of Antioch, and patriarch

of the whole Church of Syria, had been a prominent defender of the orthodox faith at Nicæa, and, after the judgment of the Council had been pronounced, expelled all his clergy who were sympathizers with Arius, and refused to be satisfied with their ambiguous submissions. In the course of the controversy Eustathius used some expressions which the Eusebians alleged to favour Sabellianism. The Eusebians thereupon determined to strike a great blow against the hostile party. A number of the Bithynian and Palestinian bishops assembled at Antioch, held a synod, and declared Eustathius heretical, and of evil life, and deposed him from his see. The people of Antioch made some demonstration in favour of their bishop. It was reported to Constantine that Antioch was stirred up by its bishop to resistance. The Emperor sent the Count Strategius Musonianus to appease the opposition, and to carry out the decision of the synod. Every one yielded to the Emperor's representative; Eustathius and many of his clergy went into exile.

The history of the filling up of the vacant see is interesting, since it shows the part which the Emperor sometimes took in the nomination to vacant sees. The bishops assembled at Antioch desired to secure the see for one of the most illustrious of their own party, Eusebius of Cæsarea. They wrote to the Emperor that the people wished to have Eusebius. The imperial officials at Antioch wrote to the same effect. Eusebius wrote a long letter, which he has left on record, stating his unwilling-

ness to accept the see. Constantine wrote three long letters, which are also on record—one to Eusebius, another to the people of Antioch, and a third to the assembled bishops. In all of them he praises the disinterestedness of Eusebius, and approves of his determination. Then he suggests two others, who seem to him suitable men for the see. This suggestion is made in very guarded terms. He does not assume any authority to nominate, and relies always on the bishops to observe the apostolic rules. But the Eusebians were glad to have the Emperor implicated on their side in the business, and they procured the election of Euphronius, one of his nominees. The friends of Eustathius held aloof from the transaction, and declined to recognize the new bishop, whom they regarded as irregularly thrust into a see not legally vacant.

The course of events was altogether in favour of the Eusebian party. They were not free from the suspicion of encouraging the Meletians in the opposition which harassed and occupied Athanasius in Egypt, while in Asia they had secured two great victories in the return of Arius and the deposition of Eustathius. They had the ear of the Emperor, who now regarded the orthodox party as that which hindered the fulfilment of his ardent desire for the peace of the Church.

The Eusebians were secretly, but incessantly, at work in furtherance of the interests of their party. Difficulties and dangers were thickening about

Athanasius. The readiness with which charges of the gravest and the foulest kind were trumped up against the most venerable personages, and the unscrupulousness with which evidence was manufactured in support of them, are the most striking features of the phase of the controversy upon which we have entered.

The enemies of Athanasius in Egypt accused him of oppressing his people by exactions in order to heap up wealth for himself; of pillaging the sacred treasures of the churches; of beating and torturing his opponents; of practising magical arts. They went so far as to accuse him of murdering Arsenius, one of the schismatical bishops, and using his dead hand for incantations; and a dead man's hand was actually shown in proof of the charge. Twice they brought these charges before the Emperor, and twice Athanasius replied to them. Once, even, he came to Nicomedia and defended himself in person. The Emperor gave him formal letters of acquittal, which were posted in the public places of Alexandria. Athanasius had, indeed, many friends, and was defended as warmly as he was attacked. He was beloved, too, by the common people; and as he passed through the city, or travelled through the country, or sailed up the Nile on his visitations, the people flocked out to meet him and welcome him with acclamations. This only suggested a new charge. They accused him of heaping up treasure and courting popularity in furtherance of designs against the State. Whether Athanasius were right

or wrong, he was the central figure in dissensions which kept the Church in agitation, and appeared to be the chief obstacle to the general tranquillity which the Emperor so ardently desired.

Whether the idea of the convocation of another synod originated with the Emperor or the bishops, we are not told, but the idea was adopted by both as the best way of dealing with the crisis. The Emperor summoned a meeting of bishops at Cæsarea, in Palestine, for the year 334 A.D. Athanasius, however, notwithstanding the express and reiterated summonses of the Emperor, declined to attend it. His enemies took care to nurse the Emperor's anger against the contumacious bishop who ventured to disregard the imperial mandate; but, with the longanimity he usually showed towards ecclesiastics, he contented himself with summoning another Council to be held at Tyre in the following year, and sending a peremptory order to Athanasius to be present at it. The Council of Arles had coincided, or nearly so, with the tenth year of the reign of Constantine; his twentieth year was made illustrious by that of Nicæa, and now the Council of Tyre fell in his thirtieth year.

The Emperor did not attend the Council in person, but sent the Count Dionysius, a functionary of high rank, to assist at the Council as the representative of the imperial authority, and addressed the following letter to the assembly:—

“ Victor Constantinus, Maximus, Augustus, to the Holy Council at Tyre.

“Surely it would best consist with and best become the prosperity of these our times, that the Catholic Church should be undivided, and the servants of Christ be at this present moment clear from all reproach. Since, however, there are those who, carried away by a hateful and furious spirit of contention (for I will not charge them with intentionally leading a life unworthy of their profession), are endeavouring to create that general confusion which, in my judgment, is the most pernicious of all evils, I exhort you (forward as you already are) to meet together and form a synod without delay; to defend those who need protection; to administer remedies to your brethren who are in peril; to recall the divided members to unity of judgment; to rectify errors while opportunity is yet allowed; that thus you may restore to so many provinces that due measure of concord which—strange and sad anomaly!—the arrogance of a few individuals has destroyed. And I believe that all are alike persuaded that this course is at the same time pleasing to Almighty God (as well as the highest object of my desires), and will bring no small honour to yourselves, should you be successful in restoring peace. Delay not, then, but hasten with redoubled zeal to terminate the present dissensions in a manner becoming the occasion, by assembling together in that spirit of true sincerity and faith

which the Saviour Whom we serve demands from us, I may almost say with an audible voice, on all occasions. No proof of pious zeal on my part shall be wanting. Already have I done all to which my attention was directed by your letters. I have sent to those bishops whose presence you desired, that they may share your counsels. I have despatched Dionysius, a man of consular rank, who will both remind of their duty those prelates who are bound to attend the Council with you, and will himself be there to superintend the proceedings, but especially to maintain good order. Meantime, should any one (though I deem it most improbable) venture on this occasion to violate my command and refuse his attendance, a messenger shall be despatched forthwith to banish that person in virtue of an imperial edict, and to teach him that it does not become him to resist an Emperor's decrees when issued in defence of truth. For the rest, it will be for your holinesses, unbiased either by enmity or favour, but consistently with ecclesiastical and apostolic order, to devise a fitting remedy, whether it be for positive offences or for unpremeditated errors; in order that you may at once free the Church from all reproach, relieve my anxiety, and, by restoring the blessings of peace to those who are now divided, procure the highest honour for yourselves. God preserve you, beloved brethren." *

The selection of bishops attending the Council seems to have been arbitrary. It was not a general

* "Vita Const.," bk. iv. c. 42.

assembly of the whole Church, nor of the Eastern provinces, nor of any definite division of the Church. The bishops seem to have been invited from the Gauls or Africa; there were one or two from Illyricum, but the majority were chosen from Palestine, Syria, Asia, and Bithynia, the stronghold of the Eusebian party. In the letter given above the Emperor says, "I have convoked the bishops whom you desired." There were about sixty thus summoned. Who were the leading bishops in the whole business is seen from the names which appear at the head of almost all the documents put forth by the assembly; they are the names of Theognis, Narcissus, Maris, Theophilus, Patrophilus, George of Laodicea, Valens and Ursacius from Pannonia and Moesia, who are all known to us as belonging to the Eusebian party. The meeting appears to have been presided over * by Flaccilus (or Placilus), who had succeeded Euphronius in the seat of the banished Eustathius. The Count Dionysius attended the sittings, surrounded by his officers.

Probably Athanasius had received an intimation similar to that which is conveyed in the Emperor's letter to the Council, to the effect that any one refusing to obey the imperial mandate on this occasion should be punished for his disobedience by banishment, and thought it wise to attend. But he did not attend alone; he brought fifty of his suffragan bishops with him, among whom were Potammon

* De Broglie, ii. 326.

and Paphnutius, whose acquaintance we have already made at Nicæa.

The bishops assembled, probably in the great church at Tyre, whose description we have already seen, and at whose dedication we have, as it were, assisted. According to custom, they took their places according to their provinces and their rank; but when Athanasius moved towards the place which was his, as the prelate whose see took precedence among all present, his enemies cried out to him to stand in the midst as one accused in the presence of his judges. Potammon marched up to Eusebius of Cæsarea, and indignantly addressed him: "What! Eusebius, dare you remain seated while Athanasius stands before you as his judge? You and I were in prison together in the persecution. I lost an eye for the truth; how did you get out uninjured?" Eusebius retorted with readiness: "It is clearly not without reason that they accuse you of playing the tyrant; if you thus treat us here, it is easy to see how you treat people in your own country."

Paphnutius limped across the church, and going up to Maximus of Jerusalem, who had suffered a similar mutilation to his own in the persecution, addressed him: "Since we bear the same marks in our bodies, and have each lost an eye for the truth, I cannot leave you to sit among the wicked and take part with the workers of iniquity;" and, taking him by the hand, he led him from the midst of the Eusebians, made him come and sit beside him, and explained to him the secret aims of those who



had convoked the assembly. The sitting was closed for that day.

Before the commencement of the proceedings, Athanasius protested against the irregular constitution of the assembly, and its well-known partiality. His accusers then brought forward as formal charges all the calumnies which had been circulated against him in Alexandria. They did not forget to accuse him of immorality, "the calumny habitually brought against an ecclesiastic whom it is sought to ruin." * A woman of bad character, professing to have been a Church virgin whose confidence Athanasius had taken advantage of, was actually brought over as evidence against him ; but when, on Athanasius's demand, she was brought into the assembly, she failed to identify him, but took some one else for him. Even the old story of the hand of Arsenius was revived, and the hand itself produced. But Athanasius laughingly introduced Arsenius to the assembly, saying, "Here is Arsenius, with two hands. God usually gives us no more ; if you think he had a third, show us where it grew."

But the really serious charges against the bishop of Alexandria related to his alleged dealings with the Miletian schismatics under his jurisdiction. It was said that he had behaved with indecent violence ; that he caused peaceable lay people, priests, and even bishops to be imprisoned and beaten. Ischiras, representing himself as a priest of a suburb of Alexandria, deposed that Macarius, one of the priests

* De Broglie, ii. 330.

of Athanasius, had entered his church when he was celebrating divine service, snatched the chalice from his hands and broken it, flung the sacred elements on the ground, carried off the altar, and burnt the sacred books.

Athanasius answered the charges one by one; the last may serve as an example. He showed that Ischiras was not a priest, according to the testimony of Meletius himself; that he had therefore been forbidden to usurp the functions of the priesthood; that the day stated in the deposition was not a Sunday, and therefore there was no celebration of the Holy Communion that day, and the scene deposed to could not have taken place; that Ischiras himself had sent him a written submission and disavowal, of which he could produce the original.

The accusers were unable to substantiate their charges, and the accused had a right to demand an acquittal. But the Eusebians demanded of the Count Dionysius an adjournment of the assembly, and the appointment of a commission which should go to Alexandria and inquire into the charges on the spot, *i.e.* seek for additional evidence. Athanasius protested against this course; but the Eusebians selected a number of their body as commissioners. The Egyptian bishops protested, the more impartial of the Asiatic bishops remonstrated, Count Dionysius pointed out the unfairness and impolicy of their course, in vain. A few days after the departure of the deputation for Alexandria,

Athanasius also quitted the city by night. Arche-laüs, the Count of Palestine, was believed to have facilitated his departure.

A week or two afterwards, Constantine, returning to his capital after a short absence, was stopped in the street by a man, who put his hand on the bridle of his horse and demanded justice. For a moment Constantine did not recognize him, but those about him informed him that it was Athanasius. Constantine was angry, shook his bridle loose, and rode on without a word. But a few days afterwards he consented to give him an audience. He listened with impatience to his complaints of the synod; interrupted him in his statements, took offence at his freedom, and would have driven him from his presence. But Athanasius was not intimidated by the anger of the man at whose frown the world trembled. He maintained the justice of his cause with firmness; and, finding that he was not able to overcome the Emperor's prepossession, he finally addressed him in a solemn voice: "O Emperor, God shall judge between you and me, since you throw your power on the side of those who oppress my weakness."

The Emperor was irascible, but he was just, and the appeal was not in vain; he determined to hear and judge for himself. Accordingly he addressed a second letter to the Council. "I understand nothing," he writes, "of what you have decided in your assembly in the midst of so much confusion and strife. I fear lest the truth should disappear

in the midst of these violences, and that, desiring to get the better of your neighbour, you should forget the service of God. . . . Come therefore to my court and explain to me all that you have done in this assembly at Tyre, and let me see, by deeds, that your decisions are sincere and in conformity with the truth. You will not deny that I am a faithful servant of God, since it is owing to the worship which I render to God that peace reigns upon the earth, and that the name of God is blessed even among the barbarians, who aforesaid were ignorant of the truth. . . . And these barbarians may well afford us an example, for, through the fear which they have of our power, they observe the law of God; while we who profess—I do not say who observe—the holy faith of the Church, one would say that we never do anything but what inspires hate and discord, and tends to the ruin of the human race. Come, then, as soon as possible to us, resting assured that we shall use every means to preserve intact all which is in the law of God.”

When this letter reached its destination the situation had already changed. On the morrow of Athanasius's departure from Tyre, the Council, without waiting for the return of its deputation, took advantage of the apparent flight of the accused to pronounce sentence against him in default. Then they started on their journey towards Jerusalem, whither Constantine had invited the whole assembly to a grand ceremonial on the occasion of the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, now completed.



The Church, in spite of the internal dissensions, which have, perhaps, occupied a larger proportion of space in our history than they did in the real history of the time, had made great advances within the last few years. To the last few years especially belong those accounts of the decay of temples and the building of churches which we had occasion to mention in the earlier period of the movement.* And now we find whole towns, as Maiuma, Gaza, and Aradus in Phœnicia, burning their altars and their idols, and embracing Christianity. Everywhere, aided by the generosity of the Emperor, churches had sprung up. The great imperial churches at Mamre and Bethlehem must by this time have been finished. The pilgrimage of Helena, the discovery of the Holy Places, the great churches of the Emperor, had helped to create enthusiasm. And now a hundred bishops, with their attendant clergy and servants, went up from Tyre, while others who had not attended the Council of Tyre went up independently, to Jerusalem, to assist at the consecration of this church, which the Emperor had desired to be the most magnificent building in the Empire, and whose dedication was to mark the tricennalia of his Empire.

“Thus Jerusalem became the gathering point for distinguished prelates from every province, and the whole city was thronged with a vast assemblage of the servants of God. The Macedonians had sent the bishop of their metropolis [viz. Alexander, Bishop

* Page 278.

of Thessalonica]; the Pannonians and Mœsians the fairest of God's youthful flock among them [viz. Ursacius and Valens, leaders of the Arian party.] A holy prelate from Persia, too, was there, deeply versed in the sacred oracles; while Bithynian and Thracian bishops [viz. Theognis of Nicæa and Theodorus of Perinthus] graced the Council with their presence; nor were the most illustrious from Cilicia wanting, nor the chief of the Cappadocians, distinguished above all for learning and eloquence. In short, the whole of Syria and Mesopotamia, Phœnicia and Arabia, Palestine, Egypt and Libya, with the dwellers in the Thebaid, all contributed to swell the mighty concourse of God's ministers, followed as they were by vast numbers from every province, and each attended by an imperial escort. An officer of trust had also been sent from the palace itself to heighten the splendour of the festival at the Emperor's expense. . . . He, in faithful obedience to the Emperor's commands, received the assembly with courteous hospitality, and entertained them with feasts and banquets on a scale of splendour." He also distributed lavish supplies of money and clothing and food among the poor. "Finally, he enriched and beautified the church with offerings of imperial magnificence. Some offered an intellectual feast to all present in discourses; others presented a bloodless sacrifice and mystical service to God in the prayers which they offered for general peace, for the Church of God, and for the Emperor."*

* Eusebius, "Vita Const."

Eusebius gives us a long and not very intelligible description of the group of buildings, which appear to have consisted of the Sepulchre itself, adorned with marbles and precious stones, surrounded by a pavement and a colonnade; and at the east of this a magnificent church of the usual basilican type, dedicated to the Resurrection. Eusebius also gives us the "intellectual treat" of the long "discourse" which, as metropolitan of Palestine, he delivered on the occasion. It is an involved, rhetorical, and rather wearisome sermon, which we need not inflict upon our readers.

In the midst of these external splendours and rejoicings, the internal dissensions continued their course. The deputation sent to Alexandria collected their evidence and drew up their report, which they kept secret. The friends of Athanasius drew up a counter statement, of which they sent copies to the commissioners, to the Præfect of Alexandria, Philargyrus, and to the Council of Tyre; and these statements, inserted by Athanasius in the midst of his own writings, have thus been preserved to us. The Council again sat on the return of the deputation, and assuming in the absence of Athanasius the truth of their report, formally deposed him from the episcopate and received the Meletians into communion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DEATH OF ARIUS.

THUS the Eusebians had succeeded in deposing the two great patriarchs of Antioch and of Alexandria. They had placed one of their party on the throne of Antioch, and they hoped to place another on that of Alexandria also. The time appeared to have arrived for opening another parallel against the Creed of Nicæa, which had been the true object of attack in all these preliminary struggles. They began to press for the restoration of Arius to the communion of the Church.

For the last three years Arius had been living in retirement—we are not told where or how employed. It was so astute a policy to keep him out of sight and out of mind while the great sees of Antioch and Alexandria were being assailed and carried on other pretexts, and while the Eusebian party was winning the confidence of the Emperor and the people, that it is difficult to believe that it was not a deliberate part of their plan.

But now the time seemed to have arrived for bringing him to the front again.



The examination of the profession of faith of Arius was, indeed, one of the subjects which had been put on the programme of the Council of Tyre; and when they had got safely rid of Athanasius, they at once took the matter in hand. They had been summoned on purpose to settle differences and restore peace to the Church. They no doubt honestly believed that Athanasius was the great obstacle to peace; and having got rid of him, they were now prepared to restore peace by declaring that Arius, and *à fortiori* the Eusebians, were orthodox.

An extract from the synodical letter will convey their conclusion in their own words:—

“Being assembled from divers provinces of Palestine to celebrate the festival of the dedication of the monument raised by the religious Emperor in memory of our Saviour, we have experienced a great increase to our joy in receiving letters from this great Emperor, in which he urges us to drive away all leaven of hatred from the bosom of the Church, and to put an end to the differences which distract the members of Christ. . . . It is he who has counselled us to receive with a sincere and peaceful spirit Arius and his friends, whom a wicked envy has for some time kept aloof from the Church. The holy Emperor by his letter has assured us of the soundness of their sentiments, which he has ascertained in personal conference; and we ourselves, having their letters before us, have found them to be sound and worthy members of the Church.” After this full acquittal of Arius and his friends

follows an exhortation to all the faithful to receive them with the affection due to brethren in the faith.

It was after this letter had been issued by the Council that the letter of Constantine arrived, which announced the appeal of Athanasius to the Emperor, and summoned the Council to the court of the Emperor for a reconsideration of the whole case.

We are not concerned to defend the course which the Emperor took in the matter. It was only gradually that the true relations of the civil power and the Church in their details were worked out by the lessons of experience. We do not say that Athanasius was wrong in appealing to the protection of the Emperor, which alone, in the existing crisis, could save him from the unjust sentence of a packed ecclesiastical tribunal. Neither do we dispute the soundness of the Canon passed by a Council at Antioch, two years afterwards, which, in view of the proceedings before us, decreed that it was not lawful for an ecclesiastic condemned by a Council to appeal to the Emperor. But we call to mind that Athanasius had *in limine* protested against the jurisdiction of the Council, as not a true Council of the Church, but only an arbitrary assemblage of bishops, of whom the majority were his known enemies. And we recognize that the Eusebian bishops who had induced the Emperor to convoke this irregular assembly had no solid ground on which to maintain their decision against the imperial revision of their proceedings.

The Eusebian party again gave evidence of the astuteness which had hitherto led them from the condition of an infinitesimal minority, utterly defeated, at Nicæa, to the condition of a party which had defeated two out of the three great patriarchs of the Church, had maintained its position in the face of Christendom, and which aimed at a general recognition of its views as orthodox.

It now took up the position that the Council had concluded its labours, issued its synodical letters, and was at an end; and it persuaded the majority of the bishops to return to their sees, while a deputation of them went to Constantinople in obedience to the Emperor's letter. The names of those who were thus deputed to confer with the Emperor is enough to indicate the general course of the intrigue. We find among them the two Eusebii, Theognis, Patrophilus, Ursacius, and Valens, the well-known leaders of the Arian party.

We find the proof of their astuteness, not only in the dispersion of the Council and in the delegation of a clique of Arians to defend its proceedings before the Emperor, but in the fact that they came to the resolution to put aside altogether the questions which had been discussed at the Council, and to raise a totally new issue. They said little or nothing to Constantine about the Meletians, or the Arians, or about Athanasius's abuses of power; but they brought the accusation that Athanasius had accumulated vast wealth, that he had acquired a great popularity among the lower classes of the

Alexandrians, and that he intended to show his power by detaining the fleets which transported to Constantinople the harvests of the Nile, upon which the food of the people of the capital depended.

This was to touch Constantine in a point in which he was most sensitive. Once already, when the annual Egyptian fleet had been delayed by contrary winds in its arrival in the Golden Horn, the populace in the theatre had clamoured against Sopater, the distinguished heathen philosopher, his friend, and accused him of causing the delay by magical arts, in order to kill the people of the Christian city by famine; and Constantine had unwillingly surrendered the philosopher's life to the clamours of the people.

He now sent for Athanasius in great excitement, and told him of the charge. The bishop denied it, and pleaded his poverty and feebleness:—where was he to find the means for interrupting the regular course of the imperial service? But Eusebius, and other bishops present with him, asserted that to their knowledge Athanasius possessed immense treasures, and that he was so influential in Alexandria that nothing happened there without his permission.

This decided the mind of Constantine, but not exactly to the conclusion the Eusebians had aimed at. He removed Athanasius from the possibility of carrying on any intrigues at Alexandria by sending him into exile to Trèves; but he refused to recognize his deposition from the see.

This was in the beginning of the winter of 336. The journey of the exiled bishop resembled a triumphant progress. The Churches of the West, which had taken no part in the dissensions which distracted the East, saw in Athanasius the hero of the faith of Nicæa, and recognized that, whatever the pretext for his banishment, it was for the faith that he now suffered. The Christians of every town received him with lively demonstrations of honour. Arrived at Trèves, the Bishop Maximin welcomed him as his friend and guest, and even the Cæsar Constantine, the eldest son of the Emperor, who ruled over the Gallic provinces and had his court at Trèves, paid Athanasius a visit, showed him the utmost respect, and ascertained that he was lodged and treated as became his rank, and, as he said at a later period, "as became the majesty of so great a man."

Meantime, Arius, acquitted by the Council of Tyre, returned to Alexandria to take his place again in the Church; but the orthodox would not receive him into communion. This gave rise to fresh tumults. To put an end to them, Arius was summoned to Constantinople. Here he demanded to be admitted to communion, but found himself again refused. Alexander, Bishop of Byzantium, to whom Alexander of Alexandria had addressed one of his earliest letters at the beginning of the Arian controversy, was still living, and though Eusebius of Nicomedia might eclipse him at court as the chief adviser of the Emperor, yet Alexander was the bishop of the city. Deceived by his gentleness of

character, the Eusebians anticipated no obstacle in him when they asked him, in the name of Christian charity, to receive back a penitent into the communion of the Church. But Alexander replied, with unexpected firmness, that Arius had been cut off from the Church by the whole Church, and that it was not possible for any one to reverse what they had done. This was, in effect, to deny the validity of that which the Council of Tyre had done. They argued, persuaded, insisted, in vain; then they proceeded to threats of the anger of the Emperor; they hinted at deposition and exile. The struggle in the old bishop's mind is an interesting episode in the story. Clearly he was one of those gentle natures to which contention is exceedingly painful, and resistance to a strong will costs a great effort; but one of those sincere and loyal souls to which the sense of duty gives a tenacity altogether foreign to their nature. It was a strange concurrence of events which had placed such a man in the position of bishop of a luxurious capital, and now subjected him to all the temptations which astute plausibility and imperial power could bring to bear upon a pious, retiring, gentle nature.

James, the hermit Bishop of Nisibis, happened to be at Constantinople at the time, and his ardent, uncompromising spirit sustained the gentle firmness of the good old Alexander. At his suggestion the Christians of Constantinople were invited to seven days of prayer on behalf of their bishop. Crowds assembled in the churches, and lingered in the

streets discussing the question thus prominently put before them. Constantine was perplexed. He had been made to believe that Arius had abandoned his errors and had honestly adopted the Nicene faith. He sent for him. When he entered the presence, the Emperor inquired of him whether he held the faith of the Catholic Church. Arius declared upon oath that he held the right faith, and gave in an account of his faith in writing, suppressing the points of the Nicene Creed on which his orthodoxy was challenged, and substituting for them expressions out of the Scriptures which had an orthodox appearance, but which the Arians were accustomed to explain in an unorthodox sense. When therefore he swore that he did not profess the opinions for which Alexander had excommunicated him, the Emperor dismissed him, saying, "If thy faith be right, thou hast done well to swear; but if thy faith be impious and thou hast sworn, God judge thee according to thy oath."* Then he sent for Alexander, and commanded him on the morrow, which was Sunday, to receive Arius to communion. Alexander wished to speak; but the Emperor would not hear him, and dismissed him. The bishop entered a neighbouring church, and, prostrating himself upon the ground, prayed, "If Arius should enter Thy sanctuary to-morrow, spare Thy servant and destroy not the righteous with the wicked; but if Thou carest for Thine heritage, arrest Arius, lest error enter together with him into Thy Church."

* "Library of the Fathers: Historical Tracts of Athanasius," p. 213.

A little while after, Arius came out of the palace surrounded by his friends, conversing with them in high spirits. The group attracted general notice. In crossing the forum, he had occasion to retire to a neighbouring cabinet, leaving his servant at the door. After a while his servant knocked, and receiving no answer, opened the door and found Arius lying dead upon the ground, like Judas burst asunder in the midst, and with "all his bowels gushed out."

The horrible news spread rapidly, and naturally produced a great effect upon the public mind. It was believed that God had interposed, in the moment of his triumph, to punish the perjury of Arius and to vindicate the Catholic faith.

Gibbon gives us the alternative of poison or miracle. We decline to be shut up to these alternatives. We accept the death of Arius as one of those more striking events which occur from time to time in the orderings of that Providence which overrules all.

The effect upon the mind of the Emperor was not that which we should perhaps have anticipated. When the friends of Athanasius took advantage of this event to ask for his recall, Constantine showed a kind of impatience and weariness of the whole business. The failure to accomplish by any means that religious unity on which his heart was set, seems to have produced a sense of disappointment and disgust. When the Alexandrians petitioned him for the return of their bishop, he desired them not

to trouble him—he was tired of the lightness and folly of the people of Alexandria. When St. Antony joined his prayers to those of his countrymen, Constantine replied more in detail: “What would you have me do against the sentence of a Council? Some bishops may have been actuated by hate or by favour, but could so many saints and pious prelates be led away by such feelings? It is clear that they had to do with a man violent in his conduct, mischievous in his designs, a friend of sedition and discord.” All that he would consent to do was to banish also John, the Meletian bishop in Alexandria, who was particularly obnoxious to the Catholics, and whose pretensions increased the agitation there.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LIFE AT COURT.

THE last eight or nine years of the reign of Constantine were not marked by any great political events. The fostering of the growth of the new capital, the gradual working out of the constitutional changes, must have occupied much of the Emperor's personal care.

In the ordinary administration of public affairs he employed the services of his sons. Constantine was his *alter ego* in the Gallic provinces, Constans in Italy, and Constantius in the East. At first the young princes were aided by suitable advisers, and the Emperor took care that the officials of their courts, both the civil and the military officers of highest rank about them, were Christians. But at length, as they gained experience and proved themselves worthy of trust, he permitted the Cæsars to direct the administration without other control than his own.*

We remember how Constantine had, in his early

* Eusebius, "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 52.

heathen days, taken Apollo the sun god for his tutelar deity, and how the court professed to find in the gallant young prince, with beardless face and golden hair and bright blue eye, a resemblance to the god. It is curious to see how the courtly flattery continued after the Emperor had become Christian; and did not cease when he had become an elderly man, and—wore a wig of false golden hair. Thus, we have seen, Phidias's statue of Apollo was erected in the forum at Constantinople, and dedicated to Constantine.

And in speaking of this arrangement of the Empire, in his tercentenary oration, Eusebius of Cæsarea presses the old flattery into the service of his rhetoric when he speaks of the "four * most noble Cæsars yoked to the imperial chariot, while the Emperor sits on high and directs their course." And again, with the same mythological reference, he speaks of them as "placed in the various parts of the Empire to be the brilliant reflectors of the light which proceeds from himself."

Eusebius admits that the Emperor's confidence was sometimes abused by those he trusted, and to some flagrant instance of this which had come to his knowledge we may attribute a law of the latter part of his reign, in which, with passionate vehemence, he calls upon any of his subjects who feel themselves wronged by such officials to declare their grievances freely to himself, and promises per-

* At the tricennalia Constantine had raised Dalmatius to the dignity of Cæsar.

sonal vengeance on "those who up to this time have deceived us by simulated integrity."

The same partial biographer also admits that, in the latter part of his reign, he was even too lenient in the punishment of crimes, so as to draw no small blame on his administration.*

His private life was exemplary. He daily, in the morning, passed some time in the solitude of his chamber, studying the Scriptures, after which he would offer up regular prayers with all the members of his imperial court.†

His household was regulated by deacons. He was fond of philosophical and religious conversations; was a patron of literature; took an interest in poetry, and carried on a correspondence with Optatian, the principal poet of his day, on the subject. The earlier portion of the Augustan history was executed under his supervision; and he wrote an autobiography which, alas! has not come down to us. He spent much time, his biographer tells us, in composing discourses, and occasionally delivered them in public, on which occasions a general invitation was issued, and great crowds of people came to the hall of the palace to hear an Emperor sustain the part of a philosopher. "If in the course of his speech any occasion offered of touching on sacred topics, he immediately stood erect, and, with a grave aspect and subdued tone of voice, seemed reverently to be initiating his auditors in the mysteries of the divine doctrine.

* "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 31.

† Ibid., ch. 17.

He usually divided the subjects of his addresses—first exposing the errors of polytheism; then asserting the sole sovereignty of God; passing thence to His providence, general and particular. Proceeding next to the dispensation of salvation, he would demonstrate its necessity and its adaptation to the nature of the case, treating next of the divine judgment. And here especially he appealed most powerfully to the consciences of his hearers; nay, he caused some of his own acquaintance who were present to feel the severe lash of his words, and to stand with downcast eyes in the consciousness of guilt, while he testified against them in the clearest and most impressive terms that they would have an account to render of their deeds to God. . . . On one occasion he thus personally addressed one of his courtiers: ‘How far, my friend, are we to carry our inordinate desires?’ Then, drawing the dimensions of a human figure with a lance which he happened to have in his hand, he continued, ‘Though thou couldst obtain the whole wealth of this world, yea, the whole world itself, thou wilt carry with thee at last no more than this little spot which I have marked out—if, indeed, even that be thine.’* At the striking passages the audience would utter loud applause, which the Emperor would vainly attempt to check by pointing upward, as if to transfer the glory from himself to heaven.

* “Vita Const.,” bk. iv. cc. 29, 30. Stanley suggests that this was probably addressed to Ablavius.

One of these discourses of the imperial philosopher has been preserved to us—an Oration “to the assembly of the saints.” It is far too long to be transcribed: it would occupy more than fifty of these pages. The curious reader will find it as an appendix to the “Life of Constantine,” so often quoted here, of which there is an English translation published by Bagster.

If the Emperor at all tried the patience of his hearers, he was at least a good listener himself. Eusebius pronounced a discourse on the subject of the Saviour's sepulchre, at which the Emperor was present. In the midst of a large number of auditors he stood and listened with the rest. Eusebius entreated him in vain to be seated on the imperial throne, near which he was standing. He paid great attention, and occasionally intimated his assent to what was said. After some time Eusebius was desirous of contracting his discourse and coming to an end, but the Emperor would not permit it. And when Eusebius again pressed him to be seated, he replied that it was not right to listen in a careless manner to the discussion of doctrines relating to God.

Eusebius also pronounced an oration in praise of Constantine on the occasion of his tricennalia, which was nearly twice as long as Constantine's specimen discourse; the eulogy would fill no less than eighty-five of these pages, and must have occupied two hours in the delivery.

Constantinople was from the first a thoroughly

Christian city. On Sundays all its public offices, manufactories, and shops were closed, and its forty churches * were thronged with worshippers. The great festivals were observed with splendour. On Easter Eve, we learn from Eusebius, the streets of the city were lighted up with wax candles and torches as light as day.†

The greatness of Constantine had reached its highest point, and the fame of it had spread far beyond the limits of the Empire. In truth, if we consider how the young and vigorous provinces of the West had grown in material prosperity and in civilization under the five and thirty years of wise and beneficial rule of Constantius and Constantine, how the older provinces also had profited by a period of peace and good government, we may safely say that the population of the Roman Empire and its material prosperity had never been so great as during the later years of the reign of Constantine. And when we call to mind how much this greatness of the Empire was due to the personal qualities and the successful career of the Emperor; and lastly, when we note that the length of his reign had given time for his name to be carried by rumour, and repeated with the story of fresh triumphs, to the most distant regions, we feel no surprise that his reputation had filled the world.

* It is not known with certainty how many churches Constantine built. In the time of Arcadius, sixty years after, there were forty.

† "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 25.

Eusebius tells us, in a few picturesque paragraphs, how he had himself seen waiting in the courts and antechambers of the palace the ambassadors of many foreign nations, who had come to offer presents and compliments from their masters to the great Emperor. "I myself have sometimes stood near the entrance of the imperial palace and observed a conspicuous array of barbarians in attendance, differing from one another in costume and decorations, in the fashion of their hair and beard; fierce in aspect, of prodigious stature; some red in complexion, some white, some of intermediate hue, Nubians, Indians, Ethiopians. All these in succession, like some painted pageant, presented to the Emperor those gifts which their own nation held in most esteem; some offering crowns of gold, others diadems set with precious stones; some bringing fair-haired boys, others barbaric vestments embroidered with gold and flowers; some appeared with horses, others with shields and long spears, with arrows and bows, thereby offering their services and alliance for the Emperor's acceptance. To these presents he made munificent returns, and honoured some of the noblest of the ambassadors with Roman titles of dignity."

Among these ambassadors were some from Sapor, King of Persia. Constantine having learnt that there were many Churches of God in Persia, and that large numbers there were gathered within the fold of Christ, wrote to the king on their behalf; "I commend these persons to your protection;

cherish them with your wonted humanity and kindness."

He afterwards mentions an embassy from the Indians who inhabit the distant regions of the East.*

* "Vita Const.," bk iv. ch. 50.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

THE act recorded at the conclusion of the last chapter but one was the last intervention of Constantine in the affairs of the Church, and among the last acts of his reign. The disappointment and disgust which we have seen evidenced there, were not merely a temporary annoyance at the ecclesiastical dissensions which he could not heal; they were part of a general weariness and satiety which had taken possession of him. It seemed to him that the time had come to act in the spirit of the Diocletian constitution, and to retire from the active conduct of the government, in order to secure its peaceful devolution upon his chosen successors. To us it may cause an emotion of surprise; it may seem to us an error in judgment. We should have expected that now that Constantine had reunited the severed parts of the Empire, and kept them so long in one hand, it would be his policy to keep the Empire united and transmit it to a single successor.

The truth, probably, is that Constantine recog-

nized that he himself had acquired sole power under exceptional circumstances, and had done wisely to retain it, in order to introduce some great reforms in the constitution, and in order to establish peace and unity throughout the Empire, yet that Diocletian had been right in the conclusion that the burden of the government was too great for any ordinary man.

Had he been disposed to retain the reins of Empire in one hand, none of his sons—now Crispus was lost—gave promise of exceptional ability; none of them was capable of wielding his father's sceptre-spear.

Had he been disposed to disregard the claims of natural affection, there was no other man conspicuous for his merit. Constantine himself, for twenty years past, had been the one great man round whom the affairs of the world turned. The only other man of the age who occupies a similar position, as standing firm in his own self-reliance, and by his strength of will controlling the surrounding world, is the banished Bishop of Alexandria. We do not in this part of his life see him at his greatest; but when Constantine had been taken from the stage, then Athanasius was left as the one great soul which stood fast in the centre and controlled the moral revolutions of the world.

The event makes it clear that Constantine had resolved to act upon the Diocletian principle of succession, and to divide the imperial power; nay, that he had adopted the principle to the extent of

resolving to place his successors in power in his own lifetime, and himself to occupy, though with a firmer hand and more real control, the position of Senior Emperor.

His three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans, had already been successively raised to the rank of Cæsar about the tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth years of his reign. The royal family contained also two other young princes, sons of Dalmatius, one of the half-brothers of Constantine; the elder of these nephews of the Emperor was called Dalmatius after his father, the other Hanniballianus. Both these young princes had distinguished themselves in the field of battle, and were favourites with the people and the armies. Constantine shared—not the Empire, but—the imperial power among his three



CONSTANS.

sons. The eldest, Constantine, was to hold the first rank among the three Augusti, and to take the western Gallic provinces under his especial administration; Constantius was to take the east, viz.

Asia, Syria and Egypt ; Constans was to take the central portion of the Empire, Italy, Africa, and Western Illyricum. But the Emperor made another provision, which astonished the world. Whether as an act of kindness to the Maximinian portion of the family, which we have had occasion to describe ;* or as an act of policy, to conciliate that portion of the imperial family, and anticipate any opposition of his nephews to his sons ; or whether both motives had a share in his mind—we can only conjecture. He detached Thrace, Macedonia, and Achaia from the rest of the Empire, and put them under the rule of Dalmatius, with the title of Cæsar ; and formed another little state out of Armenia, Cappadocia, and Pontus for Hanniballianus, who, no doubt in memory of Mithridates, took the name of king upon his coins, and established his capital at the Cappadocian Chæsarea. The sequel shows that Constantine reserved a supreme authority to himself, and it is possible that the whole arrangement was provisional—that though he gave his sons the title of Augustus, they, as well as his nephews, were for the present virtually his lieutenants, and that they were to come to their full powers only after his own decease.

The peace which the Empire had so long enjoyed under the vigorous reign of Constantine at last came to an end. In the beginning of the year 337, the year following the Emperor's tricennalia, Sapor,

* See page 341.

King of Persia, sent an embassy to Constantinople, demanding restitution of the five provinces beyond the Tigris which Galerius, forty years before, had extorted as a condition of peace after his second victorious campaign;* and the great king followed up this demand by an invasion of Mesopotamia, where Constantius was in command. It was a rude word followed by a sharp blow.

To a great mind sated with the power it has won, vexed with the indomitable unreason of men which thwarts the full development of its designs, weary of routine however grand, such a call to new enterprise is a thousand times welcome. New life thrills through every nerve; the old energies and resources revive; and the life which had grown dull and weary seems to regain the elasticity and joyousness of youth. So the insult and the danger of the Persian invasion fell into the midst of the great soul of Constantine, and the old warrior spirit flashed forth again. He took immediate measures for the gathering together of a great force. He himself assumed the command. He declared that a triumph over Persia was the one thing wanting to the glory of his reign, and that he was well pleased to have the opportunity of achieving it before he died. Among his other preparations, he caused a very splendid tent to be made, which, when erected, had the form of a church. This was to be his camp chapel; and he invited the bishops who were usually resident at his court to accompany him in the expedition.

* See page 25.

While his preparations were reaching maturity, the Easter festival arrived. The Emperor passed the entire night in prayer in the Church of the Apostles, little dreaming how soon he was to be occupying the tomb he had prepared for himself there, in the midst of the cenotaphs of the Sacred Twelve.

A few days after, he was unwell, and was counselled to take the hot baths at the not far distant town of Drepanum, to which he had lately given the name of Helenopolis, in honour of his mother. But the malady increased on his journey, and when he arrived he was already very ill. He ordered himself to be carried to the church of the town, and there prostrating himself, confessed his sins with a loud voice, and demanded to be received as a catechumen. For, strange as it seems to us, the man who believed himself miraculously converted, and had given abundant proofs of the sincerity and strength of his belief in Christ; who professed to receive divine communications; who had taken so important a part in the great Council of Nicæa; who had daily said prayers to his household and preached to thousands, had not yet been baptized, had not even been formally received into the rank of catechumen; neither had any of his sons yet been baptized.

It is perhaps the earliest instance we have on record, of what became quite common in the subsequent centuries, of a delay of baptism till some great crisis in the spiritual life answering to a

“conversion,” or till the approach of death. It was based on a profound conviction of the doctrine expressed in the Creed of Nicæa in the words, “I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins,” and in a conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of post-baptismal sin, accompanied by an exaggerated belief in the difficulty of obtaining forgiveness of such sin, fostered perhaps by the severe discipline of the Catholic Church.* This feeling reached its extreme in the belief of the Novatian heretics, that though God might forgive, the Church had no power to give absolution of post-baptismal sin, or to receive the sinner again to its communion.

The result of this state of mind was that many thought it wise to postpone their baptism. They sinned with less compunction while not baptized; they confidently hoped that whenever they were baptized all their past sins would be washed away; and they did not wish to leave too long time after baptism for falling into new sin. The Church discouraged the superstitious practice; but it was very common for converts to postpone their baptism, and even for hereditary Christians to delay the baptism of their children; so that men held in the highest estimation remained unbaptized through the greater part of life; and, in spite of Canons to the contrary, even bishops were chosen out of the ranks of the unbaptized, as Ambrose of Milan, and Nectarius of Constantinople.

* Of which we have seen some illustrations in the Canons of Arles and Nicæa.

Constantine believed that he had not long to live, and that the time was come to seek the "one baptism for the remission of sins." He had himself carried in his litter to his palace in the suburbs of Nicomedia,* and there prepared deliberately for his reception into the Church.

Some of the bishops of the court and the neighbourhood being assembled about him, he addressed them: "At length the day has come which I have so long and earnestly desired, the day of salvation which I have asked of God. The hour is come in which it is permitted to me to be marked with the seal of immortality. I have always wished to accomplish this great act in the waters of Jordan, where our Saviour, to give us an example, received the baptism of His sacred body. But God knows what is fitting for us, and thinks fit to call me here to this honour. Let there then be no more hesitation. For if God, Who is the arbiter of life and death, wills to prolong my life here, it is my firm resolution to associate myself with the people of God; it is my desire to be admitted into the Church, that I may join in the prayers of the faithful, and I impose upon myself a mode of life conformed to the divine will."

Then the ceremony proceeded. Eusebius, with his eye for the picturesque accessories of great events, tells us how the Emperor was clothed in imperial vestments, white and brilliant as the light, and his couch was similarly of purest white. Eusebius of

* Diocletian's palace.

Nicomedia administered the sacrament; Constantine received it with exultation of spirit. "To-day," he exclaimed, "I am truly happy; now I am worthy of eternal life, now I see the light divine. Unhappy, truly unhappy, are those who are without these blessings." He retained his white baptismal robes, according to custom, for the few remaining days of his life.

His arrangements for the succession to the Empire had been already made. In the absence of his sons, he received his great officers about his couch, and made them swear not to attempt anything against his sons or against the Church. He breathed his last at noon on the festival of Pentecost, the 22nd of May, A.D. 337, in the sixty-fourth year of his age and the thirty-first of his reign. His body, clad once more in imperial purple and crowned with a diadem, was laid in a coffin of gold. The imperial guards transported it in military order to Constantinople, which mourned in all sincerity for the hero whom the city and the Empire had lost. A platform of many steps was raised in the middle of the principal hall of the palace, covered with purple and ornamented with imperial insignia, surrounded with candles burning in candlesticks of gold, and on its summit the dead Emperor, in his imperial robe and crown, lay in state, with the jewelled cross which he had had placed in the centre panel of the ceiling shining above him, like the cross which he had seen in the air on the day of his conversion. A numerous retinue of attendants watched round the

body day and night. Every morning the great officers of State and the court officials, who had been accustomed to pay their respects daily to the Emperor or to take his commands, continued to fulfil this duty without any change or relaxation of the customary etiquette, saluting their dead sovereign as if he were still alive. All laws and edicts continued to be issued in the name of Constantine. "No mortal had ever, like this blessed prince, continued to reign even after his death."*

This strange and striking court of a dead Emperor, this reign of a dead sovereign, continued for three months, when Constantius arrived and proceeded to celebrate his father's funeral. He was buried in the Church of the Apostles, the principal church in the capital, which he had intended to be his mausoleum. It was of "vast height, cased with marble slabs of various colours; the inner roof of finely fretted work, overlaid with gold, and the external covering of gilded copper, encircled by a finely carved tracing wrought in brass and gold. The church itself was surrounded by an open area lined with porticoes, and had chambers and baths for those who had charge of the place. In this church the Emperor had had set up twelve tombs or cenotaphs, six on each side, in honour of the Apostles, and another tomb in the centre, which he designed for himself; and here accordingly he was buried. Constantius headed the procession of great officers of the court, the state, the army, and the city; the

* Eusebius, "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 67.

imperial guards bore the corpse, which was accompanied by representatives of different corps of the armies; the procession was preceded by a detachment of soldiers, and followed by a vast multitude of the people."

Thus the dead Emperor was carried into the church, and then the soldiers apparently retired into the atrium; for Eusebius goes on to say, "As soon as Constantius and the soldiers had withdrawn, the ministers of God came forward and performed the rites of divine worship with prayer,* and the whole multitude united with the priests of God in offering prayers for his soul with many tears.†

The great characteristic of the reign of Constantine, the transition from the heathen Empire of Rome to the Christian Empire of Constantinople, is brought before us in a striking way, for the last time, by the fact that while the Church was consigning the Emperor with the celebration of the sacred mysteries of the Christian faith to his tomb amidst the cenotaphs of the Apostles, and inscribing him in its Kalendar as Isapostolos, the Senate of Rome was decreeing him the usual honour of an apotheosis and ordering incense to be burnt before his statue.‡

* A little after he calls it "the sacred ordinances and mystic service." It was no doubt a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and therefore it was that the unbaptized Constantius and the soldiers withdrew.

† "Vita Const.," bk. iv. ch. 71.

‡ D'Agincourt, in "L'Art parses Monuments" (Sculpture, Pl. III. Fig. 15), gives an engraving of the leaf of an ivory diptych which

Our estimate of the personal character of Constantine will depend very much upon the standard by which we judge him. If we judge him by the standard of the religion which he professed in the later years of his life, he has no pretension to be a saintly man or an eminent Christian; but if we are content to estimate him from the point of view of his birth and training, and measure him with his contemporaries, he appears as "Hyperion to a satyr."

Even as a heathen he was free from the personal vices which were almost universal in his age; had a sense of religion, a high standard of personal rectitude and of public duty; was familiar and friendly in private, just and benevolent in his rule. He had the qualities of a daring warrior, a great general, a wise statesman, and a vigorous administrator. Compare him with the politic, reserved Diocletian, shrouding himself behind a Persian etiquette, or with the mere soldier and unscrupulous man of action, Maximian, or with the brutal, ferocious Galerius, or with the dissolute Maxentius, or with the cowardly, crafty, cruel Daza, or with the able, but coarse, untrustworthy Licinius, and Constantine seems to belong to a higher order of humanity.

He rose to power by successive steps which involved no crimes and no mere unscrupulous ambi-

seems to have been executed soon after the death of Constantine. It represents the Emperor on horseback in armor, armed with a spear. Above is a representation of his soul's ascent to heaven. Two winged figures bear an oval, in which is a half-length effigy of the Emperor holding a cross scepter, with a radiated crown beside him.

tion, and he rose not by the aid of some great statesman or general, the harvest of whose skill he was in a position to reap, but by his own merit and exertions. His own character made him friends; his own valour and generalship won his battles; his own statesmanship consolidated his conquests. He ruled in peace and prosperity an empire which had only lately come out of a century of anarchy. His legislation, which we have sketched, was wisely calculated to promote the well-being of mankind.

His transcendent achievement was his recognition of the Church of Christ as the co-ordinate agent with the civil power, both of divine appointment, in the future history of the world. His own personal relation to the Christian religion has always been a subject of dispute. When we admit that it arose out of a philosophical apprehension of its truth, and an imperial conception of its wonderful capabilities for promoting human progress, rather than from any deep personal sense of sin and need of the Saviour whom it offered, we do not admit that it was a mere matter of cold calculation. We must not forget the strain of religious mysticism which mixed so strangely with his clear sagacity and sarcastic humour. The supernatural intimations which he believed himself to receive at the crises of his fortunes, his profound conviction that he was an instrument in the hand of God, the occasional impulses of enthusiasm to which he was liable, are inconsistent with the theory that Constantine's religion was only a far-sighted recognition that

Christianity was in the ascendant, and a calculated adoption of it as an agent of State policy.

The great misfortune which has lessened his fame in the eyes of posterity is the want of permanence in the work which he did. Had the great Christian Empire which he founded lasted, as his contemporaries hoped and believed it would, no man would have stood higher in the estimation of the world. But the barbarians in the West and the Mohammedans in the East shattered to pieces that which would have been the stupendous monument of Constantine's glory.



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