

## BOOK XXV.

## ARGUMENT.

I. The Persians attack the Romans on their march, but are gallantly repelled.—II. The army is distressed by want of corn and forage; Julian is alarmed by prodigies.—III. The emperor, while, in order to repulse the Persians, who pressed him on all quarters, he rashly rushes into battle without his breastplate, is wounded by a spear, and is borne back to his tent, where he addresses those around him, and, after drinking some cold water, dies.—IV. His virtues and vices; his personal appearance.—V. Jovian, the captain<sup>1</sup> of the imperial guards, is tumultuously elected emperor.—VI. The Romans hasten to retreat from Persia, and on their march are continually attacked by the Persians and Saracens, whom, however, they repulse with great loss.—VII. The emperor Jovian, being influenced by the scarcity and distress with which his army is oppressed, makes a necessary but disgraceful peace with Sapor; abandoning five provinces, with the cities of Nisibis and Singara.—VIII. The Romans having crossed the Tigris, after a very long and terrible scarcity of provisions, which they endured with great courage, at length reach Mesopotamia—Jovian arranges the affairs of Illyricum and Gaul to the best of his power.—IX. Bineses, a noble Persian, acting for Sapor, receives from Jovian the impregnable city of Nisibis; the citizens are unwilling to quit their country, but are compelled to migrate to Amida—Five provinces, with the city of Singara, and sixteen fortresses, are, according to the terms of the treaty, handed over to the Persian nobles.—X. Jovian, fearing a revolution, marches with great speed through Syria, Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Galatia, and at Ancyra enters on the consulship, with his infant son Varroianus, and soon afterwards dies suddenly at Dadastana.

## I.

A.D. 363.

§ 1. THE night was dark and starless, and passed by us as nights are passed in times of difficulty and perplexity; no one out of fear daring to sit down, or to close his eyes. But as soon as day broke, brilliant breastplates surrounded with steel fringes, and glittering cuirasses, were seen at a distance, and showed that the king's army was at hand.

<sup>1</sup> Primicerius: he was the third officer of the guard; the first being the lower; the second, the tribune—answering, as one might say, to our major.

2. The soldiers were roused at this sight, and hastened to engage, since only a small stream separated them from the Persians, but were checked by the emperor; a sharp skirmish did indeed take place between our outposts and the Persians, close to the rampart of our camp, in which Machamæus, the captain of one of our squadrons, was stricken down: his brother Maurus, afterwards Duke of Phœnicia, flew to his support, and slew the man who had killed Machamæus, and crushed all who came in his way, till he himself was wounded in the shoulder by a javelin; but he still was able by great exertions to bring off his brother, who was now pale with approaching death.

3. Both sides were nearly exhausted with the intolerable violence of the heat and the repeated conflicts, but at last the hostile battalions were driven back in great disorder. Then while we fell back to a greater distance, the Saracens were also compelled to retreat from fear of our infantry, but presently afterwards joining themselves to the Persian host, they attacked us again, with more safety to themselves for the purpose of carrying off the Roman baggage. But when they saw the emperor they again retreated upon their reserve.

4. After leaving this district we reached a village called Hucumbra, where we rested two days, procuring all kinds of provisions and abundance of corn, so that we moved on again after being refreshed beyond our hopes; all that the time would not allow us to take away we burnt.

5. The next day the army was advancing more quietly, when the Persians unexpectedly fell upon our last division, to whom that day the duty fell of bringing up the rear, and would easily have slain all the men, had not our cavalry, which happened to be at hand, the moment that they heard what was going on, hastened up, though scattered over the wide valley, and repulsed this dangerous attack, wounding all who had thus surprised them.

6. In this skirmish fell Adaces, a noble satrap, who had formerly been sent as ambassador to the emperor Constantius, and had been kindly received by him. The soldier who slew him brought his arms to Julian, and received the reward he deserved.

7. The same day one of our corps of cavalry, known as

the third legion, was accused of having gradually given way, so that when the legions were on the point of breaking the enemy's line, they nearly broke the spirit of the whole army.

8. And Julian, being justly indignant at this, deprived them of their standards, broke their spears, and condemned all those who were convicted of having misbehaved of marching among the baggage and prisoners; while their captain, the only one of their number who had behaved well, was appointed to the command of another squadron, the tribune of which was convicted of having shamefully left the field.

9. And four other tribunes of companies were also cashiered for similar misconduct; for the emperor was contented with this moderate degree of punishment out of consideration for his impending difficulties.

10. Accordingly, having advanced seventy furlongs with very scanty supplies, the herbage and the corn being all burnt, each man saved for himself just as much of the grain or forage as he could snatch from the flames and carry.

11. And having left this spot, when the army had arrived at the district called Maranx, near daybreak an immense multitude of Persians appeared, with Merenes, the captain of their cavalry, and two sons of the king, and many nobles.

12. All the troops were clothed in steel, in such a way that their bodies were covered with strong plates, so that the hard joints of the armour fitted every limb of their bodies; and on their heads were effigies of human faces so accurately fitted, that their whole persons being covered with metal, the only place where any missiles which fell upon them could stick, was either where there were minute openings to allow of the sight of the eyes penetrating, or where holes for breathing were left at the extremities of the nostrils.

13. Part of them who were prepared to fight with pikes stood immovable, so that you might have fancied they were held in their places by fastenings of brass; and next to them the archers (in which art that nation has always been most skilful from the cradle) bent their supple bows with widely extended arms, so that the strings touched

their right breasts, while the arrows lay just upon their left hands; and the whistling arrows flew, let loose with great skill of finger, bearing deadly wounds.

14. Behind them stood the glittering elephants in formidable array, whose grim looks our terrified men could hardly endure; while the horses were still more alarmed at their growl, odour, and unwonted aspect.

15. Their drivers rode on them, and bore knives with handles fastened to their right hands, remembering the disaster which they had experienced at Nisibis; and if the ferocious animal overpowered his overseer, they pierced the spine where the head is joined to the neck with a vigorous blow, that the beast might not recoil upon their own ranks, as had happened on that occasion, and trample down their own people; for it was found out by Hasdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, that in this way these animals might be very easily deprived of life.

16. The sight of these beasts caused great alarm; and so this most intrepid emperor, attended with a strong body of his armed cohorts and many of his chief officers, as the crisis and the superior numbers of the enemy required, marshalled his troops in the form of a crescent with the wings bending inwards to encounter the enemy.

17. And to hinder the onset of the archers from disordering our columns, by advancing with great speed he baffled the aim of their arrows; and after he had given the formal signal for fighting, the Roman infantry, in close order, beat back the front of the enemy with a vigorous effort.

18. The struggle was fierce, and the clashing of the shields, the din of the men, and the doleful whistle of the javelins, which continued without intermission, covered the plains with blood and corpses, the Persians falling in every direction; and though they were often slack in fighting, being accustomed chiefly to combat at a distance by means of missiles, still now foot to foot they made a stout resistance; and when they found any of their divisions giving way, they retreated like rain before the wind, still with showers of arrows seeking to deter their foes from pursuing them. So the Parthians were defeated by prodigious efforts, till our soldiers, exhausted by the heat of the day, on the signal for retreat being sounded, returned to

their camp, encouraged for the future to greater deeds of daring.

19. In this battle, as I have said, the loss of the Persians was very great—ours was very slight. But the most important death in our ranks was that of Vetrano, a gallant soldier who commanded the legion of Zianni.<sup>1</sup>

## II.

§ 1. AFTER this there was an armistice for three days, while the men attended to their own wounds or those of their friends, during which we were destitute of supplies, and distressed by intolerable hunger; and since, as all the corn and forage was burnt, both men and cattle were in extreme danger of starvation, a portion of the food which the horses of the tribunes and superior officers were carrying was distributed among the lower classes of the soldiers, who were in extreme want.

2. And the emperor, who had no royal dainties prepared for himself, but who was intending to sup under the props of a small tent on a scanty portion of pulse, such as would often have been despised by a prosperous common soldier, indifferent to his own comfort, distributed what was prepared for him among the poorest of his comrades.

3. He gave a short time to anxious and troubled sleep; and when he awoke, and, as was his custom, began to write something in his tent, in imitation of Julius Cæsar, while the night was still dark, being occupied with the consideration of the writings of some philosophers, he saw, as he told his friends, in mournful guise, the vision of the Genius of the Empire, whom, when he first became emperor, he had seen in Gaul, sorrowfully departing through the curtains of his tent with the cornucopia, which he bore in his hand veiled, as well as his head.

4. And although for a moment he stood stupefied, yet being above all fear, he commended the future to the will of heaven; and leaving his bed, which was made on the ground, he rose, while it was still but little past midnight, and supplicating the deities with sacred rites to avert misfortune, he thought he saw a bright torch, falling,

<sup>1</sup> The Zianni were an Armenian tribe. The legion belonged to the Thracian establishment.

cut a passage through the air and vanish from his sight; and then he was horror-stricken, fearing that the star of Mars had appeared openly threatening him.

5. For this brightness was of the kind which we call *διαίσσοινα*, not falling down or reaching the ground. Indeed, he who thinks that solid substances can fall from heaven is rightly accounted profane and mad. But these occurrences take place in many ways, of which it will be enough to enumerate a few.

6. Some think that sparks falling off from the ethereal fire, as they are able to proceed but a short distance, soon become extinguished; or, perhaps, that rays of fire coming against the dense clouds, sparkle from the suddenness of the contact; or that some light attaches itself to a cloud, and taking the form of a star, runs on as long as it is supported by the power of the fire; but being presently exhausted by the magnitude of the space which it traverses, it becomes dissolved into air, passing into that substance from the excessive attrition of which it originally derived its heat.

7. Therefore, without loss of time, before daybreak, he sent for the Etruscan soothsayers, and consulted them what this new kind of star portended; who replied, that he must cautiously avoid attempting any new enterprise at present, showing that it was laid down in the works of Tarquiti<sup>1</sup>, "on divine affairs," that when a light of this kind is seen in heaven, no battle ought to be engaged in, or any similar measure be undertaken.

8. But as he despised this and many other similar warnings, the diviners at least entreated him to delay his march for some hours; but they could not prevail even to this extent, as the emperor was always opposed to the whole science of divination. So at break of day the camp was struck.

### III.

§ 1. WHEN we set forward, the Persians, who had learnt by their frequent defeats to shun pitched battles, laid secret ambuscades on our road, and, occupying the hills on each side, continually reconnoitred our battalions as they

<sup>1</sup> Tarquiti<sup>1</sup> was an ancient Etruscan soothsayer, who had written on the subject of his art.

marched, so that our soldiers, being kept all day on the watch, could neither find time to erect ramparts round their camp, or to fortify themselves with palisades.

2. And while our flanks were strongly guarded, and the army proceeded onward in as good order as the nature of the ground would allow, being formed in squares, though not quite closed up, suddenly news was brought to the emperor, who had gone on unarmed to reconnoitre the ground in front, that our rear was attacked.

3. He, roused to anger by this mishap, without stopping to put on his breastplate, snatched up his shield in a hurry, and while hastening to support his rear, was recalled by fresh news that the van which he had quitted was now exposed to a similar attack.

4. Without a thought of personal danger, he now hastened to strengthen this division, and then, on another side, a troop of Persian cuirassiers attacked his centre, and pouring down with vehemence on his left wing, which began to give way, as our men could hardly bear up against the foul smell and horrid cries of the elephants, they pressed us hard with spears and clouds of arrows.

5. The emperor flew to every part of the field where the danger was hottest; and our light-armed troops dashing out wounded the backs of the Persians, and the hocks of the animals, which were turned the other way.

6. Julian, disregarding all care for his own safety, made signs by waving his hands, and shouted out that the enemy were fleeing in consternation; and cheering on his men to the pursuit, threw himself eagerly into the conflict. His guards called out to him from all sides to beware of the mass of fugitives who were scattered in consternation, as he would beware of the fall of an ill-built roof, when suddenly a cavalry spear, grazing the skin of his arm, pierced his side, and fixed itself in the bottom of his liver.

7. He tried to pull it out with his right hand, and cut the sinews of his fingers with the double-edged point of the weapon; and, falling from his horse, he was borne with speed by the men around him to his tent; and the physician tried to relieve him.

8. Presently, when his pain was somewhat mitigated, so that his apprehensions were relieved, contending against

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