

BOOK XXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

I. Many persons, even senators and women of senatorial family are accused at Rome of poisonings, adultery, and debauchery, and are punished.—II. The Emperor Valentinian fortifies the whole Gallic bank of the Rhine with forts, castles, and towers; the Allemanni slay the Romans who are constructing a fortification on the other side of the Rhine.—The Marathocrupeni, who are ravaging Syria, are, by the command of Valens, destroyed with their children and their town.—III. Theodosius restores the cities of Britain which had been laid waste by the barbarians, repairs the fortresses, and recovers the province of the island which is called Valentia.—IV. Concerning the administration of Olybrius and Ampelius as prefects of the city: and concerning the vices of the Roman senate and people.—V. The Saxons, after a time, are circumvented in Gaul by the manœuvres of the Romans. Valentinian having promised to unite his forces with them, sends the Burgundians to invade Germany; but they, finding themselves tricked and deceived, put all their prisoners to the sword, and return home.—VI. The ravages inflicted in the province of Tripoli, and on the people of Leptis and Cæa, by the Asturians, are concealed from Valentinian by the bad faith of the Roman count; and so are not properly avenged.

I.

A.D. 368.

§ 1. WHILE the perfidy of the king was exciting these unexpected troubles in Persia, as we have related above, and while war was reviving in the east, sixteen years and rather more after the death of Nepotianus, Bellona, raging through the eternal city, destroyed everything, proceeding from trifling beginnings to the most lamentable disasters. Would that they could be buried in everlasting silence, lest perhaps similar things may some day be again attempted, which will do more harm by the general example thus set than even by the misery they occasion.

2. And although after a careful consideration of different circumstances, a reasonable fear would restrain me from giving a minute account of the bloody deeds now perpetrated, yet, relying on the moderation of the present age,

I will briefly touch upon the things most deserving of record, nor shall I regret giving a concise account of the fears which the events that happened at a former period caused me.

3. In the first Median war, when the Persians had ravaged Asia, they laid siege to Miletus with a vast host, threatening the garrison with torture and death, and at last reduced the citizens to such straits, that they all, being overwhelmed with the magnitude of their distresses, slew their nearest relations, cast all their furniture and movables into the fire, and then threw themselves in rivalry with one another on the common funeral pile of their perishing country.

4. A short time afterwards, Phrynichus made this event the subject of a tragedy which he exhibited on the stage at Athens; and after he had been for a short time listened to with complacency, when amid all its fine language the tragedy became more and more distressing, it was condemned by the indignation of the people, who thought that it was insulting to produce this as the subject of a dramatic poem, and that it had been prompted not by a wish to console, but only to remind them to their own disgrace of the sufferings which that beautiful city had endured without receiving any aid from its founder and parent. For Miletus was a colony of the Athenians, and had been established there among the other Ionian states by Neleus, the son of that Codrus who is said to have devoted himself for his country in the Dorian war.

5. Let us now return to our subject. Maximinus, formerly deputy prefect of Rome, was born in a very obscure rank of life at Sopianæ, a town of Valeria; his father being only a clerk in the president's office, descended from the posterity of those Carpi whom Diocletian removed from their ancient homes and transferred to Pannonia.

6. After a slight study of the liberal sciences, and some small practice at the bar, he was promoted to be governor of Corsica, then of Sardinia, and at last of Tuscany. From hence, as his successor loitered a long while on his road, he proceeded to superintend the supplying of the eternal city with provisions, still retaining the government of the province; and *three different con-*

siderations rendered him cautious on his first entrance into office, namely:—

7. In the first place, because he bore in mind the prediction of his father, a man pre-eminently skilful in interpreting what was portended by birds from whom auguries were taken, or by the note of such birds as spoke. And he had warned him that though he would rise to supreme authority, he would perish by the axe of the executioner; secondly, because he had fallen in with a Sardinian (whom he himself subsequently put to death by treachery, as report generally affirmed) who was a man skilled in raising up evil spirits, and in gathering presages from ghosts; and as long as that Sardinian lived, he, fearing to be betrayed, was more tractable and mild; lastly, because while he was slowly making his way through inferior appointments, like a serpent that glides underground, he was not yet of power sufficient to perpetrate any extensive destruction or executions.

8. But the origin of his arriving at more extensive power lay in the following transaction: Chilo, who had been deputy, and his wife, named Maxima, complained to Olybrius, at that time prefect of the city, asserting that their lives had been attacked by poison, and with such earnestness that the men whom they suspected were at once arrested and thrown into prison. These were Sericus, a musician, Asbolius, a wrestling master, and Campensis, a soothsayer.

9. But as the affair began to cool on account of the long-continued violence of some illness with which Olybrius was attacked, the persons who had laid the complaint, becoming impatient of delay, presented a petition in which they asked to have the investigation of their charge referred to the superintendent of the corn-market; and, from a desire for a speedy decision, this request was granted.

10. Now, therefore, that he had an opportunity of doing injury, Maximin displayed the innate ferocity which was implanted in his cruel heart, just as wild beasts exhibited in the amphitheatre often do when at length released from their cages. And, as this affair was represented first in various ways, as if in a kind of prelude, and some persons with their sides lacerated named certain

nobles, as if by means of their clients and other low-born persons known as criminals and informers, they had employed various artifices for injuring them. This infernal delegate, carrying his investigations to an extravagant length, presented a malicious report to the emperor, in which he told him that such atrocious crimes as many people had committed at Rome could not be investigated nor punished without the severest penalties.

11. When the emperor learnt this he was exasperated beyond measure, being rather a furious than a rigorous enemy to vice; and accordingly, by one single edict applying to causes of this kind, which in his arrogance he treated as if they partook of treason, he commanded that all those whom the equity of the ancient law and the judgment of the gods had exempted from examination by torture, should, if the case seemed to require it, be put to the rack.

12. And in order that the authority to be established, by being doubled and raised to greater distinction, might be able to heap up greater calamities, he appointed Maximin pro-prefect at Rome, and gave him as colleague in the prosecution of these inquiries, which were being prepared for the ruin of many persons, a secretary named Leo, who was afterwards master of the ceremonies. He was by birth a Pannonian, and by occupation originally a brigand, as savage as a wild beast, and insatiable of human blood.

13. The accession of a colleague so much like himself, inflamed the cruel and malignant disposition of Maximin, which was further encouraged by the commission which conferred this dignity on them; so that, flinging himself about in his exultation, he seemed rather to dance than to walk, while he studied to imitate the Brachmans who, according to some accounts, move in the air amid the altars.

14. And now the trumpets of intestine discords sounded, while all men stood amazed at the atrocity of the things which were done. Among which, besides many other cruel and inhuman actions so various and so numerous that it is impossible for me to relate them all, the death of Marinus, the celebrated advocate, was especially remarkable. He was condemned to death on a charge which was not even

attempted to be supported by evidence, of having endeavoured by wicked acts to compass a marriage with Hispanilla.

15. And since I think that perhaps some persons may read this history who, after careful investigation, will object to it that such and such a thing was done before another; or again that this or that circumstance has been omitted, I consider that I have inserted enough, because it is not every event which has been brought about by base people that is worth recording; nor, if it were necessary to relate them all, would there be materials for such an account, not even if the public records themselves were examined, when so many atrocious deeds were common, and when this new frenzy was throwing everything into confusion without the slightest restraint; and when what was feared was evidently not a judicial trial but a total cessation of all justice.

16. At this time, Cethegus, a senator, who was accused of adultery, was beheaded, and a young man of noble birth, named Alypius, who had been banished for some trivial misconduct, with some other persons of low descent, were all publicly executed; while every one appeared in their sufferings to see a representation of what they themselves might expect, and dreamt of nothing but tortures, prisons, and dark dungeons.

17. At the same time also, the affair of Hymetius, a man of very eminent character, took place, of which the circumstances were as follows. When he was governing Africa as pro-consul, and the Carthaginians were in extreme distress for want of food, he supplied them with corn out of the granaries destined for the Roman people; and shortly afterwards, when there was a fine harvest, he without delay fully replaced what he had thus consumed.

18. But as at the time of the scarcity ten bushels had been sold to those who were in want for a piece of gold, while he now bought thirty for the same sum, he sent the profit derived from the difference in price to the emperor's treasury. Therefore, Valentinian, suspecting that there was not as much sent as there ought to have been as the proceeds of this traffic, confiscated a portion of his property.

19. And to aggravate the severity of this infliction,

another circumstance happened about the same time which equally tended to his ruin. Amantius was a soothsayer of pre-eminent celebrity at that period, and having been accused by some secret informer of being employed by this same Hymetius to offer a sacrifice for some evil purpose, he was brought before a court of justice and put to the rack; but in spite of all his tortures, he denied the charge with steadfast resolution.

20. And as he denied it, some secret papers were brought from his house, among which was found a letter in the handwriting of Hymetius, in which he asked Amantius to propitiate the gods by some solemn sacrifices to engage them to make the disposition of the emperor favourable to him; and at the end of the letter were found some reproachful terms applied to the emperor as avaricious and cruel.

21. Valentinian learnt these facts from the report of some informers, who exaggerated the offence given, and with very unnecessary vigour ordered an inquiry to be made into the affair; and because Frontinus, the assessor of Hymetius, was accused of having been the instrument of drawing up this letter, he was scourged with rods till he confessed, and then he was condemned to exile in Britain. But Amantius was subsequently convicted of some capital crimes and was executed.

22. After these transactions, Hymetius was conducted to the town of Otricoli, to be examined by Ampelius, the prefect of the city, and deputy of Maximin; and when he was on the point of being condemned, as was manifest to every one, he judiciously seized an opportunity that was afforded to him of appealing to the protection of the emperor, and being protected by his name, he came off for the time in safety.

23. The emperor, however, when he was consulted on the matter, remitted it to the senate, who examined into the whole affair with justice, and banished him to Boæ, a village in Dalmatia, for which they were visited with the wrath of the emperor, who was exceedingly enraged when he heard that a man whom in his own mind he had condemned to death had been let off with a milder punishment.

24. These and similar transactions led every one to fear

that the treatment thus experienced by a few was intended for all: and that these evils should not, by being concealed, grow greater and greater till they reached an intolerable height, the nobles sent a deputation consisting of Prætextatus, formerly a prefect of the city, Venustus, formerly deputy, and Minervius, who had been a consular governor, to entreat the emperor not to allow the punishments to exceed the offences, and not to permit any senator to be exposed to the torture in an unprecedented and unlawful manner.

25. But when these envoys were admitted into the council chamber, Valentinian denied that he had ever given such orders, and insisted that the charges made against him were calumnies. He was, however, refuted with great moderation by the prætor Eupraxius; and in consequence of this freedom, the cruel injunction that had been issued, and which had surpassed all previous examples of cruelty was amended.

26. About the same time, Lollianus, a youth of tender age, the son of Lampadius, who had been prefect, being accused before Maximin, who investigated his case with great care, and being convicted of having copied out a book on the subject of the unlawful acts (though, as his age made it likely, without any definite plan of using it), was, it seemed, on the point of being sentenced to banishment, when, at the suggestion of his father, he appealed to the emperor; and being by his order brought to court, it appeared that he had, as the proverb has it, gone from the frying-pan into the fire, as he was now handed over to Phalangius, the consular governor of Bætica, and put to death by the hand of the executioner.

27. There were also Tarratius Bassus, who afterwards became prefect of the city, his brother Camenius, a man of the name of Marcian, and Eusapius, all men of great eminence, who were prosecuted on the ground of having protected the charioteer Auchenius, and being his accomplices in the act of poisoning. The evidence was very doubtful, and they were acquitted by the decision of Victorinus, as general report asserted; Victorinus being a most intimate friend of Maximin.

28. Women too were equally exposed to similar treatment. For many of this sex also, and of noble birth, were

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