

BOOK XXIV.

ARGUMENT.

I. Julian invades Assyria with his army; receives the surrender of Anatha, a fort on the Euphrates, and burns it.—II. Having made attempts on other fortresses and towns, he burns some which were deserted, and receives the surrender of Pisisabora, and burns it.—III. On account of his successes, he promises his soldiers one hundred denarii a man; and as they disdain so small a donation, he in a modest oration recalls them to a proper feeling.—IV. The town of Maogamalcha is stormed by the Romans, and rased to the ground.—V. The Romans storm a fort of great strength, both in its situation and fortifications, and burn it.—VI. Julian defeats the Persians, slays two thousand five hundred of them, with the loss of hardly seventy of his own men; and in a public assembly presents many of his soldiers with crowns.—VII. Being deterred from laying siege to Ctesiphon, he rashly orders all his boats to be burnt, and retreats from the river.—VIII. As he was neither able to make bridges, nor to be joined by a portion of his forces, he determines to return by Corduena.

I.

A.D. 363.

§ 1. AFTER having ascertained the alacrity of his army, which with ardour and unanimity declared with their customary shout that their fortunate emperor was invincible, Julian thinking it well to put an early end to his enterprise, after a quiet night ordered the trumpets to sound a march; and everything being prepared which the arduous difficulties of the war required, he at daybreak entered the Assyrian territory in high spirits, riding in front of his ranks, and exciting all to discharge the duties of brave men in emulation of his own courage.

2. And as a leader of experience and skill, fearing lest his ignorance of the country might lead to his being surprised by secret ambuscades, he began his march in line of battle. He ordered fifteen hundred skirmishers to precede him a short distance, who were to march slowly looking out on each side and also in front, to prevent any sudden attack. The infantry in the centre were under his own command, they being the flower and chief strength

of the whole army, while on the right were some legions under Nevitta, who was ordered to march along the banks of the Euphrates. The left wing with the cavalry he gave to Arinthæus and Hormisdas, with orders to lead them in close order through the level and easy country of the plain. The rear was brought up by Dagalaiphus and Victor, and the last of all was Secundinus, Duke of Osdruena.

3. Then in order to alarm the enemy by the idea of his superior numbers, should they attack him anywhere, or perceive him from a distance, he opened his ranks so as to spread both horses and men over a larger space, in such a way that the rear was distant from the van nearly ten miles; a manœuvre of great skill which Pyrrhus of Epirus is said to have often put in practice, extending his camp, or his lines, and sometimes on the other hand compressing them all, so as to present an appearance of greater or lesser numbers than the reality, according to the circumstances of the moment.

4. The baggage, the sutlers, all the camp-followers, and every kind of equipment, he placed between the two flanks of troops as they marched, so as not to leave them unprotected and liable to be carried off by any sudden attack, as has often happened. The fleet, although the river was exceedingly winding, was not allowed either to fall behind or to advance before the army.

5. After two days' march we came near a deserted town called Dura, on the bank of the river, where many herds of deer were found, some of which were slain by arrows, and others knocked down with the heavy oars, so that soldiers and sailors all had plenty of food; though the greater part of the animals, being used to swimming, plunged into the rapid stream and could not be stopped till they had reached their well known haunts.

6. Then after an easy march of four days, as evening came on, he embarked a thousand light-armed troops on board his boats, and sent the Count Lucillianus to storm the fortress of Anatha, which, like many other forts in that country, is surrounded by the waters of the Euphrates; Lucillianus having, as he was ordered, placed his ships in suitable places, besieged the island, a cloudy night favouring a secret assault.

7. But as soon as it became light, one of the garrison going out to get water, saw the enemy, and immediately raised an outcry, which roused the awakened garrison to arm in their defence. And presently, from a high watch-tower, the emperor examined the situation of the fort, and came up with all speed escorted by two vessels, and followed by a considerable squadron laden with engines for the siege.

8. And as he approached the walls, and considered that the contest could not be carried on without great risk, he tried both by conciliatory and threatening language to induce the garrison to surrender; and they, having invited Hormisdas to a conference, were won over by his promises and oaths to rely on the mercy of the Romans.

9. At last, driving before them a crowned ox, which among them is a sign of peace, they descended from the fort as suppliants; the fort was burnt, and Pusæus, its commander, who was afterwards Duke of Egypt, was appointed to the rank of tribune. The rest of the garrison with their families and property were conducted with all kindness to the Syrian city of Chalcis.

10. Among them was found a certain soldier, who formerly, when Maximian invaded Persia, had been left in this district as an invalid, though a very young man, but who was now bent with age, and according to his own account had several wives, as is the custom of that country, and a numerous offspring. He now full of joy, professing to have been a principal cause of the surrender, was led to our camp, calling many of his comrades to witness that he had long foreseen and often foretold that, though nearly a hundred years' old, he should be buried in Roman ground. After this event, the Saracens brought in some skirmishers of the enemy whom they had taken; these were received with joy by the emperor, the Saracens rewarded, and sent back to achieve similar exploits.

11. The next day another disaster took place; a whirlwind arose, and made havoc in many places, throwing down many buildings, tearing in pieces the tents, and throwing the soldiers on their backs or on their faces, the violence of the wind overpowering their steadiness of foot. And the same day another *equally perilous occurrence* took place. For the river suddenly overflowed its banks, and some of the ships

laden with provisions were wrecked, the piers and dams which had been constructed of stone to check and repress the waters being swept away; and whether that was done by treachery or through the weight of the waters could not be known.

12. After having stormed and burnt the chief city, and sent away the prisoners, the army with increased confidence raised triumphant shouts in honour of the emperor, thinking that the gods were evidently making him the object of their peculiar care.

13. And because in these unknown districts they were forced to be on unusual guard against hidden dangers, the troops especially feared the craft and exceeding deceitfulness of the enemy; and therefore the emperor was everywhere, sometimes in front, sometimes with his light-armed battalions protecting the rear, in order to see that no concealed danger threatened it, reconnoitring the dense jungles and valleys, and restraining the distant sallies of his soldiers, sometimes with his natural gentleness, and sometimes with threats.

14. But he allowed the fields of the enemy which were loaded with every kind of produce to be burnt with their crops and cottages, after his men had collected all that they could themselves make use of. And in this way the enemy were terribly injured before they were aware of it; for the soldiers freely used what they had acquired with their own hands, thinking that they had found a fresh field for their valour; and joyful at the abundance of their supplies, they saved what they had in their own boats.

15. But one rash soldier, being intoxicated, and having crossed over to the opposite bank of the river, was taken prisoner before our eyes by the enemy, and was put to death.

II.

§ 1. AFTER this we arrived at a fort called Thilutha, situated in the middle of the river on a very high piece of ground, and fortified by nature as if by the art of man. The inhabitants were invited gently, as was best, to surrender, since the height of their fort made it impregnable; but they refused all terms as yet, though they answered that when the Romans had advanced further so as to occupy the

interior of the country, they also as an appendage would come over to the conqueror.

2. Having made this reply they quietly looked down upon our boats as they passed under the very walls without attempting to molest them. When that fort was passed we came to another called Achaiacala, also defended by the river flowing round it, and difficult to scale, where we received a similar answer, and so passed on. The next day we came to another fort which had been deserted because its walls were weak; and we burnt it and proceeded.

3. In the two next days we marched two hundred furlongs, and arrived at a place called Paraxmalcha. We then crossed the river, and seven miles further on we entered the city of Diacira, which we found empty of inhabitants but full of corn and excellent salt, and here we saw a temple placed on the summit of a lofty height. We burnt the city and put a few women to death whom we found there, and having passed a bituminous spring, we entered the town of Ozogardana, which its inhabitants had deserted for fear of our approaching army; in that town is shown a tribunal of the emperor Trajan.

4. This town also we burnt after we had rested there two days to refresh our bodies. On the second day just at nightfall, the Surena (who is the officer next in rank to the king among the Persians), and a man named Malechus Podosaces, the chief of the Assanite Saracens, who had long ravaged our frontiers with great ferocity, laid a snare for Hormisdas, whom by some means or other they had learnt was about to go forth on a reconnoitring expedition, and only failed because the river being very narrow at that point, was so deep as to be unfordable.

5. And so at daybreak, when the enemy were now in sight, the moment that they were discovered by their glittering helmets and bristling armour, our men sprang up vigorously to the conflict, and dashed at them with great courage; and although the enemy wielded their huge bows with great strength, and the glistening of their weapons increased the alarm of our soldiers, yet their rage, and the compactness of their ranks, kept alive and added fuel to their courage.

6. Animated by their first success, our army advanced

to the village of Macepracta, where were seen vestiges of walls half destroyed, which had once been of great extent, and had served to protect Assyria from foreign invasion.

7. At this point a portion of the river is drawn off in large canals which convey it to the interior districts of Babylonia, for the service of the surrounding country and cities. Another branch of the river known as the Nahamalca, which means "the river of kings," passes by Ctesiphon: at the beginning of this stream there is a lofty tower like a lighthouse, by which our infantry passed on a carefully constructed bridge.

8. The cavalry and cattle then took the stream where it was less violent, and swam across obliquely; another body was suddenly attacked by the enemy with a storm of arrows and javelins, but our light-armed auxiliaries as soon as they reached the other side, supported them, and put the enemy to flight, cutting them to pieces as they fled.

9. After having successfully accomplished this exploit, we arrived at the city of Pirisabora, of great size and populousness, and also surrounded with water. But the emperor having ridden all round the walls and reconnoitred its position, began to lay siege to it with great caution, as if he would make the townsmen abandon its defence from mere terror. But after several negotiations and conferences with them, as they would yield neither to promises nor to threats, he set about the siege in earnest, and surrounded the walls with three lines of soldiers. The whole of the first day the combat was carried on with missiles till nightfall.

10. But the garrison, full of courage and vigour, spreading cloths loose everywhere over the battlements to weaken the attacks of our weapons, and protected by shields strongly woven of osier, made a brave resistance, looking like figures of iron, since they had plates of iron closely fitting over every limb, which covered their whole person with a safe defence.

11. Sometimes also they earnestly invited Hormisdas as a countryman and a prince of royal blood to a conference; but when he came they reviled him with abuse and reproaches as a traitor and deserter; and after a great part of the day had been consumed in this slow disputing, at the

beginning of night many kinds of engines were brought against the walls, and we began to fill up the ditches.

12. But before it was quite dawn, the garrison perceived what was being done, with the addition that a violent stroke of a battering-ram had broken down a tower at one corner; so they abandoned the double city wall, and occupied a citadel close to the wall, erected on the level summit of a ragged hill, of which the centre, rising up to a great height in its round circle, resembled an Argive shield, except that in the north it was not quite round, but at that point it was protected by a precipice which ran sheer down into the Euphrates; the walls were built of baked bricks and bitumen, a combination which is well known to be the strongest of all materials.

13. And now the savage soldiery, having traversed the city, which they found empty, were fighting fiercely with the defenders who poured all kinds of missiles on them from the citadel. Being hard pressed by the catapults and balistæ of our men, they also raised on the height huge bows of great power, the extremities of which, rising high on each side, could only be bent slowly; but the string, when loosed by violent exertion of the fingers, sent forth iron-tipped arrows with such force as to inflict fatal wounds on any one whom they struck.

14. Nevertheless, the fight was maintained on both sides with showers of stones thrown by the hand, and as neither gained any ground a fierce contest was protracted from daybreak to nightfall with great obstinacy; and at last they parted without any advantage to either side. The next day the fight was renewed with great violence, and numbers were slain on each side, and still the result was even; when the emperor, being eager amid this reciprocal slaughter to try every chance, being guarded by a solid column, and defended from the arrows of the enemy by their closely packed shields, rushed forward with a rapid charge up to the enemy's gates, which were faced with stout iron.

15. And although he was still in some danger, being hard pressed with stones and bullets and other weapons, still he cheered on his men with frequent war-cries while they were preparing to force in the gates in order to effect an entrance, and did not retreat till he found himself on

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