

IV.—THE EMPIRE FROM A.D. 285 to 337.

1. The revolutionary period ended in the establishment of a new system of government, consisting in a division of the empire, for administrative purposes, into four parts. This important change was made by *Diocletian*, a Dalmatian of low rank, established as emperor by the troops in A.D. 285. The adjustment which he made in the relations between the emperor and the viceroys and the army saved the empire from partition. Power in the purely military state which the Roman Empire had now become, was divided amongst four rulers. There was a co-emperor named *Maximilian*, and in 292 a ruler, with the title of "*Cæsar*," was appointed under each of the emperors. The city of Rome lost its importance, as the four rulers resided mainly on the frontiers for purposes of defence against barbarian foes. Under this new arrangement, if one of the emperors died he was to be succeeded by his subordinate "*Cæsar*," so as to deprive the army of the appointment of rulers. The empire was now ruled from four centres—*Nicomedia*, in Bithynia (Asia Minor); *Milan*, in Italy; *Antioch*, in Syria; and *Trèves* (or *Trier*), on the Moselle, in Gallia Belgica. After *Diocletian*, a firm and wise ruler, this arrangement did not work; but it showed the way for other improvements made by *Constantine*.

2. At the end of the third century (by A.D. 300) we find that great changes had passed over the Roman Empire.¹ In population the empire had become to a large extent barbarized; the armies contained great numbers of *Goths*, *Vandals*, and *Sarmatians* (a people in territory now the west and south of Russia). The *Goths* and *Vandals*, as we have seen, were *Germans*, and Germans were the nationality that was spread through the empire more than any other. We have seen that the former distinction as to Roman citizenship had been lost. The distinction between the "*Roman legions*" and the "*allies*" was thus effaced, and the last visible record of Rome's conquest was obliterated.

3. The political system of the Roman Empire had become half Oriental and half barbaric; and the great city of Rome itself, whence men had issued in olden time for the conquest of the world, had become

Division of
the Empire by
Diocletian.

Character of
its population.

Change in
political
system.

¹ Much is here taken from Professor Seeley's "Roman Imperialism" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, 1869).