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*The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 53, Parts 1 and 2. (1963), pp. 14-20.

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*The Journal of Roman Studies* is currently published by Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

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## SOME POLITICAL NOTIONS IN COIN TYPES BETWEEN 294 AND 313 \*

By C. H. V. SUTHERLAND

Within the next few years greater attention will be given to a period of Roman Imperial coinage which, apart from special and isolated studies, has so far lacked a broad and balanced treatment. The completion, now near, of volumes VI, VII and VIII of ' Mattingly-Sydenham ' will fill the large and difficult gap between the end of the third century and Pearce's volume IX, i.e. from c. 294 to 364. For the earlier Empire the great sequence of British Museum catalogues has furnished a powerful instrument by which imperial achievement can in some degree be measured against imperial claims or aspirations ; and it is now reasonable to assert that a valid distinction is to be made between the imperial image as the emperors presented it and that which the ancient historians wished or chose to reflect.<sup>1</sup> In the third century, and especially in the middle of the third century, the imperial coinage suffered an increasing debasement, not only in actual metal but also in types used with such indiscriminate generality that they must have diluted the previously selective imperial image to an ultimately negligible significance. Hence the interest of the coinage from c. 294 to 364. Avoiding altogether the excessive type-variation of the mid-third century, this seems often to wear a stereotyped or even rigid air ; but in fact this economy of usage will allow a much more perceptive interpretation of those lesser variations which were from time to time permitted or necessitated. Such interpretation, against the general historical context of the time, should be a major exercise in the coming years.

It is to the year 294 that the ultimate phase of Diocletian's coinage-reform must be ascribed.<sup>2</sup> Gold had already been reformed : now true silver coins returned,<sup>3</sup> and copper was re-valued and re-tariffed in three distinct denominations.<sup>4</sup> This new coinage, with its external face changed and its internal values revised, was issued in or soon after 294 from a network of fifteen mints, Alexandria now included,<sup>5</sup> to serve the needs of the whole empire. Compared with the fragile and unhappy years from 260 to 280, when the attempt was made with a thin blanket of gold to cover the dangers of grossly inflated copper, the new money of heavier gold, real silver and denominationally varied copper showed a determination to restore economic health by a monetary reorganization more elaborate than any during the empire previously. Nor should it be forgotten that the reform of 294 followed only about a year after the Augusti, Diocletian and Maximian Herculus, had doubled their military and administrative efficiency in general by the appointment of Constantius and Galerius as Caesars.

In an earlier paper<sup>6</sup> I dealt briefly with some major characteristics of the coinage from 294, pointing out in particular that the gold, with its ' old gods ' symbolism, bore types suitable for conservative and upper-class consumption and that those of the silver were frankly military in their tenor. These differences reflect differences in the sections of society by which gold and silver respectively were mainly absorbed. As regards the copper, the part played in the early empire by the As<sup>7</sup>—the ordinary small coin which carried types of maximum general applicability—was now to be performed by what today (and probably

\* In an earlier form this paper was the subject of a lecture given to the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and also at Dumbarton Oaks in 1962.

<sup>1</sup> cf. Sutherland in *JRS* XLIX (1959), 46 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A considerable literature has grown up around the question of the date. For studies supporting the year 294 see, most recently, H. A. Cahn in *Bull. Soc. franc. de num.*, Nov., 1954, 307 f. and in *Schweiz. Num. Rundschau* XXXVII (1955), 5 ff.; Sutherland in *JRS* XLV (1955), 116 ff. and in *Atti del Congr. Internaz. di Num. Roma, 1961* (forthcoming); M. Thirion in *Rev. belge de num.* CVII (1961), 192 ff.

<sup>3</sup> In quantities which can only now be at all properly estimated as a result of A. Jeločnik's

publication of the Sisak hoard (' The Sisak hoard of argentei of the early Tetrarchy ') in *Situla* III, 37 ff.

<sup>4</sup> cf. S. Bolin, *State and Currency in the Roman Empire to 300 A.D.* (Stockholm, 1958), 291 ff.; Sutherland in *JRS* LI (1961), 94 ff., and in *Archaeometry* IV (1961), 56 ff.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Thirion, o.c. (n.2), and Sutherland, *Atti del Congr. . . . Roma, 1961*, cit. (n. 2). New coinage in Britain could not have appeared before 296.

<sup>6</sup> ' Flexibility in the " reformed " coinage of Diocletian ', in *Essays . . . presented to Harold Mattingly* (ed. Carson/Sutherland, London, 1956), 174 ff.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g. M. Grant, *ibid.*, 108 f.

unhistorically) we call the follis, most likely a five-denarius piece.<sup>8</sup> For some years after 294 the follis bore as its commonest type that which showed Genius with *calathus* on his head, and holding *patera* and *cornucopiae*, with the legend *Genio Populi Romani*.

The Genius type has recently been studied at length by J.-P. Callu,<sup>9</sup> who, seeking to fix the date when it blazed out, nearly simultaneously, from a large number of mints, was under the consequent necessity of dating those folles, mint by mint, which first show the type. His acceptance of 295–6 as the initial date of issue (and as the date of the reform as well)<sup>10</sup> can hardly stand against the evidence for 294;<sup>11</sup> and it is to 294 that the Genius type must first be given on a thorough balance of the numismatic evidence. As a conception involving a ‘double’ line of thought, Genius is characteristically Roman—a man’s other and guardian self, or the epitome and guardian self of a class or organization or region; protective and associated with the harmless pleasures of life on earth; *deorum filius* and *parens hominum*, a semi-divine parent and guardian of an individual or of a body of like men. It is as the representative of a class that Genius Populi Romani now appears. The conception of the Genius of the Roman People had had a long numismatic history;<sup>12</sup> but, even though universal citizenship came with Caracalla, it was a conception rare in the third century. Now, in and after 294, it stood for the unity of the Roman body politic—both military and civil—from end to end of the empire, at a time when that empire was seriously threatened from outside.

Of the ‘reformed’ mints active during the first tetrarchy (294–305) it is generally accepted that ten struck *aes* folles from the actual moment of the reform<sup>13</sup>—Trier and Lyons in the west, under Constantius; Ticinum, Aquileia, Rome and Siscia<sup>14</sup> in the centre, under Herculus; Heraclea in the Balkan sector, under Galerius; and Nicomedia, Antioch and Alexandria in Asia Minor and the Levant, under Diocletian. In all ten cases Genius wore the round *calathus*, with shoulder *chlamys*. Moreover four others—Cyzicus (Diocletian), Thessalonica and Serdica (Galerius) and London (Constantius)—followed suit. Apart, therefore, from Carthage (opening c. 296 essentially as a wartime mint for Herculus’ campaign against the Quinquegentanei, and using special types, afterwards retained)<sup>15</sup> every mint from London in the north-west to Alexandria in the south-east came to strike folles which proclaimed the universality of *romanitas*. As the single theme of an everyday coinage this is now, and must have been then also, a remarkable contrast with the coinage of the previous generation—often partitioned into regional issues, often basically competitive, nearly always flooded with types so miscellaneous as to be drained of meaning. Diocletian made the change from multiplicity to unity, and gave the Roman world (through the office of his supreme *rationalis*) a single pattern of currency with a single type for the everyday coin—its meaning everywhere clear and its value everywhere guaranteed.

This initial uniformity, however, was not to be maintained; and subsequent variation is historically important. Although the chronological arrangement of the folles at the mints under discussion is not yet exact,<sup>16</sup> it is possible to work out a framework of dates, probably correct within a year or two, which will underline that importance. It is convenient to study the Genius type in its four main administrative sections.

(i) *London, Trier and Lyons under Constantius*. London did not open until c. 297. It closed c. 298–9; thereafter coins without mint-mark were issued, either from London or from elsewhere in Britain, first c. 300–1 and again possibly c. 303–5.<sup>17</sup> Throughout all issues, either with or without a mint-mark, the *Genio Populi Romani* type was constant. At Trier, the main western mint and the sole but abundant source of western gold and silver, the folles began in 294 with *Genio Populi Romani*; but from c. 298 to 299 other types were used as well, and Genius changed his form of clothing to a turreted head-dress and

<sup>8</sup> See references in note 4 above.

<sup>9</sup> *Genio Populi Romani (295–316): contribution à une histoire numismatique de la Tétrarchie* (Paris, 1960).

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 28.

<sup>11</sup> See note 2 above.

<sup>12</sup> Callu, *o.c.* (n. 9), 9 ff.

<sup>13</sup> This view, which will be the basis of arrangement in *Roman Imperial Coinage* vi, is contrary to that of Callu, *o.c.*

<sup>14</sup> See below for the association of Siscia with the Italian mints.

<sup>15</sup> See Elmer in *Num. Zeitschr.* 1932, 23 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Though it is much more exact than Callu’s monograph would suggest.

<sup>17</sup> The views which I put forward in the American Numismatic Society’s *Centennial Volume*, 627 ff., require modification in the light of P. Bastien’s paper in *Rev. belge de num.* cv (1959), 33 ff.

*himation*.<sup>18</sup> In 300–1 Trier dropped Genius altogether, in favour of Fortuna Redux and Moneta types. Finally, from late 301 to 305 Genius was resumed, at first with other types and ultimately alone, with turreted head-dress and shoulder *chlamys* dominant. Lyons contrasts strongly with Trier, for if, as seems most probable,<sup>19</sup> folles were coined annually the *Genio Populi Romani* type was produced without interruption from c. 294 to 305, always showing round *calathus* but with *himation* as an alternative to *chlamys* c. 298–9. The western picture—Constantius' picture—is thus plain. Lyons and London, both secondary mints, struck *Genio Populi Romani* folles alone. The main mint, situated in the residential and administrative capital of Trier, supplanted Genius by Fortuna and Moneta c. 300–1, and both before and afterwards the Genius type was briefly associated with others.

(ii) *Ticinum, Aquileia, Rome, Siscia and Carthage under Maximian Herculus*. Here the pattern is much more definite. Carthage was exceptional: opened c. 296, as we have noted, for Herculus' African war, it struck its own follis types (recording Herculus' visit and successes) without interruption. At all four of the other mints *Genio Populi Romani* (with round *calathus* and *chlamys*) was the sole type to c. 300, with Moneta thereafter the sole type to 305. It is because of this type-pattern that Siscia can confidently be assigned to Herculus,<sup>20</sup> and so too the responsibility for Pannonian frontier security.

(iii) *Serdica, Heraclea, Thessalonica (under Galerius), Nicomedia and Cyzicus (under Diocletian)*. The pattern here is different, for Diocletian was not infrequently active in Galerius' territories, and the area as a whole appears to show that arrangements for coinage moved, to some extent at least,<sup>21</sup> as Diocletian himself moved. It can be argued that the development of silver types in this general area evolved in a way which would reflect Diocletian's presence in 293 at Heraclea and Nicomedia, in 294–5 at Nicomedia again, and in 303 at Thessalonica. It is likely that his *aes* was produced as follows:—294, Nicomedia and Heraclea, the former only until 295, the latter until 298; 296–302, Cyzicus; 298–303, Thessalonica; 303–5, Nicomedia again; 304–5, Serdica. At all mints the folles had the *Genio Populi Romani* type (with round *calathus* and *chlamys*), though it should be noted that at Nicomedia and Cyzicus—the two Asia Minor mints—this type was accompanied by *Genio Augg et Caesarum Nn*, the latter at Cyzicus for the Caesars only. The powers of the rulers, rather than the personality of the ruled, could be more appropriately emphasized in eastern territories.

(iv) *Antioch and Alexandria under Diocletian*. At both of these large and busy mints *Genio Populi Romani* (round *calathus* and *chlamys*) is absolute from 294 to 305.<sup>22</sup>

The total picture for the first tetrarchy thus emerges. In the East under Diocletian and Galerius *Genio Populi Romani* is nearly absolute for all folles down to 305. In the centre (Carthage apart) it is absolute to c. 300, with Moneta absolute thereafter. In the West *Genio Populi Romani* is solid at Lyons and in Britain, but is shared or momentarily broken at Trier just before and after 300. The general chronology of the Moneta type associates it (like the XXI folles of Siscia and Alexandria)<sup>23</sup> with the Maximal Edict of 301, and it may perhaps follow either that the Edict was primarily directed at the centre and West, because of monetary maladjustment or other causes, or that the centre and West gave special attention to its provisions and effects. If the years 294 to 305 are viewed as a whole it may be said that the ordinary man was constantly reminded by his everyday coinage of two over-riding ideas—*romanitas* and a stable currency. Some might now be tempted to argue that so limited a range of types was the result of unimaginative indolence in high circles. But that theory could scarcely stand in the face of the variations which are to be observed.

After 305, when a resolute Diocletian and an unwilling Herculus abdicated, the previous easy balance of power was broken. Genius, hitherto an ecumenical concept, was

<sup>18</sup> cf. my analysis in *Latomus* LVIII, 1454 ff. Permutation and variation in the head-dress and drapery of Genius have not yet been satisfactorily explained. It seems likely that it was primarily due to the provision to mints of prototypes that were themselves not deliberately differentiated. Certainly there would be difficulty in reading into this variation overt competition between western and eastern ideas (cf. Callu, o.c. (n. 9), 62).

<sup>19</sup> *Pace* Callu, o.c. (n. 9), 37 ff., 113.

<sup>20</sup> Contrary to the view of J. Maurice, *La numismatique Constantinienne* II (Paris, 1911), 285.

<sup>21</sup> *Num. Zeitschr.* 1930, 25 ff.

<sup>22</sup> See the articles of Sutherland (in *Atti del Congr. Internaz. di Num. Roma 1961*) and Thirion cited in note 2 above, as against Callu, o.c. (n. 9), 20 ff.

<sup>23</sup> cf. the articles cited in the preceding note. The xcv silver of the central mints should fall in the same period.

threatened,<sup>24</sup> and soon disappeared from many mints. Not, however, in the West. There Genius continued on the folles of 305–6, and even, in a fleeting way, on those of the third tetrarchy until the tide flowed against Severus in 307. London, Trier and Lyons (all three by now under Constantine's control after the death of his father Constantius) then omitted every mention of Severus, and re-introduced Herculus as a restored and active Augustus: not only was his role in Italy in his favour, as Maxentius' partner in protecting Rome against Severus, but he was the former Augustus and 'father' of the blessed Constantius, so dear to the West. At this juncture the Genius type (henceforth to be one among a number of types) acquired a new and important significance and from now on indicated legitimately accepted and legitimately associated members of the imperial college;<sup>25</sup> this use, which was found in some other parts of the empire as well, necessitates very close dating of Genius issues. In the spring of 307 the three western mints clearly regarded the imperial college as consisting of Galerius and Herculus as Augusti, and Constantine and Maximinus as Caesars: here was the germ of the plans which Herculus conceived for vigorous presentation at Carnuntum.

Soon, however, there were differences. London dropped both Galerius and Herculus, and from autumn 307<sup>26</sup>—when these two had both had their weaknesses demonstrated—recognized only two legitimate Augusti, Constantine and Maximinus (the latter given early promotion in Britain to match that of Constantine), with Licinius added, much later, from c. 310. At Trier, likewise, the fourfold college contracted to two; it is true that Maxentius, as Augustus, received a Mars type, but it was Constantine and Herculus as Augusti who shared the Genius type in 307–8: from 310 to 313 Constantine and Maximinus appeared as Genius-partners, and Licinius—unless his coins have still to be found or recorded—was wholly absent. At Lyons, as at London, the fourfold college contracted in 307 to Constantine and Maximinus as Augusti; but in 307–8 there was an extraordinary outburst of Lyons coinage in which Constantine, Herculus, Galerius and—surprisingly—Maxentius<sup>27</sup> were recorded by shared use of the Genius type as active Augusti, with Diocletian (still the great background eminence) as 'aeternus Augustus'<sup>28</sup> and Maximinus as Caesar. This was almost certainly the further development of the structure for which Herculus was intending to press at Carnuntum. By 309, after Carnuntum, the active list at Lyons had shrunk again to two Augusti, Constantine and Herculus. Western usage was thus most uneven; and it is interesting to speculate on the reasons. London's coinage often suggests in other respects that it stood outside the orbit of normal convention, and its divergence from Trier—Constantine's centre of power<sup>29</sup>—need cause no surprise. Lyons, however, is deeply surprising, and its recognition of Maxentius as a fully legitimate Augustus in 307–8 supports Callu's suggestion<sup>30</sup> that it was at Lyons that Herculus, father of Maxentius, married his daughter Fausta to Constantine in autumn 307; it may be that Lyons was one seat of residence for Herculus (and also his temporary mint-city) until the Carnuntum decisions made him once more a *privatus*.

The central mints show a totally different picture. Genius, the western symbol of legitimate association, does not appear at Ticinum, Aquileia or Rome in 305–6, or even under Severus as Augustus (306–7); nor is it found at any time under Maxentius down to 312. Under Severus as Caesar, i.e. to 306, *Fides Militum* and *Virtus Augg et Caess* types were judged to be the essential rallying cries for north Italy, possibly in the knowledge of growing dissension at Rome; and they were still more essential in 306–7, when Maxentius' revolt set Galerius in motion in support of Severus. Maxentius himself, from the moment of his rebellion at Rome late in 306, naturally avoided the catholic and ecumenical tones of the

<sup>24</sup> See the excellent remarks of Callu, o.c. (n. 9), 16 ff., 82 f.

<sup>25</sup> Callu (o.c. n. 9), 69, 71, has already indicated almost the same view, though with the important difference that he has stressed the association of actual rulers rather than their legitimacy in that association; the differences in regional usage make the latter view much more probable.

<sup>26</sup> The difficult problem of the date at which Constantine became Augustus has been treated afresh by P. Strauss, *Rev. num.* 1954, 33 ff., whose arguments, in the light of their subsequent examina-

tion by Miss C. E. King, *Amer. Num. Soc. Museum Notes* ix (1957), 127 (cf. *Num. Chron.* 1959, 56 f.), are—short of absolute proof—convincing.

<sup>27</sup> Kent, *Num. Chron.* 1957, 42, nos. 247–52.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Sutherland in *Amer. Num. Soc. Museum Notes* vii (1957), 67 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Alone of his mints at this time Trier struck gold and silver in addition to *aes*. The western pre-eminence of Trier is strongly emphasized by the contemporary panegyrists.

<sup>30</sup> o.c. (n. 9), 75, note 3.

Genius type at a time when, as *conservator urbis suae*, he was setting Rome and Italy in opposition to the whole of the rest of the empire. Only after the battle of the Milvian Bridge, and twelve years of absence, was Genius restored to the coinage of Rome by Constantine, who brought it from its current employment in Gaul, repository of western *romanitas*, to define the new imperial college of legitimate Augusti—Constantine, Maximinus and Licinius.

Siscia, as noted above, can be surely assigned to the central group of mints by its type-pattern down to 305. In seizing Severus' other central territories Maxentius may have hoped to acquire Pannonia together with the Siscian mint. But the total absence of Siscian coins of Maxentius shows that he could not or did not do so. Exactly when Siscia fell to Galerius is not clear. Serdica, its nearest mint-neighbour to the east, struck *Genio Populi Romani* to 307, adding the new eastern personalizing versions, *Genio Augusti* and *Genio Caesaris*, in 307–8; and similar if not identical development occurred at Heraclea, Nicomedia and Cyzicus. No Genius type of any kind appeared at Siscia until 309–11, when *Genio Augusti* and *Genio Caesaris* reflected the Carnuntum decisions, which elevated Licinius and assigned Pannonia-Illyricum to him. Genius thereafter disappeared at Siscia, and not even Constantine's Italian victory in 312 prompted its return: Siscia was perhaps too remote or isolated a mint to reflect the ideas of the centre and was in any case a frontier base *par excellence*: perhaps, too, it was reflecting Licinius' independent ambitions.

From 308 onwards Licinius was recognized at all Balkan and Asia Minor mints controlled by Galerius; and in 310–11 the quadruple college of Augusti—Galerius, Licinius, Maximinus and Constantine—was reflected at these mints in the use of a Genius type, either *Augusti* or *Imperatoris*. At Thessalonica, it is to be noted, Genius disappeared after 311, the year of Galerius' death; and the fall of Heraclea to Maximinus early in 313 is shown by that city's attribution of Genius types to Maximinus alone. In general, the coinage of the Balkans and Asia Minor mirrors the weakening and breakdown of the structure of the imperial college.

Further south, in Maximinus' legal dominions, Antioch continued *Genio Populi Romani* until 306 only, when it was replaced by *Genio Imperatoris, Caesaris, Fil Augg, Exercitus* and (finally) *Augusti*: in the years 307 to 310 (while his own claims were being denied) Maximinus is seen to avoid *Genio Augusti* in favour of the less controversial but possibly more realistic *Genio Imperatoris*, used ultimately for Galerius, Licinius, Maximinus himself and (briefly and most surprisingly) for Herculus, perhaps reflecting some idea of using Herculus (by then rejected at Carnuntum but still not useless) as a counterpoise against both Constantine and Licinius. At Alexandria there was no Genius type at all until 307, when *Genio Caesaris* and *Genio Imperatoris* began: here again Herculus was, most unexpectedly, honoured. Alexandria was unique in its *Bono Genio Pii Imperatoris* of 312–32, given to Licinius, Maximinus and Constantine.

In the first tetrarchy, therefore, down to 305, Genius was a visible sign of the call to unity in *romanitas*, implying solidarity among rulers and ruled alike; and only at the moment of the Maximal Edict was there any substantial divergence. After 305 the various types of Genius indicate legitimacy of appointment or association. As long as the *Genio Populi Romani* type continued, that legitimacy was derived, by direct conferment, in succession from the first tetrarchy. The appearance of the more personal Genius (*Augusti, Caesaris, Fil Augg, Imperatoris*) indicates growing competition among the rulers. Maxentius, as was observed, used no Genius types at all in his own mints. Though his father Herculus was one of the two originals in the use of *Genio Populi Romani*, Maxentius would avail himself neither of the strong ecumenical symbolism nor of the implied status—as, for example, Constantine did after his own father Constantius died in 306. Whatever Maxentius' policy was in the autumn of 306 it involved no initial desire to continue or respect the constitutional conventions of the previous decade and more.

Perhaps, indeed, his total avoidance of Genius is to be viewed in association with his use at first of the title *princeps*. The circumstances must be briefly recalled. The original pair of Augusti, Diocletian and Herculus, retired in 305; their Caesars became the next pair of Augusti, of whom Constantius died in July, 306, his son Constantine being appointed to a now vacant Caesariate; in October, 306 Herculus' son Maxentius, excluded from the imperial college of legitimately successive Augusti and Caesars, laid claim (through his

rebellion in Rome) to the territories of Severus in Italy and Africa. Of the mints which Maxentius thereby also acquired, it is interesting that Carthage (the most distant, and perhaps least in touch with central policy) at first styled him 'Caesar'. No doubt Carthage was uncertain of its facts, or had insufficient directives; this was a brief stage, however, and 'Caesar' at Carthage was soon dropped in favour of 'Princeps' or 'Princeps Invictus',<sup>31</sup> styles regularly used for a time at Rome also until Maxentius in 307 assumed, by usurpation, the title 'Augustus'. Nor were 'Princeps' or 'Princeps Invictus' the apparent limit of Maxentius' initial ideas about titulature. Aurei with the advancing Mars reverse inscribed *Principi Imperii Romani* have long been known;<sup>32</sup> and lately a gold medallion, again with the advancing Mars reverse, has furnished an even more remarkable example of this legend.<sup>33</sup>

The simple title 'Princeps' had not previously (with the very doubtful exception of Gallienus) appeared on the imperial coinage: that which the word had connoted, in speech or in the written language of history, under Augustus and (by derivation) afterwards had never been politically defined to the point of inclusion in official titulature. 'Invictus' was an epithet increasingly affected in the third century: used, for example, by Claudius II, Aurelian, Probus, Carus, Carausius and Allectus, it was (apart from its British occurrences) specially characteristic of the mints of Siscia and Serdica, in an area of dominant military importance. It was in later use too, being found at London for *aes* of Galerius (306-7), Herculus (307) and Constantine (310-3) and at Trier for gold of Constantine (309 onwards). Because Maxentius' coinage gives no slightest suggestion that he was in any way extending or amplifying the use of 'Princeps Iuuentutis'—still a common reverse legend (for Constantine and Maximinus) at western mints of the time—it must be concluded that a special meaning was to be read into his new use of 'Princeps'.

As has been stated already, the reverse type of the *Principi Imperii Romani* gold medallion and aurei shows Mars advancing: he strides into battle (in a pose frequently found with such legend-epithets as 'ultor' or 'victor') holding spear, shield and trophy. It might be argued, in a literal sense, that in each of these cases it is Mars himself, in his own distinct and divine personality, who was being honoured by the dative of the legend. Outwardly, indeed, this was so: long convention defined the context of a reverse legend according to the content of the reverse type. But Mars was a god: the concept of *princeps*, however flexible, had long been associated with earthly rulers. Who was Mars if not Maxentius, armed contender for the *imperium Romanum*? Who, for that matter, was Hercules—the *comes Augusti nostri*—on a medallion<sup>34</sup> and aurei of the same time if not Maxentius, the son of Maximian Herculus? And Roma herself, appearing with Maxentius on yet another new gold medallion with reverse inscribed *Romae Aeternae Auctrici Aug N*, only remained what she was because in protecting Maxentius, whose base and support she was, she was protecting her protector and *conservator*. Mars, Hercules and Roma were, all three, acting as protective Genius for Maxentius.

Originally, then, the mint of Rome styled Maxentius 'Princeps' or 'Princeps Invictus'. As Mars-Maxentius he became 'Princeps Imperii Romani'. Only for a short time, however; for these new conceptions cannot have extended much after 307, and thereafter the use of the title 'Augustus' was absolute. At this point deep awareness must be felt of the little that is now known of the constitutional theory, if any, which could then have encouraged or supported the transference of power. Diocletian's quadruple college of two Augusti and two Caesars was so constructed that power devolved with personal immediacy on to the Caesars as new Augusti who themselves chose new Caesars. In October 306 Maxentius, son of Herculus, was disputing by arms the principle of the succession as Caesar of Constantine, son of Constantius. If there was, in fact, no more than a mere mechanism for succession—a mechanism personally operated through *auctoritas*, but without any sanctified theory behind it—he may well have asked himself at first whether, based at Rome, a centre of sentiment, influence and wealth, he could not exercise a controlling function, as 'Princeps Imperii Romani', in the subsequent formation of the

<sup>31</sup> Elmer, *o.c.* (n. 15), 32 f.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice, *o.c.* (n. 20), I, 180.

<sup>33</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 14 November, 1959, 650, fig. 1 (now in the British Museum).

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 651, fig. 7.

imperial college. That function would inevitably, according to precedent, make him an Augustus himself in the end ; but it could only be exercised at all if, like Diocletian earlier, he was essentially a man above all other men, ' invictus ' and ' princeps '. The mints of the West, as has been seen, flirted briefly with the new contender. Those of the East totally ignored him. He was left to fight out a hopeless position by himself ; inactive by nature, and doomed to attrition, his only claim was an imposing string of noble connections.

The preceding paragraphs have indicated only a few of the critical exercises which the coinage of 294-313 offers by way of its types. The importance of these questions is that each of them, considerable in its own right, is thrown into special prominence by the generally close dating assignable to the coinage of this period. At a time when the imperial structure was under special stress, and the empire was pulled this way and that, a detailed reflection, often at almost annual intervals, can be gathered from a coinage which has too often been regarded as a sterile and rigid contrast with the excessive laxity of third-century issues.