



CHAPTER XL. CONFUSION WORSE CONFOUNDED: THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRD CENTURY OF EMPIRE

(235-285 A. D.)

"Now begins the inferno of half a century (235-284), in which all philosophy, all civil order, all delicacy founders; with power put up to auction, the soldiery masters of everything; with sometimes ten tyrants at once; with the barbarian entering through all the breaches of a shattered world; with Athens destroying her ancient monuments, to girdle herself with ill-built walls as a protection against the Goths. If anything can show the intrinsic necessity of the Roman Empire, it is the fact that it was not wholly put out of joint by this anarchy and retained breath enough to revive under the vigorous action of Diocletian, and to endure for two centuries more. In every class the decadence is terrible. In fifty years the art of sculpture is forgotten. Latin literature comes to an end. It is as if a vampire brooded over society, drinking its life-blood." — RENAN.

BAD matters become worse in the period we are now entering. Old evils remain, and new ones are added. The rule of the soldiers is absolute, and as before, money affords the only channel to the suffrage of these rulers of the empire. As before, there is an incessant scramble after the honours and emoluments of the imperial office; as before, successful and unsuccessful aspirants alike place themselves on the sure road to an early death, so soon as they attempt to grasp the purple.

In the half century we are now entering, some seventeen emperors who may be styled legitimate holders of the title, pass in rapid succession before the view; and with only one or two doubtful exceptions they all meet a tragic end. Some reign for a few weeks or months, some for a few years; some are young, some are old; but neither the tender years of a Gordian nor the senility of a Tacitus can give protection from the imperial fate.

All this indeed is but a repetition of what we have seen in the half century just gone. There is no sudden transition, no marked revolution. And yet the time upon which we are entering has in other respects a character that is peculiarly its own. It marks a condition towards which the empire has been steadily tending; a condition that is the logical, the necessary outcome of the antecedent conditions we have studied. The essence of this new condition is found in the de-romanisation of the empire. From now on the rulers of Rome, with rare exceptions, are no longer Romans in the old sense of the word. Caracalla, to be sure, gave Roman citizenship to all free men in the empire, which list, it may be noted, included vast numbers of persons who had once been slaves. But the sweep of the imperial stylus,

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while it may make the Gaul and the Goth, the Dalmatian and the Dacian the Syrian and the Arab, each and all Romans in the official sense, is impotent to change the racial traits of this heterogeneous company. The man from the provinces, who has never been within a thousand miles of Rome, may count himself a Roman citizen, may even glory in the name, but beyond peradventure his closest interests lie with his own kith and kin, with his own race, as against those others of his fellow-citizens who live in far-distant lands, and have habits, customs, and languages different from his own.

In the present connection this natural instinct comes to have much importance. It becomes increasingly evident that we no longer have a strongly centralised government. In the first instance nearly all the emperors are themselves men from the provinces. A great city is seldom the birthplace of the great men of any epoch. It has been said that Rome never produced a poet, and the briefest analysis of her great names will show that few men indeed whom posterity remembers were born within the confines of the city itself. But in the early day the great Romans were, for the most part, born in Italy, if not at the capital. In the first century, indeed, importance attaches, as we have seen to a good many adoptive Romans who were born in Asia Minor, and to others who came from Spain — such men as the Senecas, Lucan, and Quintilian. In the second century of the empire, it will be recalled, two of the greatest emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, were Spaniards. But these are exceptional instances.

Now, however, we are entering upon a period when the Roman emperor, almost as a matter of course, is not an Italian. Maximian is a Thracian peasant, Philip is an Arab, Decius comes from Pannonia, Æmilianus is said to be a Moor; Claudius, Probus, Carus, and Carinus come from various regions of Illyricum. Some of these provincials visit Rome whenever a lull in the border warfares will permit. Philip the Arab, for example, makes Rome his headquarters; and by an odd freak of fortune it is this man of alien blood who is on the throne when Rome comes, in the year 248, to her one thousandth anniversary: it is he who conducts the magnificent secular games that mark the millennium.

There are rulers too, like Aurelian, who take an interest in the more intimate economical affairs of the empire, and who strenuously apply their energies to a reform of the currency, the debasement of which is one of the most significant features of the time. Aurelian fixes an honest value for the gold and silver coins, takes from the senate and from all cities but Alexandria the right of coinage, striving thus to fix more firmly the position of the seat of empire as the financial centre, and to give stability to the economic system. But his best efforts lead to mutiny in the present, and fall far short of hoped-for results in the future. Moreover, even an Aurelian, whatever his regard for Rome, finds his time chiefly occupied with the warlike affairs of the outlying provinces. He must dash from Syria to Egypt, from Egypt to Gaul; one revolt is not put down before another begins. And in this day it is no easy matter to transport an army from one part of the bulky empire to another.

Then again, there are emperors who scorn the capital; Maximin, for example, who for a time transfers the seat of empire to distant Pannonia. It is a strange spectacle when Italian citizens are brought from their residences in Rome to have punishment — punishment, be it understood, not justice — meted out to them in a province on the Danube. Few other emperors go quite to such extremes as this; but more and more as time goes on we feel that the interests of the empire are everywhere except in Rome.

After the time of Claudius, who occupies the throne just as the empire is rounding out its third century, it is almost a foregone conclusion that Illyricum will supply the empire with its rulers. The significance of this fact is at once evident, if we recall that Illyricum is that territory north of Greece including Macedonia, Thrace, and Mœsia, which a future emperor will fix on as the seat of New Rome — Constantinople.

The decentralisation of the empire, of which these are significant marks, is still more strikingly manifested in the ever increasing number of rival claimants to the purple. Again and again it happens that the soldiers in different portions of the empire raise different chiefs to nominal imperial power. At one time, while Gallienus is the legitimate holder of the title, there are spurious emperors in Illyricum, Gaul, Greece, Egypt, — everywhere. The time comes to be known as the epoch of the Thirty Tyrants. Doubtless there were not thirty of these rival emperors; but there may have been fifteen or twenty — just how many no one knows or need greatly care to know.

And while internal dissensions are thus weakening the empire, an even greater danger threatens it from without. The peoples whom we have come to speak of rather loosely as barbarian hordes — Franks, Alamanni, Goths — are piercing through the cordon of steel which is the sole safeguard of the empire. The Persians contest the eastern border. They capture a Roman emperor, Valerian, and carry him off to ignominious servitude. The Goths sweep down to the Bosphorus, invade Asia Minor, and coast along the shores of Greece. The Alamanni invade Italy, and come almost to Rome itself. For the time being these hordes are repelled. A pest from Egypt carries off the Goths by thousands and renders their motley array of warriors powerless. The arms of Aurelian drive back the Alamanni. For the moment the imperial seat is secure. But so dreadful appears this new threat of the old northern enemies that now, just at the close of the third century of empire, a wall is built about the imperial city. A few generations back that far-outlying wall of steel was all-sufficient: now a narrow circle of stone must safeguard the capital, as in the days of long ago, when Rome had not yet conquered Italy.

This fact alone sufficiently characterises the time. When the proud city, whose subject territories are bounded by the Euphrates and the Atlantic, acknowledges the fear of an enemy at her very portals, the beginning of the end is at hand. The Roman Empire at the close of its third century is no longer dreaming of more distant conquests; it is struggling for life itself. Some salient features of this struggle will now claim our attention.^a

MAXIMIN (C. JULIUS VERUS MAXIMINUS), 235-238 A.D.

Maximin was originally a Thracian peasant, of enormous size and strength; his stature, we are told, "exceeded eight feet; his wife's bracelet made him a thumb-ring; he could draw a loaded wagon, break a horse's leg with a kick, and crumble sandstones in his hands"; he often, it is added, "ate forty pounds of meat in the day, and washed them down with seven gallons of wine." Hence he was named Hercules, Antæus, and Milo of Croton. He became known to the emperor Severus on the occasion of his celebrating the birthday of his son Geta one time in Thrace. The young barbarian approached him, and in broken Latin craved permission to wrestle with some of the strongest of the camp followers; he vanquished sixteen of them, and received

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as many prizes, and was admitted into the service. A couple of days after, Severus seeing him exulting at his good fortune, spoke to a tribune about him, and Maximin perceiving that he was the object of the emperor's discourse began to run on foot by his horse; Severus to try his speed put his horse to the gallop, but the young soldier kept up with him till the aged emperor was tired. Severus asked him if he felt inclined to wrestle after his running: he replied in the affirmative, and overthrew seven of the strongest soldiers. He rose rapidly in the service under Severus and his son; he retired to his native village when Macrinus seized the empire; he disdained to serve Elagabalus, but the accession of Alexander induced him to return to Rome. He received the command of a legion, was made a senator, and the emperor even had thoughts of giving his sister in marriage to the son of the Thracian peasant.

The first care of Maximin when raised to the empire was to dismiss from their employments all who were in the council or family of his predecessor, and several were put to death as conspirators. He speedily displayed the native ferocity of his temper; for when, having completed a bridge of boats over the Rhine commenced by Alexander, he was preparing to pass over into Germany, a conspiracy headed by one Magnus, a consular, was discovered, the plan of which was to loose the further end of the bridge when Maximin had passed over, and thus to leave him in the hands of the Germani, and meantime Magnus was to be proclaimed emperor. On this occasion he massacred upwards of four thousand persons, without any form of trial whatever; and he was accused of having invented the conspiracy with this design.

A revolt of the eastern archers, which occurred a few days after, being quelled, Maximin led his army into Germany. As no large force opposed him, he wasted and burned the country through an extent of four hundred miles. Occasional skirmishes took place in the woods and marshes, which gave Maximin opportunities of displaying his personal prowess; and he caused pictures of his victories to be painted, which he sent to Rome to be placed at the door of the senate house.

Maximin employed the two first years of his reign in wars against the Germans and the Sarmatians. His winter residence was Sirmium in Pannonia, and he never condescended to visit Italy. But his absence was no benefit; for Italy and all parts of the empire groaned alike beneath his merciless tyranny. The vile race of delators once more came into life; men of all ranks were dragged from every part of the empire to Pannonia, where some were sewed up in the skins of animals, others were exposed to wild beasts, others beaten to death with clubs, and the properties of all were confiscated. This had been the usual course of the preceding despotism, and the people in general therefore took little heed of it; but Maximin stretched his rapacious hands to the corporate funds of the cities of the empire, which were destined for the support or the amusement of the people; and he seized on the treasures of the temples, and stripped the public edifices of their ornaments. The spirit of disaffection thus excited was general, and even his soldiers were wearied of his severity and cruelty.

RIVAL EMPERORS, AND THE DEATH OF MAXIMIN

The whole empire was now therefore ripe for revolt; the rapacity of the procurator of Africa caused it to break out in that province (237). This officer, who was worthy of his master, had condemned two young men of

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rank to pay such sums as would have quite ruined them. In despair, they assembled the peasantry on their estates, and having gained over part of the soldiers, they one night surprised the procurator and slew him and those who defended him. Knowing that they had no safety but in a general revolt, they resolved to offer the empire to M. Antonius Gordianus, the governor of the province, an illustrious senator of the venerable age of eighty years. They came to him as he was resting after giving audience in the morning, and flinging the purple of a standard over him hailed him as Augustus. Gordian declined the proffered dignity, but when he reflected that Maximin would never pardon a man who had been proclaimed emperor, he deemed it the safer course to run the hazard of the contest, and he consented to accept the empire, making his son his colleague. He then proceeded to Carthage, whence he wrote to the senate and people, and his friends at Rome, notifying his elevation to the empire.

The intelligence was received with the greatest joy at Rome. The two Gordians were declared Augusti; and Maximin and his son, whom he had associated with him in the empire, and their friends, public enemies, and re-



THE CAMPAGNA

wards were promised to those who would kill them: but the decree was ordered to be kept secret till all the necessary preparations should have been made. Soon after it was given out that Maximin was slain. The edicts of the Gordians were then published, their images and letters were carried into the prætorian camp, and forthwith the people rose in fury, cast down and broke the images of Maximin, fell on and massacred his officers and the informers: and many seized this pretext for getting rid of their creditors and their private enemies. Murder and pillage prevailed through the city. The senate meantime having advanced too far to recede, wrote a circular to all the governors of provinces, and appointed twenty of their body to put Italy into a state of defence.

Maximin was preparing to cross the Danube against the Sarmatians when he heard of what had taken place at Rome. His rage and fury passed all bounds. He menaced the whole of the senate with bonds or death, and promised their properties, and those of the Africans, to his soldiers; but finding that they did not show all the alacrity he had expected, he began to fear for his power. His spirits, however, soon rose when tidings came that his rivals were no more; for Capelianus, governor of Mauretania, being ordered by the Gordians to quit that province, marched against Carthage at the head of a body of legionaries and Moors. The younger Gordian gave him battle, and was defeated and slain, and his father on hearing the

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melancholy tidings strangled himself. Capelianus pillaged Carthage and the other towns, and exercised all the rights of a conqueror (237).

When the fatal tidings reached Rome the consternation was great, but the senate, seeing they could not now recede, chose as emperors in the place of the Gordians M. Clodius Pupienus Maximus and D. Cælius Balbinus, the former to conduct the military, the latter the civil affairs of the state. To satisfy the people, a grandson of the elder Gordian, a boy of twelve years of age, was associated with them as cæsar.

The new emperor were elected about the beginning of July, and Pupienus forthwith left Rome to oppose Maximin. The remainder of the year was spent on both sides in making preparations for the war, and in the following spring (238) Maximin put his troops in motion for Italy. He passed the Alps unopposed, but found the gates of Aquileia closed against him. His offers of pardon being rejected, he laid siege to the town; it was defended with the obstinacy of despair. His success augmented the innate ferocity of Maximin; he put to death several of his officers; these executions irritated the soldiers, who were besides suffering all kinds of privations, and discontent became general. As Maximin was reposing one day at noon in his tent, a party of the Alban soldiers approached it with the intention of killing him. They were joined by his guards, and when he awoke and came forth with his son they would not listen to him, but killed them both on the spot, and cut off their heads. Maximin's principal ministers shared his fate. His reign had lasted only three years.

PUPIENUS (M. CLODIUS PUPIENUS MAXIMUS), BALBINUS (D. CÆLIUS BALBINUS), AND GORDIAN (M. ANTONIUS GORDIANUS), 238-244 A.D.

The joy at Rome was extreme when the news of the death of Maximin arrived. Pupienus, who was at Ravenna, hastened to Aquileia, and received the submission of the army. He distributed money to the legions, and then sending them back to their usual quarters returned to Rome with the prætorians and a part of the army of the Rhine, in which he could confide. He and his colleagues entered the city in a kind of triumph.

The administration of Pupienus and Balbinus was of the best kind, and the senate and people congratulated themselves on the choice they had made. But the prætorians were far from being contented; they felt as if robbed of their right of appointing an emperor; and they were annoyed at the German troops being retained in the city, as arguing a distrust of themselves. Unfortunately, too, there prevailed a secret jealousy between the two emperors, and it is probable that concord would not long have subsisted between them under any circumstances.

The prætorians, having to no purpose sought a pretext for getting rid of the emperors, at length took advantage of the celebration of the Capitoline games, at which almost everyone was present, and the emperors remained nearly alone in the palace. They proceeded thither in fury. Pupienus, when aware of their approach, proposed to send for the Germani, but Balbinus, fearing that it was meant to employ them against himself, refused his consent. Meantime the prætorians arrived, forced the entrance, seized the two aged emperors, tore their garments, treated them with every kind of indignity, and were dragging them to their camp, till hearing that the Germans were coming to their aid, they killed them and left their bodies lying in the street. They carried the young Gordian with them to their camp,

where they proclaimed him emperor, and the senate, the people, and the provinces readily acquiesced in his elevation.

The youthful emperor was the object of general affection; the soldiers called him their child, the senate their son, the people their delight. He was of a lively and agreeable temper; and he was zealous in the acquisition of knowledge, in order that he might not be deceived by those about him. In the first years, however, of his reign public affairs were indifferently managed. His mother, who was not a Mamaea, allowed her eunuchs and freedmen to sell all the great offices of the state (perhaps she shared in their gains), and in consequence many improper appointments were made. But the marriage of the young emperor (241) brought about a thorough reformation. He espoused the daughter of Misitheus, a man distinguished in the cultivation of letters, and he made his father-in-law his praetorian prefect, and guided himself by his counsels. Misitheus, who was a man of virtue and talent as well as of learning, discharged the duties of his office in the ablest manner.

A Persian war soon called the emperor to the East (242). Sapor (Shapur), the son and successor of Artaxerxes, had invaded Mesopotamia, taken Nisibis, Carrhae, and other towns, and menaced Antioch. But the able conduct of Misitheus, when the emperor arrived in Syria, speedily assured victory to the Roman arms; the towns were all recovered, and the Persian monarch was obliged to repass the Tigris. Unfortunately for Gordian and the empire, Misitheus died in the following year (243), to the great regret of the whole army, by whom he was both beloved and feared. The office of praetorian prefect was given to M. Julius Philippus, who is accused, though apparently without reason, of having caused the death of his predecessor. Now, however, having in effect the command of the army, Philip aspired to the empire. He spoke disparagingly of the youth of Gordian; he contrived, by diverting the supplies, to cause the army to be in want, and then laid the blame on the emperor. At length (244), after a victory gained over the Persians on the banks of the Chaboras, he led the troops into a country where no provisions could be procured: a mutiny in consequence ensued, in which the emperor was slain, and Philip was proclaimed in his place. Gordian was only nineteen years of age when he met his untimely fate; he had reigned five years and eight months. The soldiers raised him a tomb on the spot, and the senate placed him among the gods.

PHILIP (M. JULIUS PHILIPPUS), 244-249 A.D.

The adventurer who had now attained the imperial purple was an Arab by birth, and it is even pretended a Christian in religion. He probably entered the Roman service in his youth, and gradually rose to rank in the army.

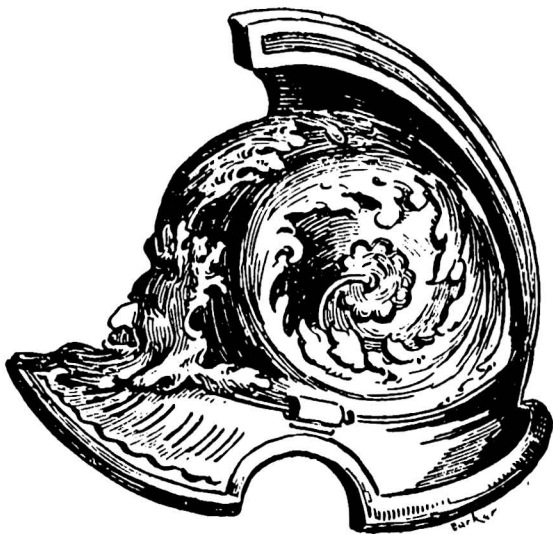
Being anxious to proceed to Rome, Philip lost no time in concluding a treaty with Sapor. He then, after a short stay at Antioch, set out for Italy. At Rome he used every means to conciliate the senators by liberality and kindness, and he never mentioned the late emperor but in terms of respect. To gain the affections of the people, he formed a reservoir to supply with water the part of the city beyond the Tiber.

In the fifth year of his reign (248), Rome having then attained her one thousandth year, Philip, in conjunction with his son, now associated with him in the empire, celebrated with great magnificence the secular games.

[248-250 A.D.]

These had been already solemnised by Augustus, by Claudius, by Domitian, and Severus, and Rome now witnessed them for the last time.

Philip would appear to have acted unwisely in committing extensive commands to his own relations; for in Syria, where his brother Priscus, and in Mœsia, where his father-in-law Severianus commanded, rival emperors were proclaimed. The Syrian rebel was named Jotapianus; the Mœsian was a centurion, named P. Carvilius Marinus. Philip, it is said, in alarm, called on the senate to support him or to accept his resignation (249); but while the other senators maintained silence, Decius, a man of rank and talent, reassured him, speaking slightly of the rebels, and asserting that they could not stand against him. His prediction proved correct, for they both were shortly after slain. Philip then obliged Decius, much, it is said, against his inclination, to take the command of the Mœsian and Pannonian legions. But when Decius reached the army, the soldiers insisted on investing him with the purple. He wrote to the emperor assuring him of his fidelity; but Philip would not trust to his declarations, and leaving his son at Rome with a part of the prætorians, he put himself at the head of his troops to chastise him. The armies met near Verona; Philip was defeated and slain, and when the news reached Rome, the prætorians slew his son and proclaimed Decius.



A ROMAN HELMET

DECIUS (C. MESSIUS QUINTUS TRAJANUS DECIUS), 249-251 A.D.

Decius was born at Bubalia, a town near Sirmium in Pannonia. He was either forty-eight or fifty-eight years of age, it is uncertain which, when he was proclaimed emperor; and from the imperfect accounts which we have of his reign he would seem to have been a man of considerable ability. His reign was, however, brief and unquiet. - It had hardly commenced when he had to go in person to quell an insurrection in Gaul, and all the rest of it was occupied in war with the Goths.

This people, whose original seat seems to have been the Scandinavian peninsula, had at an early period crossed the Baltic, and settled on its southern coast. They had gradually advanced southwards, and they now had reached the Euxine. In the time of Alexander Severus they had made inroads into Dacia; and in that of Philip they ravaged both that province and Mœsia. In the first year of Decius (250) the Gothic king Cniva passed the Danube at the head of seventy thousand warriors, and laid siege to the town of Eustesium (Novi); being repelled by the Roman general Gallus, he advanced against Nicopolis, whence he was driven by the emperor or his son (it is uncertain which) with a loss of thirty thousand men. Undismayed by his reverses he crossed Mount Hæmus, in the hope of surprising Philippopolis; Decius followed him, but his camp at Berœa was surprised by the Goths and his troops were cut to pieces. Philippopolis stood a siege of some duration; but it was taken, and the greater part of its inhabitants were massacred.

The Goths now spread their ravages into Macedonia, the governor of which, Philip's brother Priscus, assumed the purple under their protection.

It seems most probable that it was the younger Decius who met with these reverses, for the emperor must have been at Rome, as we find that on his leaving it (251) to direct the Gothic war, a person named Julius Valens was declared emperor, to the great joy of the people. He was, however, killed shortly after. Decius, who was worthy of empire, was, meantime amidst the cares of war engaged in the visionary project of restoring the long-departed public virtue which had once ennobled Rome. With this view he proposed to revive the office of censor, and the choice of the person being left to the senate they unanimously voted it (October 27, to P. Licinius Valerianus as being the man most worthy of it. The decree was transmitted to the emperor, who was in Thrace; he read it aloud in a large assembly, and exhorted Valerian, who was present, to accept the proffered dignity. Valerian would fain excuse himself. We know not if the emperor was satisfied with his excuses, but from the turn which public affairs took the censorship was never exercised.

Decius was successful against the Goths, who offered to surrender their booty and prisoners if allowed to repass the Danube; but the emperor, who was resolved to strike such a blow as would daunt the barbarians and make them henceforth respect the Roman arms, refused all terms. The Goths therefore gave him battle in a place where a part of their front was covered by a morass. The younger Decius was slain by an arrow in the beginning of the action; but the emperor crying out that the loss of one soldier did not signify, led on his troops. In the attempt to cross the morass they were pierced by the arrows of the enemy, or swallowed up in the mire, and the body of the emperor was never found.

GALLUS (C. VIBIUS TREBONIANUS GALLUS), 251-253 A.D.

The senate, it is said, but more probably the army, conferred the vacant purple on Gallus, the governor of Mœsia. He adopted Hostilianus, the remaining son of Decius, and gave him the title of Augustus; but this youth dying soon after of the plague, Gallus associated his own son Volusianus in the empire. Unable probably to resist the victorious Goths, Gallus agreed that they should depart with their booty and prisoners, and even consented to pay them annually a large sum of gold. He then set out for Rome, where he remained for the rest of his reign, ruling with great mildness and equity.

The Goths and their allies, heedless of treaties, again (253) poured over the Danube; but Æmilianus, the governor of Mœsia, gave them a signal defeat, and his victorious troops forthwith proclaimed him emperor. Without a moment's delay he put them in motion for Rome. Gallus advanced to engage him; the troops came in sight of each other at Interamna (Terni), and those of Gallus seeing themselves the weaker, and gained by the promises of Æmilianus, murdered the emperor and his son, and passed over to the side of the rebel.

ÆMILIANUS (C. JULIUS ÆMILIANUS), 253 A.D.

Æmilianus is said to have been a Moor by birth. Of his previous history nothing is known. He wrote to the senate to say that they should have the whole civil administration, and that he would be no more than their general, and that assembly readily acquiesced in his elevation.

[253-256 A.D.]

But Valerian had been sent by Gallus to fetch the legions of Gaul and Germany to his aid; and these troops, as soon as they heard of his death, proclaimed their general emperor. He led them into Italy; and the troops of Æmilianus, which were encamped at Spoletium (Spoleto), fearing the strength and number of the advancing army, murdered their emperor to obviate a conflict. The reign of Æmilianus had not lasted four months.

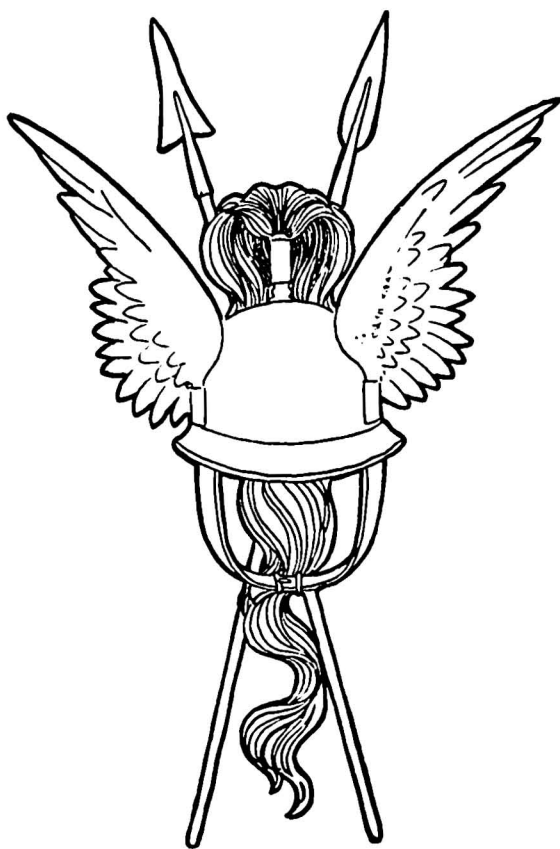
VALERIAN (P. LICINIUS VALERIANUS) AND GALLIENUS (P. LICINIUS GALLIENUS), 253-260 A.D.

Valerian is said to have been sixty years of age when thus raised to the empire. Feeling the infirmities of age, or in imitation of the practice of so many preceding emperors, he associated with him his son Gallienus, a young man devoid neither of courage nor ability, but immoderately addicted to pleasure.

Had the Roman Empire been in the condition in which it was left by Augustus, Valerian might have emulated that emperor, and have displayed his virtues and beneficence in promoting the happiness of his subjects. But a great change had taken place in the condition of Rome; her legions no longer inspired their ancient terror; her northern and eastern provinces were exposed to the ravages of those who had formerly cowered before her eagles. Valerian could therefore only exhibit his wisdom in the selection of his generals; and it is to be observed that his choice never fell on an unworthy subject.

The enemies by whom the empire was assailed at this period were the Franks, the Alamanni, the Goths, and the Persians. As the scanty notices of these times do not enable us to arrange events chronologically, we will give a separate view of the wars with each of these peoples during the reigns of Valerian and his son.

We have already observed the proneness of the Germanic tribes to form confederations. The Chauci, Cherusci, Chatti, and some adjoining states, had lately, it would seem, entered into one of these political unions under the name of Franks—*i.e.*, freemen. Their strength and number now causing uneasiness for Gaul, the young emperor Gallienus was sent to that country; but the chief military command was conferred on Postumus, a man of considerable ability. The arms of the legions were successful in various encounters; but they were finally unable to prevent the passage of an army of the Franks through Gaul, whence surmounting the barrier of the Pyrenees they poured down into the now unwarlike Spain. The rich city of Tarraco



WEAPONS AND HELMET OF THE GAULS

[256-262 A.D.]

was taken and sacked; the whole country was devastated, and the Franks, then seizing the vessels which they found in the ports, embarked to ravage Africa. We know not what was their ultimate fate; they were probably, however, destroyed in detail by the Roman troops and the provincials.

A portion of the great Suevian confederation had formed a new combination under the name of Alamanni — *i.e.*, all men, on account of the variety of tribes which composed it. Like the Suevi, their forces were chiefly composed of cavalry, with active footmen mingled with them; and they always proved a formidable foe. While Gallienus was in Gaul a body of them entered Italy, penetrated as far as Ravenna, and their advanced troops came nearly within sight of Rome. The senate drew out the prætorian guards, and added to them a portion of the populace to oppose them; and the barbarians, finding themselves greatly outnumbered, hastened to get beyond the Danube with their plunder. Gallienus it is said was so much alarmed at the spirit and energy shown by the senate on this occasion, that he issued an edict interdicting all military employments to the senators, and even prohibiting their access to the camps of the legions. It is added that the luxurious nobles viewed this indignity as a favour rather than an insult.

Gallienus is also said to have overcome a large army of Alamanni in the vicinity of Mediolanum.¹ He afterwards espoused Pipa, daughter of the king of the Marcomanni (one of the confederates), to whom he gave a territory in Pannonia, as a means of averting the hostilities of the barbarians.

The Goths were now masters of the northern coast of the Euxine, and finding their attacks on the northern provinces generally repelled with vigour, they resolved to direct their efforts against more unwarlike districts. Collecting a quantity of the vessels used for navigating the Euxine, they embarked (258) and crossed that sea. They made their first attempt on the frontier town of Pityus, which was long ably defended against them; but they at length succeeded in reducing it. They thence sailed to the wealthy city of Trapezus (Trebizond); and though it was defended by a numerous garrison, they effected an entrance during the night. The cowardly garrison fled without making any resistance; the inhabitants were massacred in great numbers; the booty and number of captives were immense, and the victors having ravaged the province of Pontus embarked there on board of the ships which they found in the harbours, and returned to their settlement in the Tauric Chersonesus.

The next expedition of the Goths was directed to the Bosphorus (261). They took and plundered Chalcedon and Nicomedia, Nicæa, Apamea, Prusa, and other cities of Bithynia. The accidental swelling of the little river Rhyndacus saved the town of Cyzicus from pillage.

The third expedition of the Goths was on a larger scale (262). Their fleet consisted of five hundred vessels of all sizes. They sailed along the Bosphorus and Propontis; took and plundered Cyzicus; passed the Hellespont, and entered the Ægean. They directed their course to the Piræus; Athens could offer no resistance; the Goths ravaged Greece with impunity, and advanced to the shores of the Adriatic. Gallienus roused himself from his pleasures and appeared in arms. A Herulian chief with his men was induced to enter the Roman service; the Goths, weakened by this defection, broke up; a part forced their way to the Danube overland; the rest embarked and, pillaging and burning the temple of Diana at Ephesus on their way, returned to the Euxine.

¹ Zonaras, c. xii. He says the Alamanni were 300,000, the Romans only 10,000 strong.

[258-260 A.D.]

Sapor of Persia had been long engaged in war with Chosroes king of Armenia, a prince of the house of Arsaces. Unable to reduce the brave Armenian, he caused him to be assassinated; and Armenia then received the Persian yoke. Elated with his success, Sapor invaded the Roman territory, took Nisibis and Carrhæ, and spread his ravages over Mesopotamia. Valerian, alarmed for the safety of the Eastern provinces, proceeded thither in person (259). The events of the war which ensued have not reached us. All that we know with certainty is that Valerian was finally defeated and made a captive (260). The circumstances of his capture were somewhat similar to those of the taking of Crassus. His army, by ignorance or treachery, got into a position where neither discipline nor courage could avail, being without supplies and suffering from disease. The soldiers clamoured for a capitulation; Sapor detained the deputies that were sent to him, and led his troops up to the camp; and Valerian was obliged to consent to a conference, at which he was made a prisoner.

Valerian ended his days a captive in Persia. We are told that Sapor treated him with every kind of indignity; that he led him about in chains clad in his imperial purple; that when the haughty Persian would mount his horse, the captive emperor was made to go on his hands and knees to serve as his horse-block; and that when death at length released him from his sufferings, his skin was stripped off, tanned and stuffed, and placed in one of the most celebrated temples of Persia. The sufferings of Valerian are, however, probably of the same kind with the tortures of Regulus and the iron cage of Bajazet — gross exaggerations of some degree of ill treatment or of necessary precaution.

GALLIENUS (P. LICINIUS GALLIENUS), 260-268 A.D.

The captivity of Valerian was lamented by all but his son, who felt himself relieved by it from the restraint imposed on him by his father's virtue. He even affected to act the philosopher on the occasion, saying in imitation of Xenophon, "I knew that my father was mortal"; but he never made any attempt to procure his liberty, and he abandoned himself without restraint to sensual indulgence.

The reign of Gallienus is termed the time of the Thirty Tyrants. This word [in its present sense deviating slightly from old Greek usage], merely signified prince, or rather usurper — that is, one who claims the supreme power already held by another. The tyrants of this time were in general men of excellent character, who had been placed in the command of armies by Valerian, and were invested with the purple by their soldiers often against their will. The number of these usurpers who rose and fell in succession did not exceed eighteen or nineteen, but some very fanciful analogy led to a comparison of them with the Thirty of Athens, and in the *Augustan History* an effort is made, by including women and children, to raise them to that number.

The East, Illyricum, Gaul, Greece, and Egypt were the places in which these tyrants appeared. We will notice them in order.

After the defeat of Valerian, Sapor conferred the title of emperor on a person named Cyriades, the son of a citizen of Antioch. This vassal forthwith conducted the Persian troops to the pillage of his native city, and so rapid and so secret was their march that they surprised the Antiochians while engaged at the theatre. The massacre and devastation, usual in the East ensued. The Persian monarch then poured his troops into Cilicia, took

and plundered Tarsus and other towns; then crossing Mount Taurus, he laid siege to Cæsarea in Cappadocia, a city with four hundred thousand inhabitants. It was stoutly defended for some time, but treachery at length delivered it into the hands of the Persians, and massacre and pillage followed. Sapor now spread his ravages on all sides; but the Roman troops having rallied under the command of Ser. Anicius Balista, who had been prætorian prefect, checked his career, and as he was retiring towards his own states he found himself assailed by an unexpected enemy,

Soon after the defeat and capture of Valerian, a train of camels laden with presents entered the camp of Sapor. They were accompanied by a letter from Odenathus, a wealthy citizen of Palmyra (the ancient Tadmor), containing an assurance that he had never acted against the Persians. Sapor, enraged at such insolence (as he deemed it), tore the letter, flung the gifts into the river, and declared that he would exterminate the insolent writer and his family unless he came before his throne with his hands bound behind his back. Odenathus at once resolved to join the Romans; he collected a force chiefly composed of the Bedouins, or Arabs of the desert, over whom he had great influence. He hovered about the Persian army, and attacking it at the passage of the Euphrates, carried off much treasure and some of the women of the Great King, who was forced to seek safety in a precipitate retreat. Odenathus made himself master of all Mesopotamia, and he even passed the Tigris and made an attempt on Ctesiphon (261). Gallienus gave him the title of his general of the East, and Odenathus himself took soon after that of king of Palmyra.

THE THIRTY TYRANTS

The Roman troops in the East meantime, being resolved not to submit to Gallienus, were deliberating on whom they would bestow the purple. Acting under the advice of Balista, they fixed on the prætorian prefect, M. Fulvius Macrianus, a man of great military talents and, what was perhaps of more importance in their eyes, extremely wealthy. Macrianus conferred the office of prætorian prefect on Balista, and leaving with him his younger son and a part of the army to defend the East, he put himself at the head of forty-five thousand men, and taking with him his elder son, set out for Europe (261). On the borders of Illyricum he was encountered by M. Acilius Aureolus, the governor (or as some say the tyrant) of that province, and in the battle which ensued, himself and his son were slain, and his troops surrendered. After the death of Macrianus, Balista assumed the purple, but he was slain by order of Odenathus, whom Gallienus (264), with the full consent of the senate and people of Rome, had made his associate in the empire, giving him the titles of cæsar, augustus, and all the other tokens of sovereignty.

Ti. Cestius Æmilianus, who commanded in Egypt, assumed the purple in that province (262), in consequence it is said of a sedition in the most turbulent city of Alexandria; but he was defeated the following year, taken prisoner, and sent to Gallienus, who caused him to be strangled.

It was in Gaul that the usurpers had most success. As soon as Gallienus left that country (260), the general M. Cassianus Latinus Postumus was proclaimed emperor, and his authority appears to have been acknowledged in both Spain and Britain. He is described as a man of most noble and upright character; he administered justice impartially, and he defended the frontier

[260-268 A.D.]

against the Germans with valour and success. Possessed of the affections of the people, he easily maintained himself against all the efforts of Gallienus; but he was slain at last (267) in a mutiny of his own soldiers, to whom he had refused the plunder of the city of Mogontiacum, in which a rival emperor had appeared. Postumus had associated with himself in the empire Victorinus, the son of a lady named Aurelia Victoria, who was called the Mother of the Camp, and who had such influence with the troops, we know not how acquired, but probably by her wealth, as to be able to give the purple to whom she pleased. Victorinus being slain by a man whose wife he had violated, a simple armourer, named Marius, wore the purple for two days, at the end of which he was murdered; and Victoria then caused a senator named C. Pivesus Tetricus to be proclaimed emperor, who maintained his power for some years.

At the time when Macrianus claimed the empire, P. Valerius Valens, the governor of Greece, finding that that usurper, who was resolved on his destruction, had sent L. Calpurnius Piso against him, assumed the purple in his own defence. Piso, being forced to retire into Thessaly, caused himself to be proclaimed emperor there; but few joined him, and he was slain by a party of soldiers sent against him by Valens, who was himself shortly after put to death by his own troops. Both Valens and Piso were men of high character, especially the latter, to whom the senate decreed divine honours, and respecting whom Valens himself said that he would not be able to account to the gods below or having ordered Piso, though his enemy, to be slain, a man whose like the Roman Republic did not then possess.

C. Annius Trebellianus declared himself independent in Isauria, and T. Cornelius Celsus was proclaimed emperor in Africa; but both speedily perished (265). Among the calamities of this reign was an insurrection of the slaves in Sicily, similar to those in the time of the republic.

While his empire was thus torn asunder, Gallienus thought only of indulgence, and the loss of a province only gave him occasion for a joke. When Egypt revolted, "Well," said he, "cannot we do without Egyptian linen?" So when Gaul was lost, he asked if the republic could not be secure without cloaks from Arras. He was content to retain Italy, satisfied with a nominal sovereignty over the rest of the empire; and whenever this seat of dominion was menaced, he exhibited in its defence the vigour and personal courage which he really possessed.

Gaul and Illyricum were the quarters from which Italy had most to apprehend. Gallienus therefore headed his troops against Postumus, and when D. Lælius Ingenuus revolted in Pannonia, he marched against him, defeated and slew him, and made the most cruel use of his victory to deter others (260). Q. Nonius Regalianus, who afterwards revolted in the same country, was slain by his own soldiers (263); but when Aureolus was induced to assume the purple (267) the Illyrian legions advanced and made themselves masters of Mediolanum (the modern Milan). Gallienus, shaking off sloth, appeared at the head of his troops; the hostile armies encountered on the banks of the Addua, and Aureolus was defeated, wounded, and forced to shut himself up in Mediolanum. During the siege a conspiracy was formed against the emperor by some of the principal officers of his army, and one night as he was sitting at table a report was spread that Aureolus had made a sally. Gallienus instantly threw himself on horseback to hasten to the point of danger, and in the dark he received a mortal wound from an unknown hand.

We now enter on a series of emperors of a new order. Born nearly all in humble stations, and natives of the province of Illyricum, they rose by merit through the gradations of military service, attained the empire in

general without crime, maintained its dignity, and checked or punished the inroads of the barbarians. This series commences with the death of Gallienus and terminates with that of Licinius, embracing a period of somewhat more than half a century, and marked, as we shall find, by most important changes in the Roman Empire. [Thus the military revolution now begins to bear good fruit.]

CLAUDIUS (M. AURELIUS CLAUDIUS), 268-270 A.D.

The murmurs of the soldiers on the death of Gallienus were easily stilled by the promise of a donative of twenty pieces of gold a man. To justify themselves in the eyes of the world, the conspirators resolved to bestow the empire on one who should form an advantageous contrast to its late unworthy possessor, and they fixed on M. Aurelius Claudius, who commanded a division of the army at Ticinum (modern Pavia). The soldiers, the senate, and the people alike approved their choice, and Claudius assumed the purple with universal approbation.

This excellent man, in whose praise writers of all parties are agreed, was a native of Illyricum, born apparently in humble circumstances. His merit raised him through the inferior gradations of the army; he attracted the notice of the emperor Decius, and the discerning Valerian made him general of the Illyrian frontier, with an assurance of the consulate.

Aureolus was soon obliged to surrender, and he was put to death by the soldiers. An army of Alamanni, coming perhaps to his aid, was then, it is said, defeated by Claudius near Verona. After his victory the emperor proceeded to Rome, where during the remainder of the year he devoted his time and thoughts to the reformation of abuses in the state. Among other just and prudent regulations, he directed that the properties confiscated by Gallienus should be restored to their original owners. A woman, it is said, came on this occasion to the emperor and claimed her land, which she said had been given to Claudius, the commander of the cavalry. This officer was the emperor himself, and he replied that the emperor Claudius must restore what he took when he was a private man and less bound to obey the laws.

The following year (269) the Goths and their allies embarked, we are told, to the number of 320,000 warriors, with their wives, children, and slaves, in two or, as some say, six thousand vessels, and directed their course to the Bosphorus. In passing that narrow channel the number of their vessels and the rapidity of the current caused them to suffer considerable loss. Their attempts on Byzantium and Cyzicus having failed, they proceeded along the northern coast of the Ægean, and laid siege to the cities of Casandrea and Thessalonica. While thus engaged they learned that the emperor was on his march to oppose them, and breaking up they advanced into the interior, wasting and plundering the country on their way. Near the town of Naisus, in Dardania, they encountered the Roman legions. The battle was long and bloody, and the Romans were at one time on the verge of defeat; but the skill of Claudius turned the beam, and the Goths were finally routed with a loss of fifty thousand men. During the remainder of the year numerous desultory actions occurred, in which the Goths sustained great losses; and being finally hemmed in on all sides by the Roman troops, they were forced to seek refuge in Mount Hæmus, and pass the winter amidst its snows. Famine and pestilence alike preyed on them, and when on the return of spring (270) the emperor took the field against them, they

[270 A.D.]

were obliged to surrender at discretion. A portion of their youth were enrolled in the imperial troops; vast numbers both of men and women were reduced to slavery; on some lands were bestowed in the provinces; few returned to their seats on the Euxine.

The pestilence which had afflicted the Goths proved also fatal to the emperor. He was attacked and carried off by it at Sirmium in the fifty-seventh year of his age. In the presence of his principal officers he named, it is said, Aurelian, one of his generals, as the fittest person to succeed him; but his brother Quintilius, when he heard of his death, assumed the purple at Aquileia, and was acknowledged by the senate. Hearing, however, that Aurelian was on his march against him, he gave up all hopes of success, and opening his veins died after a reign of seventeen days.

AURELIAN (L. DOMITIUS AURELIANUS), 270-275 A.D.

Aurelian, like his able predecessor, was a man of humble birth. His father is said to have been a small farmer, and his mother a priestess of the Sun, in a village near Sirmium. He entered the army as a common soldier, and rose through the successive gradations of the service to the rank of general of a frontier. He was adopted in the presence of Valerian (some said at his request) by Ulpian Crinitus, a senator of the same family with the emperor Trajan, who gave him his daughter in marriage, and Valerian bestowed on him the office of consul. In the Gothic War Claudius had committed to him the command of the cavalry.

Immediately on his election Aurelian hastened to Rome, whence he was speedily recalled to Pannonia by the intelligence of an irruption of the Goths. A great battle was fought, which was terminated by night without any decisive advantage on either side. Next day the Goths retired over the river and sent proposals of peace, which was cheerfully accorded, and for many years no hostilities of any account occurred between the Goths and Romans. But while Aurelian was thus occupied in Pannonia, the Alamanni, with a force of forty thousand horse and eighty thousand foot, had passed the Alps and spread their ravages to the Po. Instead of following them into Italy, Aurelian, learning that they were on their return home with their booty, marched along the Danube to intercept their retreat, and attacking them unawares, he reduced them to such straits that they sent to sue for peace.

The emperor received the envoys at the head of his legions, surrounded by his principal officers. After a silence of some moments they spoke by their interpreter, saying that it was the desire of peace and not the fear of war that had brought them thither. They spoke of the uncertainty of war, and enlarged on the number of their forces. As a condition of peace they required the usual presents, and the same annual payments in silver and gold that they had had before the war. Aurelian replied in a long speech, the sum of which was that nothing short of unconditional surrender would be accepted. The envoys returning to their countrymen reported the ill success of their embassy, and forthwith the army turned back and re-entered Italy. Aurelian followed and came up with them at Placentia. The Alamanni, who had stationed themselves in the woods, fell suddenly on the legions in the dusk of the evening, and nothing but the firmness and skill of the emperor saved the Romans from a total overthrow. A second battle was fought near Fanum in Umbria, on the spot where Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal was defeated and slain five hundred years before. The Alamanni

[267-271 A.D.]

were totally routed, and a concluding victory at Ticinum delivered Italy from their ravages. Aurelian pursued the barbarians beyond the Alps, and then turned to Pannonia, which the Vandals had invaded. He engaged and defeated them (271). They sent to sue for peace, and he referred the matter to his soldiers, who loudly expressed their desire for an accommodation. The Vandals gave the children of their two kings and of their principal nobles for hostages, and Aurelian took two thousand of them into his service.

AURELIAN WALLS ROME AND INVADES THE EAST

There had been some seditions at Rome during the time of the Alamanian War, and Aurelian on his return to the capital acted with great severity, and even cruelty, in punishing those engaged in them. He is accused of having put to death senators of high rank on the slightest evidence, and for the most trifling offences. Aware, too, that neither Alps nor Apennines could now check the barbarians, he resolved to put Rome into a posture to stand a siege, and he commenced the erection of massive walls around it, which, when completed by his successors, formed a circuit of twenty-one miles, and yielded a striking proof of the declining strength of the empire.

Aurelian, victorious against the barbarians, had still two rivals to subdue before he could be regarded as perfect master of the empire. Tetricus was acknowledged in Gaul, Spain, and Britain; Zenobia, the widow of Odenathus, ruled the East. It is uncertain against which he first turned his arms, but as the greater number of writers give the priority to the Syrian War, we will here follow their example.

Odenathus and his eldest son Herod were treacherously slain by his nephew Mæonius; but Zenobia, the widow of the murdered prince, speedily punished the traitor, and then held the government in the name of her remaining sons. This extraordinary woman claimed a descent from the Ptolemies of Egypt. In her person she displayed the beauty of the East, being of a clear dark complexion, with pearly white teeth and brilliant black eyes. Her voice was strong and harmonious; she spoke the Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian languages, and understood the Latin. She was fond of study, but at the same time she loved vigorous exercises; and she accompanied her husband to the chase of the lion, the panther, and the other wild beasts of the wood and desert, and by her counsels and her vigour of mind she greatly contributed to his success in war. To these manly qualities was united a chastity rarely to be found in the East. Viewing the union of the sexes as the appointed means of continuing the species, Zenobia would admit the embraces of her husband only in order to have offspring. She was temperate and sober, yet when needful she could quaff wine with her generals, and even vanquish in the combats of the table the wine-loving Persians and Armenians. As a sovereign Zenobia was severe or clement as the occasion required; she was frugal of her treasure beyond what was ordinary with a woman, but when her affairs called for liberality no one dispensed them more freely.

After the death of Odenathus, which occurred in the year 267, Zenobia styled her three sons Augusti, but she held the government in her own hands; she bore the title of Queen of the East, wore royal robes and the diadem, caused herself to be adored in the oriental fashion, and put the years of her reign on her coins. She defeated an army sent against her by Gallienus; she made herself mistress of Egypt, and her rule extended northwards as far as the confines of Bithynia.

[271-272 A.D.]

Aurelian on passing over to Asia reduced to order the province of Bithynia. The city of Tyana in Cappadocia resisted him, but the treachery of one of its inhabitants put it into his hands. He pardoned the people, and he abandoned the traitor to the just indignation of the soldiers. On the banks of the Orontes he encountered the troops of the Queen of the East.^c Let us turn to Zosimus for an account of what then took place :

ZOSIMUS DESCRIBES THE DEFEAT OF ZENOBIA

Aurelian observing that the Palmyrenian cavalry placed great confidence in their armour, which was very strong and secure, and that they were much better horsemen than his soldiers, he planted his infantry by themselves on the other side the Orontes. He charged the cavalry not to engage immediately with the vigorous cavalry of the Palmyrenians, but to wait for their attack, and then pretending to fly, to continue so doing until they had wearied both the men and their horses through excess of heat and the weight of their armour ; so that they could pursue them no longer. This project succeeded, and as soon as the cavalry of the emperor saw their enemy tired and their horses scarcely able to stand under them, or themselves to move, they drew up the reins of their horses, and, wheeling round, charged them, and trod them under foot as they fell from their horses. By which means the slaughter was promiscuous, some falling by the sword and others by their own and the enemy's horses.

After this defeat, the remains of the enemy fled into Antioch. Labdas, the general of Zenobia, fearing that the Antiochians on hearing of it should mutiny, chose a man resembling the emperor, and clothing him in a dress such as Aurelian was accustomed to wear, led him through the city as if he had taken the emperor prisoner. By this contrivance he imposed on the Antiochians, stole out of the city by night, and took with him Zenobia with the remainder of the army to Emesa. In the meantime the emperor was intent on his affairs, and as soon as it was day called the foot soldiers around him, intending to attack the defeated enemy on both sides ; but, hearing of the escape of Zenobia, he entered Antioch, where he was joyfully received by the citizens. Finding that many had left the city, under apprehensions that they should suffer for having espoused the party of Zenobia, he published edicts in every place to recall them, and told them that such events had happened more through necessity than of his own inclination. When this was known to the fugitives they returned in crowds and were kindly received by the emperor, who, having arranged affairs in that city, proceeded to Emesa.

Finding that a party of the Palmyrenians had got possession of a hill above the suburbs of Daphne, thinking that its steepness would enable them to obstruct the enemy's passage, he commanded his soldiers to march with their bucklers so near to each other, and in so compact a form, as to keep off any darts and stones that might be thrown at them. This being observed, as soon as they ascended the hill, being in all points equal to their adversaries, they put them to flight in such disorder that some of them were dashed in pieces from the precipices and others slaughtered in the pursuit by those that were on the hill and those that were mounting it. Having gained the victory, they marched on with great satisfaction at the success of the emperor, who was liberally entertained at Apamea, Larissa, and Arethusa. Finding the Palmyrenian army drawn up before Emesa, amounting to seventy thousand men, consisting of Palmyrenians and their allies, he opposed to them the

Dalmatian cavalry, the Mœsians and Pannonians, and the Celtic legions of Noricum and Rætia, and besides these the choicest of the imperial regiment selected man by man, the Mauretanian horse, the Tyanæans, the Mesopotamians, the Syrians, the Phœnicians, and the Palestinians, all men of acknowledged valour; the Palestinians besides other arms wielding clubs and staves.

At the commencement of the engagement the Roman cavalry receded, lest the Palmyrenians, who exceeded them in number and were better horse men, should by some stratagem surround the Roman army. But the Palmyrenian cavalry pursued them so fiercely, though their ranks were broken, that the event was quite contrary to the expectation of the Roman cavalry. For they were pursued by an enemy much their superior in strength, and therefore most of them fell. The foot had to bear the brunt of the action. Observing that the Palmyrenians had broken their ranks when the horse commenced their pursuit, they wheeled about, and attacked them while they were scattered and out of order. Upon which many were killed, because the one side fought with the usual weapons, while those of Palestine brought clubs and staves against coats of mail made of iron and brass. The Palmyrenians therefore ran away with the utmost precipitation, and in their flight trod each other to pieces, as if the enemy did not make sufficient slaughter; the field was filled with dead men and horses, whilst the few that could escape took refuge in the city.

Zenobia was not a little disturbed by this defeat, and therefore consulted on what measures to adopt. It was the opinion of all her friends that it would be prudent to relinquish all pretensions to Emesa, because the Emesians were disaffected towards her and friendly to the Romans. They advised her to remain within Palmyra, and when they were in security in that strong city, they would deliberate at leisure on their important affairs. This was no sooner proposed than done, with the concurrence of the whole assembly. Aurelian, upon hearing of the flight of Zenobia, entered Emesa, where he was cordially welcomed by the citizens, and found a treasure which Zenobia could not carry along with her. He then marched immediately to Palmyra, which he invested on every side, while his troops were supplied with provisions of every kind by the neighbouring country.

THE FALL OF PALMYRA

Meantime [continues Zosimus] the Palmyrenians only derided the Romans, as if they thought it impossible for them to take the city; and one man spoke in very indecent terms of the emperor's own person. Upon this, a Persian who stood by the emperor said, "If you will allow me, sir, you shall see me kill that insolent soldier," to which the emperor consented, and the Persian, placing himself behind some other men that he might not be seen, shot at the man while in the act of looking over the battlements, and hit him whilst still uttering his insulting language, so that he fell down from the wall before the soldiers and the emperor. The besieged however still held out, in hopes that the enemy would withdraw for want of provisions, and persisted in their resolution, until they were themselves without necessaries. They then called a council, in which it was determined to fly to the Euphrates, and request aid of the Persians against the Romans. Having thus determined, they set Zenobia on a female camel, which is the swiftest of that kind of animals, and much more swift than horses, and conveyed her out of the city.

[273 A.D.]

Aurelian was much displeased at the escape of Zenobia; and therefore exerted all his industry to send out horsemen in pursuit of her. They succeeded in taking her, as she was crossing the Euphrates in a boat, and brought her to Aurelian. Though much pleased at this sight, yet being of an ambitious disposition, he became uneasy at the reflection that in future ages it would not redound to his honour to have conquered a woman. Meantime some of the Palmyrenians, that were shut up in the town, resolved to expose themselves courageously, and to hazard their being made captives in defence of their city. While others on the contrary employed humble and submissive gestures from the walls, and entreated pardon for what was past. The emperor accepting these tokens, and commanding them to fear nothing, they poured out of the town with presents and sacrifices in their hands. Aurelian paid due respect to the holy things, received their gifts, and sent them away without injury.

But having made himself master of the city, with all the treasure it contained, he returned to Emesa, where he brought Zenobia and her accomplices to a judiciary trial. Zenobia coming into court pleaded strongly in excuse of herself, and produced many persons, who had seduced her as a simple woman, and among the rest Longinus, whose writings are highly beneficial to all lovers of learning. Being found guilty of the crimes laid to his charge, he received from the emperor sentence of death, which he bore with so much courage as to console his friends, who were much concerned at his misfortunes. Several besides Longinus suffered upon the accusation of Zenobia.

I cannot here omit to mention [Zosimus continues] what happened before the ruin of Palmyra, though I profess only to write a transient history. For as Polybius informs us by what means the Romans in a short space of time attained a vast empire, it is my purpose to show, on the other hand, that by their ill management in as short a time they lost it. But I am now speaking of the Palmyrenians who, having as I related acquired a large portion of the Roman Empire, were warned by several declarations from the gods of the overthrow which they afterwards sustained. For example, at Seleucia in Cilicia there was a temple of Apollo (called there Sarpedonius) and in that temple an oracle. It is reported of this deity that he used to give to those that were infested with locusts a species of birds, called seleuciades, which used to hover about his temple, and would send them along with any that desired it; that these birds would fly amongst the locusts, catch them in their mouths, and in a moment destroy a vast number of them, thus delivering the people from the mischief they produced. This I ascribe to the felicity of that age; our own generation has not merited such kindness from heaven.¹ The Palmyrenians, having consulted this oracle, to learn if they should ever gain the empire of the East, received this answer:

“ Accursed race! avoid my sacred fane,
Whose treach’rous deeds the angry gods disdain.”

And some persons inquiring there concerning the success of the expedition of Aurelian against the Palmyrenians, the gods told them,

“ One falcon many doves commands, whose end
On his destructive pounces must depend.”

[¹ Zosimus writes in the first half of the fifth century, A.D. It is interesting to observe that he thus looks back upon the time of Aurelian as an “age of felicity.” To some minds the past is always glorious.]

Another story was likewise much circulated of the Palmyrenians. Between Heliopolis and Byblus is a place called Aphaca, where is a temple dedicated to Venus Aphacitis, and near it a pond resembling an artificial cistern. Here is frequently seen, near the temple and in the adjacent places, a fire in the air, resembling a lamp, of a round figure, which has appeared even in our time, as often as people have assembled there on particular days. Whoever resorted hither, brought to the pond some offering for the goddess, either in gold, silver, linen, silk, or anything of like value. If she accepted it, the cloth sunk to the bottom, like substances of greater weight; but if rejected, they would float on the water; and not only cloth and such substances, but even gold, silver, or any other of those materials which usually sink. For an experiment of this miracle, the Palmyrenians, in the year before their overthrow, assembled on a festival, and threw into the pond several presents of gold, silver, and cloth, in honour of the goddess, all of which sank to the bottom. In the following year, at the same festival, they were all seen floating on the surface; by which the goddess foretold what would happen. In this manner was the regard of heaven shown to the Romans, so long as they kept up their sacred rites. But it is my lot to speak of these times, wherein the Roman Empire degenerated to a species of barbarity, and fell to decay.^d

AURELIAN QUELLS REVOLTS; ATTEMPTS REFORMS; IS MURDERED

Aurelian had passed the Bosphorus on his return to Rome when intelligence reached him that the Palmyrenians had risen on and massacred the small garrison he had left in their city. He instantly retraced his steps, arrived at Antioch before it was known that he had set out, hastened to Palmyra, took the city, and massacred men, women, and children, citizens and peasants, without distinction. As he was on his way back to Europe, news came that Egypt had revolted and made a wealthy merchant named Firmus emperor, and that the export of corn to Rome had been stopped. The indefatigable Aurelian soon appeared on the banks of the Nile, defeated the usurper, and took and put him to death.

The overthrow of Tetricus left Aurelian without a rival. Tetricus, it is said, was so wearied with the state of thralldom in which he was held by his mutinous troops, that he secretly wrote to Aurelian to come to his deliverance. When the emperor entered Gaul, Tetricus found it necessary to affect the alacrity of one determined to conquer or die; but when the armies encountered in the territory of the Catalauni on the plains of Chalons, he betrayed his troops, and deserted in the very commencement of the battle. His legions fought, notwithstanding, with desperation, and perished nearly to a man.

Victorious over all his rivals and all the enemies of Rome, Aurelian celebrated a triumph with unusual magnificence. Wild beasts of various kinds, troops of gladiators, and bands of captives of many nations opened the procession. Tetricus and his son walked, clad in the Gallic habit; Zenobia also moved on foot covered with jewels and bound with golden chains, which were borne up by slaves. The splendid cars of Odenathus and Zenobia, and one the gift of the Persian king to the emperor, preceded the chariot drawn by four stags, once the car of a Gothic king, in which Aurelian himself rode. The senate, the people, the army, horse and foot, succeeded; and it was late in the day when the monarch reached the Capitol.

[274-275 A.D.]

The view of a Roman senator led in triumph in the person of Tetricus (an act of which there was no example), cast a gloom over the minds of the senators. The insult, if intended for such, ended however with the procession. Aurelian made him governor of the southern part of Italy, and honoured him with his friendship. He also bestowed on the Palmyrenian queen an estate at Tibur, where she lived many years, and her daughters matched into some of the noblest Roman families.

The improvement of the city by useful public works, the establishment of daily distributions of bread and pork to the people, and the burning of all accounts of moneys due to the treasury, were measures calculated to gain Aurelian the popular favour. But a reformation of the coinage became the cause or pretext of an insurrection, the quelling of which cost him the lives of seven thousand of his veteran soldiers. [Aurelian had attempted to put the depreciated currency on a sound basis. He restored the aureus to its normal weight of one-fiftieth of a pound, made the imperial gold piece the standard, and took from the senate, and from all cities except Alexandria, the right of coinage.] The senators must have been implicated in the insurrection, for Aurelian's vengeance fell heavily on the whole body of the nobility. Numbers of them were cast into prison, and several were executed.

Aurelian quitted Rome once more for the East, in order to carry on war against the Persians. On the road in Thrace, having detected his private secretary Mnestheus in some act of extortion, he menaced him with his anger. Aware that he never threatened in vain, Mnestheus saw that himself or the emperor must die; he therefore, imitating Aurelian's writing, drew up a list containing his own name and those of the principal officers of the army as marked out for death. He showed this bloody list to those who were named in it, advising them to anticipate the emperor's cruelty. Without further inquiry they resolved on his murder, and falling on him between Byzantium and Heraclea, they despatched him with their swords.

TACITUS (M. CLAUDIUS TACITUS), 275-276 A.D.

After the death of the emperor Aurelian a scene without example presented itself — an amicable strife between the senate and the army, each wishing the other to appoint an emperor, and the empire without a head and without a tumult for the greater part of a year. It originated in the following manner.

The assassins of Aurelian speedily discovered their error, and Mnestheus expiated his treason with his life. The soldiers, who lamented the emperor, would not raise to his place any of those concerned in his death, however innocently, and they wrote to the senate requesting them to appoint his successor. The senate, though gratified by the deference shown to them by the army, deemed it prudent to decline the invidious honour. The legions again pressed them, and eight months passed away in the friendly contest. At length (September 28) the consul assembled the senate and laying before them the perilous condition of the empire, called on Tacitus the first of the senate to give his opinion. But ere he could speak he was saluted emperor and augustus from all parts of the house, and after having in vain represented his unfitness for the office on account of his advanced age, he was obliged to yield to their wishes and accept the purple. The prætorian guards willingly acquiesced in the choice of the senate; and when Tacitus proceeded to the camp in Thrace, the soldiers, true to their engagement, submitted willingly to his authority.

[275-276 A.D.]

Tacitus was now seventy-five years old. He was one of those men who were perhaps less rare at Rome than we generally imagine, who in the possession of a splendid fortune spent a life dignified by the honours of the state in the cultivation of philosophy and elegant literature. He claimed a descent from the historian of his name, whose works formed his constant study, and after his accession to the empire he directed that ten copies of them should be annually made and placed in the public libraries.

Viewing himself only as the minister of the laws and the senate, Tacitus sought to raise that body to its former consideration, by restoring the privileges of which it had been deprived. Once more it began to appoint magistrates, to hear appeals, and to give validity to the imperial edicts. But this was merely a glimpse of sunshine irradiating the decline of its greatness. In history there is no return, and the real power of the once mighty Roman senate had departed forever.

Aurelian had engaged a body of the Alani, a Sarmatian tribe who dwelt about Lake Mæotis, for the war against Persia. On the death of that emperor, and the suspension of the war, they ravaged the provinces south of the Euxine to indemnify themselves for their disappointment. Tacitus on taking the command of the army offered to make good to them the engagements contracted by his predecessor. A good number of them accepted the terms and retired, and he led the legions against the remainder, and speedily reduced them. As these military operations fell in the winter, the emperor's constitution, enervated by age and the relaxing clime of southern Italy, proved unequal to them. His mind was also harassed by the factions which broke out in the camp and even reached his tent, and he sank under mental and corporeal suffering at Tyana on the 22nd of April, 276, after a brief reign of six months and twenty days.¹

PROBUS (M. AURELIUS PROBUS), 276-282 A.D.

On the death of Tacitus his brother Florianus claimed the empire as if fallen to him by inheritance, and the legions yielded him their obedience; but the army of the East obliged their general, Probus, to assume the purple, and a civil war commenced. The constitution of the European troops soon, however, began to give way under the heat of the sun of Asia; sickness spread among them, desertions became numerous, and when at Tarsus in Cilicia the army of Probus came to give them battle, they averted the contest by proclaiming Probus, and putting their emperor to death after a reign of less than three months.

Probus was another of those Illyrians who, born in a humble station, attained the empire by their merit, and honoured it by their virtues. He entered the army young, and speedily became distinguished for his courage and his probity. His merit did not escape the discerning eye of Valerian,

[¹ Zosimus^d gives the following brief account of this emperor, with, it will be observed, a different version of the end of Tacitus: "Upon Aurelian's death the empire fell into the hands of Tacitus, in whose time the Scythians crossed the Palus Mæotis, and made incursions through Pontus even into Cilicia, until he opposed them. Partly in person and partly by Florianus, prefect of the court, whom he left in commission for that purpose, this emperor completely routed and destroyed them. He himself was going into Europe, but was thus circumvented and killed. He had committed the government of Syria to his cousin Maximinus, who treated the nobility of that country with such austerity that he caused them both to hate and fear him. Their hatred became so excessive that at length, conspiring with the murderers of Aurelianus, they assaulted Maximinus; and having killed him, fell on and slew Tacitus also as he was upon his departure."]

[276-279 A.D.]

who made him a tribune, though under the usual age ; gave him the command of a body of auxiliary troops, and recommended him strongly to Gallienus, by whom and by the succeeding emperors he was greatly esteemed, and trusted with important commands. Aurelian rated him very highly, and is even thought to have destined him for his successor.

After the death of Florianus, Probus wrote to the senate, apologising for having accepted the empire from the hands of the soldiery, but assuring them that he would submit himself to their pleasure. A decree was unanimously passed investing him with all the imperial titles and powers. In return Probus continued to the senate the right of hearing appeals, appointing magistrates, and of giving force to his edicts by their decrees.

Tacitus had punished severely some of those concerned in the murder of Aurelian ; Probus sought out and punished the remainder, but with less rigour. He exhibited no enmity toward those who had supported Florianus.

The Germans had taken advantage of the interregnum which succeeded the death of Aurelian to make a formidable irruption into Gaul, where they made themselves masters of not less than seventy cities, and were in possession of nearly the whole of the country. Probus, however, as soon as his affairs permitted (277), entered Gaul at the head of a numerous and well-appointed army. He gave the Germans several defeats, and forced them to repass the Rhine with a loss, it is said, of four hundred thousand men.¹ He pursued them over that river, and nine of their kings were obliged to come in person to sue for peace. The terms which the emperor imposed were the restoration of all their booty, the annual delivery of a large quantity of corn and cattle, and sixteen thousand men to recruit the Roman armies. These Probus distributed in parties of fifty and sixty throughout the legions, for it was his wise maxim that the aid derived from the barbarians should be felt, not seen. He also placed colonies of the Germans and other tribes in Britain, and some of the other provinces. He had further, it is said, conceived the idea of making the conquered Germans renounce the use of arms and trust for their defence to those of the Romans ; but on considering the number of troops it would require he gave it up, contenting himself with making them retire behind the Nicer (Neckar) and Albis (Elbe), with building forts and towns in the country between these rivers and the Rhine, and running a wall two hundred miles in length from the Rhine to the Danube as a defence to Italy and the provinces against the Alamanni.

After the conquest of the Germans the emperor led his troops into Rætia and Illyricum, where the terror of his name and his arms daunted the Goths and Sarmatians, and gave security to the provinces. He then (279) passed over to Asia, subdued the brigands of Isauria, expelled them from their fastnesses in the mountains, in which he settled some of his veterans, under the condition that they should send their sons when eighteen years of age to the army, in order that they might not be induced by the natural advantages of the country to take to a life of freebooting, and prove as dangerous as their predecessors. Proceeding through Syria he entered Egypt and

[¹ Zosimus calmly tells the following tale, as to the manner in which Probus was enabled to defeat the Germans : " When the war began there, a grievous famine prevailed throughout the surrounding country ; but a heavy shower of rain and corn fell together, so that in some places were great heaps of it made by its own descent. At this prodigy, all were so astonished that at first they dared not touch the corn to satisfy their hunger, but being at length forced to it by necessity, which expels all fear, they made bread of it, which not only allayed their hunger, but enabled them to gain the victory with great ease." Zosimus, it will be recalled, was a pagan ; but obviously the Christians had no monopoly of the belief in miracles, in the fifth century A. D.]

[278-281 A.D.]

reduced the people named Blemyes,¹ who had taken the cities of Coptos and Ptolemais. He concluded a peace with the king of Persia, and on his return through Thrace he bestowed lands on a body of two hundred thousand Bastarnæ, and on some of the Gepidæ, Vandals, and other tribes. He triumphed for the Germans and Blemyes on his return to Rome.

A prince so just and upright, and at the same time so warlike as Probus, might have been expected to have no competitors for empire; yet even he had to take the field against rival emperors. The first of these was Saturninus, whom he himself had made general of the East, a man of both talent and virtue, and for whom he had a most cordial esteem. But the light-minded and turbulent people of Alexandria, on occasion of his entry into their city, saluted him as augustus; and though he rejected the title and retired to Palestine, he yet, not reflecting on the generous nature of Probus, deemed that he could no longer live in a private station. He therefore assumed the purple, saying with tears to his friends that the republic had lost a useful man, and that his own ruin and that of many others was inevitable. Probus tried in vain to induce him to trust to his clemency. A part of his troops joined those sent against him by the emperor; he was besieged in the castle of Apamea, and taken and slain.

After the defeat of Saturninus, two officers, named Proculus and Bonosus, assumed the purple in Germany. They were both men of ability, and the emperor found it necessary to take the field against them in person. Proculus being defeated fled for succour to the Franks, by whom he was betrayed, and he fell in battle against the imperial troops. Bonosus held out for some time, but having received a decisive overthrow, he hanged himself. As he had been remarkable for his drinking powers, one who saw him hanging cried, "There hangs a jar, not a man." Probus treated the families of both with great humanity.^c

THE ISAURIAN ROBBERS

In the year 278 the Isaurian marauders were reduced to submission. Zosimus gives us an account of the incident that led up to the capture of their city of Crymna. "There was an Isaurian named Lydius," he says, "who had been a robber from his youth, and with a gang like himself had committed depredations throughout Pamphylia and Lycia. This gang being attacked by the soldiers, Lydius, not being able to oppose the whole Roman army, retreated to a place in Lycia called Crymna, which stands on a precipice and is secured on one side by large and deep ditches. Finding many who had fled there for refuge, and observing that the Romans were very intent on the siege and that they bore the fatigue of it with great resolution, he pulled down the houses, and making the ground fit for tillage, sowed corn for the maintenance of those that were in the town. But the number being so great that they were in need of much more provisions, he turned out of the place all that were of no service, both male and female.

"The enemy, perceiving his design, forced them back again, on which Lydius threw them headlong into the trenches that surrounded the walls, where they died. Having done this, he constructed a mine from the town beyond the enemy's camp, through which he sent persons to steal cattle and other provisions. By these means he provided for the besieged a considerable time, until the affair was discovered to the enemy by a woman.

¹ This people inhabited the mountains between Upper Egypt and the Red Sea.

[278-283 A.D.]

Lydius, however, still did not despond, but gradually retrenched his men in their wine, and gave them a smaller allowance of corn. But this not answering the end, he was at length driven to such straits that he killed all that were in the town, except a few of his adherents sufficient as he thought to defend it, and some women, whom he ordered to be in common among them all. But when he had resolved to persevere against all dangers, there happened at length this accident. There was with him in the town a man who was expert in making engines, and in using them with such dexterity that when Lydius ordered him to shoot a dart at any of the enemy, he never missed his aim. It happened that Lydius had ordered him to hit a particular person, whom either accidentally or on purpose he missed, for which he stripped and scourged him severely, and moreover threatened him with death.

“The man was so exasperated on account of the blows he had received, and so affrighted at the menaces, that he took an opportunity to steal out of the town; and falling in with some soldiers to whom he gave an account of his actions and sufferings, he showed them an aperture in the wall through which Lydius used to inspect all that was done in their camp, and promised them to shoot him as he was looking through it in his usual manner. The commander of the expedition on this took the man into favour, who, having planted his engine, and placed some men before him that he might not be discovered by the enemy, took aim at Lydius as he looked through the aperture, and with a dart shot him and gave him a mortal wound. He had no sooner received this wound than he became still more strict with some of his own men. Having enjoined them upon oath never to surrender the place, he expired with much struggling.”^d

Notwithstanding the admonition of the dying chief, the city capitulated presently to Probus. In the same year the Blemyes of Nubia were expelled from Upper Egypt. And, as the wars on the Rhine had been followed by the settlement of numbers of captive Germani in Gaul and Britain, so in the year 279 large bodies of Bastarnæ, a Germanic tribe which was giving ground before the advancing Goths, were transplanted to Mœsia and Thrace, with a view to the romanisation of those provinces.

But gradually the disgust of the soldiers at the laborious tasks to which they were set, such as agriculture, the draining of swamps, and the laying out of vineyards, objects which the excellent emperor pursued with the utmost zeal, grew to be a menace to his personal safety. As early as the summer of 282, mutinous troops in Rætia and Noricum had forced M. Aurelius Carus, a Dalmatian general and a native of Naronæ, who had always been on friendly terms with Probus, to come forward as a rival emperor; and in the October of the same year Probus himself was slain by his own soldiers, in a revolt that broke out suddenly, after the fashion common in this century, among the men employed in digging a canal at Sirmium.

CARUS, NUMERIANUS, AND CARINUS (282-285 A.D.)

Carus, the new emperor an old man of stern temper, set about the war with Persia in earnest. The elder of his sons, the cæsar M. Aurelius Carinus, managed the affairs of Rome and Gaul, and the emperor, accompanied by M. Aurelius Numerianus, the other cæsar, set out before the end of 282 for Asia, where he gained some considerable successes. Favoured by the internecine disorders of the Persian Empire, he first brought Armenia

[283-285 A.D.]

ence more under the dominion of Rome, in the year 283 ; and then proceeded to reconquer Mesopotamia. At length Ctesiphon itself fell into the hands of the Romans. But the army had no desire to follow the emperor into the interior of Iran, and Carus perished, apparently by a conspiracy among the officers of high rank, in December, 283. His son Numerianus fell ill during the retreat of the army to the Bosphorus (284) ; and when, at the beginning of September, one part of the force reached Chalcedon and the other Perinthus, the soldiers discovered that the young emperor, who had accompanied the latter body, was dead. His father-in-law, *Arrius Aper*, prætorian præfect, who then tried to win the people for himself, was arrested on a strong suspicion of having murdered him.

Meanwhile the officers at Chalcedon, taking into consideration the profligate and disgraceful conduct of the youthful cæsar, *Carinus*, at Rome, proclaimed *Diocles*, the commander of the imperial body-guard, emperor on September 17th, 284.

This general, who was at that time thirty-nine years of age, was born in 245, at *Doclea* or *Dioclea*, near *Scodra*, in *Dalmatia*, of humble parents. He owed his promotion to his extraordinary ability and exceptional intellectual gifts. Though addicted, like all his comrades, to the superstition of the age, he was superior to them all in administrative capacity, as in penetration, discretion, and resolution. Having slain *Aper* before his tribunal—whether from motives purely superstitious or, as the pessimistic criticism of our day would have it, as an accomplice in his own designs, he took up the dynastic war against *Carinus*, under the name of *Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus*. It ended in favour of *Diocletian*, after a somewhat protracted struggle, by a battle on the lower *Margus* (*Morava*), in which, while the fortune of the day hung yet undecided, an officer whose wife had been seduced by the Roman *débauché*, struck *Carinus* down in the thick of the fray (summer of 285).^b

