

CHAPTER XLIV THE DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE (395)

ARCADIUS AND HONORIUS SUCCEED THEODOSIUS

THE genius of Rome expired with Theodosius, the last of the successors of Augustus and Constantine who appeared in the field at the head of their armies, and whose authority was universally acknowledged throughout the whole extent of the empire. The memory of his virtues still continued, however, to protect the feeble and inexperienced youth of his two sons. After the death of their father, Arcadius and Honorius were saluted, by the unanimous consent of mankind, as the lawful emperors of the East and of the West; and the oath of fidelity was eagerly taken by every order of the state—the senates of old and new Rome, the clergy, the magistrates, the soldiers, and the people. Arcadius, who then was about eighteen years of age, was born in Spain, in the humble habitation of a private family. But he received a princely education in the palace of Constantinople; and his inglorious life was spent in that peaceful and splendid seat of royalty, from whence he appeared to reign over the provinces of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, from the lower Danube to the confines of Persia and Ethiopia. His younger brother, Honorius, assumed, in the eleventh year of his age, the nominal government of Italy, Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Britain; and the troops, which guarded the frontiers of his kingdom, were opposed on one side to the Caledonians, and on the other to the Moors.

The great and martial prefecture of Illyricum was divided between the two princes; the defence and possession of the provinces of Noricum, Pannonia, and Dalmatia still belonged to the Western Empire;¹ but the two large dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia, which Gratian had intrusted to the valour of Theodosius, were forever united to the empire of the East. The boundary in Europe was not very different from the line which now separates the Germans and the Turks; and the respective advantages of territory, riches, populousness, and military strength, were fairly balanced and compensated. The hereditary sceptre of the sons of Theodosius appeared to be the gift of nature and of their father; the generals and ministers had been accustomed to adore the majesty of the royal infants. The gradual discovery of the weakness of Arcadius and Honorius, and the repeated calamities of their reign, were not sufficient to obliterate the deep and early impressions of loyalty.

[¹Essentially the division was of the same nature as that made by Diocletian; there was still one empire divided into two administrative districts, and the two Augusti were colleagues, as before. The division was not intended to be final, and we shall see (Volume VII) that it was not absolutely so in fact; for after the abdication of Romulus, the emperor at Constantinople not only claimed sovereignty over the whole empire, but at times actually exercised his sovereignty over parts of the West.]

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Theodosius had tarnished the glory of his reign by the elevation of Rufinus; an odious favourite, who, in an age of civil and religious faction, has deserved, from every party, the imputation of every crime. The strong impulse of ambition and avarice had urged Rufinus to abandon his native country, an obscure corner of Gaul, to advance his fortune in the capital of the East: the talent of bold and ready elocution qualified him to succeed in the lucrative profession of the law; and his success in that profession was a regular step to the most honourable and important employments of the state. He was raised by just degrees to the station of master of the offices. In the exercise of his various functions, so essentially connected with the whole system of civil government, he acquired the confidence of a monarch who soon discovered his diligence and capacity in business, and who long remained ignorant of the pride, the malice, and the covetousness of his disposition.

The character of Theodosius imposed on his minister the task of hypocrisy, which disguised, and sometimes restrained, the abuse of power; and Rufinus was apprehensive of disturbing the indolent slumber of a prince still capable of exerting the abilities and the virtue which had raised him to the throne. But the absence, and soon afterwards the death, of the emperor confirmed the absolute authority of Rufinus over the person and dominions of Arcadius; a feeble youth, whom the imperious prefect considered as his pupil rather than his sovereign. Regardless of the public opinion, he indulged his passions without remorse and without resistance; and his malignant and rapacious spirit rejected every passion that might have contributed to his own glory or the happiness of the people. His avarice, which seems to have prevailed in his corrupt mind over every other sentiment, attracted the wealth of the East by the various arts of partial and general extortion: oppressive taxes, scandalous bribery, immoderate fines, unjust confiscations, forced or fictitious testaments, by which the tyrant despoiled of their lawful inheritance the children of strangers or enemies; and the public sale of justice, as well as of favour, which he instituted in the palace of Constantinople.

The ambitious candidate eagerly solicited, at the expense of the fairest part of his patrimony, the honours and emoluments of some provincial government; the lives and fortunes of the unhappy people were abandoned to the most liberal purchaser; the public discontent was sometimes appeased by the sacrifice of an unpopular criminal, whose punishment was profitable only to the prefect of the East, his accomplice and his judge. The fate of Lucian proclaimed to the East that the prefect, whose industry was much abated in the despatch of ordinary business, was indefatigable in the pursuit of revenge. Lucian, the son of the prefect Florentius, the oppressor of Gaul and the enemy of Julian, had employed a considerable part of his inheritance, the fruit of rapine and corruption, to purchase the friendship of Rufinus and the high office of count of the East. But the new magistrate imprudently departed from the maxims of the court and of the times; disgraced his benefactor by the contrast of a virtuous and temperate administration; and presumed to refuse an act of injustice, which might have tended to the profit of the emperor's uncle.

Arcadius was easily persuaded to resent the supposed insult; and the prefect of the East resolved to execute in person the cruel vengeance which he meditated against this ungrateful delegate of his power. He performed with incessant speed the journey of seven or eight hundred miles from Constantinople to Antioch, entered the capital of Syria at the dead of the night, and spread universal consternation among a people ignorant of his design but not ignorant of his character. The count of the fifteen provinces of the

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East was dragged, like the vilest malefactor, before the arbitrary tribunal of Rufinus. Notwithstanding the clearest evidence of his integrity, which was not impeached even by the voice of an accuser, Lucian was condemned, almost without a trial, to suffer a cruel and ignominious punishment. The ministers of the tyrant, by the order and in the presence of their master, beat him on the neck with leather thongs, armed at the extremities with lead; and when he fainted under the violence of the pain, he was removed in a close litter, to conceal his dying agonies from the eyes of the indignant city. No sooner had Rufinus perpetrated this inhuman act, the sole object of his expedition, than he returned, amidst the deep and silent curses of a trembling people, from Antioch to Constantinople; and his diligence was accelerated by the hope of accomplishing without delay the nuptials of his daughter with the emperor of the East.

But Rufinus soon experienced that a prudent minister should constantly secure his royal captive by the strong though invisible chain of habit; and that the merit, and much more easily the favour, of the absent are obliterated in a short time from the mind of a weak and capricious sovereign. While the prefect satiated his revenge at Antioch, a secret conspiracy of the favourite eunuchs, directed by the great chamberlain Eutropius, undermined his power in the palace of Constantinople. They discovered that Arcadius was not inclined to love the daughter of Rufinus, who had been chosen, without his consent, for his bride; and they contrived to substitute in her place the fair Eudoxia, the daughter of Bauto, a general of the Franks in the service of Rome; and who was educated, since the death of her father, in the family of the sons of Promotus.

The young emperor, whose chastity had been strictly guarded by the pious care of his tutor Arsenius, eagerly listened to the artful and flattering descriptions of the charms of Eudoxia: he gazed with impatient ardour on her picture, and he understood the necessity of concealing his amorous designs from the knowledge of a minister who was so deeply interested to oppose the consummation of his happiness. Soon after the return of Rufinus, the approaching ceremony of the royal nuptials was announced to the people of Constantinople, who prepared to celebrate, with false and hollow acclamations, the fortune of his daughter. A splendid train of eunuchs and officers issued, in hymeneal pomp, from the gates of the palace; bearing aloft the diadem, the robes, and the inestimable ornaments of the future empress. The solemn procession passed through the streets of the city, which were adorned with garlands and filled with spectators; but when it reached the house of the sons of Promotus, the principal eunuch respectfully entered the mansion, invested the fair Eudoxia with the imperial robes, and conducted her in triumph to the palace and bed of Arcadius. The secrecy and success with which this conspiracy against Rufinus had been conducted imprinted a mark of indelible ridicule on the character of a minister who had suffered himself to be deceived in a post where the arts of deceit and dissimulation constitute the most distinguished merit. He considered, with a mixture of indignation and fear, the victory of an aspiring eunuch, who had secretly captivated the favour of his sovereign; and the disgrace of his daughter, whose interest was inseparably connected with his own, wounded the tenderness, or at least the pride, of Rufinus. The character of Rufinus seemed to justify the accusations that he conspired against the person of his sovereign to seat himself on the vacant throne, and that he had secretly invited the Huns and the Goths to invade the provinces of the empire, and to increase the public confusion. The subtle prefect, whose life had been

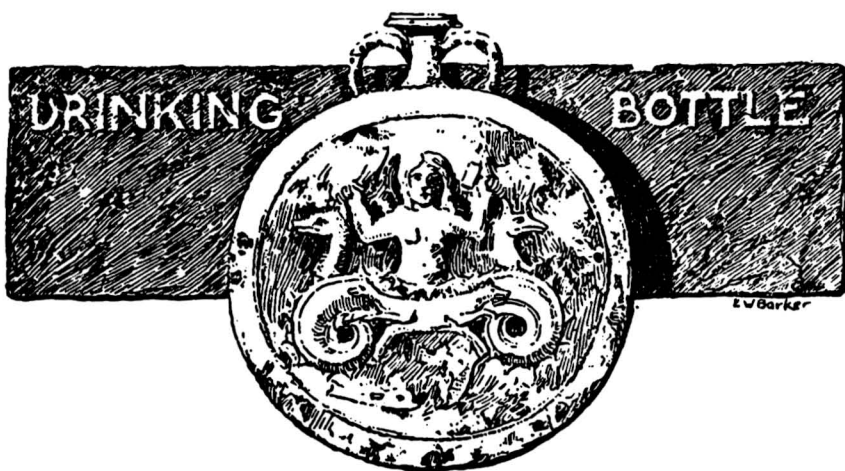
spent in the intrigues of the palæce, opposed, with equal arts, the artful measures of the eunuch Eutropius; but the timid soul of Rufinus was astonished by the hostile approach of a more formidable rival—of the great Stilicho, the general, or rather the master, of the empire of the West.

The celestial gift which Achilles obtained, and Alexander envied, of a poet worthy to celebrate the actions of heroes, has been enjoyed by Stilicho, in a much higher degree than might have been expected from the declining state of genius and of art. The muse of Claudian, devoted to his service, was always prepared to stigmatise his adversaries, Rufinus or Eutropius, with eternal infamy; or to paint in the most splendid colours the victories and virtues of a powerful benefactor. In the review of a period indifferently supplied with authentic materials, we cannot refuse to illustrate the annals of Honorius from the invectives or the panegyrics of a contemporary writer; but as Claudian appears to have indulged the most ample privilege of a poet and a courtier, some criticism will be requisite to translate the language of fiction or exaggeration into the truth and simplicity of historic prose. His silence concerning the family of Stilicho may be admitted as a proof that his patron was neither able, nor desirous, to boast of a long series of illustrious progenitors; and the slight mention of his father, an officer of barbarian cavalry, in the service of Valens, seems to countenance the assertion, that the general, who so long commanded the armies of Rome, was descended from the savage and perfidious race of the Vandals. From his earliest youth he embraced the profession of arms; his prudence and valour were soon distinguished in the field; the horsemen and archers of the East admired his superior dexterity; and in each degree of his military promotions the public judgment always forestalled and approved the choice of the sovereign. He was named by Theodosius to ratify a solemn treaty with the monarch of Persia; he supported during that important embassy the dignity of the Roman name; and after his return to Constantinople, his merit was rewarded by an intimate and honourable alliance with the imperial family. Theodosius had been prompted, by a pious motive of fraternal affection, to adopt for his own the daughter of his brother Honorius; the beauty and accomplishments of Serena were universally admired by the obsequious court; and Stilicho obtained the preference over a crowd of rivals, who ambitiously disputed the hand of the princess and the favour of her adoptive father. The assurance that the husband of Serena would be faithful to the throne which he was permitted to approach, engaged the emperor to exalt the fortunes and to employ the abilities of the sagacious and intrepid Stilicho. He rose through the successive steps of master of the horse and count of the domestics, to the supreme rank of master-general of all the cavalry and infantry of the Roman, or at least of the Western, Empire; and his enemies confessed that he invariably disdained to barter for gold the rewards of merit, or to defraud the soldiers of the pay and gratifications which they deserved or claimed from the liberality of the state.

The virtues and victories of Stilicho deserved the hatred of Rufinus; and the arts of calumny might have been successful, if the tender and vigilant Serena had not protected her husband against his domestic foes, whilst he vanquished in the field the enemies of the empire. Theodosius continued to support an unworthy minister, to whose diligence he delegated the government of the palace and of the East; but when he marched against the tyrant Eugenius, he associated his faithful general to the labours and glories of the civil war; and, in the last moments of his life, the dying monarch recommended to Stilicho the care of his sons and of the republic. The ambition

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and the abilities of Stilicho were not unequal to the important trust; and he claimed the guardianship of the two empires, during the minority of Arcadius and Honorius. The first measure of his administration, or rather of his reign, displayed to the nations the vigour and activity of a spirit worthy to command. He passed the Alps in the depth of winter; descended the stream of the Rhine, from the fortress of Basilia (Bâle) to the marshes of Batavia; reviewed the state of the garrisons; repressed the enterprises of the Germans; and, after establishing along the banks a firm and honourable peace, returned with incredible speed to the palace of Mediolanum. The person and court of Honorius were subject to the master-general of the West; and the armies and provinces of Europe obeyed, without hesitation, a regular authority which was exercised in the name of their young sovereign. Two rivals only remained to dispute the claims and to provoke the vengeance of



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Stilicho. Within the limits of Africa, Gildo the Moor maintained a proud and dangerous independence; and the minister of Constantinople asserted his equal reign over the emperor and the empire of the East.

The impartiality which Stilicho affected, as the common guardian of the royal brothers, engaged him to regulate the equal division of the arms, the jewels, and the magnificent wardrobe and furniture of the deceased emperor. But the most important object of the inheritance consisted of the numerous legions, cohorts, and squadrons of Romans, or barbarians, whom the event of the civil war had united under the standard of Theodosius. The various multitudes of Europe and Asia, exasperated by recent animosities, were overawed by the authority of a single man; and the rigid discipline of Stilicho protected the lands of the citizen from the rapine of the licentious soldiers. Anxious, however, and impatient to relieve Italy from the presence of this formidable host, which could be useful only on the frontiers of the empire, he listened to the just requisition of the minister of Arcadius, declared his intention of reconducting in person the troops of the East, and dexterously employed the rumour of a Gothic tumult to conceal his private designs of ambition and revenge. The guilty soul of Rufinus was alarmed by the approach of a warrior and a rival, whose enmity he deserved; he computed, with increasing terror, the narrow space of his life and greatness; and, as the last hope of safety, he interposed the authority of the emperor Arcadius.

Stilicho, who appears to have directed his march along the sea coast of the Adriatic, was not far distant from the city of Thessalonica when he received a peremptory message to recall the troops of the East, and to declare that

his nearer approach would be considered by the Byzantine court as an act of hostility. The prompt and unexpected obedience of the general of the West convinced the vulgar of his loyalty and moderation; and as he had already engaged the affection of the eastern troops, he recommended to their zeal the execution of his bloody design, which might be accomplished in his absence with less danger, perhaps, and with less reproach. Stilicho left the command of the troops of the East to Gainas the Goth, on whose fidelity he firmly relied; with an assurance, at least, that the hardy barbarian would never be diverted from his purpose by any consideration of fear or remorse. The soldiers were easily persuaded to punish the enemy of Stilicho and of Rome; and such was the general hatred which Rufinus had excited, that the fatal secret, communicated to thousands, was faithfully preserved during the long march from Thessalonica to the gates of Constantinople. As soon as they had resolved his death, they condescended to flatter his pride; the ambitious prefect was seduced to believe that those powerful auxiliaries might be tempted to place the diadem on his head; and the treasures which he distributed with a tardy and reluctant hand were accepted by the indignant multitude as an insult rather than as a gift. At a distance of a mile from the capital, in the Field of Mars, before the palace of Hebdomon, the troops halted; and the emperor as well as his minister advanced, according to ancient custom, respectfully to salute the power which supported their throne.

As Rufinus passed along the ranks, and disguised with studied courtesy his innate haughtiness, the wings insensibly wheeled from the right and left, and enclosed the devoted victim within the circle of their arms. Before he could reflect on the danger of his situation, Gainas gave the signal of death; a daring and forward soldier plunged his sword into the breast of the guilty prefect, and Rufinus fell, groaned, and expired at the feet of the affrighted emperor. If the agonies of a moment could expiate the crimes of a whole life, or if the outrages inflicted on a breathless corpse could be the object of pity, our humanity might perhaps be affected by the horrid circumstances which accompanied the murder of Rufinus. His mangled body was abandoned to the brutal fury of the populace of either sex, who hastened in crowds from every quarter of the city, to trample on the remains of the haughty minister, at whose frown they had so lately trembled. His right hand was cut off and carried through the streets of Constantinople, in cruel mockery, to extort contributions for the avaricious tyrant, whose head was publicly exposed, borne aloft on the point of a long lance. According to the savage maxims of the Greek republics, his innocent family would have shared the punishment of his crimes. The wife and daughter of Rufinus were indebted for their safety to the influence of religion. Her sanctuary protected them from the raging madness of the people; and they were permitted to spend the remainder of their lives in the exercise of Christian devotion, in the peaceful retirement of Jerusalem.

Even Stilicho did not derive from the murder of his rival the fruit which he had proposed; and though he gratified his revenge, his ambition was disappointed. Under the name of a favourite, the weakness of Arcadius required a master; but he naturally preferred the obsequious arts of the eunuch Eutropius, who had obtained his domestic confidence; and the emperor contemplated, with terror and aversion, the stern genius of a foreign warrior. Till they were divided by the jealousy of power, the sword of Gainas and the charms of Eudoxia supported the favour of the great chamberlain of the palace; the perfidious Goth, who was appointed master-general of the East,

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betrayed without scruple the interest of his benefactor; and the same troops which had so lately massacred the enemy of Stilicho, were engaged to support against him the independence of the throne of Constantinople. The life of Stilicho was repeatedly attempted by the daggers of hired assassins; and an edict was obtained from the senate of Constantinople to declare him an enemy of the republic, and to confiscate his ample possessions in the provinces of the east. At a time when the only hope of delaying the ruin of the Roman name depended on the firm union and reciprocal aid of all the nations to whom it had been gradually communicated, the subjects of Arcadius and Honorius were instructed by their respective masters to view each other in a foreign and even hostile light; to rejoice in their mutual calamities, and to embrace, as their faithful allies, the barbarians, whom they excited to invade the territories of their countrymen. The natives of Italy affected to despise the servile and effeminate Greeks of Byzantium, who presumed to imitate the dress and to usurp the dignity of Roman senators; and the Greeks had not yet forgotten the sentiments of hatred and contempt which their polished ancestors had so long entertained for the rude inhabitants of the west. The prudent Stilicho, instead of persisting to force the inclinations of a prince and people who rejected his government, wisely abandoned Arcadius to his unworthy favourites; and his reluctance to involve the two empires in a civil war displayed the moderation of a minister who had so often signalled his military spirit and abilities. But if Stilicho had any longer endured the revolt of Africa, he would have betrayed the security of the capital, and the majesty of the western emperor, to the capricious insolence of a Moorish rebel. Gildo, the brother of the tyrant Firmus, had preserved and obtained, as the reward of his apparent fidelity, the immense patrimony which was forfeited by treason; long and meritorious service in the armies of Rome raised him to the dignity of a military count; the narrow policy of the court of Theodosius had adopted the mischievous expedient of supporting a legal government by the interest of a powerful family; and the brother of Firmus was invested with the command of Africa. His ambition soon usurped the administration of justice and of the finances without account, and without control; and he maintained, during a reign of twelve years, the possession of an office from which it was impossible to remove him, without the danger of a civil war.

During those twelve years, the province of Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant who seemed to unite the unfeeling temper of a stranger with the partial resentments of domestic faction. The forms of law were often superseded by the use of poison; and if the trembling guests who were invited to the table of Gildo presumed to express their fears, the insolent suspicion served only to excite his fury, and he loudly summoned the ministers of death. Gildo alternately indulged the passions of avarice and lust; and if his days were terrible to the rich, his nights were not less dreadful to husbands and parents. The image of the republic was revived, after a long interval, under the reign of Honorius. The emperor transmitted an accurate and ample detail of the complaints of the provincials and the crimes of Gildo to the Roman senate; and the members of that venerable assembly were required to pronounce the condemnation of the rebel. Their unanimous suffrage declared him the enemy of the republic; and the decree of the senate added a sacred and legitimate sanction to the Roman arms. The prudence of Stilicho conceived and executed without delay the most effectual measure for the relief of the Roman people. A large and seasonable supply of corn, collected in the inland provinces of Gaul, was embarked on the rapid

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stream of the Rhone, and transported by an easy navigation from the Rhone to the Tiber. During the whole term of the African war, the granaries of Rome were continually filled, her dignity was vindicated from the humiliating dependence, and the minds of an immense people were quieted by the calm confidence of peace and plenty.

The cause of Rome and the conduct of the African war were entrusted by Stilicho to a general, active and ardent to avenge his private injuries on the head of the tyrant. The spirit of discord which prevailed in the house of Nabal had excited a deadly quarrel between two of his sons, Gildo and Mascezel. The usurper pursued with implacable rage the life of his younger brother, whose courage and abilities he feared; and Mascezel, oppressed by superior power, took refuge in the court of Mediolanum, where he soon received the cruel intelligence that his two innocent and helpless children had been murdered by their inhuman uncle. The affliction of the father was

suspended only by the desire of revenge. The vigilant Stilicho judged it advisable that Mascezel should attempt this arduous adventure at the head of a chosen body of Gallic veterans, who had lately served under the standard of Eugenius.

Gildo was prepared to resist the invasion with all the forces of Africa. By the liberality of his gifts and promises, he endeavoured to secure the doubtful allegiance of the Roman soldiers whilst he attracted to his standard the distant tribes of Gætulia and Ethiopia. He proudly reviewed an army of seventy thousand men, and boasted, with the rash presumption which is the forerunner of disgrace, that his numerous cavalry would trample under their horses' feet the troops of Mascezel, and involve in a cloud of burning sand the



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natives of the cold regions of Gaul and Germany. As Mascezel advanced before the front with fair offers of peace and pardon, he encountered one of the foremost standard-bearers of the Africans, and, on his refusal to yield, struck him on the arm with his sword. The arm, and the standard, sunk under the weight of the blow; and the imaginary act of submission was hastily repeated by all the standards of the line. At this signal, the disaffected cohorts proclaimed the name of their lawful sovereign; the barbarians, astonished by the defection of their Roman allies, dispersed, according to their custom, in tumultuary flight; and Mascezel obtained the honours of an easy and almost bloodless victory. The tyrant escaped from the field of battle to the sea shore; and threw himself into a small vessel, with the hope of reaching in safety some friendly port of the empire of the East; but the obstinacy of the wind drove him back into the harbour of Thabraca, which had acknowledged, with the rest of the province, the dominion of Honorius and the authority of his lieutenant. The inhabitants, as a proof of their repentance and loyalty, seized and confined the person of Gildo in a dungeon; and his own despair saved him from the intolerable torture of supporting the presence of an injured and victorious brother.

After he had finished an important war in a single winter, Mascezel was received at the court of Mediolanum with loud applause, affected gratitude

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and secret jealousy ; and his death, which perhaps was the effect of accident, has been considered as the crime of Stilicho. In the passage of a bridge the Moorish prince who accompanied the master-general of the West was suddenly thrown from his horse into the river ; the officious haste of the attendants was restrained by a cruel and perfidious smile which they observed on the countenance of Stilicho ; and while they delayed the necessary assistance, the unfortunate Mascezel was irrecoverably drowned.

The joy of the African triumph was happily connected with the nuptials of the emperor Honorius and of his cousin Maria, the daughter of Stilicho ; and this equal and honourable alliance seemed to invest the powerful minister with the authority of a parent over his submissive pupil. Honorius was only in the fourteenth year of his age ; Serena, the mother of his bride, deferred by art or persuasion the consummation of the royal nuptials ; Maria died a virgin, after she had been ten years a wife ; and the chastity of the emperor was secured by the coldness, or perhaps the debility, of his constitution. His subjects, who attentively studied the character of their young sovereign, discovered that Honorius was without passions, and consequently without talents ; and that his feeble and languid disposition was alike incapable of discharging the duties of his rank, or of enjoying the pleasures of his age. In his early youth he made some progress in the exercises of riding and drawing the bow : but he soon relinquished these fatiguing occupations, and the amusement of feeding poultry became the serious and daily care of the monarch of the West, who resigned the reins of empire to the firm and skilful hand of his guardian Stilicho.

The experience of history will countenance the suspicion that a prince who was born in the purple received a worse education than the meanest peasant of his dominions ; and the ambitious minister suffered him to attain the age of manhood without attempting to excite his courage or to enlighten his understanding. The predecessors of Honorius were accustomed to animate by their example, or at least by their presence, the valour of the legions ; and the dates of their laws attest the perpetual activity of their motions through the provinces of the Roman world. But the son of Theodosius passed the slumber of his life, a captive in his palace, a stranger in his country, and the patient, almost the indifferent, spectator of the ruin of the Western Empire, which was repeatedly attacked, and finally subverted, by the arms of the barbarians. In the eventful history of a reign of twenty-eight years, it will seldom be necessary to mention the name of the emperor Honorius.

ALARIC INVADES GREECE

If the subjects of Rome could be ignorant of their obligations to the great Theodosius, they were too soon convinced how painfully the spirit and abilities of their deceased emperor had supported the frail and mouldering edifice of the republic. He died in the month of January ; and before the end of the winter of the same year the Gothic nation was in arms.

The Goths, instead of being impelled by the blind and headstrong passions of their chiefs, were now directed by the bold and artful genius of Alaric. That renowned leader was descended from the noble race of the Balti, which yielded only to the royal dignity of the Amali ; he had solicited the command of the Roman armies, and the imperial court provoked him to demonstrate the folly of their refusal and the importance of their loss. Whatever hopes might be entertained of the conquest of Constantinople, the judicious general

soon abandoned an impracticable enterprise. In the midst of a divided court and a discontented people, the emperor Arcadius was terrified by the aspect of the Gothic arms: but the want of wisdom and valour was supplied by the strength of the city; and the fortifications, both of the sea and land, might securely brave the impotent and random darts of the barbarians. Alaric disdained to trample any longer on the prostrate and ruined countries of Thrace and Dacia and he resolved to seek a plentiful harvest of fame and riches in a province which had hitherto escaped the ravages of war.

The character of the civil and military officers, on whom Rufinus had devolved the government of Greece, confirmed the public suspicion that he had betrayed the ancient seat of freedom and learning to the Gothic invader. The proconsul Antiochus was the unworthy son of a respectable father; and Gerontius, who commanded the provincial troops, was much better qualified to execute the oppressive orders of a tyrant than to defend with courage and ability a country most remarkably fortified by the hand of nature. Alaric had traversed, without resistance, the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly, as far as the foot of Mount Ceta, a steep and woody range of hills, almost impervious to his cavalry.

The troops which had been posted to defend the straits of Thermopylæ retired, as they were directed, without attempting to disturb the secure and rapid passage of Alaric; and the fertile fields of Phocis and Bœotia were instantly covered by a deluge of barbarians; who massacred the males of an age to bear arms, and drove away the beautiful females, with the spoil and cattle, of the flaming villages. As soon as the Athenians heard the voice of the Gothic herald, they were easily persuaded to deliver the greatest part of their wealth as the ransom of the city of Minerva and its inhabitants. The treaty was ratified by solemn oaths, and observed with mutual fidelity. The Gothic prince, with a small and select train, was admitted within the walls; he indulged himself in the refreshment of the bath, accepted a splendid banquet which was provided by the magistrate, and affected to show that he was not ignorant of the manners of civilised nations. But the whole territory of Attica, from the promontory of Sunium to the town of Megara was blasted by his baleful presence; and if we may use the comparison of a contemporary philosopher, Athens itself resembled the bleeding and empty skin of a slaughtered victim.

Corinth, Argos, Sparta, yielded without resistance to the arms of the Goths; and the most fortunate of the inhabitants were saved, by death, from beholding the slavery of their families and the conflagration of their cities.

The last hope of a people who could no longer depend on their arms, their gods, or their sovereign, was placed in the powerful assistance of the general of the West; and Stilicho, who had not been permitted to repulse, advanced to chastise, the invaders of Greece.^b

It was impossible for Stilicho to remain quiet. He hastened to anticipate a landing in Italy, and crossed over to Peloponnesus with his troops. Alaric retreated before him to the mountains of Arcadia, and was there closely hemmed in, but escaped the threatening danger of destruction. He either availed himself of a momentary negligence on the part of the Roman general, or else the latter allowed him to escape for political reasons. The Goths went from Peloponnesus to Illyricum, and here suddenly, to the astonishment of the world, the Gothic king was made commander-in-chief of this border province, and his troops declared the auxiliaries of the Eastern Roman Empire. In taking this course it was the intention of Eutropius to make use of the Goths against the hated Stilicho.

[39. 403 A.]

The Eastern Roman Empire was then in a terrible condition. Most of the provinces had been devastated by the Goths; Alans and other barbarians had been settled in Asia for the defence of the northern frontier, and incited by Tribigildus, one of their princes, they devastated the lands entrusted to their charge. Tribigildus was led to do this by the Goth Gainas, who sought to overthrow the minister Eutropius, and for this purpose had contrived a plot in which he had persuaded Tribigildus to join. An army sent by Eutropius against the latter was beaten; the populace of Constantinople raised a furious outcry against the minister on account of this defeat and of the devastation of Asia Minor, and Gainas, who was to have marched against Tribigildus with his Gothic troops, refused to obey unless Eutropius were dismissed. As the latter had also quarrelled with the empress, he could no longer avoid the threatening storm. He was dismissed and not only deprived of his property but also of his life. He had sought refuge from his enemies in one of the churches of the capital; in this sanctuary St. Chrysostom, who was then patriarch of Constantinople, in vain sought to protect him. Eutropius had to be given up, and was first banished to Cyprus, and then executed (399).

After his fall, the empress Eudoxia carried on the government; Gainas now openly allied himself with Tribigildus, and together they committed such fearful ravages in Asia Minor that the government had to submit to negotiate with them and at their request to deliver up three distinguished officials for execution. Fortunately Tribigildus soon died. Gainas with his hordes inflicted terrible suffering on the capital and the surrounding country, until finally the people took courage and killed more than seven thousand Goths. Another Goth, Fravitta, who had been for a long time in the service of Greece, and was summoned from Asia to help against Gainas, completely defeated him, so that the devastator had to retreat with his armies to the neighbourhood of the Danube. Soon after this he was killed in a war with the Huns.

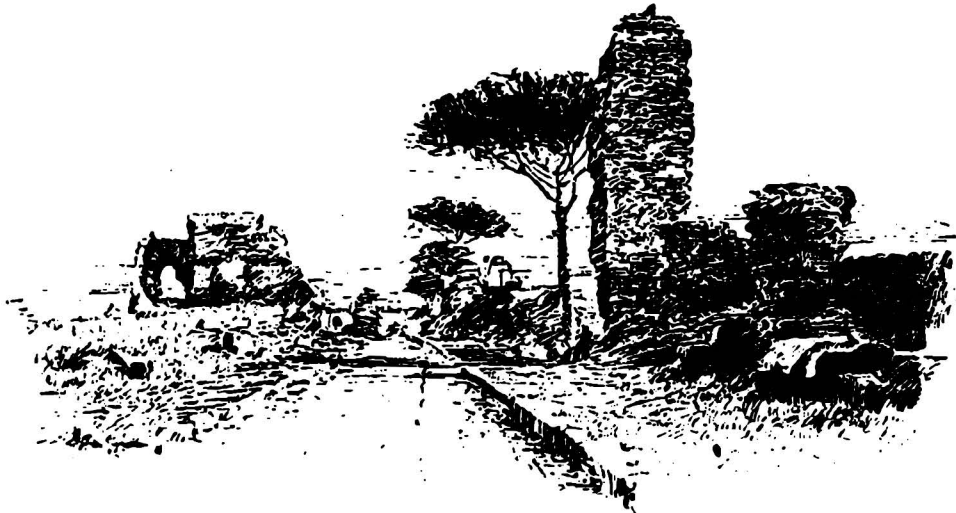
Meanwhile, Stilicho held the reins of the government of the West with a powerful hand, and distinguished himself by brilliant achievements both as statesman and general. He vindicated the fame of the Roman arms in war against the Franks and Alamanni, and successfully and quickly suppressed a dangerous rebellion by which Gildo, the brother of Firmus, had made himself master of Africa. We know too little of the private life and character of Stilicho to determine whether he, as some writers allege, really plotted the overthrow of the emperor Honorius, so as to place his own son on the throne.

Directly after Gildo's victory, Stilicho had to protect the empire from a new danger which was threatening it from a different quarter. The title of general of the East Roman Empire, bestowed on Alaric, had been utilised by him to such good purpose that he had completely equipped his Goths with arms from the arsenals in Illyricum, and now, incited by the court of Constantinople, he broke into the Western Empire, devastating as he went (400). As, for unknown reasons, he only pushed forward into Venetia, Stilicho had time to arm himself. He gathered troops from all sides, and when, two years later, Alaric again appeared (402), Stilicho alone did not lose courage, while all Italy trembled, and the emperor fled from Mediolanum to the stronghold of Ravenna. Stilicho conducted the war with much caution, and did not engage in battle until he could attack under favourable circumstances. The opportunity offered itself at the town of Pollentia in Liguria, and here, in the spring of 403, he accepted battle

[403-406 A.D.]

Both sides claimed the victory, but the chief advantage was undoubtedly on the side of the Romans, who in this fight freed thousands of their imprisoned countrymen and plundered the enemy's baggage. But the Goths were by no means conquered; for throughout the summer they maintained themselves in the vicinity of the Apennines, and held the city of Rome in constant fear. They only began to retire from Italy in the autumn; and Stilicho let them depart with their booty, thinking it advisable to build golden bridges for a flying enemy. Nevertheless he observed their march, and tried to induce individual tribes who served under Alaric to leave him; and delivered a second battle at Verona, which was more disastrous to the king of the Goths than the battle of Pollentia, for it was with only a small portion of his army that he reached his own country.

For a few years the Goths remained quiet; but soon after their departure, other Germans visited Italy with far worse devastations than theirs had been (406) Radagaisus, one of the German princes who had accompanied Alaric



THE APPIAN WAY

in his first expedition to Italy, collected to the north of the upper Danube a number of private adventurers and whole tribes, whom he promised to lead to Rome itself, saying he had heard of an opportunity and a way of getting there. His expedition resembled a national migration, as women and children accompanied the army, which according to the lowest computation amounted to two hundred thousand men, and according to another and more probable one, to double that number. Stilicho did not dare to oppose this flood, but rather tried to keep it within bounds by the manner in which he divided and disposed his troops.

Watched from all sides, the barbaric hordes advanced through Lombardy and over the Apennines to the neighbourhood of Florence. Here Stilicho, who had followed the expedition, took possession of all the approaches to the mountains, threw reinforcements into the towns, had his own army supplied from the sea, and quietly awaited the result of the want which an innumerable and disorderly crowd must soon begin to feel. Hemmed in on all sides by the Roman troops, in a short time the barbarians suffered from famine, disease, and every kind of misery. Stilicho destroyed a part of this great body, but the remaining and larger portion died from want. Etruria resembled a vast grave; the leader of the unfortunate swarm in vain tried to fight his way through — he was captured and executed.

[406-407 A.R.]

Alan, Ersemen, Huns, Goths, and other barbarians, who were among the Roman mercenaries, here did the best service. This is especially worthy of attention, as it shows us that the inhabitants of the most beautiful of countries, whose predecessors had conquered all nations of the earth, had sunk so low that they actually called in barbarians to defend them from other barbarians. On their weakness, their love of ease and pleasure, every law of their own government was wrecked, even when the latter sought to compel them to military service by severe punishments. They even preferred to mutilate themselves, as many did at this time so as to escape from serving in war, rather than risk dangers and hardships for the sake of their country.

For the second time Stilicho had saved Italy; his merit was greater than that of a Camillus or a Marius, as he had not, like these men, to lead a warlike nation into battle, but had first to create his army. Besides this, his whole life was not only a fight of civilisation with barbarism, but at the same time the struggle of force with underhand intrigue. For this reason we can no more weigh his private character against his political merits than we can those of other Roman heroes, especially of Camillus and Marius. Much of what has been made matter of reproach against him should rather be counted to him for merit. For instance, he kept his emperor under perpetual tutelage, but immediately after Stilicho's death the advantage of depriving Honorius of a personal share in the government became apparent.

It is with still greater injustice that the ruin of the prosperity of Gaul and Spain in the period immediately following the expedition of Radagaisus has been attributed to him as a crime. Stilicho had brought the Roman troops from Gaul and kept them with him after the liberation of Italy, as he intended seeking out the Goths in Illyricum. The barbarians in Germany seized this opportunity to invade Gaul (407). The Quadi, Vandals, Suevi, Alani, Heruli, Saxons, Burgundiones, Franks, and other barbarians broke into the unfortunate country, wasting it as they advanced, whilst the Gepidæ, Sarmatæ, and Huns pressed into the Danubian provinces which some of these peoples had hitherto occupied, and settled there. Argentoratum (Strasburg), Noviomagus (Speier), Borbetomagus (Worms), Mogontiacum, and other towns, which until then had opposed a barrier to the barbarians, were destroyed, and like a rushing stream the invaders poured themselves over all parts of Gaul.

The like misfortune overtook the province of Britain, whence Stilicho had just recalled the Roman forces. In 407 the troops of this country, amongst whom there were only a few Roman soldiers, finding themselves thus abandoned to their fate, proclaimed one of their number, Constantine, emperor, and under his leadership crossed over into Gaul. Here Constantine was universally acknowledged as ruler by the inhabitants, who stood in much need of help. An army under the general Sarus, whom Honorius sent against him, was beaten, and Constantine also fought the barbarians successfully. As, owing to the gravity of the situation in Italy and Gaul, Honorius and his ministers could not for the moment concern themselves with Spain, Constantine considered the moment propitious to subject that country also. The religious dissensions by which Spain as well as Africa was then rent, and the persecutions which the Donatists and Arians had to suffer from the orthodox Honorius and his court ecclesiastics, facilitated Constantine's undertaking. The Roman troops and militia were vanquished by him and almost the whole land conquered. Unfortunately Constantine replaced the brave national militia of the mountaineers, who until then had defended the passes of the Pyrenees, by mercenaries of all nations, and these

[407-411 A.D.]

shortly after made common cause with the barbarians who wandered across the mountains from Gaul, and became their companions and guides.^c

Zosimus^d has said of Stilicho that, during the twenty-three years that he commanded the army, never had he used the funds for his own profit, nor did he resort to any dishonest means to advance the interests of his only son. This son, however, was only twenty years old, and, although Stilicho was faithful under Theodosius and during the first part of the reign of Honorius, he might have later allowed himself to be corrupted in his official capacity. Several writers have accused him of having thought to elevate his son to the throne at the sacrifice of Honorius, his prince, his pupil, and his son-in-law, and with this point in view to have brought about the invasion of the barbarians which resulted in such evil to the Romans. Olympiodorus^e and Zosimus, both pagans, defend him on this point: this they did because perhaps they would have been content to see Eucher usurp the empire and re-establish paganism.

Zosimus does not hesitate to say that as his trust made him minister of justice it was necessary to buy it from him either with money or with favour; that "all the best and richest lands in the empire fell into his hands either through fear of incurring his disfavour or in the desire to lean upon his reputation to pillage the people; that he acquired immense riches by despoiling the most illustrious families and ruining the provinces." One reads the same thing, and written in a more odious manner, in Suidas,^f who seems to have taken it from Eunape, a pagan historian of that time. Zosimus also accuses Stilicho of amusing himself "by pleasures unworthy of him and even criminal, just at the time when he had most need to husband all his time."^h

Whilst these events were taking place, Italy was also a prey to the barbarians. Stilicho had induced the Gothic king Alaric to quit the service of the Greek Empire for that of the Latin, and had come to some secret understanding with him, about which we are completely in the dark. According to a highly improbable report, Stilicho wished to employ Alaric's Goths against his own master; according to another, which is just as unreliable, he intended marching with the Goths against Constantinople, and placing his son on the Greek throne. Whatever the facts may have been, Stilicho and Alaric had come to some agreement; for just as the former was marching against Constantine with his army, Alaric suddenly appeared on the frontiers of Italy, complained that he had been deceived, and demanded an indemnity. The Roman senate, which was intrusted with the management of the affair, was extremely unwilling to grant this shameful tribute and only consented at Stilicho's urgent request.

The minister's enemies seized this opportunity to bring about his fall, and the weak Honorius listened to the miserable persons who in their jealousy of Stilicho worked on the emperor's timidity to make him suspicious of the only man who could save the empire.^c

Four days after the emperor had arrived at Pavia the soldiers, incited by Olympius, revolted. Zosimus exaggerates this sedition as much as possible. Sozomen, in speaking of it, says that all those were killed who were believed to be accomplices of Stilicho.

Zosimus narrates at length the sorrow of Stilicho when he heard of this revolt, the news of which reached him at Boulogne, and how he withdrew to Ravenna where Honorius sent two separate orders; the one for his arrest, the other for his death. When the officer who carried them handed in the first, Stilicho took refuge in the church. The next day he came forth and

[408 A.D.]

delivered himself into the hands of the soldiers, after they had taken an oath in the presence of the bishop, that they had orders only to hold him a prisoner. The officer however having given the second order, he was beheaded the 23rd of August, according to Zosimus. In which statement he is upheld by history.

Eucher, sometime before the death of his father, had retired to Rome, where he also had sought refuge in a church, and, although orders had been given to kill him wherever he was found, respect for the place prevented the officers from using violence until a special order arrived from the emperor commanding them to drag him forth. He was conducted out of Rome, probably to the Emperor, who condemned him to death, whereupon he was sent back to Rome to be executed. He was almost rescued on the way by the troops of Alaric, who, as we shall see, overran all Italy. Eucher was finally executed before the first siege of Rome. "Thus," says Orosius, "was the emperor Honorius and the church also (which had everything to fear from Eucher) delivered from a great peril and avenged with scarcely any noise and by the chastisement of but a few people." Olympius, who took the place of the fallen minister, from the first used his power to ruin the empire. He filled the positions in the army and state with his creatures, put to death all Stilicho's family, friends, and clients, on whom he could lay hands, tried in every way to gratify the ecclesiastics' greed of power, and went so far in his hypocritical piety that when Alaric threatened Rome he appointed not the bravest and most experienced, but the most pious men as commanders.

At a time when unity was of the first necessity, he prevailed upon the emperor to make a number of intolerant decrees. It was not only ordained that no Arian was to fill a public office, but the persecution of heretics on behalf of the state was made a duty binding upon all magistrates; more than this, Honorius even gave the investigation of heresies into the hands of the clergy, and set up a special inquisitorial tribunal for the purpose. The Arian Goths in the Roman army were reduced to despair by these measures, and as, after the murder of Stilicho, the wives and children of barbarian soldiers whom the Romans held as security for their fidelity had been put to death, many thousands of Goths, Alans, and other foreigners belonging to the Roman army fled to Alaric, and offered themselves to him as combatants and guides that they might take vengeance on the Romans.

