



CHAPTER XLVI. THE HUNS AND THE VANDALS

DURING a long and disgraceful reign of twenty-eight years, Honorius, emperor of the West, was separated from the friendship of his brother, and afterwards of his nephew, who reigned over the East; and Constantinople beheld, with apparent indifference and secret joy, the calamities of Rome. The strange adventures of Placidia gradually renewed and cemented the alliance of the two empires. The daughter of the great Theodosius had been the captive and the queen of the Goths; she lost an affectionate husband, she was dragged in chains by his insulting assassin, she tasted the pleasure of revenge, and was exchanged in the treaty of peace, for six hundred thousand measures of wheat.

After her return from Spain to Italy, Placidia experienced a new persecution in the bosom of her family. She was averse to a marriage which had been stipulated without her consent; and the brave Constantius, as a noble reward for the tyrants whom he had vanquished, received from the hand of Honorius himself the struggling and reluctant hand of the widow of Atawulf. But her resistance ended with the ceremony of the nuptials; nor did Placidia refuse to become the mother of Honoria and Valentinian III or to assume and exercise an absolute dominion over the mind of her grateful husband. The generous soldier, whose time had hitherto been divided between social pleasure and military service, was taught new lessons of avarice and ambition. He extorted the title of Augustus; and the servant of Honorius was associated to the empire of the West. The death of Constantius, in the seventh month of his reign, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase the power of Placidia. On a sudden, by some base intrigues the city of Ravenna was agitated with bloody and dangerous tumults, which could only be appeased by the forced or voluntary retreat of Placidia and her children.

The royal exiles landed at Constantinople, soon after the marriage of Theodosius, during the festival of the Persian victories. They were treated with kindness and magnificence; but as the status of the emperor Constantius had been rejected by the Eastern court, the title of Augusta could not decently be allowed to his widow. Within a few months after the arrival of Placidia, a swift messenger announced the death of Honorius, the consequence of a dropsy; but the important secret was not divulged till the

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necessary orders had been despatched for the march of a large body of troops to the seacoast of Dalmatia. The shops and the gates of Constantinople remained shut during seven days; and the loss of a foreign prince, who could neither be esteemed nor regretted, was celebrated with loud and affected demonstrations of the public grief.

While the ministers of Constantinople deliberated, the vacant throne of Honorius was usurped by the ambition of a stranger. The name of the rebel was Joannes. He filled the confidential office of *primicerius*, or principal secretary, and history has attributed to his character more virtues than can easily be reconciled with the violation of the most sacred duty. Elated by the submission of Italy, and the hope of an alliance with the Huns, Joannes presumed to insult, by an embassy, the majesty of the Eastern emperor; but when he understood that his agents had been banished, imprisoned, and at length chased away with deserved ignominy, Joannes prepared to assert by arms the injustice of his claims.

In such a cause, the grandson of the great Theodosius should have marched in person; but the young emperor was easily diverted by his physicians from so rash and hazardous a design, and the conduct of the Italian expedition was prudently entrusted to Ardaburius and his son Aspar, who had already signalised their valour against the Persians. It was resolved that Ardaburius should embark with the infantry, whilst Aspar, at the head of the cavalry, conducted Placidia and her son Valentinian along the seacoast of the Adriatic. The march of the cavalry was performed with such active diligence that they surprised, without resistance, the important city of Aquileia; when the hopes of Aspar were unexpectedly confounded by the intelligence that a storm had dispersed the imperial fleet; and that his father, with only two galleys, was taken and carried a prisoner into the port of Ravenna. Yet this incident, unfortunate as it might seem, facilitated the conquest of Italy. Ardaburius employed, or abused, the courteous freedom which he was permitted to enjoy, to revive among the troops a sense of loyalty and gratitude; and as soon as the conspiracy was ripe for execution, he invited by private messages and pressed the approach of Aspar. A shepherd, whom the popular credulity transformed into an angel, guided the Eastern cavalry, by a secret and, it was thought, an impassable road through the morasses of the Padus (Po); the gates of Ravenna, after a short struggle, were thrown open; and the defenceless tyrant was delivered to the mercy, or rather to the cruelty, of the conquerors. His right hand was first cut off; and, after he had been exposed, mounted on an ass, to the public derision, Joannes was beheaded in the circus of Aquileia.

In a monarchy which, according to various precedents, might be considered as elective, or hereditary, or patrimonial, it was impossible that the intricate claims of female and collateral succession should be clearly defined; and Theodosius, by the right of consanguinity or conquest, might have reigned the sole legitimate emperor of the Romans. For a moment, perhaps, his eyes were dazzled by the prospect of unbounded sway; but his indolent temper gradually acquiesced in the dictates of sound policy. He contented himself with the possession of the East; and wisely relinquished the laborious task of waging a distant, and doubtful war against the barbarians beyond the Alps; or of securing the obedience of the Italians and Africans, whose minds were alienated by the irreconcilable difference of language and interest.

Instead of listening to the voice of ambition, Theodosius resolved to imitate the moderation of his grandfather, and to seat his cousin Valentinian

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on the throne of the West. The royal infant was distinguished at Constantinople by the title of *nobilissimus*: he was promoted, before his departure from Thessalonica, to the rank and dignity of Cæsar; and, after the conquest of Italy, the patrician Helion, by the authority of Theodosius and in the presence of the senate, saluted Valentinian III by the name of Augustus, and solemnly invested him with the diadem and the imperial purple. By the agreement of the three females who governed the Roman world, the son of Placidia was betrothed to Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius and



A HUN

(From a painting)

Athenais; and, as soon as the lover and his bride had attained the age of puberty, this honourable alliance was faithfully accomplished. At the same time, as a compensation perhaps for the expenses of the war, the western Illyricum was detached from the Italian dominions and yielded to the throne of Constantinople.

The emperor of the East acquired the useful dominion of the rich and maritime province of Dalmatia, and the dangerous sovereignty of Pannonia and Noricum, which had been filled and ravaged above twenty years by a promiscuous crowd of Huns, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Bavarians. Theodosius and Valentinian continued to respect the obligations of their public and domestic alliance; but the unity of the Roman government was finally dissolved. By a positive declaration, the validity of all future laws was limited

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to the dominions of their peculiar author; unless he should think proper to communicate them, subscribed with his own hand, for the approbation of his independent colleague.

Valentinian, when he received the title of Augustus, was no more than six years of age; and his long minority was intrusted to the guardian care of a mother, who might assert a female claim to the succession of the Western Empire. Placidia envied, but she could not equal, the reputation and virtues of the wife and sister of Theodosius, the elegant genius of Eudacia, the wise and successful policy of Pulcheria. The mother of Valentinian was jealous of the power which she was incapable of exercising. She reigned twenty-five years, in the name of her son; and the character of that unworthy emperor gradually countenanced the suspicion that Placidia had enervated his youth by a dissolute education, and studiously diverted his attention from every manly and honourable pursuit. Amidst the decay of military spirit her armies were commanded by two generals, Aëtius and Boniface, who may be deservedly named as the last of the Romans. Their union might have supported a sinking empire; their discord was the fatal and immediate cause of the loss of Africa. The invasion and defeat of Attila have immortalised the fame of Aëtius; and though time has thrown a shade over the exploits of his rival, the defence of Marseilles and the deliverance of Africa attest the military talents of Count Boniface.

The abilities of Aëtius and Boniface might have been usefully employed against the public enemies, in separate and important commands; but the experience of their past conduct should have decided the real favour and confidence of the empress Placidia. In the melancholy season of her exile and distress, Boniface alone had maintained her cause with unshaken fidelity; and the troops and treasures of Africa had essentially contributed to extinguish the rebellion. The same rebellion had been supported by the zeal and activity of Aëtius, who brought an army of sixty thousand Huns from the Danube to the confines of Italy, for the service of the usurper. The untimely death of Joannes compelled him to accept an advantageous treaty; but he still continued, the subject and the soldier of Valentinian, to entertain a secret, perhaps a treasonable correspondence with his barbarian allies, whose retreat had been purchased by liberal gifts and more liberal promises.

But Aëtius possessed an advantage of singular moment in a female reign; he was present; he besieged, with artful and assiduous flattery, the palace of Ravenna; disguised his dark designs with the mask of loyalty and friendship; and at length deceived both his mistress and his absent rival by a subtle conspiracy which a weak woman and a brave man could not easily suspect. He secretly persuaded Placidia to recall Boniface from the government of Africa; he secretly advised Boniface to disobey the imperial summons. To the one he represented the order as a sentence of death, to the other he stated the refusal as a signal of revolt; and when the credulous and unsuspecting count had armed the province in his defence, Aëtius applauded his sagacity in foreseeing the rebellion which his own perfidy had excited.

A temperate inquiry into the real motives of Boniface would have restored a faithful servant to his duty and to the republic; but the arts of Aëtius still continued to betray and to inflame, and the count was urged, by persecution, to embrace the most desperate counsels. The success with which he eluded or repelled the first attacks could not inspire a vain confidence that, at the head of some loose disorderly Africans, he should be able to withstand the regular forces of the West, commanded by a rival whose

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military character it was impossible for him to despise. After some hesitation the last struggles of prudence and loyalty, Boniface despatched a trusty friend to the court, or rather to the camp, of Gonderic, king of the Vandals, with the proposal of a strict alliance and the offer of an advantageous and perpetual settlement.

The experience of navigation, and perhaps the prospect of Africa, encouraged the Vandals to accept the invitation which they received from Count Boniface; and the death of Gonderic served only to forward and animate the bold enterprise. In the room of a prince not conspicuous for any superior powers of the mind or body, they acquired his bastard brother, the terrible Genseric, a name which, in the destruction of the Roman Empire, has deserved an equal rank with the names of Alaric and Attila. The king of the Vandals is described to have been of a middle stature, with a lameness in one leg, which he had contracted by an accidental fall from his horse. His slow and cautious speech seldom declared the deep purposes of his soul; he disdained to imitate the luxury of the vanquished, but he indulged the sterner passions of anger and revenge.

The ambition of Genseric was without bounds and without scruples; and the warrior could dexterously employ the dark engines of policy to solicit the allies who might be useful to his success, or to scatter among his enemies the seeds of hatred and contention. Almost in the moment of his departure he was informed that Hermanric, king of the Suevi, had presumed to ravage the Spanish territories, which he was resolved to abandon. Impatient of the insult, Genseric pursued the hasty retreat of the Suevi as far as Augusta Emerita (Merida); precipitated the king and his army into the river Anas, and calmly returned to the seashore to embark his victorious troops. The vessels which transported the Vandals over the modern straits of Gibraltar, a channel only twelve miles in breadth, were furnished by the Spaniards, who anxiously wished their departure, and by the African general, who had implored their formidable assistance.

Our fancy, so long accustomed to exaggerate and multiply the martial swarms of barbarians that seemed to issue from the north, will perhaps be surprised by the account of the army which Genseric mustered on the coast of Mauretania. The Vandals, who in twenty years had penetrated from the Elbe to Mount Atlas, were united under the command of their warlike king; and he reigned with equal authority over the Alani, who had passed, within the term of human life, from the cold of Scythia to the excessive heat of an African climate. The hopes of the bold enterprise had excited many brave adventurers of the Gothic nation; and many desperate provincials were tempted to repair their fortunes by the same means which had occasioned their ruin.

Yet this various multitude amounted only to fifty thousand effective men; and though Genseric artfully magnified his apparent strength by appointing eighty *chiliarchs*, or commanders of thousands, the fallacious increase of old men, of children, and of slaves would scarcely have swelled his army to fourscore thousand persons. But his own dexterity and the discontents of Africa soon fortified the Vandal powers by the accession of numerous and active allies. The parts of Mauretania which border on the great desert and the Atlantic Ocean were filled with a fierce and untractable race of men, whose savage temper had been exasperated, rather than reclaimed, by their dread of the Roman arms.

The wandering Moors, as they gradually ventured to approach the seashore and the camp of the Vandals, must have viewed with terror and

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astonishment the dress, the armour, the martial pride and discipline of the unknown strangers who had landed on their coast; and the fair complexion of the blue-eyed warriors of Germany formed a very singular contrast with the swarthy or olive hue which is derived from the neighbourhood of the torrid zone. After the first difficulties had in some measure been removed, which arose from the mutual ignorance of their respective languages the Moors, regardless of any future consequence, embraced the alliance of the enemies of Rome; and a crowd of naked savages rushed from the woods and valleys of Mount Atlas, to satiate their revenge on the polished tyrants who had injuriously expelled them from their native sovereignty of the land.

The persecution of the Donatists was an event not less favourable to the designs of Genseric. Seventeen years before he landed in Africa a public conference was held at Carthage by the order of the magistrate. The Catholics were satisfied that, after the invincible reasons which they had alleged, the obstinacy of the schismatics must be inexcusable and voluntary; and the emperor Honorius was persuaded to inflict the most rigorous penalties on a faction which had so long abused his patience and clemency. Three hundred bishops, with many thousands of the inferior clergy, were torn from their churches, stripped of their ecclesiastical possessions, banished to the islands, and proscribed by the laws, if they presumed to conceal themselves in the provinces of Africa. By these severities, which obtained the warmest approbation of St. Augustine, great numbers of Donatists were reconciled to the Catholic church; but the fanatics, who still persevered in their opposition, were provoked to madness and despair; the distracted country was filled with tumult and bloodshed. The armed troops of Circumcellions alternately pointed their rage against themselves or against their adversaries; and the calendar of martyrs received on both sides a considerable augmentation. Under these circumstances Genseric, a Christian but an enemy of the orthodox communion, showed himself to the Donatists as a powerful deliverer, from whom they might reasonably expect the repeal of the odious and oppressive edicts of the Roman emperors. The conquest of Africa was facilitated by the active zeal or the secret favour of a domestic faction; the wanton outrages against the churches and the clergy, of which the Vandals are accused, may be fairly imputed to the fanaticism of their allies; and the intolerant spirit which disgraced the triumph of Christianity contributed to the loss of the most important province of the West.

The court and the people were astonished by the strange intelligence that a virtuous hero, after so many favours and so many services, had renounced his allegiance and invited the barbarians to destroy the province intrusted to his command. The friends of Boniface, who still believed that his criminal behaviour might be excused by some honourable motive, solicited, during the absence of Aëtius, a free conference with the count of Africa; and Darius, an officer of high distinction, was named for the important embassy. In their first interview at Carthage, the imaginary provocations were mutually explained; the opposite letters of Aëtius were produced and compared, and the fraud was easily detected. Placidia and Boniface lamented their fatal error; and the count had sufficient magnanimity to confide in the forgiveness of his sovereign, or to expose his head to her future resentment. His repentance was fervent and sincere; but he soon discovered that it was no longer in his power to restore the edifice which he had shaken to its foundations. Carthage and the Roman garrisons returned with their general to the allegiance of Valentinian, but the rest of Africa was still distracted with war and faction; and the inexorable king of the Vandals, disdainful all

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terms of accommodation, sternly refused to relinquish the possession of his prey. The band of veterans who marched under the standard of Boniface and his hasty levies of provincial troops were defeated with considerable loss; the victorious barbarians insulted the open country; and Carthage, Cirta, and Hippo Regius were the only cities that appeared to rise above the general inundation.

On a sudden the seven fruitful provinces, from Tingis (Tangier) to Tripolis, were overwhelmed by the invasion of the Vandals, whose destructive rage has perhaps been exaggerated by popular animosity, religious zeal, and extravagant declamation. War, in its fairest form, implies a perpetual violation of humanity and justice; and the hostilities of barbarians are inflamed by the fierce and lawless spirit which incessantly disturbs their peaceful and domestic society. The Vandals, where they found resistance, seldom gave quarter; and the deaths of their valiant countrymen were expiated by the ruin of the cities under whose walls they had fallen. Careless of the distinctions of age, or sex, or rank, they employed every species of indignity and torture to force from the captives a discovery of their hidden wealth. The stern policy of Genseric justified his frequent examples of military execution. He was not always the master of his own passions, nor of those of his followers; and the calamities of war were aggravated by the licentiousness of the Moors and the fanaticism of the Donatists. Yet I shall not easily be persuaded that it was the common practice of the Vandals to extirpate the olive and other fruit trees of a country where they intended to settle; nor can I believe that it was a usual stratagem to slaughter great numbers of their prisoners before the walls of a besieged city, for the sole purpose of infecting the air and producing a pestilence of which they themselves must have been the first victims.

The generous mind of Count Boniface was tortured by the exquisite distress of beholding the ruin which he had occasioned, and whose rapid progress he was unable to check. After the loss of a battle he retired into Hippo Regius, where he was immediately besieged by an enemy who considered him as the real bulwark of Africa. By the skill of Boniface, and perhaps by the ignorance of the Vandals, the siege of Hippo was protracted above fourteen months; the sea was continually open; and when the adjacent country had been exhausted by irregular rapine, the besiegers themselves were compelled by famine to relinquish their enterprise. The importance and danger of Africa were deeply felt by the regent of the West. Placidia implored the assistance of her Eastern ally; and the Italian fleet and army were reinforced by Aspar, who sailed from Constantinople with a powerful armament. As soon as the force of the two empires was united under the command of Boniface, he boldly marched against the Vandals; and the loss of a second battle irretrievably decided the fate of Africa. He embarked with the precipitation of despair; and the people of Hippo were permitted, with their families and effects, to occupy the vacant place of the soldiers, the greatest part of whom were either slain or made prisoners by the Vandals. The count, whose fatal credulity had wounded the vitals of the republic, might enter the palace of Ravenna with some anxiety, which was soon removed by the smiles of Placidia.

Boniface accepted with gratitude the rank of patrician and the dignity of master-general of the Roman armies; but he must have blushed at the sight of those medals in which he was represented with the name and attributes of Victory. The discovery of his fraud, the displeasure of the empress, and the distinguished favour of his rival, exasperated the haughty and

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perfidious soul of Aëtius. He hastily returned from Gaul to Italy with a retinue, or rather with an army, of barbarian followers; and such was the weakness of the government that the two generals decided their private quarrel in a bloody battle. Boniface was successful; but he received in the conflict a mortal wound from the spear of his adversary, of which he expired within a few days, in such Christian and charitable sentiments that he exhorted his wife, a rich heiress of Spain, to accept Aëtius for her second husband. But Aëtius could not derive any immediate advantage from the generosity of his dying enemy; he was proclaimed a rebel by the justice of Placidia; and though he attempted to defend some strong fortresses erected on his patrimonial estate, the imperial power soon compelled him to retire into Pannonia, to the tents of his faithful Huns. The republic was deprived by their mutual discord of the service of her two most illustrious champions.¹

It might naturally be expected, after the retreat of Boniface, that the Vandals would achieve without resistance or delay the conquest of Africa. Eight years, however, elapsed from the evacuation of Hippo to the reduction of Carthage. In the midst of that interval, the ambitious Genseric, in the full tide of apparent prosperity, negotiated a treaty of peace, by which he gave his son Hunneric for a hostage and consented to leave the Western emperor in the undisturbed possession of the three Mauretanas.² The vigilance of his enemies was relaxed by the protestations of friendship which concealed his hostile approach; and Carthage was at length surprised by the Vandals, 585 years after the destruction of the city and republic by the younger Scipio.

The king of the Vandals severely reformed the vices of a voluptuous people; and the ancient, noble, ingenuous freedom of Carthage (these expressions of Victor are not without energy) was reduced by Genseric into a state of ignominious servitude. After he had permitted his licentious troops to satiate their rage and avarice, he instituted a more regular system of rapine and oppression. An edict was promulgated, which enjoined all persons, without fraud or delay, to deliver their gold, silver, jewels, and valuable furniture or apparel to the royal officers; and the attempt to secrete any part of their patrimony was inexorably punished with death and torture, as an act of treason against the state. The lands of the proconsular province, which formed the immediate district of Carthage, were accurately measured and divided among the barbarians; and the conqueror reserved, for his peculiar domain, the fertile territory of Byzacium and the adjacent parts of Numidia and Gætulia.

It was natural enough that Genseric should hate those whom he had injured; the nobility and senators of Carthage were exposed to his jealousy and resentment, and all those who refused the ignominious terms, which their honour and religion forbade them to accept, were compelled by the Arian tyrant to embrace the condition of perpetual banishment. Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the East were filled with a crowd of exiles, of fugitives, and of ingenuous captives, who solicited the public compassion.

After the death of his rival Boniface, Aëtius had prudently retired to the tents of the Huns; and he was indebted to their alliance for his safety and

This story of the feud between Boniface and Aëtius was the subject of a severe onslaught by Freeman, who calls it "the Procopian legend." Hodgkin,^c however, thinks that it "has still a reasonable claim to be accepted as history." *Italy and her Invaders*, Vol. I, pp. 889-898.]

[² See Procopius *de Bell. Vandal.* l. 1. c. 4, p. 186. Valentinian published several humane laws, to relieve the distress of his Numidian and Mauretanian subjects; he discharged them, in a great measure, from the payment of their debts, reduced their tribute to one-eighth, and gave them a right of appeal from the provincial magistrates to the prefect of Rome.]

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his restoration. Instead of the suppliant language of a guilty exile, he solicited his pardon at the head of sixty thousand barbarians; and the empress Placidia confessed, by a feeble resistance, that the condescension which might have been ascribed to clemency was the effect of weakness or fear. She delivered herself, her son Valentinian, and the Western Empire into the hands of an insolent subject; nor could Placidia protect the son-in-law of Boniface, the virtuous and faithful Sebastian, from the implacable persecution which urged him from one kingdom to another, till he miserably perished in the service of the Vandals. The fortunate Aëtius, who was immediately promoted to the rank of patrician and thrice invested with the honours of the consulship, assumed, with the title of master of the cavalry and infantry, the whole military power of the state; and he is sometimes styled, by contemporary writers, the duke, or general, of the Romans of the West. His prudence, rather than his virtue, engaged him to leave the grandson of Theodosius in the possession of the purple; and Valentinian was permitted to enjoy the peace and luxury of Italy, while the patrician appeared in the glorious light of a hero and a patriot, who supported near twenty years the ruins of the Western Empire.

The barbarians, who had seated themselves in the western provinces, were insensibly taught to respect the faith and valour of the patrician Aëtius. He soothed their passions, consulted their prejudices, balanced their interests, and checked their ambition. A seasonable treaty, which he concluded with Genseric, protected Italy from the depredations of the Vandals; the independent Britons implored and acknowledged his salutary aid; the imperial authority was restored and maintained in Gaul and Spain; and he compelled the Franks and the Suevi, whom he had vanquished in the field, to become the useful confederates of the republic.

From a principle of interest as well as gratitude, Aëtius assiduously cultivated the alliance of the Huns. While he resided in their tents as a hostage, or an exile, he had familiarly conversed with Attila himself, the nephew of his benefactor; and the two famous antagonists appear to have been connected by a personal and military friendship, which they afterwards confirmed by mutual gifts, frequent embassies, and the education of Carpilio, the son of Aëtius, in the camp of Attila. By the specious professions of gratitude and voluntary attachment, the patrician might disguise his apprehensions of the Scythian conqueror, who pressed the two empires with his innumerable armies. His demands were obeyed or eluded. When he claimed the spoils of a vanquished city — some vases of gold, which had been fraudulently embezzled — the civil and military governors of Noricum were immediately despatched to satisfy his complaints; and it is evident, from their conversation with Maximin and Priscus in the royal village, that the valour and prudence of Aëtius had not saved the western Romans from the common ignominy of tribute. Yet his dexterous policy prolonged the advantages of a salutary peace; and a numerous army of Huns and Alani, whom he had attached to his person, was employed in the defence of Gaul. Two colonies of these barbarians were judiciously fixed in the territories of Valence and Orleans, and their active cavalry secured the important passages of the Rhone and of the Loire. These savage allies were not indeed less formidable to the subjects than to the enemies of Rome. Their original settlement was enforced with the licentious violence of conquest; and the province through which they marched was exposed to all the calamities of a hostile invasion. Strangers to the emperor or the republic, the Alani of Gaul were devoted to the ambition of Aëtius; and though he might suspect that, in

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a contest with Attila himself, they would revolt to the standard of their national king, the patrician laboured to restrain, rather than to excite, their zeal and resentment against the Goths, the Burgundiones, and the Franks.

The kingdom established by the Visigoths, in the southern provinces of Gaul, had gradually acquired strength and maturity; and the conduct of those ambitious barbarians, either in peace or war, engaged the perpetual vigilance of Aëtius. After the death of Wallia the Gothic sceptre devolved to Theodoric, the son of the great Alaric; and his prosperous reign, of more than thirty years, over a turbulent people may be allowed to prove that his prudence was supported by uncommon vigour, both of mind and body. Impatient of his narrow limits, Theodoric aspired to the possession of Arles, the wealthy seat of government and commerce; but the city was saved by the timely approach of Aëtius; and the Gothic king, who had raised the siege with some loss and disgrace, was persuaded for an adequate subsidy to divert the martial valour of his subjects in a Spanish war. Yet Theodoric still watched, and eagerly seized the favourable moment of renewing his hostile attempts. The Goths besieged Narbo Martius (Narbonne), while the Belgic provinces were invaded by the Burgundiones; and the public safety was threatened on every side by the apparent union of the enemies of Rome. On every side the activity of Aëtius and his Scythian cavalry opposed a firm and successful resistance. Twenty thousand Burgundiones were slain in battle, and the remains of the nation humbly accepted a dependent seat in the mountains of Savoy.

The walls of Narbo had been shaken by the battering engines, and the inhabitants had endured the last extremities of famine, when Count Litorius, approaching in silence, and directing each horseman to carry behind him two sacks of flour, cut his way through the entrenchments of the besiegers. The siege was immediately raised, and the more decisive victory, which is ascribed to the personal conduct of Aëtius himself, was marked with the blood of eight thousand Goths. But in the absence of the patrician, who was hastily summoned to Italy by some public or private interest, Count Litorius succeeded to the command; and his presumption soon discovered that far different talents are required to lead a wing of cavalry or to direct the operations of an important war. At the head of an army of Huns, he rashly advanced to the gates of Tolosa (Toulouse), full of careless contempt for an enemy whom misfortune had rendered both prudent and desperate.

The predictions of the augurs had inspired Litorius with the profane confidence that he should enter the Gothic capital in triumph; and the trust which he reposed in his pagan allies encouraged him to reject the fair conditions of peace, which were repeatedly proposed by the bishops in the name of Theodoric. The king of the Goths exhibited in his distress the edifying contrast of Christian piety and moderation; nor did he lay aside his sackcloth and ashes till he was prepared to arm for the combat. His soldiers, animated with martial and religious enthusiasm, assaulted the camp of Litorius. The conflict was obstinate, the slaughter was mutual. The Roman general, after a total defeat, which could be imputed only to his unskilful rashness, was actually led through the streets of Tolosa, not in his own, but in a hostile triumph. [His captors in a few days put an end to his shame and his life.]

Such a loss, in a country whose spirit and finances were long since exhausted, could not easily be repaired; and the Goths, assuming, in their turn, the sentiments of ambition and revenge, would have planted their victorious standards on the banks of the Rhone, if the presence of Aëtius had

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not restored strength and discipline to the Romans. The two armies expected the signal of a decisive action; but the generals, who were conscious of each other's force and doubtful of their own superiority, prudently sheathed their swords in the field of battle; and their reconciliation was permanent and sincere. Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, appears to have deserved the love of his subjects, the confidence of his allies, and the esteem of mankind. His throne was surrounded by six valiant sons, who were educated with equal care in the exercises of the barbarian camp and in those of the Gallie schools; from the study of the Roman jurisprudence, they acquired the theory, at least, of law and justice, and the harmonious sense of Virgil contributed to soften the asperity of their native manners.



COSTUME OF A GOTH WOMAN

The two daughters of the Gothic king were given in marriage to the eldest sons of the kings of the Suevi and of the Vandals, who reigned in Spain and Africa; but these illustrious alliances were pregnant with guilt and discord. The queen of the Suevi bewailed the death of a husband, inhumanly massacred by her brother. The princess of the Vandals was the victim of a jealous tyrant, whom she called her father. The cruel Genseric suspected that his son's wife had conspired to poison him the supposed crime was punished by the amputation of her nose and ears, and the unhappy daughter of Theodoric was ignominiously returned to the court of Tolosa in that deformed and mutilated condition. This horrid act, which must seem incredible to a civilised age, drew tears from every spectator; but Theodoric was urged, by the feelings of a parent and a king, to revenge such irreparable injuries.

The imperial ministers, who always cherished the discord of the barbarians, would have supplied the Goths with arms, and ships, and treasures, for the African War; and the cruelty of Genseric might have been fatal to himself, if the artful Vandal had not armed in his cause the formidable power of the Huns. "His rich gifts and pressing solicitations inflamed the ambition of Attila; and the designs of Aëtius and Theodoric were prevented by the invasion of Gaul.

The Franks, whose monarchy was still confined to the neighbourhood of the lower Rhine, had wisely established the right of hereditary succession in the noble family of the Merovingians. These princes were elevated on a buckler, the symbol of military command, and the royal fashion of long hair was the ensign of their birth and dignity. Their flaxen locks, which they combed and dressed with singular care, hung down in flowing ringlets on their backs and shoulders; while the rest of the nation were obliged either by law or custom, to shave the hinder part of their head, to comb their hair

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over the forehead, and to content themselves with the ornament of two small whiskers. The lofty stature of the Franks, and their blue eyes, denoted a Germanic origin; their close apparel accurately expressed the figure of their limbs; a weighty sword was suspended from a broad belt; their bodies were protected by a large shield. And these warlike barbarians were trained, from their earliest youth, to run, to leap, to swim, to dart the javelin or battle-axe with unerring aim; to advance without hesitation against a superior enemy; and to maintain, either in life or death, the invincible reputation of their ancestors.

Clodion, the first of their long-haired kings, whose name and actions are mentioned in authentic history, held his residence at Dispargum, a village or fortress, whose place may be assigned between Louvain and Brussels. From the report of his spies, the king of the Franks was informed that the defenceless state of the second Belgic must yield, on the slightest attack, to the valour of his subjects. He boldly penetrated through the thickets and morasses of the Carbonarian forest, occupied Turnacum (Tournay) and Camaracum (Cambrai), the only cities which existed in the fifth century, and extended his conquests as far as the river Samara (Somme), over a desolate country, whose cultivation and populousness are the effects of more recent industry (429).

While Clodion lay encamped in the plains of Artois, and celebrated with vain and ostentatious security the marriage perhaps of his son, the nuptial feast was interrupted by the unexpected and unwelcome presence of Aëtius, who had passed the Samara at the head of his light cavalry. The tables, which had been spread under the shelter of a hill, along the banks of a pleasant stream, were rudely overturned; the Franks were oppressed before they could recover their arms or their ranks; and their unavailing valour was fatal only to themselves. The loaded wagons which had followed their march afforded a rich booty; and the virgin bride, with her female attendants, submitted to the new lovers who were imposed on them by the chance of war. This advantage, which had been obtained by the skill and activity of Aëtius, might reflect some disgrace on the military prudence of Clodion; but the king of the Franks soon regained his strength and reputation, and still maintained the possession of his Gallic kingdom from the Rhine to the Samara.

Under his reign, and most probably from the enterprising spirit of his subjects, the three capitals, Mogontiacum, Augusta Trevirorum, and Colonia Agrippina, experienced the effects of hostile cruelty and avarice. The distress of Colonia Agrippina was prolonged by the same barbarians who evacuated the ruins of Augusta Trevirorum; and Augusta Trevirorum, which in the space of forty years had been four times pillaged, was disposed to lose the memory of her afflictions in the vain amusements of the circus. The death of Clodion, after a reign of twenty years, exposed his kingdom to the discord and ambition of his two sons. Merovæus, the younger, was persuaded to implore the protection of Rome; he was received at the imperial court as the ally of Valentinian, and the adopted son of the patrician Aëtius; and dismissed to his native country, with splendid gifts and the strongest assurances of friendship and support. During his absence, his elder brother had solicited with equal ardour the formidable aid of Attila; and the king of the Huns embraced an alliance which facilitated the passage of the Rhine and justified by a specious and honourable pretence the invasion of Gaul.

When Attila declared his resolution of supporting the cause of his allies the Vandals and the Franks, at the same time and almost in the spirit of

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romantic chivalry, the savage monarch professed himself the lover and the champion of the princess Honoria. The sister of Valentinian was educated in the palace of Ravenna; and as her marriage might be productive of some danger to the state, she was raised by the title of Augusta above the hopes of the most presumptuous subject. But the fair Honoria had no sooner attained the sixteenth year of her age than she detested the importunate greatness which must forever exclude her from the comforts of honourable love; in the midst of vain and unsatisfactory pomp, Honoria sighed, yielded to the impulse of nature, and threw herself into the arms of her chamberlain Eugenius. Her guilt and shame (such is the absurd language of imperious man) were soon betrayed by the appearances of pregnancy; but the disgrace of the royal family was published to the world by the imprudence of the empress Placidia, who dismissed her daughter, after a strict and shameful confinement, to a remote exile at Constantinople. The unhappy princess passed twelve or fourteen years in the irksome society of the sisters of Theodosius and their chosen virgins; to whose crown Honoria could no longer aspire, and whose monastic assiduity of prayer, fasting, and vigils she reluctantly imitated. Her impatience of long and hopeless celibacy urged her to embrace a strange and desperate resolution.

The name of Attila was familiar and formidable at Constantinople; and his frequent embassies entertained a perpetual intercourse between his camp and the imperial palace. In the pursuit of love, or rather of revenge, the daughter of Placidia sacrificed every duty and every pretence; and offered to deliver her person into the arms of the barbarian, of whose language she was ignorant, whose figure was scarcely human, and whose religion and manners she abhorred. By the ministry of a faithful eunuch, she transmitted to Attila a ring, the pledge of her affection; and earnestly conjured him to claim her as a lawful spouse, to whom he had been secretly betrothed. These indecent advances were received however with coldness and disdain; and the king of the Huns continued to multiply the number of his wives, till his love was awakened by the more forcible passions of ambition and avarice.

The invasion of Gaul was preceded and justified by a formal demand of the princess Honoria, with a just and equal share of the imperial patrimony. His predecessors, the ancient Tanjous, had often addressed, in the same hostile and peremptory manner, the daughters of China; and the pretensions of Attila were not less offensive to the majesty of Rome. A firm but temperate refusal was communicated to his ambassadors. The right of female succession, though it might derive a specious argument from the recent examples of Placidia and Pulcheria, was strenuously denied; and the indissoluble engagements of Honoria were opposed to the claims of her Scythian lover. On the discovery of her connection with the king of the Huns, the guilty princess had been sent away as an object of horror from Constantinople to Italy. Her life was spared; but the ceremony of her marriage was performed with some obscure and nominal husband, before she was immured in a perpetual prison, to bewail those crimes and misfortunes which Honoria might have escaped, had she not been born the daughter of an emperor.

A native of Gaul, and a contemporary, the learned and eloquent Sidonius, who was afterwards bishop of Clermont, had made a promise to one of his friends that he would compose a regular history of the war of Attila. If the modesty of Sidonius had not discouraged him from the prosecution of this interesting work, the historian would have related with the simplicity of truth those memorable events to which the poet, in vague and doubtful metaphors, has concisely alluded. The kings and nations of Germany and

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Scythia, from the Volga perhaps to the Danube, obeyed the warlike summons of Attila. From the royal village, in the plains of Hungary, his standard moved towards the west and, after a march of seven or eight hundred miles he reached the conflux of the Rhine and the Nicer (Neckar); where he was joined by the Franks, who adhered to his ally, the elder of the sons of Clodion. A troop of light barbarians, who roamed in quest of plunder, might choose the winter for the convenience of passing the river on the ice; but the innumerable cavalry of the Huns required such plenty of forage and provisions as could be procured only in a milder season; the Hercynian forest supplied materials for a bridge of boats; and the hostile myriads were poured, with resistless violence, into the Belgic provinces.

The consternation of Gaul was universal; and the various fortunes of its cities have been adorned by tradition with martyrdoms and miracles. Tricassæ (Troyes) was saved by the merits of St. Lupus; St. Servatius was removed from the world, that he might not behold the ruin of Aduataca Tungrorum (Tongres); and the prayers of St. Genevieve diverted the march of Attila from the neighbourhood of Lutetia Parisiarum (Paris). But as the greatest part of the Gallic cities were alike destitute of saints and soldiers, they were besieged and stormed by the Huns, who practised, in the example of Mettis (Metz), their customary maxims of war. They involved, in a promiscuous massacre, the priests who served at the altar, and the infants, who, in the hour of danger, had been providently baptised by the bishop; the flourishing city was delivered to the flames, and a solitary chapel of St. Stephen marked the place where it formerly stood. From the Rhine and the Mosella (Moselle), Attila advanced into the heart of Gaul, crossed the Sequana (Seine) at Autesiodorum (Auxerre), and, after a long and laborious march, fixed his camp under the walls of Orleans. He was desirous of securing his conquests by the possession of an advantageous post, which commanded the passage of the Loire; and he depended on the secret invitation of Sangiban, king of the Alani, who had promised to betray the city and to revolt from the service of the empire. But this treacherous conspiracy was detected and disappointed. Orleans had been strengthened with recent fortifications; and the assaults of the Huns were vigorously repelled by the faithful valour of the soldiers or citizens, who defended the place.

The pastoral diligence of Anianus, a bishop of primitive sanctity and consummate prudence, exhausted every art of religious policy to support their courage till the arrival of the expected succours. After an obstinate siege, the walls were shaken by the battering-rams; the Huns had already occupied the suburbs; and the people who were incapable of bearing arms lay prostrate in prayer. Anianus, who anxiously counted the days and hours, despatched a trusty messenger to observe, from the rampart, the face of the distant country. He returned twice, without any intelligence that could inspire hope or comfort; but in his third report he mentioned a small cloud which he had faintly descried at the extremity of the horizon. "It is the aid of God!" exclaimed the bishop, in a tone of pious confidence; and the whole multitude repeated after him, "It is the aid of God!" The remote object, on which every eye was fixed, became each moment larger and more distinct; the Roman and Gothic banners were gradually perceived; and a favourable wind blowing aside the dust discovered, in deep array, the impatient squadrons of Aëtius and Theodoric, who pressed forward to the relief of Orleans.

The facility with which Attila had penetrated into the heart of Gaul may be ascribed to his insidious policy, as well as to the terror of his arms.

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His public declarations were skilfully mitigated by his private assurances; he alternately soothed and threatened the Romans and the Goths; and the courts of Ravenna and Tolosa, mutually suspicious of each other's intentions, beheld with supine indifference the approach of their common enemy. Aëtius was the sole guardian of the public safety; but his wisest measures were embarrassed by a faction which, since the death of Placidia, infested the imperial palace; the youth of Italy trembled at the sound of the trumpet; and the barbarians, who, from fear or affection, were inclined to the cause of Attila, awaited with doubtful and venal faith the event of the war. The patrician passed the Alps at the head of some troops, whose strength and numbers scarcely deserved the name of an army. But on his arrival at Arelate, or Lugdunum he was confounded by the intelligence that the Visigoths, refusing to embrace the defence of Gaul, had determined to expect within their own territories the formidable invader whom they professed to despise.

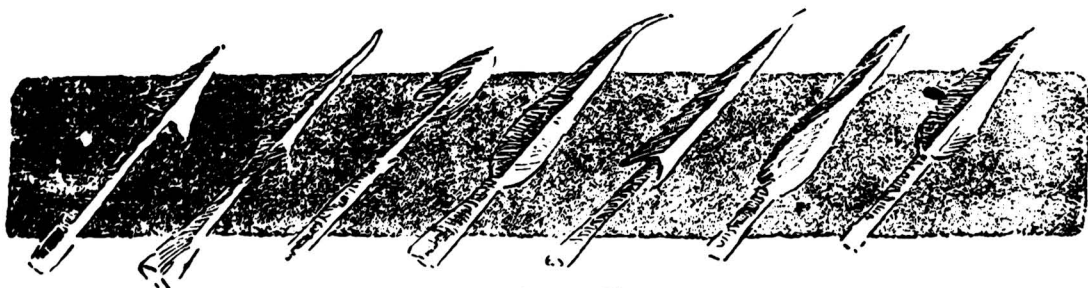
The senator Avitus, who after the honourable exercise of the prætorian prefecture had retired to his estate in Auvergne, was persuaded to accept the important embassy, which he executed with ability and success. He represented to Theodoric that an ambitious conqueror, who aspired to the dominion of the earth, could be resisted only by the firm and unanimous alliance of the powers whom he laboured to oppress. The lively eloquence of Avitus inflamed the Gothic warriors by the description of the injuries which their ancestors had suffered from the Huns; whose implacable fury still pursued them from the Danube to the foot of the Pyrenees. He strenuously urged that it was the duty of every Christian to save from sacrilegious violation the churches of God and the relics of the saints; that it was the interest of every barbarian, who had acquired a settlement in Gaul, to defend the fields and vineyards which were cultivated for his use against the desolation of the Scythian shepherds. Theodoric yielded to the evidence of truth; adopted the measure at once the most prudent and the most honourable, and declared that, as the faithful ally of Aëtius and the Romans, he was ready to expose his life and kingdom for the common safety of Gaul.

The Visigoths, who at that time were in the mature vigour of their fame and power, obeyed with alacrity the signal of war; prepared their arms and horses, and assembled under the standard of their aged king, who was resolved with his two eldest sons Torismond and Theodoric, to command in person his numerous and valiant people. The example of the Goths determined several tribes or nations, that seemed to fluctuate between the Huns and the Romans. The indefatigable diligence of the patrician gradually collected the troops of Gaul and Germany, who had formerly acknowledged themselves the subjects, or soldiers, of the republic, but who now claimed the rewards of voluntary service and the rank of independent allies — the Læti, the Armoricans, the Breones, the Saxons, the Burgundiones, the Sarmatians or Alani, the Ripuarians, and the Franks who followed Meroveus as their lawful prince. Such was the various army which, under the conduct of Aëtius and Theodoric, advanced by rapid marches to relieve Orleans and to give battle to the innumerable host of Attila.

On their approach, the king of the Huns immediately raised the siege and sounded a retreat to recall the foremost of his troops from the pillage of a city which they had already entered. The valour of Attila was always guided by his prudence; and as he foresaw the fatal consequences of a defeat in the heart of Gaul, he repassed the Seine, and expected the enemy in the plains of Châlons, whose smooth and level surface was adapted to the opera-

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tions of his Scythian cavalry. But in this tumultuary retreat the vanguard of the Romans and their allies continually pressed, and sometimes engaged, the troops which Attila had posted in the rear; the hostile columns, in the darkness of the night and the perplexity of the roads, might encounter each other without design; and the bloody conflict of the Franks and Gepids, in which fifteen thousand barbarians were slain, was a prelude to a more general and decisive action. The Catalaunian fields spread themselves round Châlons,¹ and extend, according to the vague measurement of Jordanes, to the length of 150 and the breadth of 100 miles over the whole province, which is entitled to the appellation of a champaign country.^b



ANCIENT SPEAR HEADS

THE GOTHIC HISTORIAN JORDANES ON THE BATTLE OF CHÂLONS

But before entering upon the actual encounter, we had better here refer to some preliminary details, all the more that this battle was no less ample in scale and complicated in details than the day of its date was famous. Sangiban, king of the Alans, solicitous for his future, promised Attila submission and to hand over his then residence, Aureliani (Orleans). This treacherous move coming to the ears of Theodoric and Aëtius, they constructed great outworks around the city, keeping the suspected Sangiban under surveillance, and posted him and his people among their own auxiliaries. Consequently Attila, impressed by this occurrence and distrustful of his own strength, hesitated to join action. Yet fearing flight as he did death, he resolved to scan the future by help of augury.

As usual the augurs pried into the entrails of a sheep, and inspected its bones and veins as the latter showed on some scraped bones, announcing, as a result, misfortune to the Huns. A morsel of contentment was added, however, in the prediction that the enemy's commander-in-chief should die in the hour of victory, and sully his laurels. Now Attila, in his eager desire for the death of Aëtius even at the risk of his own, and his army's defeat, although disturbed by the prospect held out by the augurs, yet, being skilled in the refinements of military tactics, after some hesitation resolved to join battle about three in the afternoon and thus obviate suspicion of yielding by trusting to darkness in case of defeat.

The field, from a gentle slope, gradually assumed the character of a hill. As the advantages presented by such conformation were by no means slight, both parties made this slope their objective, the Huns with their auxiliaries seizing upon the right flank, the Romans and Visigoths the left, leaving the

[¹ The place which we now call Châlons was probably under the Romans named Duro-Catalaunum. It was the chief place of the Catalauni, a tribe who dwelt next to the Suessiones. In Roman miles (10 of which are about equal to 1 English), and by the Roman roads, Châlons was 170 miles distant from Metz, and 51 from Troyes.]

crest, for future decision. The contest commences, Aetius on the left with his Romans, with the Visigoths as his right support, and Sangiban leader of the Alans between — a piece of military precaution by which they doubly flanked this rather doubtful leader, since fighting is the more probable where flight is impossible.

The battle array of the Huns was on a different plan. Attila, with his bravest held the centre. By this arrangement he had his personal safety in view, trusting that a stand amid the valiant of his race would insure himself, at least as king, from imminent danger. On the flanks there deployed in disorder multitudes of subject nations and people, chief among whom were the Ostrogoths' forces under the leadership of the three brothers, Walamir, Theodomir, and Widemir, nobler than the very king himself whom they served, since resplendent with the hereditary glories of the Amal race. There might be seen also at the head of countless bands of the Gepidæ their most renowned king, Ardaric, who from his all too great loyalty to Attila was of his inner counsels. For Attila, well aware of his wisdom, prized him and Walamir of the Ostrogoths above all the pettier royalties — Walamir, the reticent, the affable, the guileless, and Ardaric the knightly and the loyal. Not without reason was it that Attila trusted them to match their Visigothic kindred.

As for the rest, — the kingly mob, if I am not irreverent, — and the chiefs of this nation and that, retainers rather than kings, they hung on each move of Attila's; and did his eye beckon them, then, speechless, terrified, and trembling they stood at call, or at least were subservient to his every order. Yet king of kings though he was, was Attila solitary amid all, and over all solicitous.

The battle began over the possession of the ridge already mentioned. Leading his men on to secure this summit, Attila was in this forestalled by Torismund and Aëtius who, striving with all their might to reach the crest, first won it, and from their superior vantage ground easily dispersed the Huns. When Attila beheld his troops disorganised by this occurrence, he thought a harangue at this juncture would rally them and said:

Victorious so often over so many nations, and masters of the world, if to-day you flinch not, I should think myself a fool to rouse you to courage by speech as if you were raw recruits. Consign such conduct to the juvenile general and the untrained militia. It as little befits me to deal in commonplace as you to listen. You are warriors, or nothing, and what to such is more satisfying than to carve out his vengeance by the sword? Ah! Revenge, nature's first gift and sweetest soother of the soul! Let your feet then be swift to the attack since ever is the attacker the bolder! Heed not that mongrel mass of foreign speech, who but prove their fear by herding together. Look at them! Look! how even before our first charge they are swayed to and fro from fear; they make for hill and height; again, too late for regret, are back for safety to the battle-field. You need no telling as to the flimsiness of Roman defence, or how, not a wound, but a speck of dust merely lays them low. Be your old selves, and, while they are punctiliously peddling away at formations and shield-locking, charge with your unflinching courage, laugh at their 'formations.' On against Visigoth and down with the Alans! There lies speedy victory for us, and there the struggle lies. Sunder the sinew and the limbs collapse; hack the bones and the body falls!

"Huns of mine! Rouse your rage; and let your fury swell as of old! Craftily now, and by the sword-stroke then! Some death mid the enemy let

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the wounded man seek, and the scatheless fight till he sicken with the slaughter! The child of victory the dart will not smite, but fate deals the doomed one his death at the board. Nor did fortune deal the Hun such a roll of victories, if not to make him blithe over this one victory the more. Who unbared the Moetic swamp, the secret of the centuries? Who weaponless vanquished the weaponed? These herded outcasts dare not confront the Hun! That this shall be my new field of victory, the long tale of my former assures me! Yea! and first am I whose shaft shall be sped! And doomed is he who fights not when Attila leads the fight."

Spurred on by this dithyramb, headlong into fight they rush.

The juncture had its terrors, yet the king's presence overcame the fear even of the coward. It was soon a case of man to man. It was a battle. savage, tangled, widespread, dogged. Antiquity has not its parallel. Such deeds are told of, that he who has not been privileged to witness them, though witnessing much that is marvellous, yet must ever lack the marvel of this. For, to believe tradition, a brook whose feeble current rolled through the plain already spoken of, swollen by the blood of the wounded and enlarged not as usual by rains but by an all too rare flood, was converted into a torrent by this sanguine contribution. Those, moreover, parched by loss of blood, who were driven to its bank, were reduced to drinking this gruesome draught — drinking by an enforced fate the very gushings of their own wounds.

Then, too, King Theodoric, riding up and down his ranks in cheering exhortation, fell from his steed and was trampled under foot by his own soldiery, terminating his career at an advanced age. Another tale has it that he fell by the javelin of Andagis, Attila's lieutenant. Thus was accomplished the prediction of Attila's augurs, which Attila had set down to Aëtius.

Next the Visigoths, leaving the Alans, fell on the Hunnish bands with fury, and Attila himself were as good as dead, had not his prudence led him to take refuge with his followers within his camp and its fortification of wagons. Weak as was this shelter, yet there, for protection of their lives, trooped the warriors whom but a little previously no ordinary obstacle could withstand.

Torismund, son of Theodoric, who, with Aëtius, had seized the hill and repelled the enemy from its summit, in the belief that he was rejoining his men, and misled by the darkness of the night, stepped inside the wagon enclosure of the Huns. While fighting bravely, he fell to the ground from his wounded horse, but though rescued by his men he was persuaded to give up further fighting. Aëtius, too, during the night's confusion, wandered amid the enemy. Dreading some disaster to the Goths, he persisted in his search for the correct way, arriving at length at the allied camp, where under the protection of shields he passed the night.

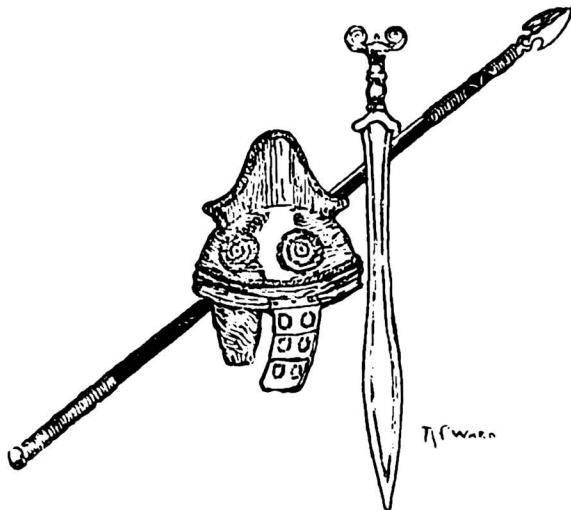
At dawn a plain is seen heaped and covered with corpses, but the Huns do not venture to issue from their retreat, and so the confederates judge the victory theirs. They judged, too, that it was no common disaster which had induced the flight of Attila from the battle-field. Yet was his action not that of one who acknowledged defeat.

He showed his usual courage, for within his camp was the clash of arms, the brattle of the trumpet, ever threatening a sortie; as a lion might, when hard beset by the hunters, ramp and rave at entrance to his den, without venturing to emerge, yet nevertheless terrifying the neighbourhood by his roaring, so did the warlike king, secure in his retreat, supply a source of fear

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to his conquerors. These latter resolved to wear him out by a siege, since he lacked provisions, and as he could from his archers placed inside the barrier rain down showers of missiles on them should they attempt an assault by force. It is reported, however, that the king, haughty as ever even in a situation so desperate, had formed a pyre from saddlery, having resolved to throw himself into its flames should the enemy force his camp, that none might boast of having wounded him, or that the lord of so many nations should have ever been in an enemy's power.

Whilst this siege bred delay, the Visigoths busied themselves in search for their king,—the father of Torismond,—wondering at his absence while success had crowned their arms. When after long search they found him, as is not infrequent among brave men, amid a dense heap of bodies, they honoured him in song, bearing away his body under the eyes of the enemy. Then it was possible to see crowds of Goths, with uncouth accent



GALLIC WEAPONS

that rent the air in song, render the last and most sacred rites to the dead while all around was war. Tears there were, but such as a warrior merits. The death was ours, to be sure, but even to the Hun it was glorious, nor did Attila's pride feel aught but humbled to see the Goths bear to burial with all its trappings the body of a mighty king. These Goths, while paying last and merited honours to Theodoric, at the same hour made over to his son the royal dignity, and amid clash of arms the brave and glorious warrior Torismond followed the funeral rites of his dear father as was fitting for a son.

These rites accomplished, urged by grief through his bereavement and impelled by natural valour, Torismond resolved to avenge the death of his father upon the remnant of the Huns. On this point he consulted the patrician Aëtius, his senior in years and of riper experience, and craved advice as to his action. He in his fear lest the thorough overthrow of the Huns might leave the Roman power at the mercy of the Goths, advised him as follows :

That he should retrace his steps to his own state, and firmly secure the throne now vacant by his father's death, as otherwise his brothers might seize upon the royal treasure, and usurp the regal power over the Visigoths, in which case was no alternative left but a laborious contest made all the more squalid as being between relatives. Torismond listened to this advice not as to a piece of duplicity but as if it advanced his own interests, and leaving the Huns behind him, he returned to his district of Gaul. Thus does man's weakness give way to suspicion, and amid momentous events lose the opportune hour.

In this most famous battle, waged between the bravest of races, report says that one hundred and sixty-five thousand men fell on both sides, not to mention fifteen thousand of the Gepids and Franks, who one night before the general engagement meeting by chance fell by mutual assault, the Franks siding with Romans, the Gepids with the Huns.

On Attila's learning the departure of the Goths, he pursued such course as is customary in abnormal circumstances. He suspected a ruse and so for

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some time longer lurked in camp. But when the enemy's absence was conjoined to lengthened quiet, the spirit of a victor returned to him, gaiety gained the upper hand, and the musings of this mighty monarch resumed the path of their ancient destiny.

Meanwhile Torismond, who had succeeded to the throne, marched into Tolosa, and none was found to dispute his succession ^d

THE INVASION OF ITALY: THE FOUNDATION OF VENICE

Neither the spirit, nor the forces, nor the reputation of Attila were impaired by the failure of the Gallic expedition. In the ensuing spring, he repeated his demand of the princess Honoria and her patrimonial treasures. The demand was again rejected, or eluded; and the indignant lover immediately took the field, passed the Alps, invaded Italy, and besieged Aquileia with an innumerable host of barbarians. Those barbarians were unskilled in the methods of conducting a regular siege, which, even among the ancients, required some knowledge, or at least some practice, of the mechanical arts. But the labour of many thousand provincials and captives, whose lives were sacrificed without pity, might execute the most painful and dangerous work. The skill of the Roman artists might be corrupted to the destruction of their country. The walls of Aquileia were assaulted by a formidable train of battering-rams, movable turrets, and engines, that threw stones, darts, and fire; and the monarch of the Huns employed the forcible impulse of hope, fear, emulation, and interest to subvert the only barrier which delayed the conquest of Italy.

Aquileia was at that period one of the richest, the most populous, and the strongest of the maritime cities of the Adriatic coast. The Gothic auxiliaries, who appeared to have served under their native princes Alaric and Antala, communicated their intrepid spirit; and the citizens still remembered the glorious and successful resistance which their ancestors had opposed to a fierce, inexorable barbarian who disgraced the majesty of the Roman purple. Three months were consumed without effect in the siege of Aquileia; till the want of provisions and the clamours of his army compelled Attila to relinquish the enterprise, and reluctantly to issue his orders that the troops should strike their tents the next morning, and begin their retreat. But, as he rode round the walls, pensive, angry, and disappointed, he observed a stork preparing to leave her nest in one of the towers, and to fly with her infant family towards the country. He seized, with the ready penetration of a statesman, this trifling incident which chance had offered to superstition, and exclaimed, in a loud and cheerful tone, that such a domestic bird, so constantly attached to human society, would never have abandoned her ancient seats unless these towers had been devoted to impending ruin and solitude.

The favourable omen inspired an assurance of victory; the siege was renewed and prosecuted with fresh vigour; a large breach was made in the part of the wall from whence the stork had taken her flight; the Huns mounted to the assault with irresistible fury; and the succeeding generation could scarcely discover the ruins of Aquileia. After this dreadful chastisement, Attila pursued his march; and, as he passed, the cities of Altinum, Concordia, and Patavium (Padua) were reduced into heaps of stones and ashes. The inland towns, Vicentia (Vicenza), Verona, and Bergomum (Bergamo) were exposed to the rapacious cruelty of the Huns. Mediolanum and Ticinum submitted without resistance to the loss of their

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wealth; and applauded the unusual clemency which preserved from the flames the public as well as private buildings, and spared the lives of the captive multitude. The popular traditions of Comum, Turin, or Modena may justly be suspected; yet they concur with more authentic evidence to prove that Attila spread his ravages over the rich plains of modern Lombardy, which are divided by the Po, and bounded by the Alps and Apennine. When he took possession of the royal palace of Mediolanum, he was surprised and offended at the sight of a picture, which represented the Cæsars seated on their throne and the princes of Scythia prostrate at their feet. The revenge which Attila inflicted on this monument of Roman vanity was harmless and ingenious. He commanded a painter to reverse the figures and the attitudes; and the emperors were delineated, on the same canvas, approaching in a suppliant posture to empty their bags of tributary gold before the throne of the Scythian monarch. The spectators must have confessed the truth and propriety of the alteration; and were perhaps tempted to apply, on this singular occasion, the well-known fable of the dispute between the lion and the man.

It is a saying worthy of the ferocious pride of Attila that the grass never grew on the spot where his horse had trod. Yet the savage destroyer undesignedly laid the foundation of a republic which revived, in the feudal state of Europe, the art and spirit of commercial industry. The celebrated name of Venice, or Venetia, was formerly diffused over a large and fertile province of Italy, from the confines of Pannonia to the river Addua, and from the Po to the Rætian and Julian Alps. Before the irruption of the barbarians, fifty Venetian cities flourished in peace and prosperity; Aquileia was placed in the most conspicuous station, but the ancient dignity of Patavium was supported by agriculture and manufactures; and the property of five hundred citizens who were entitled to the equestrian rank must have amounted, at the strictest computation, to 1,700,000 pounds. Many families of Aquileia, Patavium, and the adjacent towns, who fled from the sword of the Huns, found a safe though obscure refuge in the neighbouring islands.

At the extremity of the gulf, where the Adriatic feebly imitates the tides of the ocean, near a hundred small islands are separated by shallow water from the continent, and protected from the waves by several long slips of land, which admit the entrance of vessels through some secret and narrow channels. Till the middle of the fifth century, these remote and sequestered spots remained without cultivation, with few inhabitants, and almost without a name. But the manners of the Venetian fugitives, their arts and their government, were gradually formed by their new situation; and one of the epistles of Cassiodorus, which describes their condition about seventy years afterwards, may be considered as the primitive monument of the republic.

THE RETREAT OF ATTILA

The Italians, who had long since renounced the exercise of arms, were surprised, after forty years' peace, by the approach of a formidable barbarian, whom they abhorred as the enemy of their religion as well as of their republic. Amidst the general consternation, Aëtius alone was incapable of fear; but it was impossible that he should achieve, alohe and unassisted, any military exploits worthy of his former renown. The barbarians, who had defended Gaul, refused to march to the relief of Italy; and the succours promised by the Eastern emperor were distant and doubtful. Since Aëtius,

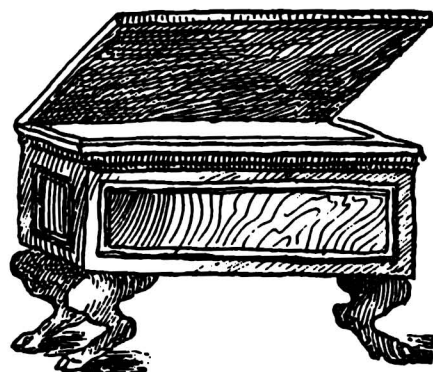
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at the head of his domestic troops, still maintained the field, and harassed or retarded the march of Attila, he never showed himself more truly great than at the time when his conduct was blamed by an ignorant and ungrateful people.

If the mind of Valentinian had been susceptible of any generous sentiments, he would have chosen such a general for his example and his guide. But the timid grandson of Theodosius, instead of sharing the dangers escaped from the sound of war; and his hasty retreat from Ravenna to Rome, from an impregnable fortress to an open capital, betrayed his secret intention of abandoning Italy as soon as the danger should approach his imperial person. This shameful abdication was suspended, however, by the spirit of doubt and delay, which commonly adheres to pusillanimous counsels and sometimes corrects their pernicious tendency. The Western emperor, with the senate and people of Rome, embraced the more salutary resolution of deprecating, by a solemn and suppliant embassy, the wrath of Attila. This important commission was accepted by Avienus, who, from his birth and riches, his constant dignity, the numerous train of his clients, and his personal abilities, held the first rank in the Roman senate.

The specious and artful character of Avienus was admirably qualified to conduct a negotiation either of public or private interest; his colleague Trigetius had exercised the prætorian prefecture of Italy; and Leo, bishop of Rome, consented to expose his life for the safety of his flock. The genius of Leo was exercised and displayed in the public misfortunes; and he has deserved the appellation of "great," by the successful zeal with which he laboured to establish his opinions and his authority, under the venerable names of orthodox faith and ecclesiastical discipline. The Roman ambassadors were introduced to the tent of Attila, as he lay encamped at the place where the slow-winding Mincius is lost in the foaming waves of the lake Benacus, and trampled, with the Scythian cavalry, the farms of Catullus and Virgil. The barbarian monarch listened with favourable, and even respectful, attention; and the deliverance of Italy was purchased by the immense ransom, or dowry, of the princess Honoria. The state of his army might facilitate the treaty and hasten his retreat. Their martial spirit was relaxed by the wealth and indolence of a warm climate.

The shepherds of the north, whose ordinary food consisted of milk and raw flesh, indulged themselves too freely in the use of bread, of wine, and of meat prepared and seasoned by the arts of cookery; and the progress of disease revenged in some measure the injuries of the Italians. When Attila declared his resolution of carrying his victorious arms to the gates of Rome, he was admonished by his friends as well as by his enemies that Alaric had not long survived the conquest of the Eternal City. His mind, superior to real danger, was assaulted by imaginary terrors; nor could he escape the influence of superstition, which had so often been subservient to his designs. The pressing eloquence of Leo, his majestic aspect and sacerdotal robes, excited the veneration of Attila for the spiritual father of the Christians. The apparition of the two Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, who menaced the barbarian with instant death if he rejected the prayer of their successor, is one of the noblest legends of ecclesiastical tradition. The safety of Rome



A ROMAN COFFER

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might deserve the interposition of celestial beings; and some indulgence is due to a fable which has been represented by the pencil of Raphael and the chisel of Algardi.

Before the king of the Huns evacuated Italy, he threatened to return more dreadful and more implacable, if his bride, the princess Honoria, were not delivered to his ambassadors within the term stipulated by the treaty. Yet, in the meantime, Attila relieved his tender anxiety by adding a beautiful maid, whose name was Ildico, to the list of his innumerable wives. Their marriage was celebrated with barbaric pomp and festivity, at his wooden palace beyond the Danube; and the monarch, oppressed with wine and sleep, retired at a late hour from the banquet to the nuptial bed. His attendants continued to respect his pleasures or his repose the greatest part of the ensuing day, till the unusual silence alarmed their fears and suspicions; and, after attempting to awaken Attila by loud and repeated cries, they at length broke into the royal apartment. They found the trembling bride sitting by the bedside, hiding her face with her veil, and lamenting her own danger as well as the death of the king, who had expired during the night. An artery had suddenly burst; and as Attila lay in a supine posture, he was suffocated by a torrent of blood, which, instead of finding a passage through the nostrils, regurgitated into the lungs and stomach. His body was solemnly exposed in the midst of the plain, under a silken pavilion, and the chosen squadrons of the Huns, wheeling round in measured evolutions, chanted a funeral song to the memory of a hero glorious in his life, invincible in his death, the father of his people, the scourge of his enemies, and the terror of the world. According to their national custom, the barbarians cut off a part of their hair, gashed their faces with unseemly wounds, and bewailed their valiant leader as he deserved, not with the tears of women but with the blood of warriors (453).

The remains of Attila were enclosed within three coffins, of gold, of silver, and of iron, and privately buried in the night: the spoils of nations were thrown into his grave; the captives who had opened the ground were inhumanly massacred; and the same Huns who had indulged such excessive grief, feasted with dissolute and intemperate mirth about the recent sepulchre of their king. It was reported at Constantinople that, on the fortunate night on which he expired, Marcian beheld in a dream the bow of Attila broken asunder; and the report may be allowed to prove how seldom the image of that formidable barbarian was absent from the mind of a Roman emperor.

The revolution which subverted the empire of the Huns established the fame of Attila, whose genius alone had sustained the huge and disjointed fabric. After his death the boldest chieftains aspired to the rank of kings; the most powerful kings refused to acknowledge a superior; and the numerous sons whom so many various mothers bore to the deceased monarch divided and disputed, like a private inheritance, the sovereign command of the nations of Germany and Scythia. The bold Ardaric felt and resented the disgrace of this servile partition; and his subjects, the warlike Gepidæ, with the Ostrogoths, under the conduct of three valiant brothers, encouraged their allies to vindicate the rights of freedom and royalty.

In a bloody and decisive conflict on the banks of the river Netad, in Pannonia, the lance of the Gepidæ, the sword of the Goths, the arrows of the Huns, the Suevic infantry, the light arms of the Heruli, and the heavy weapons of the Alani, encountered or supported each other; and the victory of Ardaric was accompanied with the slaughter of thirty thousand of his

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enemies. Ellac, the eldest son of Attila, lost his life and crown in the memorable battle of Netad; his early valour had raised him to the throne of the Acatzires, a Scythian people whom he subdued, and his father, who loved the superior merit, would have envied the death of Ellac. His brother Dengisich, with an army of Huns, still formidable in their flight and ruin, maintained his ground above fifteen years on the banks of the Danube. The palace of Attila, with the old country of Dacia, from the Carpathian hills to the Euxine, became the seat of a new power which was erected by Ardaric, king of the Gepidæ. The Pannonian conquests, from Vindobona to Sirmium, were occupied by the Ostrogoths; and the settlements of the tribes who had so bravely asserted their native freedom were irregularly distributed, according to the measure of their respective strength. Surrounded and oppressed by the multitude of his father's slaves, the kingdom of Dengisich was confined to the circle of his wagons; his desperate courage urged him to invade the Eastern Empire; he fell in battle; and his head, ignominiously exposed in the Hippodrome, exhibited a grateful spectacle to the people of Constantinople.

Attila had fondly or superstitiously believed that Irnac, the youngest of his sons, was destined to perpetuate the glories of his race. The character of that prince, who attempted to moderate the rashness of his brother Dengisich, was more suitable to the declining condition of the Huns; and Irnac, with his subject hordes, retired into the heart of the Lesser Scythia. They were soon overwhelmed by a torrent of new barbarians, who followed the same road which their own ancestors had formerly discovered. The Geougen or Avars, whose residence is assigned by the Greek writers to the shores of the ocean, impelled the adjacent tribes; till at length the Igours of the north, issuing from the cold Siberian regions, which produce the most valuable furs, spread themselves over the desert, as far as the Borysthenes and the Caspian gates; and finally extinguished the empire of the Huns.

Such an event might contribute to the safety of the Eastern Empire, under the reign of a prince who conciliated the friendship without forfeiting the esteem of the barbarians. But the emperor of the West, the feeble and dissolute Valentinian, who had reached his thirty-fifth year without attaining the age of reason or courage, abused this apparent security to undermine the foundations of his own throne by the murder of the patrician Aëtius. From the instinct of a base and jealous mind, he hated the man who was universally celebrated as the terror of the barbarians, and the support of the republic; and his new favourite, the eunuch Heraclius, awakened the emperor from the supine lethargy which might be disguised, during the life of Placidia, by the excuse of filial piety. The fame of Aëtius, his wealth and dignity, the numerous and martial train of barbarian followers, his powerful dependents, who filled the civil offices of the state, and the hopes of his son Gaudentius, who was already contracted to Eudoxia, the emperor's daughter, had raised him above the rank of a subject.

The ambitious designs of which he was secretly accused, excited the fears, as well as the resentment, of Valentinian. Aëtius himself, supported by the consciousness of his merit, his services, and perhaps his innocence, seems to have maintained a haughty and indiscreet behaviour. The patrician offended his sovereign by a hostile declaration; he aggravated the offence, by compelling him to ratify with a solemn oath a treaty of reconciliation and alliance; he proclaimed his suspicions; he neglected his safety; and from a vain confidence that the enemy whom he despised was incapable even of a manly crime, he rashly ventured his person in the palace of Rome.

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Whilst he urged, perhaps with intemperate vehemence, the marriage of his son, Valentinian, drawing his sword, the first sword he had ever drawn, plunged it in the breast of a general who had saved his empire; his courtiers and eunuchs ambitiously struggled to imitate their master; and Aëtius, pierced with a hundred wounds, fell dead in the royal presence. Boethius, the praetorian prefect was killed at the same moment; and before the event could be divulged, the principal friends of the patrician were summoned to the palace and separately murdered. The horrid deed palliated by the specious names of justice and necessity, was immediately communicated by the emperor to his soldiers, his subjects, and his allies.

The nations who were strangers or enemies to Aëtius generously deplored the unworthy fate of a hero; the barbarians who had been attached to his service dissembled their grief and resentment; and the public contempt which had been so long entertained for Valentinian, was at once converted into deep and universal abhorrence. Such sentiments seldom pervade the walls of a palace; yet the emperor was confounded by the honest reply of a Roman, whose approbation he had not disdained to solicit: "I am ignorant, sir, of your motives or provocations; I only know that you have acted like a man who cuts off his right hand with his left."

The luxury of Rome seems to have attracted the long and frequent visits of Valentinian; who was consequently more despised at Rome than in any other part of his dominions. A republican spirit was insensibly revived in the senate, as their authority, and even their supplies, became necessary for the support of his feeble government. The stately demeanour of an hereditary monarch offended their pride; and the pleasures of Valentinian were injurious to the peace and honour of noble families. The birth of the empress Eudoxia was equal to his own, and her charms and tender affection deserved those testimonies of love which her inconstant husband dissipated in vague and unlawful amours.

Petronius Maximus, a wealthy senator of the Anician family, who had been twice consul, was possessed of a chaste and beautiful wife; her obstinate resistance served only to irritate the desires of Valentinian, and he resolved to accomplish them either by stratagem or force. Deep gaming was one of the vices of the court; the emperor, who by chance or contrivance had gained from Maximus a considerable sum, uncourteously exacted his ring as a security for the debt; and sent it by a trusty messenger to his wife, with an order in her husband's name that she should immediately attend the empress Eudoxia. The unsuspecting wife of Maximus was conveyed in her litter to the imperial palace; the emissaries of her impatient lover conducted her to a remote and silent bedchamber; and Valentinian violated, without remorse, the laws of hospitality. Her tears when she returned home, her deep affliction, and her bitter reproaches against her husband, whom she considered as the accomplice of his own shame, excited Maximus to a just revenge; the desire of revenge was stimulated by ambition; and he might reasonably aspire by the free suffrage of the Roman senate to the throne of a detested and despicable rival. Valentinian, who supposed that every human breast was devoid, like his own, of friendship and gratitude, had imprudently admitted among his guards several domestics and followers of Aëtius. Two of these, of barbarian race, were persuaded to execute a sacred and honourable duty by punishing with death the assassin of their patron; and their intrepid courage did not long expect a favourable moment. Whilst Valentinian amused himself in the Field of Mars with the spectacle of some military sports, they suddenly rushed upon

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him with drawn weapons, despatched the guilty Heraclius, and stabbed the emperor to the heart, without the least opposition from his numerous train, who seemed to rejoice in the tyrant's death.

Such was the fate of Valentinian III, the last Roman emperor of the family of Theodosius. He faithfully imitated the hereditary weakness of his cousin and his two uncles, without inheriting the gentleness, the purity, the innocence, which alleviate in their characters the want of spirit and ability. Valentinian was less excusable, since he had passions without virtues; even his religion was questionable; and though he never deviated into the paths of heresy, he scandalised the pious Christians by his attachment to the profane arts of magic and divination.^b



ROMAN TERRA-COTTA FIGURES