



CHAPTER XLVII

THE FALL OF ROME

THE Vandals were of the Low German stock and closely allied to the Goths. We first hear of them in the time of Pliny and Tacitus as occupying a district nearly corresponding to Brandenburg and Pomerania. From thence, in the second century, they pressed southwards to the confines of Bohemia, where they gave their name to the mountains now called the Riesengebirge.

After a century of hostile and desultory operations against the Roman Empire, having been signally defeated by Aurelian (271) they made peace with Rome, one of the conditions being that they should supply two thousand *fœderati* to the imperial army. Sixty years later they sustained a great defeat from the Goths under their king Geberic, after which they humbly sought and obtained permission from Constantine to settle as Roman subjects within the province of Pannonia. Here they remained seventy years, and during this period they probably made some advances in civilisation and became Christians of the Arian type.

In 406, when the empire under Honorius was falling into ruin, they crossed the Rhine and entered Gaul. Stilicho, the chief adviser of Honorius, who was a man of Vandal extraction, was accused by his enemies of having invited them into the empire, but this is probably a groundless calumny. In Gaul they fought a great battle with the Franks, in which they were defeated with the loss of two thousand men, and their king Godigisclus was slain. In 409 his son Gunderic led them across the Pyrenees. They appear to have settled in Spain in two detachments. One, the Asdingian Vandals, occupied Gallæcia, the other, the Silingian, part of Bætica (Andalusia). Twenty years of bloody and purposeless warfare with the armies of the empire and with their fellow-barbarians, the Goths and the Suevi, followed. The Silingian Vandals were well-nigh exterminated, but their Asdingian brethren (with whom were now associated the remains of a Turanian people, the Alans, who had been utterly defeated by the Goths) marched across Spain and took possession of Andalusia.

In 428 or 429 the whole nation set sail for Africa, upon an invitation received by their king from Boniface, count of Africa, who had fallen into disgrace with the court of Ravenna. Gunderic was now dead and supreme power was in the hands of his bastard brother, who is generally known in history as Genseric, though the more correct form of his name is Gaiseric. This man, short of stature and with limping gait, but with a great natural capacity for war and dominion, reckless of human life and unrestrained by conscience or pity, was for fifty years the hero of the Vandal race and the terror of Constantinople and Rome. In the month of May 428 (?) he assembled all his people on the shore of Andalusia, and numbering the males



THE HUNS APPROACHING ROME

(From the painting by Chieco)

[430-455 A.D.]

among them from the graybeard down to the newborn infant found them to amount to eighty thousand souls. The passage was effected in the ships of Boniface, who, however, soon returning to his old loyalty, besought his new allies to depart from Africa. They, of course, refused, and Boniface turned against them, too late however, to repair the mischief which he had caused. Notwithstanding his opposition the progress of the Vandals was rapid, and by May 430 only three cities of Roman Africa — Carthage, Hippo, and Cirta — remained untaken.

The long siege of Hippo (May 430 to July 431), memorable for the last illness and death of St. Augustine, which occurred during its progress, ended unsuccessfully for the Vandals. At length (30th of January, 435) peace was made between the emperor Valentinian III and Genseric. The emperor was to retain Carthage and the small but rich proconsular province in which it was situated, while Hippo and the other six provinces of Africa were abandoned to the Vandal. Genseric observed this treaty no longer than suited his purpose. On the 19th of October 439, without any declaration of war, he suddenly attacked Carthage and took it. The Vandal occupation of this great city, the third among the cities of the Roman Empire, lasted for ninety-four years. Genseric seems to have counted the years of his sovereignty from the date of its capture. Though most of the remaining years of Genseric's life were passed in war, plunder rather than territorial conquest seems to have been the object of his expeditions. He made, in fact, of Carthage a pirates' stronghold, from whence he issued forth, like the Barbary pirates of a later day, to attack, as he himself said, "the dwellings of the men with whom God is angry," leaving the question who those men might be to the decision of the elements. Almost alone among the Teutonic invaders of the empire, he set himself to form a powerful fleet, and was probably for thirty years the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean.

The revolutions of the palace, which left the Western Empire without a defender, and without a lawful prince, dispelled the apprehensions and stimulated the avarice of Genseric. He immediately equipped a numerous fleet of Vandals and Moors, and cast anchor at the mouth of the Tiber, about three months after the death of Valentinian and the elevation of Maximus to the imperial throne.

The private life of the senator Petronius Maximus was often alleged as a rare example of human felicity. His birth was noble and illustrious, since he descended from the Anician family, his dignity was supported by an adequate patrimony in land and money; and these advantages of fortune were accompanied with liberal arts and decent manners, which adorn or imitate the inestimable gifts of genius and virtue. The luxury of his palace and table was hospitable and elegant. Whenever Maximus appeared in public, he was surrounded by a train of grateful and obsequious clients; and it is possible that, among these clients, he might deserve and possess some real friends. His merit was rewarded by the favour of the prince and senate; he thrice exercised the office of prætorian prefect of Italy; he was twice invested with the consulship, and he obtained the rank of patrician.

These civil honours were not incompatible with the enjoyment of leisure and tranquillity; his hours, according to the demands of pleasure or reason, were accurately distributed by a water-clock; and this avarice of time may be allowed to prove the sense which Maximus entertained of his own happiness. The injury which he received from the emperor Valentinian appears to excuse the most bloody revenge. Yet a philosopher might have reflected that, if the resistance of his wife had been sincere, her chastity was still

[455 A.D.]

inviolate, and that it could never be restored if she had consented to the will of the adulterer. A patriot would have hesitated, before plunging himself and his country into those inevitable calamities which must follow the extinction of the royal house of Theodosius. The imprudent Maximus disregarded these salutary considerations; he gratified his resentment and ambition, he saw the bleeding corpse of Valentinian at his feet, and heard himself saluted emperor by the unanimous voice of the senate and people. But the day of his inauguration was the last day of his happiness. He was imprisoned (such is the lively expression of Sidonius) in the palace; and, after passing a sleepless night, he sighed that he had attained the summit of his wishes, and aspired only to descend from the dangerous elevation. Oppressed by the weight of the diadem, he communicated his anxious thoughts to his friend and quæstor Fulgentius; and when he looked back with unavailing regret on the secure pleasures of his former life, the emperor exclaimed, "O fortunate Damocles, thy reign began and ended with the same dinner!" a well-known allusion, which Fulgentius afterwards repeated as an instructive lesson for princes and subjects.

The reign of Maximus continued about three months. His hours, of which he had lost the command, were disturbed by remorse, or guilt, or terror; and his throne was shaken by the seditions of the soldiers, the people, and the confederate barbarians. The marriage of his son Palladius with the eldest daughter of the late emperor might tend to establish the hereditary succession of his family; but the violence which he offered to the empress Eudoxia could proceed only from the blind impulse of lust or revenge. His own wife, the cause of these tragic events, had been seasonably removed by death; and the widow of Valentinian was compelled to violate her decent mourning, perhaps her real grief, and to submit to the embraces of a presumptuous usurper, whom she suspected as the assassin of her deceased husband.

These suspicions were soon justified by the indiscreet confession of Maximus himself; and he wantonly provoked the hatred of his reluctant bride, who was still conscious that she was descended from a line of emperors. From the East, however, Eudoxia could not hope to obtain any effectual assistance; her father and her aunt Pulcheria were dead; her mother languished at Jerusalem in disgrace and exile; and the sceptre of Constantinople was in the hands of a stranger. She directed her eyes towards Carthage, secretly implored the aid of the king of the Vandals; and persuaded Genseric to improve the fair opportunity of disguising his rapacious designs by the specious names of honour, justice, and compassion. Whatever abilities Maximus might have shown in a subordinate station, he was found incapable of administering an empire; and though he might easily have been informed of the naval preparations which were made on the opposite shores of Africa, he expected with supine indifference the approach of the enemy, without adopting any measures of defence, of negotiation, or of a timely retreat.

When the Vandals disembarked at the mouth of the Tiber, the emperor was suddenly roused from his lethargy by the clamours of a trembling and exasperated multitude. The only hope which presented itself to his astonished mind was that of a precipitate flight, and he exhorted the senators to imitate the example of their prince. But no sooner did Maximus appear in the streets than he was assaulted by a shower of stones; a Roman, or a Burgundian soldier, claimed the honour of the first wound; his mangled body was ignominiously cast into the Tiber; the Roman people rejoiced in the punishment which they had inflicted on the author of the public calamities, and the domestics of Eudoxia signalised their zeal in the service of their mistress.

[455 A.D.]

On the third day after the tumult, Genseric boldly advanced from the port of Ostia to the gates of the defenceless city. Instead of a sally of the Roman youth, there issued from the gates an unarmed and venerable procession of the bishop at the head of his clergy. The fearless spirit of Leo, his authority and eloquence, again mitigated the fierceness of a barbarian conqueror, the king of the Vandals promised to spare the unresisting multitude, to protect the buildings from fire, and to exempt the captives from torture; and although such orders were neither seriously given nor strictly obeyed, the mediation of Leo was glorious to himself and in some degree beneficial to his country. But Rome and its inhabitants were delivered to the licentiousness of the Vandals and Moors, whose blind passions revenged the injuries of Carthage.

The pillage lasted fourteen days and nights; and all that yet remained of public or private wealth, of sacred or profane treasure, was diligently transported to the vessels of Genseric. Among the spoils, the splendid relics of two temples, or rather of two religions, exhibited a memorable example of the vicissitudes of human and divine things. Since the abolition of paganism, the Capitol had been violated and abandoned; yet the statues of the gods and heroes were still respected, and the curious roof of gilt bronze was reserved for the rapacious hands of Genseric. The holy



ROMAN PIN AND BRACELET

(In the British Museum)

instruments of the Jewish worship, the gold table and the gold candlestick with seven branches, originally framed according to the particular instructions of God himself, and which were placed in the sanctuary of his temple, had been ostentatiously displayed to the Roman people in the triumph of Titus. They were afterwards deposited in the temple of Peace; and, at the end of four hundred years, the spoils of Jerusalem were transferred from Rome to Carthage, by a barbarian who derived his origin from the shores of the Baltic. These ancient monuments might attract the notice of curiosity, as well as of avarice.

But the Christian churches, enriched and adorned by the prevailing superstition of the times, afforded more plentiful materials for sacrilege; and the pious liberality of Pope Leo, who melted six silver vases, the gift of Constantine, each of a hundred pounds' weight, is evidence of the damage which he attempted to repair. In the forty-five years that had elapsed since the Gothic invasion, the pomp and luxury of Rome were in some measure restored; and it was difficult either to escape or to satisfy the avarice of a conqueror, who possessed leisure to collect and ships to transport the wealth of the capital. The imperial ornaments of the palace, the magnificent furniture and wardrobe, the sideboards of massy plate, were accumulated with disorderly rapine; the gold and silver amounted to several thousand talents; yet even the brass and copper were laboriously removed.

[455 A.D.]

Eudoxia herself, who advanced to meet her friend and deliverer, soon bewailed the imprudence of her own conduct. She was rudely stripped of her jewels; and the unfortunate empress, with her two daughters, the only surviving remains of the great Theodosius, was compelled as a captive to follow the haughty Vandal; who immediately hoisted sail and returned with a prosperous navigation to the port of Carthage. Many thousand Romans of both sexes, chosen for some useful or agreeable qualifications, reluctantly embarked on board the fleet of Genseric; and their distress was aggravated by the unfeeling barbarians, who, in the division of the booty, separated the wives from their husbands and the children from their parents. The charity of Deogratias, bishop of Carthage, was their only consolation and support. He generously sold the gold and silver plate of the church to purchase the freedom of some, to alleviate the slavery of others, and to assist the wants and infirmities of a captive multitude, whose health was impaired by the hardships which they had suffered in their passage from Italy to Africa. By his order two spacious churches were converted into hospitals; the sick were distributed in convenient beds, and liberally supplied with food and medicines, and the aged prelate repeated his visits, both in the day and night, with an assiduity that surpassed the value of his services. Compare this scene with the field of Cannæ; and judge between Hannibal and the successor of St. Cyprian.

The deaths of Aëtius and Valentinian had relaxed the ties which held the barbarians of Gaul in peace and subordination. The sea coast was infested by the Saxons; the Alamanni and the Franks advanced from the Rhine to the Seine; and the ambition of the Goths seemed to meditate more extensive and permanent conquests. The emperor Maximus relieved himself, by a judicious choice, from the weight of these distant cares; he silenced the solicitations of his friends, listened to the voice of fame, and promoted a stranger to the general command of the forces in Gaul. Avitus, the stranger, whose merit was so nobly rewarded, descended from a wealthy and honourable family in the diocese of Auvergne. The convulsions of the times urged him to embrace, with the same ardour, the civil and military professions; and the indefatigable youth blended the studies of literature and jurisprudence with the exercise of arms and hunting. Thirty years of his life were laudably spent in the public service; he alternately displayed his talents in war and negotiation; and the soldier of Aëtius, after executing the most important embassies, was raised to the station of prætorian prefect of Gaul. Either the merit of Avitus excited envy, or his moderation was desirous of repose, since he calmly retired to an estate which he possessed in the neighbourhood of Clermont. In this retreat, where Avitus amused his leisure with books, rural sports, the practice of husbandry, and the society of his friends, he received the imperial diploma, which constituted him master-general of the cavalry and infantry of Gaul. He assumed the military command; the barbarians suspended their fury; and whatever means he might employ, whatever concessions he might be forced to make, the people enjoyed the benefits of actual tranquillity. But the fate of Gaul depended on the Visigoths; and the Roman general, less attentive to his dignity than to the public interest, did not disdain to visit Tolosa in the character of an ambassador.

He was received with courteous hospitality by Théodoric, the king of the Goths; but while Avitus laid the foundations of a solid alliance with that powerful nation, he was astonished by the intelligence that the emperor Maximus was slain, and that Rome had been pillaged by the Vandals. A

[455-456 A.D.]

vacant throne, which he might ascend without guilt or danger, tempted his ambition; and the Visigoths were easily persuaded to support his claim by their irresistible suffrage. They loved the person of Avitus, they respected his virtues; and they were not insensible of the advantage, as well as honour, of giving an emperor to the West

The season was now approaching in which the annual assembly of the seven provinces was held at Arelate (Arles); their deliberations might perhaps be influenced by the presence of Theodoric and his martial brothers, but their choice would naturally incline to the most illustrious of their countrymen. Avitus, after a decent resistance, accepted the imperial diadem from the representatives of Gaul; and his election was ratified by the acclamations of the barbarians and provincials. The formal consent of Marcian, emperor of the East, was solicited and obtained; but the senate, Rome, and Italy, though humbled by their recent calamities, submitted with a secret murmur to the presumption of the Gallic usurper.

Theodoric, to whom Avitus was indebted for the purple, had acquired the Gothic sceptre by the murder of his elder brother Torismond; and he justified this atrocious deed by the design which his predecessor had formed of violating his alliance with the empire. Such a crime might not be incompatible with the virtues of a barbarian, but the manners of Theodoric were gentle and humane; and posterity may contemplate without terror the original picture of a Gothic king whom Sidonius had intimately observed in the hours of peace and of social intercourse.

When the king of the Visigoths encouraged Avitus to assume the purple, he offered his person and his forces as a faithful soldier of the republic. The exploits of Theodoric soon convinced the world that he had not degenerated from the warlike virtues of his ancestors. After the establishment of the Goths in Aquitania, and the passage of the Vandals into Africa, the Suevi, who had fixed their kingdom in Gallæcia, aspired to the conquest of Spain and threatened to extinguish the feeble remains of the Roman dominion. The provincials of Carthago (Cartagena), and Tarraco (Tarragona), afflicted by a hostile invasion, represented their injuries and their apprehensions.

Count Fronto was despatched, in the name of the emperor Avitus, with advantageous offers of peace and alliance; and Theodoric interposed his weighty mediation to declare that, unless his brother-in-law, the king of the Suevi, immediately retired, he should be obliged to arm in the cause of

D. H. G. 1840
COSTUME OF A VISIGOTH

[456 A.D.]

justice and of Rome. "Tell him," replied the haughty Rechiarius, "that I despise his friendship and his arms; but that I shall soon try whether he will dare to expect my arrival under the walls of Tolosa." Such a challenge urged Theodoric to prevent the bold designs of his enemy; he passed the Pyrenees at the head of the Visigoths, the Franks and Burgundians served under his standard, and though he professed himself the dutiful servant of Avitus, he privately stipulated for himself and his successors the absolute possession of his Spanish conquests. The two armies, or rather the two nations, encountered each other on the banks of the river Urbicus, about twelve miles from Augusta Asturica (Astorga); and the decisive victory of the Goths appeared for a while to have extirpated the name and kingdom of the Suevi. From the field of battle Theodoric advanced to Bracara (Braga), their metropolis, which still retained the splendid vestiges of its ancient commerce and dignity. His entrance was not polluted with blood, and the Goths respected the chastity of their female captives, more especially of the consecrated virgins; but the greatest part of the clergy and people were made slaves, and even the churches and altars were confounded in the universal pillage.

The unfortunate king of the Suevi had escaped to one of the ports of the ocean, but the obstinacy of the winds opposed his flight; he was delivered to his implacable rival; and Rechiarius, who neither desired nor expected mercy, received with manly constancy the death which he would probably have inflicted. After this bloody sacrifice to policy and resentment, Theodoric carried his victorious arms as far as Augusta Emerita (Merida), the principal town of Lusitania, without meeting any resistance, except from the miraculous powers of St. Eulalia; but he was stopped in the full career of success, and recalled from Spain, before he could provide for the security of his conquests. In his retreat towards the Pyrenees he revenged his disappointment on the country through which he passed; and in the sack of Pallantia and Augusta Asturica he showed himself a faithless ally as well as a cruel enemy.

Whilst the king of the Visigoths fought and vanquished in the name of Avitus, the reign of Avitus had expired, and both the honour and the interest of Theodoric were deeply wounded by the disgrace of a friend whom he had seated on the throne of the Western Empire.

The pressing solicitations of the senate and people persuaded the emperor Avitus to fix his residence at Rome, and to accept the consulship for the ensuing year. Avitus, at a time when the imperial dignity was reduced to a pre-eminence of toil and danger, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italian luxury; age had not extinguished his amorous inclinations, and he is accused of insulting, with indiscreet and ungenerous raillery, the husbands whose wives he had seduced or violated.¹ But the Romans were not inclined either to excuse his faults or to acknowledge his virtues. The several parts of the empire became every day more alienated from each other; and the stranger of Gaul was the object of popular hatred and contempt.

The senate asserted their legitimate claim in the election of an emperor; and their authority, which had been originally derived from the old constitution, was again fortified by the actual weakness of a declining monarchy. Yet even such a monarchy might have resisted the votes of an unarmed senate, if their discontent had not been supported, or perhaps inflamed, by

[¹ "The charges made by Gibbon . . . rest on no solid basis of evidence; . . . except for a vague and feebly supported charge of 'luxury,' the moral character of Avitus is without a stain." Hodgkin.]

[456-457 A.D.]

Count Ricimer, one of the principal commanders of the barbarian troops, who formed the military defence of Italy. The daughter of Wallia, king of the Visigoths, was the mother of Ricimer; but he was descended, on the father's side, from the nation of the Suevi; his pride or patriotism might be exasperated by the misfortunes of his countrymen, and he obeyed with reluctance an emperor in whose elevation he had not been consulted. His faithful and important services against the common enemy rendered him still more formidable: and after destroying on the coast of Corsica a fleet of Vandals, which consisted of sixty galleys, Ricimer returned in triumph with the appellation of the Deliverer of Italy. He chose that moment to signify to Avitus that his reign was at an end; and the feeble emperor, at a distance from his Gothic allies, was compelled after a short and unavailing struggle to abdicate the purple. By the clemency, however, or the contempt of Ricimer, he was permitted to descend from the throne to the more desirable station of bishop of Placentia; but the resentment of the senate was still unsatisfied, and their inflexible severity pronounced the sentence of his death. He fled towards the Alps, with the humble hope not of arming the Visigoths in his cause but of securing his person and treasures in the sanctuary of Julian, one of the tutelar saints of Auvergne. Disease, or the hand of the executioner, arrested him on the road; yet his remains were decently transported to Brivas or Brioude, in his native province, and he reposed at the feet of his holy patron.

The successor of Avitus presents the welcome discovery of a great and heroic character, such as sometimes arises in a degenerate age, to vindicate the honour of the human species. The emperor Majorian has deserved the praises of his contemporaries and of posterity; and these praises may be strongly expressed in the words of a judicious and disinterested historian: "That he was gentle to his subjects; that he was terrible to his enemies; and that he excelled in every virtue all of his predecessors who had reigned over the Romans." Such a testimony may justify at least the panegyric of Sidonius; and we may acquiesce in the assurance that, although the obsequious orator would have flattered, with equal zeal, the most worthless of princes, the extraordinary merit of his object confined him, on this occasion, within the bounds of truth. Majorian derived his name from his maternal grandfather who, in the reign of the great Theodosius had commanded the troops of the Illyrian frontier. He gave his daughter in marriage to the father of Majorian, a respectable officer, who administered the revenues of Gaul with skill and integrity; and generously preferred the friendship of Aëtius to the tempting offers of an insidious court. His son, the future emperor, who was educated in the profession of arms, displayed, from his early youth, intrepid courage, premature wisdom, and unbounded liberality in a scanty fortune. He followed the standard of Aëtius, contributed to his success, shared, and sometimes eclipsed, his glory, and at last excited the jealousy of the patrician, or rather of his wife, who forced him to retire from the service. Majorian, after the death of Aëtius, was recalled and promoted, and his intimate connection with Count Ricimer was the immediate step by which he ascended the throne of the Western Empire. During the vacancy that succeeded the abdication of Avitus, the ambitious barbarian whose birth excluded him from the imperial dignity governed Italy, with the title of patrician; resigned to his friend the conspicuous station of master-general of the cavalry and infantry; and, after an interval of some months, consented to the unanimous wish of the Romans, whose favour Majorian had solicited by a recent victory over the Alamanni.

The public and private actions of Majorian are very imperfectly known; but his laws, remarkable for an original cast of thought and expression, faithfully represent the character of a sovereign who loved his people, who sympathised in their distress, who had studied the causes of the decline of the empire, and who was capable of applying (as far as such reformation was practicable) judicious and effectual remedies to the public disorders. His regulations concerning the finances manifestly tended to remove, or at least to mitigate, the most intolerable grievances.

(1) From the first hour of his reign, he was solicitous (these are his own words) to relieve the weary fortunes of the provincials, oppressed by the accumulated weight of indictions and superindictions. With this view, he granted a universal amnesty, a final and absolute discharge of all arrears of tribute, of all debts which, under any pretence, the fiscal officers might demand from the people. This wise dereliction of obsolete, vexatious, and unprofitable claims improved and purified the sources of the public revenue; and the subject, who could now look back without despair might labour with hope and gratitude for himself and for his country.

(2) In the assessment and collection of taxes, Majorian restored the ordinary jurisdiction of the provincial magistrates; and suppressed the extraordinary commissions which had been introduced, in the name of the emperor himself, or of the prætorian prefects. The favourite servants, who obtained such irregular powers, were insolent in their behaviour and arbitrary in their demands; they affected to despise the subordinate tribunals, and they were discontented if their fees and profits did not twice exceed the sum which they condescended to pay into the treasury. One instance of their extortion would appear incredible, were it not authenticated by the legislator himself. They exacted the whole payment in gold; but they refused the current coin of the empire, and would accept only such ancient pieces as were stamped with the names of Faustina or the Antonines. The subject who was unprovided with these curious medals had recourse to the expedient of compounding with their rapacious demands; or, if he succeeded in the research, his imposition was doubled, according to the weight and value of the money of former times.

(3) "The municipal corporation," says the emperor, "the lesser senates (so antiquity has justly styled them), deserve to be considered as the heart of the cities, and the sinews of the republic. And yet so low are they now reduced, by the injustice of magistrates and the venality of collectors, that many of their members, renouncing their dignity and their country, have taken refuge in distant and obscure exile." He urges and even compels their return to their respective cities; but he removes the grievance which had forced them to desert the exercise of their municipal functions. They are directed, under the authority of the provincial magistrates, to resume their office of levying the tribute; but, instead of being made responsible for the whole sum assessed on their district, they are only required to produce a regular account of the payments which they have actually received, and of the defaulters who are still indebted to the public.

(4) But Majorian was not ignorant that these corporate bodies were too much inclined to retaliate the injustice and oppression which they had suffered; and he therefore revives the useful office of the defenders of cities. He exhorts the people to elect, in a full and free assembly, some man of discretion and integrity, who would dare to assert their privileges, to represent their grievances, to protect the poor from the tyranny of the rich, and to inform the emperor of the abuses that were committed.

[457-458 A.D.]

The spectator who casts a mournful view over the ruins of ancient Rome is tempted to accuse the memory of the Goths and Vandals for the mischief which they had neither leisure nor power, nor perhaps inclination, to perpetrate. The tempest of war might strike some lofty turrets to the ground; but the destruction which undermined the foundations of those massy fabrics was prosecuted, slowly and silently, during a period of ten centuries; and the motives of interest that afterwards operated without shame or control were severely checked by the taste and spirit of the emperor Majorian.

The decay of the city had gradually impaired the value of the public works. The circus and theatres might still excite, but they seldom gratified, the desires of the people; the temples, which had escaped the zeal of the Christians, were no longer inhabited either by gods or men; the diminished crowds of the Romans were lost in the immense space of their baths and porticoes; and the stately libraries and halls of justice became useless to an indolent generation, whose repose was seldom disturbed either by study or business. The monuments of consular or imperial greatness were no longer revered as the immortal glory of the capital; they were only esteemed as an inexhaustible mine of materials, cheaper and more convenient than the distant quarry. Specious petitions were continually addressed to the easy magistrates of Rome, which stated the want of stones or bricks for some necessary service; the fairest forms of architecture were rudely defaced for the sake of some paltry or pretended repairs; and the degenerate Romans, who converted the spoil to their own emolument, demolished with sacrilegious hands the labours of their ancestors. Majorian, who had often sighed over the desolation of the city, applied a severe remedy to the growing evil. He reserved to the prince and senate the sole cognisance of the extreme cases which might justify the destruction of an ancient edifice; imposed a fine of fifty pounds of gold [or about £2000] on every magistrate who should presume to grant such illegal and scandalous license; and threatened to chastise the criminal obedience of their subordinate officers by a severe whipping and the amputation of both their hands.

In the last instance the legislator might seem to forget the proportion of guilt and punishment; but his zeal arose from a generous principle, and Majorian was anxious to protect the monuments of those ages in which he would have desired and deserved to live. The emperor conceived that it was his interest to increase the number of his subjects, that it was his duty to guard the purity of the marriage bed; but the means which he employed to accomplish these salutary purposes are of an ambiguous and perhaps exceptionable kind. The pious maids who consecrated their virginity to Christ were restrained from taking the veil till they had reached their fortieth year. Widows under that age were compelled to form a second alliance within the term of five years, by the forfeiture of half their wealth to their nearest relatives or to the state. Unequal marriages were condemned or annulled. The punishment of confiscation and exile was deemed so inadequate to the guilt of adultery, that if the criminal returned to Italy he might, by the express declaration of Majorian, be slain with impunity.

While the emperor Majorian assiduously laboured to restore the happiness and virtue of the Romans, he encountered the arms of Genseric, from his character and situation their most formidable enemy. A fleet of Vandals and Moors landed at the mouth of the Liris or Garigliano: but the imperial troops surprised and attacked the disorderly barbarians, who were encumbered with the spoils of Campania; they were chased with slaughter

[458 A.D.]

to their ships, and their leader, the king's brother-in-law, was found in the number of the slain. Such vigilance might announce the character of the new reign; but the strictest vigilance and the most numerous forces were insufficient to protect the long-extended coast of Italy from the depredations of a naval war. The public opinion had imposed a nobler and most arduous task on the genius of Majorian. Rome expected from him alone the restitution of Africa; and the design which he formed of attacking the Vandals in their new settlements was the result of bold and judicious policy. If the intrepid emperor could have infused his own spirit into the youth of Italy, if he could have revived in the Field of Mars the manly exercises in which he had always surpassed his equals — he might have marched against Genseric at the head of a Roman army.

Such a reformation of national manners might be embraced by the rising generation; but it is the misfortune of those princes who laboriously sustain a declining monarchy that, to obtain some immediate advantage or to avert some impending danger, they are forced to countenance and even to multiply the most pernicious abuses. Majorian, like the weakest of his predecessors, was reduced to the disgraceful expedient of substituting barbarian auxiliaries in the place of his unwarlike subjects; and his superior abilities could only be displayed in the vigour and dexterity with which he wielded a dangerous instrument, so apt to recoil on the hand that used it.

Besides the confederates who were already engaged in the service of the empire, the fame of his liberality and valour attracted the nations of the Danube, the Borysthenes, and perhaps of the Tanais. Many thousands of the bravest subjects of Attila, the Gepidæ, the Ostrogoths, the Rugians, the Burgundiones, the Suevi, the Alani, assembled in the plains of Liguria; and their formidable strength was balanced by their mutual animosities. They passed the Alps in a severe winter. The emperor led the way on foot, and in complete armour; sounding, with his long staff, the depth of the ice or snow, and encouraging the Scythians, who complained of the extreme cold, by the cheerful assurance that they should be satisfied with the heat of Africa. The citizens of Lugdunum had presumed to shut their gates; they soon implored and experienced the clemency of Majorian. He vanquished Theodoric in the field; and admitted to his friendship and alliance a king whom he had found not unworthy of his arms. The beneficial though precarious reunion of the greatest part of Gaul and Spain was the effect of persuasion as well as of force; and the independent Bagaudæ, who had escaped or resisted the oppression of former reigns, were disposed to confide in the virtues of Majorian.

His camp was filled with barbarian allies, his throne was supported by the zeal of an affectionate people; but the emperor had foreseen that it was impossible, without a maritime power, to achieve the conquest of Africa. In the First Punic War, the republic had exerted such incredible diligence that, within sixty days after the first stroke of the axe had been given in the forest, a fleet of 160 galleys proudly rode at anchor in the sea. Under circumstances much less favourable, Majorian equalled the spirit and perseverance of the ancient Romans. The woods of the Apennine were felled; the arsenals and manufactures of Ravenna and Misenum were restored; Italy and Gaul vied with each other in liberal contributions to the public service; and the imperial navy of three hundred large galleys, with an adequate proportion of transports and smaller vessels, was collected in the secure and capacious harbour of Carthago Nova (Cartagena) in Spain.

The intrepid countenance of Majorian animated his troops with a con-

[458-460 A.D.]

confidence of victory; and if we might credit the historian Procopius, his courage sometimes hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence. Anxious to explore, with his own eyes, the state of the Vandals, he ventured after disguising the colour of his hair to visit Carthage in the character of his own ambassador; and Genseric was afterwards mortified by the discovery that he had entertained and dismissed the emperor of the Romans. Such an anecdote may be rejected as an improbable fiction; but it is a fiction which would not have been imagined unless in the life of a hero.

Without the help of a personal interview, Genseric was sufficiently acquainted with the genius and designs of his adversary. He practised his customary arts of fraud and delay; but he practised them without success. His applications for peace became each hour more submissive, and perhaps more sincere; but the inflexible Majorian had adopted the ancient maxim that Rome could not be safe, so long as Carthage existed in a hostile state. The king of the Vandals distrusted the valour of his native subjects, who were enervated by the luxury of the south; he suspected the fidelity of the vanquished people, who abhorred him as an Arian tyrant; and the desperate measure which he executed, of reducing Mauretania into a desert, could not defeat the operations of the Roman emperor, who was at liberty to land his troops on any part of the African coast.

But Genseric was saved from impending and inevitable ruin by the treachery of some powerful subjects, envious or apprehensive of their master's success. Guided by their secret intelligence, he surprised the unguarded fleet in the Bay of Cartagena; many of the ships were sunk, or taken, or burned, and the preparations of three years were destroyed in a single day. After this event, the behaviour of the two antagonists showed them superior to their fortune. The Vandal, instead of being elated by this accidental victory, immediately renewed his solicitations for peace. The emperor of the West, who was capable of forming great designs and of supporting heavy disappointments, consented to a treaty, or rather to a suspension of arms; in the full assurance that before he could restore his navy he should be supplied with provocations to justify a second war. Majorian returned to Italy, to prosecute his labours for the public happiness; and as he was conscious of his own integrity, he might long remain ignorant of the dark conspiracy which threatened his throne and his life.

The recent misfortune of Cartagena sullied the glory which had dazzled the eyes of the multitude. Almost every description of civil and military officers were exasperated against the reformer, since they all derived some advantage from the abuses which he endeavoured to suppress; and the patrician Ricimer impelled the inconstant passions of the barbarians against a prince whom he esteemed and hated. The virtues of Majorian could not protect him from the impetuous sedition which broke out in the camp near Tortona, at the foot of the Alps. He was compelled to abdicate the imperial purple; five days after his abdication it was reported that he died of a dysentery,¹ and the humble tomb which covered his remains was consecrated by

[¹ The manner in which Majorian met his death is in dispute. While Gibbon gives credence to the report that he died from dysentery, Samuel Dill, who speaks of Majorian as "that great soldier and far-sighted statesman," says: "Majorian, the 'young Marcellus' of the last years of the Western Empire, with all his old Roman spirit and statesmanlike insight, failed in his mission and was treacherously slain by Ricimer." J. B. Bury, expressing the same view, says "That Majorian returned from Spain to Gaul, and after a sojourn in Arles passed into Italy, without an army. At Tortona the officers of Count Ricimer, who had judged him unworthy of empire, seized him, stripped him of the imperial purple, and beheaded him (7th August, 461)." Niebuhr, on the other hand, tells us that "when Majorian returned, a conspiracy was formed against him at the instigation of Ricimer; he was compelled to abdicate, and died a few days afterwards."]

[456-461 A.D.]

the respect and gratitude of succeeding generations. The private character of Majorian inspired love and respect. Malicious calumny and satire excited his indignation, or, if he himself were the object, his contempt; but he protected the freedom of wit, and in the hours which the emperor gave to the familiar society of his friends he could indulge his taste for pleasantries, without degrading the majesty of his rank.^c

THE BARBARIAN EMPEROR-MAKERS

The spoliation of Rome by Genseric was only a beginning of sorrows; for, during the sixteen years that ensued Italy remained at the mercy of her own paid leader, Count Ricimer, by birth and family alliances a barbarian, who defeated every attempt to re-establish legal government. After the fall of Aëtius, Ricimer obtained the command of the Western forces and the patrician dignity. The career of Ricimer resembled in some degree those of Stilicho and of Aëtius; for though his delinquencies were more numerous and of a far deeper dye than theirs, like them he possessed great military abilities, and like them he had personal interests that could not be reconciled with those of the "Respublica Romana."^d The prestige which he gained by his services against the Vandal Corsairs enabled him to make himself virtual master of Empire and emperors for almost twenty years (456-472). The attack of Avitus upon the Suevi in Spain offended the Suevic Ricimer; and although it was an imperial duty which Avitus performed in withstanding the encroachments of the Suevi, the commander of the Roman troops found the way to his undoing. For the next ten months Ricimer ruled under the title of patrician, which was now very much akin to that of tyrant in the Greek sense of the word or our modern political "boss." He chose to be maker of emperors rather than emperor himself and thus initiated a policy which was continued to the fall of the Empire in the West. The history of these last years is not that of the shadow emperors who flit across the scene, powerless in themselves and in their circumstances, but of the great leaders like Ricimer the Suevic-Goth, Orestes of Pannonia, or Bauto the Frank.

Meantime in the East conditions prevailed that were not altogether dissimilar. The death of Marcian, after a reign of seven years, left no hereditary claimant to the Eastern throne.^a The man of most authority in the army was the general Aspar (*magister militum per orientem*), an Alan by descent, who with his father Ardaburius had distinguished himself thirty-five years before in suppressing the usurper John and helping Valentinian III to his legitimate succession. Aspar's position in the East resembled that of Ricimer in the West. He and his three sons, being Arians and foreigners, could not hope to sit on the imperial throne; and thus the only course open to Aspar was to secure the elevation of one on whose pliancy he might count. He chose Leo, a native of Dacia and an orthodox Christian, who was steward of his own household. Thus Aspar, like Ricimer, was a king-maker.

But when Leo assumed the purple (7th February, 457) — on which occasion the ceremony of coronation by the Patriarch of Constantinople (then Anatolius) was first introduced — he did not prove as amenable to influence as Aspar had hoped; on the contrary, he took measures to reduce the resources of Aspar's family, which by its close relations with the army had considerable power, and was the centre of a large faction of Arians and barbarians. In fact Aspar, though an Alan and not a German, was the representative of

[457-460 A.D.]

German influence in the Empire, and the danger which had threatened the Empire in the reign of Arcadius through the power of Gainas was now repeated. Leo however firmly resisted the aggressiveness of this influence, and in order to neutralise the great fact which worked in Aspar's favour, namely that the bulk and flower of the army consisted of Germans, he formed the plan of recruiting the line from native subjects. For this purpose he chose the hardy race of Isaurian mountaineers, who lived almost like an independent people, little touched by the influence of Hellenism, in the wild regions of Mount Taurus. This is Leo's great original work, for which he deserves the title "Great," more than for his orthodoxy for which he probably received it. He conceived an idea, whose execution, begun by himself and carried out by his successor, counteracted that danger of German preponderance which threatened the State throughout the fifth century.

Aspar appears to have possessed all the characteristics of an untutored barbarian. Brave and active in war, he was idle and frivolous in peace. During the reign of Marcian, and doubtless also in the reign of Leo, while the Empire enjoyed rest, "he betook himself to relaxation and womanly ease. His pleasures consisted in actors and jugglers and all stage amusements, and spending his time on these ill-famed occupations he lost all count of the things that make for glory." But if he was no longer active as a warrior, he won repute in the humbler part of an energetic citizen or a competent policeman, for in the great fire which laid waste a large part of Constantinople in 465 it is recorded that Aspar exerted himself unsparingly for the public interest.

Leo had made a promise, apparently at the time of his elevation, to raise one of Aspar's sons to the rank of cæsar, and thereby designate him as his successor, in spite of the fact that he was a barbarian. When he delayed to perform this promise, Aspar is said to have seized him by his purple robe and said, "Emperor, it is not meet that he who wears this robe should speak falsely;" to which Leo replied, "Nor yet is it meet that he should be constrained and driven like a slave."^d

After this extraordinary scene, it was impossible that the reconciliation of the emperor and the patrician could be sincere; or, at least, that it could be solid and permanent. An army of Isaurians was secretly levied and introduced into Constantinople; and while Leo undermined the authority, and prepared the disgrace of the family of Aspar, his mild and cautious behaviour restrained them from any rash and desperate attempts, which might have been fatal to themselves or their enemies. The measures of peace and war were affected by this internal revolution. As long as Aspar degraded the majesty of the throne, the secret correspondence of religion and interest engaged him to favour the cause of Genseric. When Leo had delivered himself from that ignominious servitude, he listened to the complaints of the Italians; resolved to extirpate the tyranny of the Vandals; and declared his alliance with Anthemius.^e

Even the genius and energy of Majorian is of no avail against the dictatorship of Ricimer. But the spell of the imperial dignity was still strong, and the commander of the army was not long in nominating another to the purple.^a

Severus, as the nominee of Ricimer, next wore the purple, and decrees were registered in his name; but his appointment obtained no confirmation at Constantinople, and the usurped power of Ricimer himself never extended beyond the limits of Italy. In Gaul and in Dalmatia, the Roman governors, Egidius and Marcellinus, continued to hold their respective provinces in trust

[460-467 A.D.]

for the "sancta res publica," acknowledging no emperor but Leo and Leo nominated both consuls. After four years of confusion and misery Severus died; and when Ricimer, as patrician, had exercised for above a year the power of the executive, he appears to have become satisfied that, without a combined effort in which the naval resources of the East should be brought to bear, the plague of Vandal descents could not be stayed. Yielding, it would seem, to necessity, he concurred with the senate in a request to the emperor Leo that he would name an emperor of the West (65).

In this attempt to establish closer relations with the East, the senate appears to have acted in conformity with the original constitution of the two empires, and at the same time to have adopted a policy that might under other circumstances have relieved the Roman world from its besetting danger — namely, that of a military despotism exercised by men who derived their wealth and importance from Roman sources and yet failed to entertain any exclusive attachment to Roman interests.

The choice of Leo fell on Anthemius, who some years previously had served as consul, and whose hereditary influence placed him at the head of the Eastern magnates.^d The virtues of Anthemius have perhaps been magnified, since the imperial descent, which he could only deduce from the usurper Procopius, has been swelled into a line of emperors. But the merit of his immediate parents, their honours, and their riches, rendered Anthemius one of the most illustrious subjects of the East. His father, Procopius, obtained, after his Persian embassy, the rank of general and patrician; and the name of Anthemius was derived from his maternal grandfather, the celebrated prefect, who protected, with so much ability and success, the infant reign of Theodosius. The grandson of the prefect was raised above the condition of a private subject, by his marriage with Euphemia, the daughter of the emperor Marcian.

This splendid alliance, which might supersede the necessity of merit, hastened the promotion of Anthemius to the successive dignities of count, of master-general, of consul, and of patrician; and his merit or fortune claimed the honours of a victory, which was obtained, on the banks of the Danube, over the Huns. Without indulging an extravagant ambition, the son-in-law of Marcian might hope to be his successor; but Anthemius supported the disappointment with courage and patience; and his subsequent elevation was universally approved by the public, who esteemed him worthy to reign till he ascended the throne.

The solemn inauguration of Anthemius was followed by the nuptials of his daughter and the patrician Ricimer; a fortunate event, which was considered as the firmest security of the union and happiness of the state. The wealth of two empires was on this occasion most ostentatiously displayed: and many senators completed their ruin by an expensive effort to disguise their poverty. All serious business was suspended during the time of this festival; the courts of justice were shut; the streets of Rome; the theatres, the places of public and private resort resounded with hymeneal songs and dances; and the royal bride, clothed in silken robes, with a crown on her head, was conducted to the palace of Ricimer, who had changed his military dress for the habit of a consul and a senator.

The unprecedented task intrusted to the emperor Leo of selecting the man with whom he was to share the administration and defence of the whole Roman world, makes it requisite to consider his actual position. Leo had now attained the eleventh year of his reign, which, from the first, had been

[467-468 A.D.]

beset with difficulties. Aspar, with his barbarian satellites, overawed the Eastern senate; and it was only by compliances savouring of duplicity that the government could be carried on. Leo could do no more than turn to advantage any opportunity that might arise for the extension of his influence. When the Huns invaded Thrace, he gained a battle in which one of Attila's sons was slain—a success which increased his influence. By enlisting the services of an Isaurian prince, whose barbaric name he changed to that of the stoic Zeno, he at length obtained a counterpoise to Aspar. The Isaurian though no philosopher and though in his manners a barbarian, had at his disposal a considerable array of hardy combatants, whose services Leo secured by accepting their leader for his son-in-law. The resources of the Eastern Empire were then freely devoted to an enterprise on the success and failure of which the weal or woe of Italy depended.

Coins were struck representing the two emperors with joined hands, and sanguine hopes were once more entertained that, by their combined efforts, Africa with the command of the Mediterranean would be regained.

In fitting out an armada of fabulous magnitude, the sum expended by Leo exceeded £5,000,000 [\$25,000,000]. Marcellinus, under whose government Dalmatia had prospered and who had refused to obey Ricimer, declared his allegiance to Anthemius, and the successes which his galleys obtained over those of the Vandals enabled him to liberate the island of Sardinia from their oppression. About the same time, the prefect Heraclius landed at Tripolis, reconquered the adjacent settlements, and commenced his march to cooperate with the main expedition in an attack on Carthage. Such were the signs of an irresistible superiority with which the war commenced, and which so far shook the confidence of Genseric that he protested his willingness to submit to whatever terms the two emperors might dictate; and there appears to be no doubt that his apprehensions were shared by his coreligionists, Ricimer and Aspar, to whom a subversion of the Arian ascendancy in Africa would have been fatal. Fortunately for them, the chief command was given to Basiliscus, a brother of the empress consort Verina. As Leo had no son, Basiliscus, if Procopius is to be relied upon, already aspired to the imperial succession, and was anxious to stand well with Aspar.

The landing took place at a small seaport about forty miles from Carthage; and while the disembarkation of stores and other impedimenta was in progress, envoys from Genseric arrived. Basiliscus, whether yielding to a desire to gratify Aspar, to the allurements of Vandal gold, or to the suggestions of his own weak judgment, lent a willing ear to their assurances. They asked and obtained a truce of five days, during which the terms of submission might be arranged.

The panic, which would have made the reconquest of Carthage an easy achievement, subsided, and Genseric having time for a careful examination took note of the crowded order in which the Roman Armada lay at anchor. His fire-ships, the torpedoes of ancient warfare, were in readiness, supported by galleys which, however inferior to those of the Romans in number, were the best manned and the most efficient in existence.

At nightfall the fire-ships were so placed that they drifted on the very centre of the unsuspecting enemy, the flames spread, and when the confusion was at its height a bold and well-timed attack did the rest. The store-ships, on which the army depended for subsistence, were captured or sunk; and acts of individual heroism on the part of the Roman commander, of which there were many, were of no avail. A hopeless resistance was for a while maintained, but the losses were irreparable.

[468-473 A.D.]

Basiliſcus ſaved himſelf by an early flight. On arriving at Conſtantine, he took refuge in the church of St. Sophia, until he obtained a reprieve from capital puniſhment through the interceſſion of his ſiſter. Such was the diſaſtrous ending of the combined effort made for the recovery of Africa. Its ſucceſs would have conſolidated the power of the two emperors; by its failure, Ricimer and Aſpar were relieved from their fears, and their arrogance became greater than ever. Leo found it neceſſary to pacify Aſpar by inveſting his ſon Patricius with the dignity of cæſar, a title which conferred on its bearer a proſpective claim to the throne.

To Aſpar and his family, whoſe unpopularity was already great, the acquisition of this dangerous honour brought no advantage, but only an increase of hostility; for to the orthodox Eaſt Romans the idea of an Arian emperor was inſufferable. Owing to the loſſes incurred during the late diſaſtrous expedition the forces on which Aſpar formerly relied were no longer at his beck; and, rightly or wrongly, he and his ſon were charged with treaſonable deſigns againſt the government, over which they had long domineered, and againſt the life of the emperor.

The circumſtances preceding and attending their aſſaſſination are variously and obſcurely related; but no plea of ſtate neceſſity can relieve the memory of Leo from the ſtain of participation in the death of his benefactor. In Italy, the reckless energy of Ricimer led to a very different reſult. Having reſolved to break up the alliances of the emperors, he fixed his headquarters at Mediolanum, enliſted forces, while Anthemius, relying on the cordial ſupport of the ſenate and the bulk of the people, remained inactive at Rome.

The Mediolanians, wiſhing to prevent a civil war, employed Epiphanius, biſhop of Ticinum (Pavia), as negotiator; and from the account given by Ennodius of the biſhop's embaſſy, ſome eſtimate may be formed of the difficulties that ſtood in the way of any attempt on the part of the Weſt Romans to re-conſtruct their dilapidated empire.

The pacific exhortations of the biſhop reſulted in a truce, which gave time for Ricimer to engage the requiſite number of Suevi and Burgundiones. Having done this he threw off the mask, and making the death of Aſpar his plea, reſuſed to acknowledge either Leo or Anthemius, proclaimed Olybrius, an enemy of his father-in-law, emperor, and commenced his march to Rome.

When the Roman governor of Gaul brought an army to ſupport Anthemius, he was defeated and ſlain. Rome nevertheless held out bravely until reduced by famine when, with the exception of a few ſtreets, occupied by his own adherents, Ricimer condemned it to be ſacked. He then added to the liſt of emperors whom he had put to death the name of his own father-in-law, and died the ſame year (472).^d

Whiſt the vacant throne of Italy was abandoned to lawleſs barbarians, the election of a new colleague was ſeriously agitated in the council of Leo. The empreſs Verina, ſtudious to promote the greatneſs of her own family, had married one of her nieces to Julius Nepos, who ſucceeded his uncle Marcellinus in the ſovereignty of Dalmatia, a more ſolid poſſeſſion than the title, which he was perſuaded to accept, of emperor of the Weſt.

But the meaſures of the Byzantine court were ſo languid and irreſolute that many months elapſed after the death of Anthemius, and even of Olybrius, before their deſtined ſucceſſor could ſhow himſelf, with a reſpectable force, to his Italian ſubjects. During that interval, Glycerius, an obſcure ſoldier, was inveſted with the purple by his patron Gundobald; but the Burgundionian prince was unable, or unwilling, to ſupport his

[473-475 A.D.]

nomination by a civil war; the pursuits of domestic ambition recalled him beyond the Alps, and his client was permitted to exchange the Roman sceptre for the bishopric of Salona. After extinguishing such a competitor, the emperor Nepos was acknowledged by the senate, by the Italians, and by the provincials of Gaul; his moral virtues, and military talents, were loudly celebrated, and those who derived any private benefit from his government announced, in prophetic strains, the restoration of the public felicity. Their hopes (if such hopes had been entertained) were confounded within the term of a single year; and the treaty of peace, which ceded Auvergne to the Visigoths, is the only event of his short and inglorious reign.

The most faithful subjects of Gaul were sacrificed by the Italian emperor to the hope of domestic security; but his repose was soon invaded by a furious sedition of the barbarian confederates, who, under the command of Orestes, their general, were in full march from Rome to Ravenna. Nepos trembled at their approach; and, instead of placing a just confidence in the strength of Ravenna, he hastily escaped to his ships and retired to his Dalmatian principality, on the opposite coast of the Adriatic. By this shameful abdication he protracted his life about five years, in a very ambiguous state between an emperor and an exile, till he was assassinated at Salona by the ungrateful Glycerius, who was translated, perhaps as the reward of his crime, to the archbishopric of Milan.

The nations who had asserted their independence after the death of Attila were established, by the right of possession or conquest, in the boundless countries to the north of the Danube, or in the Roman provinces between the river and the Alps. But the bravest of their youth enlisted in the army of confederates, who formed the defence and the terror of Italy; and in this promiscuous multitude the names of the Heruli, the Scyri, the Alani, the Turcilingi, and the Rugi appear to have predominated.

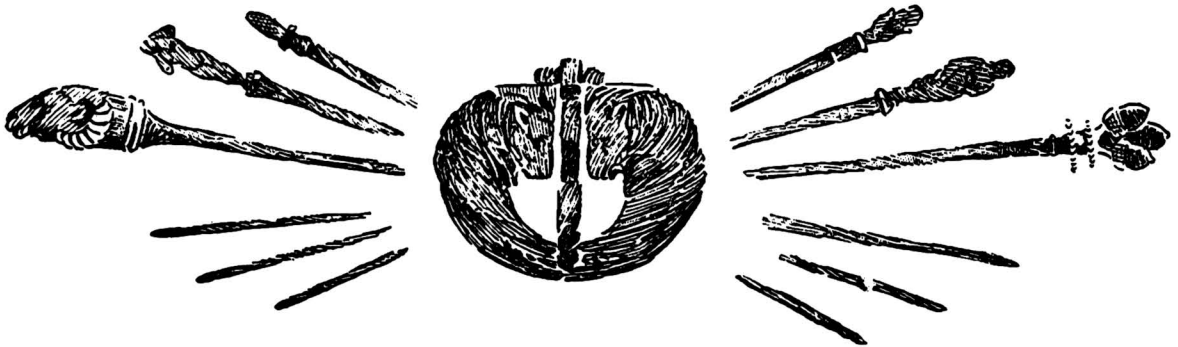
The example of these warriors was imitated by Orestes, the son of Tatullus, and the father of the last Roman emperor of the West. Orestes, who has been already mentioned in this history, had never deserted his country. His birth and fortunes rendered him one of the most illustrious subjects of Pannonia. When that province was ceded to the Huns, he entered into the service of Attila, his lawful sovereign, obtained the office of his secretary, and was repeatedly sent ambassador to Constantinople, to represent the person and signify the commands of the imperious monarch. The death of that conqueror restored him to his freedom, and Orestes might honourably refuse either to follow the sons of Attila into the Scythian desert, or to obey the Ostrogoths, who had usurped the dominion of Pannonia. He preferred the service of the Italian princes, the successors of Valentinian; and as he possessed the qualifications of courage, industry, and experience, he advanced with rapid steps in the military profession, till he was elevated, by the favour of Nepos himself, to the dignities of patrician and master-general of the troops.

These troops had been long accustomed to reverence the character and authority of Orestes, who affected their manners, conversed with them in their own language, and was intimately connected with their national chieftains by long habits of familiarity and friendship. At his solicitation they rose in arms against the obscure Greek who presumed to claim their obedience; and when Orestes, from some secret motive, declined the purple, they consented with the same facility, to acknowledge his son Augustulus as the emperor of the West. By the abdication of Nepos, Orestes had now attained the summit of his ambitious hopes; but he soon discovered before the end

[475-476 A.D.]

of the first year, that the lessons of perjury and ingratitude which a rebel must inculcate will be retorted against himself; and that the precarious sovereign of Italy was only permitted to choose whether he would be the slayer, or the victim, of his barbarian mercenaries. The dangerous alliance of these strangers had oppressed and insulted the last remains of Roman freedom and dignity. At each revolution, their pay and privileges were augmented; but their insolence increased in a still more extravagant degree. They envied the fortune of their brethren in Gaul, Spain, and Africa, whose victorious arms had acquired an independent and perpetual inheritance; and they insisted on their peremptory demand that a third part of the lands of Italy should be immediately divided among them.

Orestes, with a spirit which, in another situation, might be entitled to our esteem, chose rather to encounter the rage of an armed multitude than to subscribe the ruin of an innocent people. He rejected the audacious demand; and his refusal was favourable to the ambition of Odoacer, a bold barbarian, who assured his fellow-soldiers that, if they dared to associate under his command, they might soon extort the justice which had been denied to their dutiful petitions. From all the camps and garrisons of Italy the confederates, actuated by the same resentment and the same hopes, impatiently flocked to the standard of this popular leader; and the unfortu-



ROMAN PINS AND BRACELET

nate patrician, overwhelmed by the torrent, hastily retreated to the strong city of Ticinum, the episcopal seat of the holy Epiphanius. Ticinum was immediately besieged, the fortifications were stormed, the town was pillaged; and although the bishop might labour with much zeal and some success to save the property of the church and the chastity of female captives, the tumult could only be appeased by the execution of Orestes. His brother Paul was slain in an action near Ravenna; and the helpless Augustulus, who could no longer command the respect was reduced to implore the clemency of Odoacer. That successful barbarian was the son of Edecon; who, in some remarkable transactions, had been the colleague of Orestes himself.

The honour of an ambassador should be exempt from suspicion; and Edecon had listened to a conspiracy against the life of his sovereign. But this apparent guilt was expiated by his merit or repentance; his rank was eminent and conspicuous, he enjoyed the favour of Attila; and the troops under his command, who guarded in their turn the royal village, consisted of a tribe of Scyrri, his immediate and hereditary subjects. In the revolt of the nations, they still adhered to the Huns; and more than twelve years afterwards the name of Edecon is honourably mentioned, in their unequal contest with the Ostrogoths; which was terminated, after two bloody battles, by the defeat and dispersion of the Scyrri. Their gallant leader, who did not

[476 A.D.]

survive this national calamity, left two sons, Onulf and Odoacer, to struggle with adversity, and to maintain as they might, by rapine or service, the faithful followers of their exile.

Onulf directed his steps towards Constantinople, where he sullied, by the assassination of a generous benefactor, the fame which he had acquired in arms. His brother Odoacer led a wandering life among the barbarians of Noricum, with a mind and a fortune suited to the most desperate adventures; and when he had fixed his choice, he piously visited the cell of Severinus, the popular saint of the country, to solicit his approbation and blessing. The lowness of the door would not admit the lofty stature of Odoacer. He was obliged to stoop, but in that humble attitude the saint could discern the symptoms of his future greatness; and addressing him in a prophetic tone, "Pursue," said he, "your design; proceed to Italy; you will soon cast away this coarse garment of skins; and your wealth will be adequate to the liberality of your mind." The barbarian, whose daring spirit accepted and ratified the prediction, was admitted into the service of the Western Empire, and soon obtained an honourable rank in the guards. His manners were gradually polished, his military skill was improved, and the confederates of Italy would not have elected him for their general unless the exploits of Odoacer had established a high opinion of his courage and capacity. Their military acclamations saluted him with the title of king: but he abstained, during his whole reign, from the use of the purple and diadem, lest he should offend those princes whose subjects, by their accidental mixture, had formed the victorious army which time and policy might insensibly unite into a great nation.

Royalty was familiar to the barbarians, and the submissive people of Italy was prepared to obey, without a murmur, the authority which he should condescend to exercise as the viceroy of the emperor of the West. But Odoacer had resolved to abolish that useless and expensive office; and such is the weight of ancient prejudice that it required some boldness and penetration to discover the extreme facility of the enterprise. The unfortunate Augustulus was made the instrument of his own disgrace; he signified his resignation to the senate; and that assembly, in their last act of obedience to a Roman prince, still affected the spirit of freedom and the forms of the constitution. An epistle was addressed, by their unanimous decree, to the emperor Zeno, the son-in-law and successor of Leo; who had lately been restored, after a short rebellion, to the Byzantine throne. They solemnly disclaim the necessity, or even the wish, of continuing any longer the imperial succession in Italy; since, in their opinion, the majesty of a sole monarch is sufficient to pervade and protect, at the same time, both the East and the West. In their own name, and in the name of the people, they consent that the seat of universal empire shall be transferred from Rome to Constantinople; and they basely renounce the right of choosing their master, the only vestige that yet remained of the authority which had given laws to the world. The republic — they repeat that name without a blush — might safely confide in the civil and military virtues of Odoacer; and they humbly request that the emperor would invest him with the title of patrician and the administration of the diocese of Italy.

The deputies of the senate were received at Constantinople with some marks of displeasure and indignation; and when they were admitted to the audience of Zeno, he sternly reproached them with their treatment of the two emperors, Anthemius and Nepos, whom the East had successively granted to the prayers of Italy. "The first," continued he, "you have

murdered, the second you have expelled; but the second is still alive, and whilst he lives he is your lawful sovereign." But the prudent Zeno soon deserted the hopeless cause of his abdicated colleague. His vanity was gratified by the title of sole emperor, and by the statues erected to his honour in the several quarters of Rome; he entertained a friendly, though ambiguous, correspondence with the patrician Odoacer; and he gratefully accepted the imperial ensigns, the sacred ornaments of the throne and palace, which the barbarian was not unwilling to remove from the sight of the people.

In the space of twenty years since the death of Valentinian nine emperors had successively disappeared; and the son of Orestes, a youth recommended only by his beauty, would be the least entitled to the notice of posterity if his reign, which was marked by the extinction of the Roman Empire in the West, did not leave a memorable era in the history of mankind. The patrician Orestes had married the daughter of Count Romulus, of Petovio in Noricum. The name of Augustus, notwithstanding the jealousy of power, was known at Aquileia as a familiar surname; and the appellations of the two great founders of the city and of the monarchy were thus strangely united in the last of their successors. The son of Orestes assumed and disgraced the names of Romulus Augustus; but the first was corrupted into Momylus by the Greeks, and the second has been changed by the Latins into the contemptible diminutive Augustulus. The life of this inoffensive youth was spared by the generous clemency of Odoacer, who fixed his annual allowance at six thousand pieces of gold, and assigned the castle of Lucullus, in Campania, for the place of his exile or retirement.^c

A REVIEW OF THE BARBARIAN ADVANCE

There were two ways to Europe for the Indo-Germanic tribes, — south and north of the Black Sea. First the Hellenic and Italic tribes came over the sea and settled in the two countries lying near them and connected by islands, which form the southeastern limits of one continent — Greece and Italy.¹ The peoples in these beautiful countries quickly attained to a wonderful state of civilisation, isolated for more than a thousand years from northern Europe. This was the period of classical antiquity which, for its art and literature, its statecraft and military system, unrivalled almost up to the present day, has become the best school of later mankind.

The second way from Asia to Europe lay north of the Pontus, and was far longer and more fraught with weariness and danger than the first; thus it was all the more adapted to the strengthening both of body and spirit. At the northwest corner of the Black Sea it divided into a south and a north road. Along the former, by the Danube between the Alps and the Carpathians, the Celts migrated; later, along the second, north of the Carpathians, the Germanic tribes entered western Europe, and were soon followed by the Slavonic. Rome was already at the height of its empire over the world when the first conflict took place between the Romans and the Germanic tribes. The contact of the two races was of course that of a rude primitive people with the members of a civilised state. Rome at first tried the system of gradual repulse by the attack and subjection of the Germans. When this policy was defeated by the battle fought by Varus, she adopted the system of frontier protection, which lasted nearly two centuries.

[¹There is great uncertainty as to these prehistoric migrations.]

[150-268 A.D.]

But the destinies of the future were being prepared in another way. The remarkable aptitude for civilisation of the Germanic races made them early recognise the value of that of Rome. Young nobles were educated in the capital of the empire and trained in the army; the actual commercial interests, the servitude of the one race in the countries of the other, brought about a mutual relation whose most powerful lever was the Roman military service, which thousands of Germans joined, satisfying in that way their thirst for war and glory as well as their desire for monetary gains.

Thus Rome itself trained the officers and military leaders of its subsequent foes and final destroyers, from whom it had already seriously suffered in the revolt of Civilis. The first act of the "barbarian advance" opened with the war which we call the Marcomannic.

Towards the beginning of the last half of the second century the tribes living between the Pregel, Vistula, and Baltic — now East and West Prussia — left their unfavoured home to seek a better one in the proximity of the Roman frontiers. It was the great Gothic family which made this first migration, in which it carried along with it other allied races, as the Vandals and Burgundiones. The mass separated; the chief tribe, the Goths, went towards the Black Sea between the Don and the Dnieper, where they only arrived after a long time on account of the long distance and of the necessity of fighting their way.

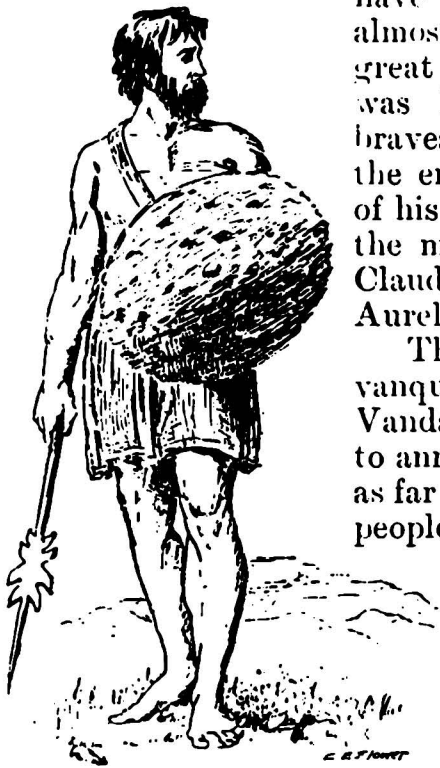
The secondary tribes went up the Vistula through the Carpathians to the Danube. Beyond this stream, in the year 165, one of the unceasing wars between the Marcomanni and the Romans was in progress. The pressure of the new rovers from the north gave fresh weight and importance to the pressure of the Danubian Germans. The Marcomannic War lasted nearly fifteen years; its course was terrible, and similar to that of the Punic War.

Marcus Aurelius, however, was greater than the danger; he became its master. Not a foot of Roman territory was lost; on the contrary, many thousand homeless Germans settled in the empire as new brave subjects. There was now for half a century an apparent cessation of the process of destruction, but only of its external manifestations, not of the internal efforts and preparations towards this end. The Roman tithe province (*agri decumates*) between the Rhine and the Danube, unprotected by any natural boundaries, was the first field of Germanic occupation. At what date the chief mass of Vandals and Burgundiones, together with the Lygii, migrated from their settlements between the Oder and the Vistula to the Roman frontiers, we have no knowledge. We first encounter them under Probus in the year 277, acting in the rear of the older frontier tribes as their allies.

For over half a century, from 211 to 268, Rome had no great emperor; indeed, with the exception of Maximinus, 235-238, not even a warrior. He, however, was a rude barbarian who knew only how to fight and to conquer, not how to organise. Then began the period of decline, in which one emperor, Decius, fell upon the battle-field, and another, Valerian, was carried into lifelong captivity. Simultaneously there rose up in the East (about the year 226) a new and terrible foe, the powerful Sapor, one of the Persian Sassanidæ, by whom the rule of the Parthians was overthrown, and who was burning to become a second Cyrus. Under Gallienus, Valerian's son, 260-268, the misery of Rome reached its height. In expeditions of hitherto unheard-of magnitude, the Goths during ten years overran Asia Minor and Greece to Macedonia; the noblest and finest towns of antiquity fell in flames.

But the greatest evil of all, at least in the West, was the civil war. Nineteen tyrants, usurpers, rose against the ruler; amongst whom, however, two, Odenathus and his wife Zenobia, victoriously defended the empire against the Persians. For fifteen years the West languished under tyrants, of whom the first, Postumus, was certainly more powerful than the rightful emperor.

There was no longer any talk of repulsing the foreign foe; the fact that a great number of Germans were in both armies fighting for and against each other was only a diminution of the danger. Further districts of Gaul were being constantly annexed and won back from the barbarians, and a small host of Franks pressed fighting into Spain, and after twelve years lost itself in Africa. Not only the beginning of the end, but the end itself seemed to



A BARBARIAN

have set in, when Rome was again saved and raised almost to its former glory by a series of brave and great emperors. But the true saviour of the empire was Diocletian (285-305), the wisest if not the bravest of these. By his state reforms he built up the empire on a new foundation, suitable to the needs of his time. His predecessors had rendered harmless the most dangerous foes of the empire, the Goths—Claudius by his glorious victory at Naissus, and Aurelian by the cession of the large province of Dacia.

The new Probus, however, had so completely vanquished the peoples of the West with their allies, Vandals, Burgundiones, and Lygii, that he was able to announce to the senate: "The whole of Germania, as far as it reaches, is subdued. Nine kings of different peoples lie at your feet." In the next two years, however, the conquered people uprose once more, and the old state of affairs seemed to be returning, when Diocletian in the year 285 brought permanent succour.

The division of the imperial government among those brave and able men whom he appointed "cæsars" checked the German peril. His successor and the completer of his work,

Constantine the Great, brought (at all events to the eastern portion of the empire) fresh life and more than a thousand years' duration, by establishing his own place of residence at Constantinople. But once again, under the reign of Constantius, weak son of a great father, the lust of war and plunder was awakened in the barbarians of the West by the rise of a new tyrant in Gaul, and the civil war resulting therefrom. Already the Rhenish strongholds, amongst them Colonia Agrippina (Cologne), were in their hands when a new preserver, the youthful Julian, came upon the scene.

He, like Cæsar, knew how to fight and conquer. The Salian Franks, who had usurped the country between the Schelde and the Maas, Toxandria, were taken as subjects; the Ripuarians, even the Saxon Chauci, were forced to a submissive peace, and the Alamanni compelled, after four campaigns, to the condition of tributaries.

Valentinian I continued Julian's work with an iron hand and will. During this interlude of more than a century in the migration of the tribes the victory of Christendom was effected in Rome and also its entry amongst the Germanic peoples in the form of Arianism. The Germans received a fresh

[367-476 A.D.]

impetus, by the incursions of the Huns, which extended from the Crimean wall to the Loire. The western Goths, who were already in a state of transition from barbarism to civilisation, fled before these Mongols to the Romans. Tricked by imperial officers, wronged and deceived, they seized upon the sword; the decisive battle at Hadrianopolis, in which the emperor Valens fell, made them lords of the European provinces of the Eastern Empire. The joint empire was once more saved by Theodosius the last of the great emperors, who contrived to appease the Goths. But when in 395 the last and permanent division of the empire took place under Arcadius and Honorius, the two weak sons of Theodosius, who were still in their boyhood, the danger to western Rome flared up again, even more terrible than before.

For nearly eight hundred years the capital of the world had seen no conqueror within its walls. Alaric the Visigoth, a fearless warrior, became after the emperor had caused his best commander Stilicho to be put to death the first successor of the Gallic Brennus.

But the twofold occupation of Rome by Alaric was of no more importance as an epoch in the barbarian invasion than was the later occupation by Genseric in the year 455. Alaric did not wish to destroy the empire, only to rule over his people in and with it; the Vandal wished for nothing but plunder. From the passage of the Rhine by the Vandals and Suevi, at the beginning of the year 406, to the incursion of the Visigoths into Gaul in 412, was a far more important period in the barbaric advance. In the year 409 the first went across the Pyrenees, and in 411 permanently established themselves in Spain. In the year 413 the Burgundiones took possession of the country now bearing their name; in the year 419 southwestern Gaul was at last formally ceded to the Visigoths by the emperor Honorius. This people acknowledged a certain, though only nominal, supremacy on the part of Rome. Rome, through its last great commander Aëtius, brought into subjection the whole of the rest of Gaul and the greater part of Spain. Far worse, however, was the loss it suffered at the hands of the most terrible of all the Germanic conquerors, Genseric the king of the Vandals; who in the year 427 deprived it of the distant and rich Africa, its granary, as well as of the islands of the Mediterranean, and founded a piratical state which became for him the source of enormous wealth during half a century, but for Italy and other countries of the coast one of indescribable devastations.

One hundred and seven years had the Vandal empire stood when, after the Germans had become greatly degenerated, it was overthrown with ease in the year 534 by Justinian's general, Belisarius. Only indirectly, as lever and impelling force, had the incursions of the Huns from 375 onwards influenced the tribal migrations, particularly the entrance of the Germans into Gaul, Spain, and Africa.

It would seem as though the terrible Attila, that mighty scourge of God, had determined to complete the work of destruction. But Attila's empire was built up on his personality; with his death it fell to pieces.

Therefore his campaigns of the years 451 and 452 in Gaul and Italy—with the battle at Châlons, so famous in the world's history—were only a remarkable interlude in the great drama of race migration, and of no decisive import in its real progress. After Attila's death, when Valentinian III had himself deprived the empire of its last support by the murder of Aëtius in 454, the decline of the Western Roman Empire set in, and continued during the next twenty years.

Not external pressure, whose severest shock had been happily averted, but the inward germ of death, the growing power of the barbarians within

[476-568 A.D.]

the empire itself, brought this occurrence, so important in the world's history, to maturity. For centuries the Roman army had consisted for the most part of foreigners, chiefly Germans. With the need the number increased, and at the same time their self-confidence and pretensions, and consequently the hatred of the barbarians on the part of the Romans. So long as the son and grandson of Theodosius reigned, the great generals, by the habit of obedience and the magic of legitimate rights, masked the inner dissensions and the weakness of the empire. But when Nemesis had avenged the death of Aëtius, on Valentinian III by his own death in a similar manner, the internal corruption of the state revealed itself under the growing pressure from without.

A bold adventurer of Suevian descent, the patrician Ricimer, acquired as leader of the foreign troops the highest power in the state, and for nineteen years raised emperors and overturned them at his pleasure. Within twenty-one years nine ascended the throne. Even the ablest, and the one among them of eminent talents, Majorian, succumbed to the stealthy cunning and superior military strength of the barbarian mercenaries. Their pretensions rose higher until they demanded a third of the territories of Italy; and in Odoacer, an officer of the body-guard, they found the man who procured them their desire after he had forced the abdication, in 476, of the last emperor of Rome, an immature youth who bore the proud names of Romulus and Augustulus.

Until the year 480 the emperor Nepos, driven from Italy, reigned in Dalmatia; Odoacer accepted from Zeno, the emperor of the East, the title of administrator, and reigned over Italy according to the old forms.

So at least in appearance. In reality it was a Germanic kingdom which was raised on the foundation of the Eternal City which had ruled the world for seven centuries. We now therefore consider the year 476 as that of the fall of Western Rome, which up till then had stood for 109 years, with short interruptions, as a separate empire, in fact, at all events, if not in public recognition. With its fall, and Odoacer's elevation, the great work of expansion, distinction, and building up anew, which we call the migration of races was completed. Now the ground was clear for the German colonisation on Roman territory, already in progress at various points since the year 411

Suevi, Vandals and Alans, Burgundiones and Visigoths, had founded new kingdoms in Spain, Gaul, and Africa, some transitional, some of more permanent duration, whose origin and progress were closely bound up with the history of Western Rome. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the most powerful of all the German tribes arose, the Franks, under Childeric's son Clovis, who in the year 486 destroyed the last remnant of Roman supremacy in western Europe—that of Syagrius over a great part of northern Gaul—by the battle of Soissons. This outer limb, as far as it had any connection with the main body, belonged to the empire of Eastern Rome.

Ostrogoths and Langobardi (Lombards) took part in the destruction of Western Rome only in the second and third periods, not the first, which was in so far an advantage that they drove out again their former conquerors and possessors from the heart of the empire.

The moment of settlement for them came when, leaving their former country, they prepared for colonisation on Roman territory—that is for the conquest of Italy; this was for the Ostrogoths in the year 488, for the Lombards in 568. [For it was in April of the latter year that the Lombards, under Alboin, entered Italy. Fifteen years before Narses had dealt a death blow to the Ostrogothic kingdom, and Italy once more became a part of the Roman Empire. But now the empire was left but a small district to rule over and the peninsula passed forever from undivided Roman rule.]

[476 A.D.]

A FULFILLED AUGURY

It is not to be imagined that the fall of the Roman Empire in the West created so much stir among contemporaries as it has since done in history. A century of constant reverse had led up to it. It was predicted by religion, foreseen by politicians, and expected, as one might say, at a fixed date.

An inexplicable fatality hovered over Rome from its cradle. It cannot be denied that the failure of the town of Romulus, or the decline of its power at the end of twelve centuries, was predicted almost from its birth. The story of the portent of the twelve vultures appearing to its founder on the Mount Palatine, embodied this instinctive belief, fortified by all the authority of augural science. The Tuscan soothsayers had, in effect, declared the twelve vultures to signify twelve centuries of power, after which the fate of Rome would be consummated.

This political faith, already strong in the brightest days of the republican epoch, was transmitted from generation to generation, proudly when the end was far distant; fearfully, as it drew near. Even as the historic date of the foundation was disputed, so there was disagreement as to its end. The soothsayers all calculated in their own way as they themselves understood it, but all expected it.

According to the most generally received chronology, Rome had passed the middle of the eleventh century when Alaric took and burned it. One might almost think the augury accomplished — allowing for a difference of a few years. After the departure of the Goths, hope revived and calculation recommenced. After the second sack of Rome by Genseric, in the twelve hundred and seventh year from its foundation (455 A.D.) the fatal and definite hour was declared to have arrived. “The twelfth vulture has finished his flight. Now, O Rome, thou knowest thy destiny,” wrote Sidonius Apollinaris, a firm Christian, but imbued, like every Roman subject, with the superstitious traditions of the city of the Seven Hills. Thenceforward began the real death throes of the empire, as it passed to barbarian masters — from Ricimer to Gundobald, from Gundobald to Odoacer, ever growing weaker, more despised, more crushed. When names were heard, long strange to the nomenclature of the Cæsars — names such as Julius and Augustus, coming from the grave of history like so many spectres announcing the last day, and that of Romulus expiring in a child — public consternation knew no bounds. These fortuitous combinations presented in their fantastic aspect something of the supernatural, and troubled the strongest minds. Men bowed their heads and were silent.

The obsequies of Rome were carried out in mournful silence. We find in contemporary historians no accent either of regret or joy, no declamations either in prose or verse; just a few dates and a bare record of facts, that is all. It might almost be believed that nothing of importance took place in the year 476. Jordanes alone, a little later, sounds his barbarian trumpet over the grave of the empire, but only to celebrate the coming of the Goths.

BREYSIG'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE WEST

It is of the death of a great nation that we have here to speak. For it is not the physical, nor the spiritual; nor certainly a merely formal political continuance — like that of Byzantium — which determines the historical

[476 A.D.]

existence of the nations, but a political independence at once material and powerful, and containing the essentials of civilisation. And if we inquire once again into the reason of such a death of nations, in the end we shall not venture to assign as a cause some form of political or social organisation; some condition of sexual morality; the invasion of Christianity (as Nietzsche thought), and still less the cessation of mechanical inventions, as the folly of some natural philosophers dabbling in history, has assumed: but solely the waning of the nation's vigour. We shall be compelled to consider not a few of the political, social, moral, and intellectual phenomena towards the end of the period as symptoms of this decay, as, for example, the degeneration of Cæsarism and its hierarchy of officials, the social reaction of the romancists of guilds and castes, the extravagant luxury; the complete torpor of economical activity, and still more the decay of intellectual life. But all these cannot have been the causes, but only tokens and effects of the same disease of the innermost core.

But who shall say to what last final causes are to be referred the rotting and crumbling of this nation which in the days of the flower of its youth and manhood seemed to be possessed of eternal vigour. The Roman nation was certainly not as short-lived as the Greek. If we measure the periods of their development, one against the other, which is the only possible form of comparison, we shall find that from the beginning of their later middle age down to the loss of their political independence, the Greeks are granted not quite half and the Romans almost the whole of a millennium of autonomous history. Perhaps the compact and more continental conformation of the Italian peninsula essentially contributed to this duration; the connecting links between the two facts of the great longevity of the Roman people and the broad surface and less broken outline of their country might be represented by their far less rapid economical and especially commercial development, and their much more phlegmatic intellectual growth, and, in the sphere of politics, by the far wider extent of the domains of the state, which consequently afforded a much firmer base.

But, indeed, if it is permissible to enlarge further upon these anthropogeographical conjectures, the sea was not here able to exercise its animating, but also agitating and therefore strength-consuming effects to the same extent as in Hellas, although it may nevertheless have exercised sufficient influence. The fact that on the soil of Greece there flourished an extraordinary wealth of intellectual growth and an over-refined political civilisation, is just as explicable as that Italy produced such a tardy intellectual, and at the same time such a powerful and yet carefully planned political, organisation. Italy was, to speak in entirely hypothetical language, narrow and washed by the sea, — but it was also sunny, and yet not too much split up into small sections to allow of its bringing forth political institutions which were not only sound but also really permeated with intellectual thought, and to permit it to produce its art of government and its law. In other words, this peninsula everywhere offered so wide a surface that it was able to produce a state more extensive, stronger, more full of life, and, above all, less threatened by natural separation of interests. But it was not so continental as to permit of the formation of a despotically governed state, stretching over a wide plain as in the vast countries of the East. The sea had been able to exercise its invigorating effects in so far that Italy attained a form of government, strong indeed, but also free. And if no such finely organised intellectual culture was assigned to it, at least its political institutions were intellectually elaborated to a singular degree. For in all essentials

[476 A.D.]

they were as much the peculiar product of her otherwise less remarkable intellectual culture as of her political civilisation.

On the other hand Italy shares equally with Greece a life-giving but also life-shortening effect of her geographical position: a mild climate. Perhaps its effects in accelerating her bloom but also her decay have been here somewhat arrested by other territorial conditions, yet perhaps they too finally succeeded in making their influence felt. Else why have Germans and Slavs, that is to say the only civilised peoples of the north alone on the globe maintained themselves so much longer in their strength, and why have they, and perhaps they only, still to-day a prospect of millenniums of an equally robust life of political and intellectual activity?^h



ROMAN BRACELET
(In the British Museum)