

CHAPTER X

The Emperors Decius, Gallus, Aemilianus, Valerian, and Gallienus—The General Eruption of the Barbarians—The 30 Tyrants

AD 248—268: The Emperor Philip

From the great secular games celebrated by Philip, to the death of the emperor Gallienus, there elapsed (AD 248—268) 20 years of shame and misfortune. During that calamitous period, every instant of time was marked, and barbarous invaders and military tyrants afflicted every province of the Roman world. The ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution. The confusion of the times, and the scarcity of authentic memorials, oppose equal difficulties to the historian who attempts to preserve a clear and unbroken thread of narration. Surrounded with imperfect fragments, always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory, he is reduced to collect, compare, and conjecture. Although he ought never to place his conjectures in the rank of facts, yet the knowledge of human nature, and of the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions, might, on some occasions, supply the want of historical materials.

AD 249: Services, Revolt, Victory, and Reign of the Emperor Decius

There is not, for instance, any difficulty in conceiving that the successive murders of so many emperors had loosened all ties of allegiance between the prince and people. All the generals of Philip were disposed to imitate the example of their master; and the caprice of armies, long since habituated to frequent and violent revolutions, might any day raise to the throne the most obscure of their fellow-soldiers. History can only add that the rebellion against the emperor Philip broke out in the summer of the year 249 AD, among the legions of Maesia; and that a subaltern officer,¹ named Marinus, was the object of their seditious choice. Philip was alarmed. He dreaded lest the treason of the Maesian army should prove the first spark of a general conflagration. Distracted with the consciousness of his guilt and of his danger, he communicated the intelligence to the senate. A gloomy silence prevailed, the effect of fear, and perhaps of disaffection, till at length Decius, one of the assemblies, assuming a spirit worthy of his noble extraction, ventured to discover more intrepidity than the emperor seemed to possess. He treated the whole business with contempt, as a hasty and inconsiderate tumult, and Philip's rival as a phantom of royalty, who in a very few days would be destroyed by the same inconstancy that had created him. The speedy completion of the prophecy inspired Philip with a just esteem for so able a counselor. Decius appeared to him the only person capable of restoring peace and discipline to an army whose tumultuous spirit did not immediately subside after the murder of Marinus. Decius, who long resisted his own nomination, seems to have insinuated the danger of presenting a leader of merit to the angry and apprehensive minds of the soldiers; and his prediction was again confirmed by the event. The legions of Maesia forced their judge to become (AD 249) their accomplice. They left him only the alternative of death or the purple. His subsequent conduct, after that decisive measure, was unavoidable. He conducted or followed his army to the confines of Italy, where Philip, collecting all his force to repel the formidable competitor whom he had raised up, advanced to meet him. The Imperial troops were superior in number; but the rebels formed an army of veterans, commanded by an able and experienced leader.² Philip was either killed in the battle, or put to death a few days afterward at

¹ The expression used by Zosimus and Zonaras may signify that Marinas commanded a centenary, a cohort, or a legion.

² His birth at Bubalia, a little village in Pannonia (Eutrop. ix. Victor in Caesarib. at epitom.), seems to contradict, unless it was merely accidental, his supposed descent from the Decii. Six hundred years had bestowed nobility on the Decii; but

Verona. His son and associate in the empire was massacred at Rome by the Pretorian guards; and the victorious Decius, with more favorable circumstances than the ambition of that age can usually plead, was universally acknowledged by the senate and provinces. It is reported that, immediately after his reluctant acceptance of the title of Augustus, he had assured Philip, by a private message, of his innocence and loyalty, solemnly protesting that, on his arrival in Italy he would resign the Imperial ornaments, and return to the condition of an obedient subject. His professions might be sincere. But in the situation where fortune had placed him it was scarcely possible that he could either forgive or be forgiven. (Zosimus, 1. 1. p 20; Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 624)

The emperor Decius had employed a few months in the works of peace and the administration of justice, when (AD 250) he was summoned to the banks of the Danube by the invasion of the Goths. This is the first considerable occasion in which history mentions that great people, who afterward broke the Roman power, sacked the capital, and reigned in Gaul, Spain, and Italy. So memorable was the part that they acted in the subversion of the Western Empire, that the name 'Goths' is frequently but improperly used as a general label of rude and warlike barbarism.

The Goths from Scandinavia

In the beginning of the 6th Century, and after the conquest of Italy, the Goths, in possession of present greatness, very naturally indulged themselves in the prospect of past and of future glory. They wished to preserve the memory of their ancestors, and to transmit to posterity their own achievements. The principal minister of the court of Ravenna, the learned Cassiodorus, gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history, which consisted of twelve books, now reduced to the imperfect abridgment of Jornandes.³ These writers passed with the most artful conciseness over the misfortunes of the nation, celebrated its successful valor, and adorned the triumph with many Asiatic trophies that more properly belonging to the people of Scythia. On the faith of ancient songs and uncertain memorials of barbarians, they deduced the first origin of the Goths from the vast island, or peninsula, of Scandinavia.⁴ That extreme country of the north was not unknown to the conquerors of Italy. Recent offices of friendship had strengthened the ties of ancient blood relation. A Scandinavian king had cheerfully abdicated his savage greatness that he might pass the remainder of his days in the peaceful and polished court of Ravenna. Many vestiges, which cannot be ascribed to the arts of popular vanity, attest the ancient residence of the Goths in the countries beyond the Baltic. From the time of the geographer Ptolemy, the southern part of Sweden seems to have continued in the possession of the less enterprising remnant of the nation, and a large territory is even at present divided into east and west Gothland. During the Middle Ages (from the 9th to the 12th Century), while Christianity was advancing with a slow progress into the north, the Goths and Swedes composed two distinct and sometimes hostile members of the same monarchy.⁵ The latter of these two names has prevailed without extinguishing the former. The Swedes, who might well be satisfied with their own fame in arms, have in every age claimed the kindred glory of the Goths. In a moment of discontent against the court of Rome, Charles XII insinuated that his victorious troops were not degenerated from their brave

at the commencement of that period, they were only Plebeians of merit, and among the first who shared the consulship with the haughty clans. *Plebeiae Deciorum animae*, etc. Juvenal, Sat. viii. 254. See the spirited speech of Decius, in Livy, x. 9, 10

³ Prefaces of Cassiodorus and Jornandes. It is surprising that the latter should be omitted in the excellent edition published by Grotius of the Gothic writers.

⁴ On the authority of Ablavius, Jornandes quotes some old Gothic chronicles in verse. *De Reb. Geticis*, c. 4.

⁵ The Prolegomena of Grotius has some large extracts from Adam of Brengen, and Saxo Grammaticus. The former wrote in the year 1077, the latter flourished about the year 1200.

ancestors, who had already subdued the mistress of the world.⁶

Their Religion

Till the end of the 11th Century, a celebrated temple subsisted at Upsal, the most considerable town of the Swedes and Goths. It was enriched with the gold that the Scandinavians had acquired in their piratical adventures, and sanctified by the uncouth representations of the three principal deities: the god of war, the goddess of generation, and the god of thunder. In the general festival, that was solemnized every ninth year, nine animals of every species (even human) were sacrificed, and their bleeding bodies suspended in the sacred grove adjacent to the temple.⁷ The only traces that now remain of this barbaric superstition are contained in the Edda, a system of mythology, compiled in Iceland about the 13th Century, and studied by the learned of Denmark and Sweden as the most valuable remains of their ancient traditions.

Notwithstanding the mysterious obscurity of the Edda, we can easily distinguish two persons confounded under the name of Odin: the god of war, and the great legislator of Scandinavia. The latter, the Mahomet of the north instituted a religion adapted to the climate and to the people. Numerous tribes on either side of the Baltic were subdued by the invincible valor of Odin, by his persuasive eloquence, and by the fame that he acquired of a most skilful magician. The faith that he had propagated during a long and prosperous life he confirmed by a voluntary death. Apprehensive of the ignominious approach of disease and infirmity, he resolved to expire as became a warrior. In a solemn assembly of the Swedes and Goths, he wounded himself in nine mortal places, hastening away (as he asserted with his dying voice) to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the god of war. (Mallet, *Introduction to Danish History*)

Institutions and Death of Odin

The native and proper habitation of Odin is distinguished by the title of Asgard. The happy resemblance of that name with As-burg, or As-of,⁸ words of a similar signification, has given rise to a historical system of so pleasing a fabric that we could almost wish to persuade ourselves of its truth. It is supposed that Odin was the chief of a tribe of barbarians who dwelt on the banks of the lake Maeotis, till the fall of Mithridates and the arms of Pompey menaced the north with servitude. Supposedly, yielding with indignant fury to a power which he was unable to resist, Odin led his tribe from the frontiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden. He had a great design of forming, in that inaccessible retreat of freedom, a religion and people, which, in some remote age, might be subservient to his immortal revenge. His invincible Goths, armed with martial fanaticism, swarmed from the neighborhood of the Polar circle, to chastise the oppressors of mankind.⁹

⁶ Voltaire, *Hist. de Char.* XII. 1. iii. When the Austrians desired the aid of the court of Rome against Gustavus Adolphus, they always represented that conqueror as the lineal successor of Alaric. Harte's *Hist. of Gustavus*, vol. ii. p. 123.

⁷ Adam of Bremen in *Grotii Prolegomenis*, p. 104. The temple of Upsal was destroyed by Ingo, king of Sweden, who began his reign in the year 1075, and about 80 years after a Christian cathedral was erected on its ruins. Dalin's *History of Sweden*, in *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*.

⁸ Mallet, c. iv. p. 55, has collected from Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Stephanus Byzantinus the vestiges of such a city and people.

⁹ This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducing the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause, might supply the noble groundwork of an epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history. According to the obvious sense of the Edda, and the interpretation of the most skilful critics, As-gard, instead of denoting a real city of the Asiatic Sarmatia, is the fictitious name of the mystic abode of the gods, the Olympus of Scandinavia. This was where the prophet was supposed to descend when he announced his new religion to the Gothic nations, who were already

Emigration from Scandinavia into Prussia and the Ukraine

If so many successive generations of Goths were capable of preserving a faint tradition of their Scandinavian origin, we must not expect, from such unlettered barbarians, any distinct account of the time and circumstances of their emigration. To cross the Baltic was an easy and natural attempt. The inhabitants of Sweden were masters of a sufficient number of large vessels, with oars (Tacit. Germ. c. 44), and the distance is little more than one hundred miles from Cariscrona to the nearest ports of Pomerania and Prussia. Here, at length, we land on firm and historic ground. At least as early as the Christian era,¹⁰ and as late as the age of the Antonines (Ptolemy, 1. ii.), the Goths were established toward the mouth of the Vistula, and in that fertile province where the commercial cities of Thorn, Elbing, Konigsberg, and Dantzic were long afterward founded.¹¹ Westward of the Goths, the numerous tribes of the Vandals were spread along the banks of the Oder, and the seacoast of Pomerania and Mecklenburgh. A striking resemblance of manners, complexion, religion, and language, seemed to indicate that the Vandals and the Goths were originally one great people.¹² The latter appear to have been subdivided into Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Gepidae.¹³ The distinction among the Vandals was more strongly marked by the independent names of Heruli, Burgundians, Lombards, and a variety of other petty states, many of which, in a future age, expanded themselves into powerful monarchies.

In the age of the Antonines, the Goths were still seated in Prussia. About the reign of Alexander Severus, the Roman province of Dacia had already experienced their proximity by frequent and destructive inroads.¹⁴ In this interval, therefore, of about seventy years, we must place the second migration of the Goths from the Baltic to the Euxine; but the cause that produced it lies concealed among the various motives which actuate the conduct of unsettled barbarians. Either a pestilence or a famine, a victory or a defeat, an oracle of the gods or the eloquence of a daring leader, were sufficient to impel the Gothic arms on the milder climates of the south. Besides the influence of a martial religion, the numbers and spirit of the Goths were equal to the most dangerous adventures. The use of round bucklers and short swords rendered them formidable in a close engagement; the manly obedience that they yielded to hereditary kings gave uncommon union and stability to their councils.¹⁵ The renowned Amala, the hero of that age, and the tenth ancestor of Theodoric, king of Italy, enforced, by the ascendant of personal merit, the prerogative of his birth, which he derived from the Anses, or demigods of the Gothic nation. (Jornandes, c. 13, 14)

seated in the southern parts of Sweden.

¹⁰ Tacit. Annal. ii. 62. If we could yield a firm assent to the navigations of Pytheas of Marseilles, we must allow that the Goths had passed the Baltic at least 300 years before Christ.

¹¹ By the German colonies who followed the arms of the Teutonic knights. Those adventurers completed the conquest and conversion of Prussia in the 13th Century.

¹² Pliny (list. Natur. iv. 14) and Procopius (in Bell. Vandal. L i. c. 1) agree in this opinion. They lived in distant ages, and possessed different means of investigating the truth.

¹³ The *Ostro* and *Visi*, the eastern and western Goths, obtained those denominations from their original seats in Scandinavia. In all their future marches and settlements they preserved, with their names, the same relative situation. When they first departed from Sweden, the infant colony was contained in three vessels. The third being a heavy sailer, lagged behind, and the crew, which afterward swelled into a nation, received from that circumstance the name Gepidae or Loiterers. Jornandes, c. 17.

¹⁴ Fragment of Peter Patricius in the Excerpta Legationum; and with regard to its probable date, Tillemont, *History of the Emperors*, tom. iii. p. 346.

¹⁵ The Goths probably acquired their iron by the commerce of amber.

The Nation Increases Its March; Description of the Ukraine

The fame of a great enterprise excited the bravest warriors from all the Vandalic states of Germany, many of whom are seen a few years afterward combating under the common standard of the Goths.¹⁶ The first motions of the emigrants carried them to the banks of the Prypec, a river universally conceived by the ancients to be the southern branch of the Borysthenes.¹⁷ The windings of that great stream through the plains of Poland and Russia gave a direction to their line of march, and a constant supply of fresh water and pasturage to their numerous herds of cattle. They followed the unknown course of the river, confident in their valor, and careless of whatever power might oppose their progress. The Bastarnae and the Venedi were the first who presented themselves; and the flower of their youth, either from choice or compulsion, increased the Gothic army. The Bastarnae dwelt on the northern side of the Carpathian Mountains; the immense tract of land that separated the Bastarnae from the savages of Finland, was possessed, or rather wasted, by the Venedi (Tacit. Germ. c. 46). We have some reason to believe that the first of these nations, which distinguished itself in the Macedonian war (Cluver. *German Antiquities* 1. iii. c. 43), and was afterward divided into the formidable tribes of the Peucini, Borani, Carpi, etc., derived its origin from the Germans. With better authority, a Sarmatian extraction may be assigned to the Venedi, who rendered themselves so famous in the Middle Ages.¹⁸ But the confusion of blood and manners on that doubtful frontier often perplexed the most accurate observers.¹⁹ As the Goths advanced near the Euxine Sea, they encountered a purer race of Sarmatians, the Jazyges, the Alani, and the Roxolani. They were probably the first Germans who saw the mouths of the rivers Borysthenes and Tanais. If we inquire into the characteristic marks of the people of Germany and of Sarmatia, we shall discover that fixed huts or movable tents principally distinguished those two great portions of human kind. They also wore a close dress or flowing garments, married of one or more wives, and had a military force consisting, for the most part, either of infantry or cavalry. Above all, they were distinguished by the Teutonic or Sclavonian language, the last of which has been diffused by conquest from the confines of Italy to the neighborhood of Japan. The Goths were now in possession of the Ukraine, a country of considerable extent and uncommon fertility, intersected with navigable rivers, which, from either side, discharge themselves into the Borysthenes, and interspersed with large and lofty forests of oaks. There was plenty of game and fish. The innumerable beehives deposited in the hollows of old trees and in rock cavities, and forming, even in that crude age, a valuable branch of commerce. The large cattle, the air temperature, the soil's ability for every species of grain, and the luxuriant vegetation, all displayed the liberality of Nature and tempted the industry of man.²⁰ But the Goths withstood all these temptations, and still adhered to a life of idleness, of poverty, and of rapine.

The Goths Invade the Roman Provinces

The Scythian hordes, which, toward the east, bordered on the new settlements of the Goths, presented nothing to their arms, except the doubtful chance of an unprofitable victory. But the prospect

¹⁶ The Heruli, and the Uregundi or Burgundi, are particularly mentioned. Mascou's *History of the Germans*, 1. v. A passage in the Augustan History, p. 28, seems to allude to this great emigration. The Marcomannic war was partly occasioned by the pressure of barbarous tribes, who tied before the arms of more northern barbarians.

¹⁷ D'Anville, *Ancient Geographies*, and the third part of his incomparable map of Europe.

¹⁸ The Venedi, the Slave, and the Antes were the three great tribes of the same people. Jornandes, c. 24.

¹⁹ Tacitus most assuredly deserves that title, and even his cautions suspense is a proof of his diligent inquiries.

²⁰ *Genealogical History of the Tartars*, p. 593. Bell (vol ii. p. 379) traversed the Ukraine in his journey from Petersburg to Constantinople. The modern face of the country is a just representation of the ancient, since, in the hands of the Cossacks, it still remains in a state of nature.

of the Roman territories was far more alluring; and the fields of Dacia were covered with rich harvests, sown by the hands of an industrious, and exposed to be gathered by those of a warlike, people. It is probable that the conquests of Trajan, maintained by his successors less for any real advantage than for ideal dignity, had contributed to weaken the empire on that side. The new and unsettled province of Dacia was neither strong enough to resist, nor rich enough to satiate, the rapaciousness of the barbarians. As long as the remote banks of the Niester were considered as the boundary of the Roman power, the fortifications of the Lower Danube were more carelessly guarded, and the inhabitants of Maesia lived in supine security, fondly conceiving themselves at an inaccessible distance from any barbarian invaders. The eruption of the Goths, under the reign of Philip, fatally convinced them of their mistake. The king, or leader, of that fierce nation, traversed with contempt the province of Dacia, and passed both the Niester and the Danube without encountering any opposition capable of retarding his progress. The relaxed discipline of the Roman troops betrayed the most important posts where they were stationed, and the fear of deserved punishment induced great numbers of them to enlist under the Gothic standard. The various Barbarian multitudes appeared, at length, under the walls of Marcianopolis, a city built by Trajan in honor of his sister, and at that time the capital of the second Maesia.²¹ The inhabitants consented to ransom their lives and property by the payment of a large sum of money, and the invaders retreated back into their deserts, animated, rather than satisfied, with the first success of their arms against an opulent but feeble country. Intelligence was soon transmitted to the emperor Decius that Cniva, king of the Goths, had passed the Danube a second time, with more considerable forces. His numerous detachments scattered devastation over the province of Maesia, while the main body of the army, consisting of 70,000 Germans and Sarmatians, a force equal to the most daring achievements, required the presence of the Roman monarch and the exertion of his military power.

Various Events of the Gothic War

Decius found (AD 250) the Goths engaged before Nicopolis, on the Jatrus, one of the many monuments of Trajan's victories.²² On his approach they raised the siege, but with a design only of marching away to a conquest of greater importance, the siege of Philippopolis, a city of Thrace, founded by the father of Alexander, near the foot of Mount Haemus.²³ Decius followed them through a difficult country, and by forced marches; but when he imagined himself at a considerable distance from the rear of the Goths, Cniva turned with rapid fury on his pursuers. The camp of the Romans was surprised and pillaged, and, for the first time, their emperor fled in disorder before a troop of poorly armed barbarians. After a long resistance, Philippopolis, destitute of support, was taken by storm. A hundred thousand persons are reported to have been massacred in the sack of that great city. (Ammian. xxxi. 5) Many prisoners of consequence became a valuable accession to the spoil; and Priscus, a brother of the late emperor Philip, blushed not to assume the purple under the protection of the barbarous enemies of Rome. (Aurel. Victor. c. 29) The time consumed in that tedious siege however, enabled Decius to revive the courage, restore discipline, and increase his troop strength. He intercepted several parties of Carpi, and other Germans, who were hastening to share the victory of their

²¹ In the 16th chapter of Jornandes, instead of *secundo* Maesiam, we may venture to substitute *secundam*, the second Maesia, of which Marcianopolis was certainly the capital (Hierocles de Provincils, and Wesseling ad locum, p. 636. Itinerar.) It is surprising how this palpable error of the scribe could escape the judicious correction of Grotius

²² The place is still called Nicop. The little stream, on whose banks it stood, falls into the Danube. D'A.nville, *Ancient Geographies*, tom. i. p. 307.

²³ Stephan. Byzant. de Urbibus, p. 740. Wesseling Itinerar. p. 136. Zonaras, by an odd mistake, ascribes the foundation of Philippopolis to the immediate predecessor of Decius.

countrymen.²⁴ He entrusted the mountain passes to officers of proven valor and fidelity,²⁵ repaired and strengthened the Danube river fortifications, and exerted his utmost vigilance to oppose either the progress or the retreat of the Goths. Encouraged by the return of fortune, he anxiously waited for an opportunity to retrieve, by a great and decisive blow, his own glory and that of the Roman army.²⁶

Decius Revives the Office of Censor

At the same time when Decius was struggling with the violence of the tempest, his mind, calm and deliberate amid the tumult of war, investigated the more general causes that had so impetuously urged the decline of Roman greatness since the age of the Antonines. He soon discovered that it was impossible to replace that greatness on a permanent basis without restoring public virtue, ancient principles and manners, and the oppressed majesty of the laws. To execute this noble but arduous design, he first resolved to revive the obsolete office of censor, an office which, as long as it had subsisted in its pristine integrity, had so much contributed to the perpetuity of the state,²⁷ till it was usurped and gradually neglected by the Caesars.²⁸ Conscious that the favor of the sovereign may confer power, but that the esteem of the people can alone bestow authority, he submitted the choice of the censor to the unbiased voice of the senate. By their unanimous votes, or rather acclamations, Valerian, who was afterward emperor, and who then served with distinction in the army of Decius, was (AD 251, 27 Oct.) declared the most worthy of that exalted honor. As soon as the decree of the senate was transmitted to the emperor, he assembled a great council in his camp, and, before the investiture of the censor-elect, he apprised him of the difficulty and importance of his great office. The prince said to his distinguished subject:

Happy Valerian. Happy in the general approbation of the senate and of the Roman republic! Accept the censorship of mankind; and judge of our manners. You will select those who deserve to continue members of the senate; you will restore the equestrian order to its ancient splendor; you will improve the revenue, yet moderate the public burdens. You will distinguish into regular classes the various and infinite multitude of citizens, and accurately review the military strength, the wealth, the virtue, and the resources of Rome. Your decisions shall obtain the force of laws. The army, the palace, the ministers of justice, and the great officers of the empire are all subject to your tribunal. None are exempted, excepting only the ordinary consuls,²⁹ the prefect of the city, the king of the sacrifices, and (as long as she preserves her chastity inviolate) the eldest of the vestal virgins. Even these few, who may not dread the severity, will anxiously solicit the esteem of the Roman censor. Original speech, in the Augustan Rust. pp. 173, 174.

Defeat and Death of Decius and His Son

A magistrate, invested with such extensive powers, would have appeared not so much the minister

²⁴ *Victoriae Carpicae*, on some medals of Decius, insinuates these advantages.

²⁵ Claudius (who afterward reigned with so much glory) was posted in the pass of Thermopylae with 200 Dardanians, 100 heavy and 160 light horse, 60 Cretan archers, and 1,000 well-armed recruits, See an original letter from the emperor to his officer, in the Augustan History, p. 200.

²⁶ Jornandes, c. 16—18, Zosimus, I i. p. 22. In the general account of this war, it is easy to discover the opposite prejudices of the Gothic and the Grecian writer. In carelessness alone they are alike.

²⁷ Montesquieu, *Grandeur and Decadence of Rome*, c. 8. He illustrates the nature and use of the censorship with his usual ingenuity, and with uncommon precision.

²⁸ Vespasian and Titus were the last censors (Pliny, Hist. Natur. iii. 49. *Censorinus de Die Natali*). The modesty of Trajan refused an honor that he deserved, and his example became a law to the Antonines. Pliny's Panegyric, c. 45 and 60.

²⁹ Yet in spite of this exemption Pompey appeared before that tribunal during his consulship. The occasion indeed was equally singular and honorable. Plutarch in Pomp. p. 630.

as the colleague of his sovereign would.³⁰ Valerian justly dreaded an elevation so full of envy and of suspicion. He modestly urged the alarming greatness of the trust, his own insufficiency, and the incurable corruption of the times. He artfully insinuated that the office of censor was inseparable from the Imperial dignity, and that the feeble hands of a subject were unequal to the support of such an immense weight of cares and of power.³¹ The approaching event of war soon put an end to the prosecution of a project so specious but so impracticable. While it preserved Valerian from the danger, it also saved the emperor Decius from the disappointment, which would most probably have attended it. A censor may maintain, but he can never restore the morals of a state. It is impossible for such a magistrate to exert his authority with benefit, or even with effect, unless he is supported by a quick sense of honor and virtue in the minds of the people. He does this through a decent reverence for public opinion and by a train of useful prejudices combating on the side of national manners. In a period when these principles are annihilated, the censorial jurisdiction must either sink into empty pageantry, or be converted into a partial instrument of vexatious oppression.³² It was easier to vanquish the Goths than to eradicate the public vices; yet even in the first of these enterprises Decius lost his army and his life.

The Goths were now surrounded and pursued by the Roman army on every side. The flower of their troops had perished in the long siege of Philippopolis, and the exhausted country could no longer afford subsistence for the remaining multitude of licentious barbarians. Reduced to this extremity, the Goths would gladly have purchased, by the surrender of all their booty and prisoners, the permission of an undisturbed retreat. But the emperor, confident of victory, and resolving, by the chastisement of these invaders, to strike a salutary terror into the nations of the North, refused to listen to any terms of accommodation. The high-spirited barbarians preferred death to slavery. An obscure town of Maesia, called Forum Terebronii,³³ was the scene of the battle. The Gothic army formed up in three lines, and, from either choice or accident, a morass covered the front of the third line. In the beginning of the action, the son of Decius, a youth of the fairest hopes, and already associated to the honors of the purple, was slain by an arrow. It happened in the sight of his afflicted father; who, summoning all his fortitude, admonished the dismayed troops that the loss of a single soldier was of little importance to the republic.³⁴ The conflict was terrible, a combat of despair against grief and rage. The first line of the Goths at length gave way in disorder; the second, advancing to sustain it, shared its fate. Only the third line remained whole, and was prepared to dispute the passage of the morass, which was imprudently attempted by the presumption of the enemy.

Here the fortune of the day turned, and all things became adverse to the Romans. The ground was deep with ooze, sinking under those who stood and slippery to those who advanced. Their armor was heavy, and the waters deep. Nor could they wield, in that uneasy situation, their weighty javelins. The barbarians, on the contrary, were used to encounters in the bogs. They were tall and their spears were long. As such, they could wound at a distance. – Tacitus³⁵

After an ineffectual struggle in this morass, the Roman army was irrecoverably lost. Nor could anyone find the emperor's body.³⁶ At 50 years old, such was Decius' fate. He was an accomplished

³⁰ This transaction might deceive Zonaras, who supposes that Valerian was actually declared of Decius' colleague, 1. xli. p. 625.

³¹ Hist. August. p. 174. The emperor's reply is omitted.

³² Such as the attempts of Augustus toward a reformation of manners. Tacit. Annal. iii. 24.

³³ Tillemont, *History of the Emperors*, tom. iii p. 598. As Zosimus and some of his followers mistake the Danube for the Tanais, they place the field of battle in the plains of Scythia.

³⁴ Aurelius Victor allows two distinct actions for the deaths of the two Decii but I have preferred the account of Jornandes.

³⁵ I have ventured to copy from Tacitus (Annal. i. 64) the picture of a similar engagement between a Roman army and a German tribe.

³⁶ Jornandes, c. 18. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 22. Zonaras, 1. xli. p. 627. Aurelius Victor.

prince, active in war, and affable in peace.³⁷ Together with his son, he has deserved to be compared, both in life and death, with the brightest examples of ancient virtue.³⁸

AD 251: Election of Gallus

This fatal blow humbled, for a very little time, the insolence of the legions. They appear to have patiently expected, and submissively obeyed, the decree of the senate, which regulated the succession to the throne. From a just regard for the memory of Decius, the Imperial title was (AD 251, Dec.) conferred on Hostilianus, his only surviving son. However, an equal rank, with more effectual power, was granted to Gallus, whose experience and ability seemed equal to the great trust of guardian to the young prince and the distressed empire.³⁹ The first care of the new emperor was to deliver the Illyrian provinces from the intolerable weight of the victorious Goths. He (AD 252) agreed to let them keep the rich fruits of their invasion, an immense booty, and—what was still more disgraceful—a great number of prisoners of the highest merit and quality. He plentifully supplied their camp with every convenience that could assuage their angry spirits, or facilitate their so much wished-for departure. He even promised to pay them an annual large sum of gold, on condition, they should never afterward infest the Roman territories by their incursions. (Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 628)

Retreat of the Goths On Payment of An Annual Tribute

In the age of the Scipios, the most opulent kings of the earth, who courted the protection of the victorious commonwealth, were gratified with such trifling presents as could only derive a value from the hand that bestowed them. An ivory chair, a coarse garment of purple, an inconsiderable piece of plate, or a quantity of copper coin.⁴⁰ After the wealth of nations had centered in Rome, the emperors displayed their greatness, and even their policy, by the regular exercise of a steady and moderate liberality toward the allies of the state. They relieved the poverty of the barbarians, honored their merit, and recompensed their fidelity. These voluntary marks of bounty were understood to flow not from the fears, but merely from the generosity or the gratitude of the Romans. And while presents and subsidies were liberally distributed among friends and suppliants, they were sternly refused to such as claimed them as a debt.⁴¹ But this stipulation of an annual payment to a victorious enemy appeared without disguise in the light of a shameful tribute. The minds of the Romans were not yet accustomed to accept such unequal laws from a tribe of barbarians. The prince who, by a necessary concession, had probably saved his country, became the object of the general contempt and aversion. The death of Hostilianus, though it happened in the midst of a raging pestilence, was interpreted as the personal crime of Gallus (Jornandes, c. 19, and Victor in Caesaribus). Even the defeat of the late emperor was ascribed by the voice of suspicion to the perfidious counsels of his hated successor.⁴² The tranquillity which the empire enjoyed during the first year of his administration⁴³ served rather to inflame than to

³⁷ The Decii were killed before the end of the year 251, since the new princes took possession of the consulship on the following January.

³⁸ Hist. August. p. 223, gives them a very honorable place among the small number of good emperors who reigned between Augustus and Diocletian.

³⁹ Latin text omitted.

⁴⁰ A *Sella* (chair), a *Toga* (robe), and a golden *Patera* (bowl) of five pounds weight were accepted with joy and gratitude by the wealthy king of Egypt (Livy, xxvii. 4). *Quina Millie Aeris*, a weight of copper in value about £18 sterling, was the usual present made to foreign ambassadors (Livy, xxxi. 9).

⁴¹ See the firmness of a Roman general so late as the time of Alexander Severus, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 25.

⁴² These improbable accusations are alleged by Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 23, 24.

⁴³ Jornandes, c. 19. The Gothic writer at least observed the peace that his victorious countrymen had sworn to Galius.

appease the public discontent. As soon as the apprehensions of war were removed, the infamy of the peace was more deeply and more sensibly felt.

AD 253: Popular Discontent; Victory and Revolt of Aemilianus; Gallus Abandoned and Slain

But the Romans were irritated to a still higher degree when they discovered that they had not even secured their repose, though at the expense of their honor. The dangerous secret of the wealth and weakness of the empire had been revealed to the world. New swarms of barbarians, encouraged (AD 253) by the success, and not conceiving themselves bound by the obligation, of their brethren, spread devastation through the Illyrian provinces, and terror as far as the gates of Rome. Aemilianus, governor of Pannonia and Maesia, assumed the defense of the monarchy, which seemed abandoned by the cowardly emperor. He rallied the scattered forces and revived the fainting spirits of the troops. The barbarians were unexpectedly attacked, routed, chased, and pursued beyond the Danube. The victorious leader distributed as a donation the money collected for the tribute, and the acclamations of the soldiers proclaimed him emperor on the field of battle. (Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 25, 26) Gallus, careless of the general welfare, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italy. In almost the same instant, he was told of the success, revolt, and rapid approach of his aspiring lieutenant. He advanced to meet him as far as the plains of Spoleto. When the armies came in sight of each other, the Gallus' soldiers compared the shameful conduct of their sovereign with the glory of his rival. They admired Aemilianus' valor, and were attracted by his liberality, for he offered a considerable increase of pay to all deserters. (Victor in Caesaribus) Gallus and his son Volusianus' murders put an end to the civil war; and the senate (AD 253, May) gave a legal sanction to the rights of conquest. The letters of Aemilianus to that assembly displayed a mixture of moderation and vanity. He assured them that he should resign the civil administration to their wisdom. He claimed to be satisfied with the quality of their general, and would in a short time assert the glory of Rome, and deliver the empire from all the barbarians both of the North and of the East. (Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 628) His pride was flattered by the applause of the senate. Medals are still extant, representing him with the name and attributes of Hercules the Victor, and Mars the Avenger. (Banduri *Numismata*, p. 94)

Valerian Is Acknowledged Emperor

If the new monarch possessed the abilities, he wanted the time necessary to fulfil these splendid promises. Less than 4 months intervened between his victory and fall.⁴⁴ He had vanquished Gallus, and sunk under the weight of a competitor more formidable. That unfortunate prince had sent Valerian, already distinguished by the honorable title of censor, to bring the legions of Gaul and Germany⁴⁵ to his aid. Valerian executed that commission with zeal and fidelity; and as he arrived too late to save his sovereign, he resolved to avenge him. The troops of Aemilianus, who still lay encamped in the plains of Spoleto, were awed by the sanctity of his character, but much more by the superior strength of his army. They were now as incapable of personal attachment as they had always been of constitutional principle. They therefore readily imbrued their hands in the blood of a prince who had so lately been the object of their partial choice (AD 253, Aug). The guilt was theirs, but the advantage was Valerian's. He obtained the possession of the throne through civil war, but with a degree of innocence singular in that age of revolutions. This was because he owed neither gratitude nor allegiance to his predecessor, whom he dethroned.

⁴⁴ Eutropius, 1. ix. c. 6, says *tertio mense* (third part). Eusebius omits this emperor.

⁴⁵ Zosimus, 1. i. p. 28. Eutropius and Victor station Valerian's army in Rhaetia.

Valerian was about 70 years of age⁴⁶ when he was invested with the purple, not by the caprice of the populace, or the clamors of the army, but by the unanimous voice of the Roman world. In his gradual ascent through the honors of the state, he had deserved the favor of virtuous princes, and had declared himself the enemy of tyrants.⁴⁷ His noble birth, his mild but unblemished manners, his learning, prudence, and experience, were revered by the senate and people. If mankind (according to the observation of an ancient writer) had been left at liberty to choose a master, their choice would most assuredly have fallen on Valerian.⁴⁸ Perhaps the merit of this emperor was inadequate to his reputation; perhaps the languor and, coldness of old age affected his abilities, or at least his spirit. The consciousness of his decline engaged him to share the throne with a younger and more active associate.⁴⁹ The emergency of the times demanded a general no less than a prince; and the experience of the Roman censor might have directed him where to bestow the Imperial purple, as the reward of military merit. But instead of making a judicious choice, which would have confirmed his reign and endeared his memory, Valerian, only consulted the dictates of affection or vanity. He immediately invested his son Gallienus with the supreme honors, a youth whose effeminate vices had been hitherto concealed by the obscurity of a private station. The joint government of the father and the son lasted about 7 years, and the sole administration of Gallienus continued about 8, years (AD 253—268). But the whole period was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. The Roman empire was at this time, and on every side, being attacked with blind fury by foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of domestic usurpers. Thus, we shall consult order and perspicuity, by pursuing not so much the doubtful arrangement of dates, as the more natural distribution of subjects. The most dangerous enemies of Rome, during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, were the Franks, Alemanni, Goths, and Persians. Under these general names, we may comprehend the adventures of less considerable tribes, whose obscure and uncouth names would only serve to oppress the memory and perplex the attention of the reader.

Inroads of the Barbarians Confederacy of the Franks, Who Invade Gaul, Ravage Spain, and Pass Over Into Africa

As the French posterity compose one of the greatest and most enlightened nations of Europe, the powers of learning and ingenuity have been exhausted in the discovery of their unlettered ancestors. To the tales of credulity have succeeded the systems of fancy. Every passage has been sifted, every spot has been surveyed, that might possibly reveal some faint traces of their origin. It has been supposed that Pannonia,⁵⁰ that Gaul, that the northern parts of Germany,⁵¹ gave birth to that celebrated colony of warriors. At length the most rational critics, rejecting the fictitious emigrations of ideal conquerors,

⁴⁶ He was about 70 at the time of his accession, or, more probably, of his death. Hist. August. p. 173. Tillemont, list. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 893, note 1.

⁴⁷ Inimicus Tyrannorum. Hist. August. p. 173. In the glorious struggle of the senate against Maximin, Valerian acted a very spirited part. Hist. August. p. 156. 288

⁴⁸ According to the distinction of Victor, he seems to have received the title of Imperator from the army and that of Augustus from the senate.

⁴⁹ From Victor and from the medals, Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 710) very justly infers that Gallienus was associated to the empire about the month of August of the year 253.

⁵⁰ Various systems have been formed to explain a difficult passage in Gregory of Tours, 1. ii. c. 9.

⁵¹ The Geographer of Ravenna, i. 11, by mentioning *Mauringania*, on the confines of Denmark, as the ancient seat of the Franks, gave birth to an ingenious system of Leibnitz.

have acquiesced in a sentiment whose simplicity persuades us of its truth.⁵² They suppose that, about the year 240 AD,⁵³ a new confederacy was formed under the name of Franks, by the old inhabitants of the Lower Rhine and the Weser. The present circle of Westphalia, the Landgraviate of Hesse, and the duchies of Brunswick and Luneburg, was the ancient seat of the Chauci, who, in their inaccessible morasses, defied the Roman arms.⁵⁴ The Cherusci were proud of Arminius' fame. The Catti were formidable by their own firm and intrepid infantry. Finally, there were several other tribes of inferior power and renown. (Tacit. Germania, c. 30, 37) The love of liberty was the ruling passion of these Germans; the enjoyment of it their best treasure. That word expressed their enjoyment, and was most pleasing to their ear. They deserved, assumed, and maintained the honorable epithet of Franks or Freeman, which concealed but did not extinguish, the peculiar names of the several states of the confederacy.⁵⁵ Tacit consent, and mutual advantage, dictated the first laws of the union. Habit and experience gradually cemented it. The league of the Franks may admit of some comparison with the Helvetic body. Every division, retaining its independent sovereignty, consulted with its brethren in the common cause, without acknowledging the authority of any supreme head or representative assembly.⁵⁶ But the principle of the two confederacies was extremely different. A peace of 200 years has rewarded the wise and honest policy of the Swiss. An inconstant spirit, the thirst of rapine, and a disregard to the most solemn treaties disgraced the character of the Franks.

The Romans had long experienced the daring valor of the people of Lower Germany. The union of their strength threatened Gaul with a more formidable invasion, and required the presence of Gallienus, the heir and colleague of imperial power. (Zosimus, 1. i. p. 27) While that prince and his infant son Salonius, displayed the majesty of the empire in the court of Treves, its armies were ably led by their general Posthumus. Although he later betrayed Valerian's family, Posthumus was ever faithful to the great interest of the monarchy. The treacherous language of panegyrics and medals darkly announces a long series of victories. Trophies and titles attest (if such evidence can attest) the fame of Posthumus, who is repeatedly styled the "conqueror of the Germans," and "the savior of Gaul."⁵⁷

But a single fact—the only one indeed of which we have any distinct knowledge—erases, in a great measure, these monuments of vanity and adulation. The Rhine, though dignified with the title of Safeguard of the Provinces, was an imperfect barrier against the daring spirit of enterprise with which the Franks were actuated. Their rapid devastation stretched from the river to the foot of the Pyrenees; nor were they stopped by those mountains. Spain, which had never dreaded the inroads of the Germans, was unable to resist. During 12 years, the greater part of the reign of Gallienus, that opulent country was the theatre of unequal and destructive hostilities. Tarragona, the flourishing capital of a peaceful province, was sacked and almost destroyed.⁵⁸ As late as the days of Orosius, who wrote in the 5th Century, wretched cottages, scattered amid the ruins of magnificent cities, still recorded the rage of the barbarians.⁵⁹ When the exhausted country no longer supplied a variety of plunder, the Franks seized on

⁵² Cluver. Germania Antiqua, 1. iii. c. 20. M. Freret, in the *Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions*, tom. xviii.

⁵³ Most probably under the reign of Gordian, from an accidental circumstance fully canvassed by Tillemont, tom. 111. pp. 710, 1181.

⁵⁴ Plin. Hist. Natur. xvi. 1. The panegyricists frequently allude to the morasses of the Franks.

⁵⁵ In a subsequent period most of those old names are occasionally mentioned. See some vestiges of them in Cluver. Germ. Antiq. 1. iii.

⁵⁶ Latin text omitted.

⁵⁷ M. de Brequigny (Mem. de l'Acad. tom. xxx.) has given us a very curious life of Posthumus. A series of the Augustan History from Medals and Inscriptions has been planned several times, and is still very much needed.

⁵⁸ Aurel. Victor, c. 33. Instead of *Paene direpto* (mostly destroyed), both the sense and the expression require *deleto* (blotted out). Though indeed, for different reasons, it is difficult to correct the text of the best and the worst writers.

⁵⁹ In the time of Ausonius (the end of the 4th Century) Ilerda or Lerida was in a very ruinous state (Auson. Epist. xxv. 58), which probably was the consequence of this invasion.

some vessels in the ports of Spain,⁶⁰ and transported themselves into Mauritania. The distant province was astonished with the fury of these barbarians, who seemed to fall from a new world, as their name, manners, and complexion were equally unknown on the coast of Africa. (Aurel. Victor. Eutrop. ix. 6.)

Origins of the Suevi and Alemanni and Their Invasion of Gaul and Italy

In that part of Upper Saxony beyond the Elbe, which is at present called the Marquisate of Lusace, there existed, in ancient times, a sacred wood, the awful seat of the superstition of the Suevi. None were permitted to enter the holy precincts, without confessing, by their servile bonds and suppliant posture, the immediate presence of the sovereign Deity. (Tacit. Germania, 38) Patriotism contributed as well as devotion to consecrate the Sonnenwald, or wood of the Semnonen. (Cluver. Germ. Antiq. iii. 25) It was universally believed that the nation had received its first existence on that sacred spot. At stated periods, the numerous tribes who gloried in the Suevic blood resorted thither by their ambassadors; and the memory of their common extraction was perpetuated by barbaric rites and human sacrifices. The wide extended name of Suevi filled the interior countries of Germany, from the banks of the Oder to those of the Danube. They were distinguished from the other Germans by their peculiar mode of dressing their long hair, which they gathered into a crude knot on the crown of the head. They delighted in an ornament that showed their ranks more lofty and terrible in the eyes of the enemy.⁶¹ Jealous as the Germans were of military renown, they all confessed the superior valor of the Suevi. The tribes of the Usipetes and Tencteri, who, with a vast army, encountered the dictator Caesar, declared that they esteemed it not a disgrace to have fled before a people to whose arms the immortal gods themselves were unequal. (Caesar in Bello Gallico, iv. 7)

In the reign of the emperor Caracalla, an innumerable swarm of Suevi appeared on the banks of the Mein, and in the neighborhood of the Roman provinces, in quest either of food, plunder, or glory. (Victor in Caracal.; Dion Cassius, lxxvii. p. 1350) The hasty army of volunteers gradually coalesced into a great and permanent nation, and, as it was composed from so many different tribes, assumed the name Alemanni, or *All-men*, to readily denote their various lineage and common bravery.⁶² The latter was soon felt by the Romans in many a hostile inroad. The Alemanni fought chiefly on horseback, but their cavalry was rendered still more formidable by a mixture of light infantry. These were selected from the bravest and most active of the youth, whom frequent exercise had inured to accompany the horseman in the longest march, the most rapid charge, or the most precipitate retreat.⁶³

Are Repulsed From Rome By the Senate and People

This warlike people of Germans had been astonished by the immense preparations of Alexander Severus, they were dismayed by the arms of his successor, a barbarian equal in valor and fierceness to themselves. But still hovering on the frontiers of the empire, they increased the general disorder that ensued after the death of Decius. They inflicted severe wounds on the rich provinces of Gaul; they were the first who removed the veil that covered the feeble majesty of Italy. A numerous body of the Alemanni penetrated across the Danube, and through the Rhaetian Alps, into the plains of Lombardy. They advanced as far as Ravenna, and displayed the victorious banners of barbarians almost in sight of

⁶⁰ Valesius is therefore mistaken in supposing that the Franks had invaded Spain by sea.

⁶¹ Latin text omitted. A proud separation!

⁶² This etymology (far different from those who amuse the fancy of the learned) is preserved by Asinius Quadratus, an original historian, quoted by Agathias, 1. c. 5.

⁶³ The Suevi engaged Caesar in this manner, and the maneuver deserved the conqueror's approval (Bell. Gall. i. 48).

Rome.⁶⁴ The insult and the danger rekindled in the senate some sparks of their ancient virtue. Both the emperors were engaged in far-distant wars: Valerian in the East, and Gallienus on the Rhine. All the hopes and resources of the Romans were in themselves. In this emergency, the senators resumed the republic's defense, drew out the Pretorian guards, who had been left to garrison the capital, and filled up their numbers by enlisting into the public service the bravest and most willing of Plebeians. The Alemanni, astonished with the sudden appearance of an army more numerous than their own, retired into Germany, laden with spoil. Their retreat was esteemed as a victory by the un-warlike Romans. (Zosimus, 1. i. p. 34.)

When Gallienus received the intelligence that his capital was delivered from the barbarians, he was much less delighted than alarmed with the courage of the senate, since it might one day prompt them to rescue the public from domestic tyranny, as well as from foreign invasion. His timid ingratitude was published to his subjects, in an edict which prohibited the senators from exercising any military employment, and even from approaching the camps of the legions. But his fears were groundless. The rich and luxurious nobles, sinking into their natural character, accepted, as a favor, this disgraceful exemption from military service. As long as they were indulged in the enjoyment of their baths, theatres, and villas, they cheerfully resigned the more dangerous cares of empire to the rough hands of peasants and soldiers.⁶⁵

Gallienus Contracts An Alliance with the Alemanni

Another invasion of the Alemanni, of a more formidable aspect, but more glorious event, is mentioned by a writer of the lower empire. Three hundred thousand of that warlike people are said to have been vanquished in a battle near Milan, by Gallienus in person, at the head of only ten thousand Romans. (Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 631) We may however, with great probability, ascribe this incredible victory either to the credulity of the historian or to some exaggerated exploits of one of the emperor's lieutenants. It was by arms of a very different nature that Gallienus endeavored to protect Italy from the fury of the Germans. He espoused Pipa, the daughter of a king of the Marcomanni, a Suevic tribe which was often confounded with the Alemanni in their wars and conquests.⁶⁶ To the father, as the price of his alliance, he granted an ample settlement in Pannonia. The native charms of unpolished beauty seem to have fixed the daughter in the affections of the inconstant emperor, and the bands of policy were more firmly connected by those of love. But the haughty prejudice of Rome still refused the name of marriage to the profane mixture of a citizen and a barbarian; and has stigmatized the German princess with the insulting title of Concubine of Gallienus. (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 398, etc.)

Inroads of the Goths

We have already traced the emigration of the Goths from Scandinavia, or at least from Prussia, to the mouth of the Borysthenes, and have followed their victorious arms from the Borysthenes to the Danube. Under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the frontier of the last-mentioned river was perpetually infested by the inroads of Germans and Sarmatians; but it was defended by the Romans with more than usual firmness and success. The provinces that were the seat of war recruited the armies of Rome with an inexhaustible supply of hardy soldiers; and more than one of these Illyrian peasants attained the station and displayed the abilities of a general. Though flying parties of the barbarians, who

⁶⁴ Hist. August. pp. 215, 216. Dexippus in the Excerpta Legationum, p. 8. Hieronyin. Chron. Orosius, vii. 22.

⁶⁵ Victor, in *Gallieno et Probo* (Gallienus and Honesty). His complaints breathe an uncommon spirit of freedom.

⁶⁶ One of the Victors calls him King of the Marcomanni; the other, of the Germans.

incessantly hovered on the banks of the Danube, penetrated sometimes to the confines of Italy and Macedonia, their progress was commonly checked, or their return intercepted, by the Imperial lieutenants.⁶⁷ But the great stream of the Gothic hostilities was diverted into a very different channel. The Goths, in their new settlement of the Ukraine, soon became masters of the northern coast of the Euxine. To the south of that inland sea were situated the soft and wealthy provinces of Asia Minor, which possessed all that could attract, and nothing that could resist, a barbarian conqueror.

Conquest of the Bosphorus by the Goths

The banks of the Borysthenes are only 60 miles from the narrow entrance⁶⁸ of the peninsula of Crim Tartary, known to the ancients by the name Chersonesus Taurica.⁶⁹ On that inhospitable shore, Euripides, embellishing with exquisite art the tales of antiquity, has placed the scene of one of his most affecting tragedies. (Euripides in Iphigenia in Taurid) The bloody sacrifices of Diana, the arrival of Orestes and Pylades, and the triumph of virtue and religion over savage fierceness, serve to represent a historical truth. Namely, that the Tauri, the original inhabitants of the peninsula, were, in some degree, reclaimed from their brutal manners by a gradual intercourse with the Grecian colonies which settled along the maritime coast. The little kingdom of Bosphorus, whose capital was situated on the Straits, through which the Maeotis communicates itself to the Euxine, was composed of degenerate Greeks and half-civilized barbarians. It subsisted, as an independent state, from the time of the Peloponnesian war,⁷⁰ was at last swallowed up by the ambition of Mithridates (Appian in Mithridat.), and, with the rest of his dominions, sunk under the weight of the Roman arms. From the reign of Augustus,⁷¹ the kings of Bosphorus were the humble, but not useless, allies of the empire. By presents, by arms, and by a slight fortification drawn across the Isthmus, they efficiently guarded the access of a country against the roving plunderers of Sarmatia, which, from its peculiar situation and convenient harbors, commanded the Euxine Sea and Asia Minor.⁷² As long as the scepter was possessed by a lineal succession of kings, they acquitted themselves of their important charge with vigilance and success. Domestic factions, and the fears, or private interest of obscure usurpers, who seized on the vacant throne, admitted the Goths into the heart of Bosphorus. With the acquisition of a superfluous waste of fertile soil, the conquerors obtained the command of a naval force sufficient to transport their armies to the coast of Asia. (Zosimus, i. i. p. 28) The ships used in the navigation of the Euxine were of a very singular construction They were slight flat-bottomed barks framed of timber only, without the least mixture of iron, and occasionally covered with a shelving roof, in case of a storm.⁷³ In these floating houses, the Goths carelessly trusted themselves to the mercy of an unknown sea, under the conduct of sailors pressed into the service, and whose skill and fidelity were equally suspicious. But the hopes of plunder had banished every idea of danger, and a natural fearlessness of temper supplied in their minds the more rational confidence which is the just result of knowledge and experience. Warriors of such a daring spirit must have often murmured against the cowardice of their guides, who required the strongest assurances of a settled calm before they would venture to embark; and would scarcely ever be

⁶⁷ Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus, in the Augustan History.

⁶⁸ It is about half a league (1-1/2 miles) in breadth. Genealogical History of the Tartars, p. 598.

⁶⁹ M. de Peyssonel, who had been French consul at Caffa, in his *Observations of the Barbarians*, qui ont habité les bords du Danube (who have lived on the Danube's banks).

⁷⁰ Strabo, l. vii. p. 309. The first kings of Bosphorus were the allies of Athens.

⁷¹ It was reduced by the arms of Agrippa. Orosius, vi. 21. Eutropius, vii. 9. The Romans once advanced within 3 days' march of the Tanais. Tacit. Annal. xii. 11.

⁷² See the Toxaris of Lucian, if we credit the sincerity and the virtues of the Scythian, who relates a great war of his nation against the kings of Bosphorus.

⁷³ Strabo, i. xi. Tacit. list. ill. 4l.—They were called *Camarae*.

tempted to lose sight of the land. Such, at least, is the practice of the modern Turks;⁷⁴ and they are probably not inferior in the art of navigation to the ancient inhabitants of Bosphorus.

First Naval Expedition of the Goths

The Goth fleet, leaving the coast of Circassia on the left hand, first appeared before Pityus,⁷⁵ the utmost limits of the Roman provinces; a city provided with a convenient port and fortified with a strong wall. Here they met with a resistance more obstinate than they had reason to expect from the feeble garrison of a distant fortress. They were repulsed; and their disappointment seemed to diminish the terror of the Gothic name. As long as Sucessianus, an officer of superior rank and merit, defended that frontier, all their efforts were ineffectual. But as soon as he was removed by Valerian to a more honorable but less important station, they resumed the attack of Pityus. By the destruction of that city, he obliterated the memory of their former disgrace. (Zosimus, L i. p. 30)

They Besiege and Take Trebizond

Circling round the eastern extremity of the Euxine Sea, the navigation from Pityus to Trebizond is about 300 miles.⁷⁶ The course of the Goths carried them in sight of the country of Colchis, so famous by the expedition of the Argonauts. They even attempted, though without success, to pillage a rich temple at the mouth of the river Phasis. Trebizond, celebrated in the retreat of the 10,000 as an ancient colony of Greeks (Xenophon. Anabasis, 1. iv. p. 348), derived its wealth and splendor from the generosity of the emperor Hadrian, who had constructed an artificial port on a coast left destitute by nature of secure harbors.⁷⁷ The city was large and populous; a double enclosure of walls seemed to defy the fury of the Goths, and the usual garrison had been strengthened by a reinforcement of 10,000 men. But there are no advantages capable of supplying the absence of discipline and vigilance. The numerous garrison of Trebizond, dissolved in riot and luxury, failed to guard their impregnable fortifications. The Goths soon discovered the supine negligence of the besieged, erected a lofty pile of tree branches, ascended the walls in the silence of the night, and entered the defenseless city, sword in hand. A general massacre of the people ensued, while the frightened soldiers escaped through the opposite gates of the town. The most holy temples and edifices were involved in a common destruction. The booty that fell into the hands of the Goths was immense. The wealth of the adjacent countries had been deposited in Trebizond, as in a secure place of refuge. The number of captives was incredible, as the victorious barbarians ranged without opposition through the extensive province of Pontus.⁷⁸ The rich spoils of Trebizond filled a great fleet of ships that had been found in the port. The robust youth of the seacoast were chained to the oars, and the Goths, satisfied with the success of their first naval expedition, returned in triumph to their new establishments in the kingdom of Bosphorus. (Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 32, 33)

Their Second Expedition

The second expedition of the Goths was undertaken with greater powers of men and ships. But

⁷⁴ See a very natural picture of the Euxine navigation, in the 16th letter of Tournefort.

⁷⁵ Arrian places the frontier garrison at Dioscurias, or Sebastopolis, 44 miles east of Pityus. The garrison of Phasis consisted in his time of only 400 foot. Periplus of the Euxine.

⁷⁶ Arrian (in Periplo Marie Euxin. p. 130) calls the distance 2,610 stadia.

⁷⁷ Arrian, p.129. The general observation is Tournefort's.

⁷⁸ Epistle of Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neo-Caesarea, quoted by Mascou. v. 37.

these steered a different course, disdainful of the exhausted provinces of Pontus. They followed the western coast of the Euxine, passed before the wide mouths of the Borysthenes, Niester, and Danube, and increased their fleet by the capture of a great number of fishing boats. They approached the narrow outlet through which the Euxine Sea pours its waters into the Mediterranean, and divides the continents of Europe and Asia. The garrison of Chalcedon was encamped near the temple of Jupiter Urius, on a promontory that commanded the entrance of the Strait. So dreaded were the invasions of the barbarians that this body of troops surpassed in number the Gothic army. But it was in numbers alone that they surpassed it. They deserted with precipitation their advantageous post, and abandoned the town of Chalcedon, most plentifully stored with arms and money, to the discretion of the conquerors. While they hesitated whether they should prefer the sea or land, Europe or Asia, for the scene of their hostilities, a traitorous fugitive pointed out Nicomedia, once the capital of the kings of Bithynia, as a rich and easy conquest. He guided the march, which was only 60 miles from the camp of Chalcedon (Itiner. Hierosolym. p. 572; Wesseling), directed the resistless attack, and partook of the booty. The Goths had learned sufficient policy to reward the traitor, whom they detested. Nice, Prusa, Apamlea, Cius, cities that had sometimes rivaled or imitated the splendor of Nicomedia, were involved in the same calamity, which, in a few weeks, raged without control through the whole province of Bithynia. Three hundred years of peace, enjoyed by the soft inhabitants of Asia, had abolished the exercise of arms and removed the apprehension of danger. The ancient walls had fallen into disrepair, and all the revenue of the most opulent cities was reserved for the construction of baths, temples, and theatres. (Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 32, 33)

Plunder of Bithynia; Goths' Retreat

When the city of Cyzicus withstood the utmost effort of Mithridates,⁷⁹ it was distinguished by wise laws, a naval power of two hundred galleys, and three arsenals: arms, military engines, and corn. (Strabo, 1. xii. p. 573) It was still the seat of wealth and luxury; but of its ancient strength nothing remained except the situation, in a little island of the Propontis, connected with the continent of Asia only by two bridges. From the recent sack of Prusa, the Goths advanced within 18 miles (Pocock's *Description of the East*, 1. ii. c. 23, 24) of the city, which they had devoted to destruction. However, the ruin of Cyzicus was delayed by a fortunate accident. The season was rainy, and Lake Apolloniates, the reservoir of all the springs of Mount Olympus, rose to an uncommon height. The little river of Rhyndacus, which issues from the lake, swelled into a broad and rapid stream, stopping the Goths' progress. Their retreat to the maritime city of Heraclea, where the fleet had probably been stationed, was attended by a long train of wagons, laden with the spoils of Bithynia, and was marked by the flames of Nice and Nicomedia, which they wantonly burned. (Zosimus, i. i. p. 33) Some obscure hints are mentioned of a doubtful combat that secured their retreat.⁸⁰ But even a complete victory would have been of little moment, as the approach of the autumnal equinox summoned them to hasten their return. To navigate the Euxine before the month of May, or after September, is esteemed by the modern Turks the most unquestionable instance of rashness and folly.⁸¹

Third Expedition of the Goths; They Pass the Bosphorus and Hellespont

When we are informed that the third fleet, equipped by the Goths in the ports of Bosphorus,

⁷⁹ He besieged the place with 400 galleys, 150,000 foot-soldiers, and a numerous cavalry. Plutarch in Lucul. Appian in Mithridat. Cicero pro Lege Maniliâ. c. 8.

⁸⁰ Syncellus tells an unintelligible story of Prince *Odenathus*, who defeated the Goths and was killed by Prince *Odenathus*.

⁸¹ Voyages de Chardin, tom. i. p. 45. He sailed with the Turks from Constantinople to Caffa.

consisted of 500 sailing ships,⁸² our ready imagination instantly computes and multiplies the formidable armament. However, Strabo judiciously assures us (Strabo, 1. xi. p. 495), that the piratical vessels used by the barbarians of Pontus and the Lesser Scythia were not capable of containing more than 25 or 30 men. We may safely therefore affirm that no more than 15,000 warriors embarked in this great expedition. Impatient of the limits of the Euxine, they steered their destructive course from the Cimmerian to the Thracian Bosphorus. When they had almost gained the middle of the Straits, they were suddenly driven back to the entrance. This lasted until a favorable wind springing up the next day, carried them in a few hours into the placid Lake Propontis. Their landing on the little island of Cyzicus was attended with the ruin of that ancient and noble city. From thence issuing again through the narrow passage of the Hellespont, they pursued their winding navigation amid the numerous islands scattered over the Archipelago, or the Aegean Sea. The assistance of captives and deserters must have been very necessary to pilot their vessels, and to direct their various incursions, as well on the coast of Greece as on that of Asia. At length the Gothic fleet anchored in the port of Piraeus, five miles distant from Athens (Pun. list. Natur. iii. 7), which had attempted to make some preparations for a vigorous defense. Cleodamus, one of the engineers employed by the emperor's orders to fortify the maritime cities against the Goths, had already begun to repair the ancient walls fallen to decay since the time of Sylla. The efforts of his skill were ineffectual, and the barbarians became masters of the native seat of the muses and the arts. But while the conquerors abandoned themselves to the license of plunder and drunkenness, their fleet, that lay with a slender guard in the harbor of Piraeus, was unexpectedly attacked by the brave Dexippus. He, along with the engineer Cleodamus from the sack of Athens, collected a hasty band of volunteers—peasants as well as soldiers—and in some measure avenged the calamities of his country.⁸³

Greece Ravaged and Italy Threatened

But this exploit, whatever luster it might shed on the declining age of Athens, served rather to irritate than to subdue the undaunted spirit of the northern invaders. A general conflagration blazed out at the same time in every district of Greece. Thebes and Argos, Corinth and Sparta, which had formerly waged such memorable wars against each other, were now unable to bring an army into the field, or even to defend their ruined fortifications. The rage of war, both by land and sea, spread from the eastern point of Sunium to the western coast of Epirus. The Goths had already advanced within sight of Italy, when the approach of such imminent danger awakened the indolent Gallienus from his dream of pleasure. The emperor appeared in arms; and his presence seems to have checked the ardor and divided the strength of the enemy. Naulobatus, a chief of the Heruli, accepted an honorable capitulation, entered with a large body of his countrymen into the service of Rome, and was invested with the ornaments of the consular dignity, which had never before been profaned by the hands of a barbarian.⁸⁴ Great numbers of the Goths, disgusted with the perils and hardships of a tedious voyage, broke into Maesia, with a design of forcing their way over the Danube to their settlements in the Ukraine. The wild attempt would have proved inevitable destruction, if the discord of the Roman generals had not opened to the barbarians the means of an escape.⁸⁵ The small remainder of this destroying host returned

⁸² Syncellus (p. 382) speaks of this expedition, as undertaken by the Heruli.

⁸³ Hist. August. p. 181. Victor, c. 33. Orosius, vii. 42. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 35. Zonaras, 1. xii. 635. Syncellus, p. 3132. It is not without some attention that we can explain and conciliate their imperfect hints. We can still discover some traces of the partiality of Dexippus, in the relation of his own and his countrymen's exploits.

⁸⁴ Syncellus, p. 382. This body of Heruli was for a long time faithful and famous.

⁸⁵ Claudius, who commanded on the Danube, thought with propriety and acted with spirit. His colleague was jealous of his fame. Hist. August. p. 181.

on board their vessels; and measuring back their way through the Hellespont and the Bosphorus, ravaged in their passage the shores of Troy, whose fame, immortalized by Homer, will probably survive the memory of the Gothic conquests. As soon as they found themselves in safety within the basin of the Euxine, they landed at Anchialus in Thrace, near the foot of Mount Haemus. After all their toils, they indulged themselves in the use of those pleasant and salutary hot baths. What remained of the voyage was a short and easy navigation. (Jornandes, c. 20) Such was the various fate of this third and greatest of their naval enterprises. It may seem difficult to conceive how the original body of 15,000 warriors could sustain the losses and divisions of so bold an adventure. But as their numbers were gradually wasted by the sword, shipwrecks, and the influence of a warm climate, they were perpetually renewed by troops of bandits and deserters. These flocked to the standard of plunder, and by a crowd of fugitive slaves, often of German or Sarmatian extraction, who eagerly seized the glorious opportunity of freedom and revenge. In these expeditions, the Gothic nation claimed a superior share of honor and danger; but the tribes that fought under the Gothic banners are sometimes distinguished and sometimes confounded in the imperfect histories of that age. As the barbarian fleets seemed to issue from the mouth of the Tanais, the vague but familiar Scythian name was frequently bestowed on the mixed multitude.⁸⁶

Ruin of the Temple of Ephesus; Conduct of Goths At Athens

In the general calamities of mankind, the death of an individual, however exalted, and the ruin of an edifice, however famous, are passed over with careless inattention. Yet we cannot forget that the temple of Diana at Ephesus, after having risen with increasing splendor from seven repeated misfortunes (Hist. August. p. 178; Jornandes, c. 20), was finally burned by the Goths in their third naval invasion. The arts of Greece, and the wealth of Asia, had conspired to erect that sacred and magnificent structure. It was supported by 127 marble columns of the Ionic order. They were the gifts of devout monarchs, each column being 60 feet high. The altar was adorned with the masterly sculptures of Praxiteles, who had, perhaps, selected from the favorite legends of the place the birth of the divine children of Latona, the concealment of Apollo after the slaughter of the Cyclops, and the clemency of Bacchus to the vanquished Amazons.⁸⁷ Yet the length of the temple of Ephesus was only 425 feet, about two-thirds of the measure of the Church of St. Peter's at Rome.⁸⁸ In the other dimensions, it was still more inferior to that sublime production of modern architecture. The spreading arms of a Christian cross require a much greater breadth than the oblong temples of the Pagans. And the boldest artists of antiquity would have been startled at the proposal of raising in the air a dome of the size and proportions of the Pantheon. The temple of Diana was, however, admired as one of the wonders of the world. Successive empires—Persian, Macedonian, and Roman—had revered its sanctity and enriched its splendor.⁸⁹ But the crude savages of the Baltic were destitute of a taste for the elegant arts, and they despised the ideal terrors of a foreign superstition.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Zosimus and the Greeks (as the author of the *Philopatris*) give the name of Scythians to those whom Jornandes, and the Latin writers, constantly represent as Goths.

⁸⁷ Strabo, l. xiv. p. 640. Vitruvius, l. i. c. 1, praefat. l. vii. Tacit. *Annal.* iii. 61. Plin, *Hist. Nat.* xxxvi. 14.

⁸⁸ The length of St. Peter's is 840 Roman palms; each palm is short of 9 English inches. *Greaves's Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 233; On the Roman foot.

⁸⁹ The policy, however, of the Romans induced them to abridge the extent of the sanctuary or asylum, which by successive privileges had spread itself two stadia round the temple. Strabo, l. xiv. p. 641. Tacit. *Annal.* iii. 60, etc.

⁹⁰ They offered no sacrifices to the Grecian gods. *Epistles of Gregory*. Thaummat.

Conquest of Armenia by the Persians

Another circumstance is related of these invasions which might deserve our notice were it not justly to be suspected as the fanciful conceit of a recent sophist. We are told that in the sack of Athens the Goths had collected all the libraries, and were on the point of setting fire to this funeral pile of Grecian learning, had not one of their chiefs, of more refined policy than his brethren, dissuaded them from the design. He profoundly observed, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms.⁹¹ The sagacious counselor (should the truth of the fact be admitted) reasoned like an ignorant barbarian. In the most polite and powerful nations, genius of every kind has displayed itself about the same period; and the age of science has generally been the age of military virtue and success.

Valerian Marches into the East

The new sovereigns of Persia, Artaxerxes and his son Sapor, had triumphed over the house of Arsaces. Of the many princes of that ancient race, Chosroes, king of Armenia, had alone preserved both his life and independence. He defended himself by the natural strength of his country; by the perpetual resort of fugitives and malcontents; by the alliance of the Romans, and, above all, by his own courage. Invincible in arms, during a 30-year-long war, he was at length assassinated by the emissaries of Sapor, king of Persia. The patriotic satraps of Armenia, who asserted the freedom and dignity of the crown, implored the protection of Rome in favor of Tiridates, the lawful heir. But the son of Chosroes was an infant, the allies were at a distance, and the Persian monarch advanced toward the frontier at the head of an irresistible force. Young Tindates, the future hope of his country, was saved by the fidelity of a servant, and Armenia continued above 27 years a reluctant province of the great monarchy of Persia.⁹² Elated with this easy conquest, and presuming on the distresses or the degeneracy of the Romans, Sapor obliged the strong garrisons of Carrhae and Nisibis to surrender, and spread devastation and terror on either side of the Euphrates.

AD 260: Valerian Taken Prisoner By Sapor, King of Persia, Who Overruns Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia

The loss of an important frontier, the ruin of a faithful and natural ally, and the rapid success of Sapor's ambition, affected Rome with a deep sense of the insult as well as of the danger. Valerian flattered himself that the vigilance of his lieutenants would sufficiently provide for the safety of the Rhine and of the Danube; but he resolved, notwithstanding his advanced age, to march in person to the defense of the Euphrates. During his progress through Asia Minor, the naval enterprises of the Goths were suspended, and the afflicted province enjoyed a transient and deceptive calm. He passed the Euphrates and met the Persian monarch near the walls of Edessa. There, he was vanquished and taken prisoner by Sapor. (AD 260) The particulars of this great event are darkly and imperfectly represented; yet by the glimmering light which is afforded us, we may discover a long series of imprudence, error, and deserved misfortunes on the side of the Roman emperor. He held implicit confidence in Macrinus,

⁹¹ Zonaras, i. xii. p. 635. Such an anecdote was perfectly suited to the taste of Montaigne. He makes use of it in his agreeable *Essay on Pedantry*, l. i. c. 24.

⁹² Moses Chorenensis, I. ii. c. 71, 73, 74. Zonaras, I. xii. p. 628. The authentic relation of the Armenian historian serves to rectify the confused account of the Greek. The latter talks of the children of Tiridates, who at that time was himself an infant.

his Pretorian prefect.⁹³ That worthless minister rendered his master formidable only to the oppressed subjects, and contemptible to Rome's enemies. (Zosimus, I. i. p. 33) By his weak or wicked counsels, the Imperial army was betrayed into a situation where valor and military skill were equally unavailing. (Hist. August. p. 174) The vigorous attempt of the Romans to cut their way through the Persian host was repulsed with great slaughter (Victor. in Caesar. Eutropius, ix. 7); and Sapor, who encompassed the camp with superior numbers, patiently waited till the increasing rage of famine and pestilence had insured his victory. The licentious murmurs of the legions soon accused Valerian as the cause of their calamities; their seditious clamors demanded an instant capitulation. An immense sum of gold was offered to purchase the permission of a disgraceful retreat. But the Persian, conscious of his superiority, refused the money with disdain. Detaining the deputies, he advanced in order of battle to the foot of the Roman rampart and insisted on a personal conference with the emperor. Valerian was reduced to the necessity of trusting his life and dignity to the faith of an enemy. The interview ended as it was natural to expect. The emperor was made a prisoner, and his astonished troops laid down their arms.⁹⁴ In such a moment of triumph, the pride and policy of Sapor prompted him to fill the vacant throne with a successor entirely dependent on his pleasure. Cyriades, an obscure fugitive of Antioch, stained with every vice, was chosen to dishonor the Roman purple. The will of the Persian victor could not fail of being ratified by the acclamations, however reluctant, of the captive army.⁹⁵

The Imperial slave was eager to secure the favor of his master by an act of treason to his native country. He conducted Sapor over the Euphrates, and by the way of Chalcis to the metropolis of the East. So rapid were the motions of the Persian cavalry that, if we may credit a very judicious historian,⁹⁶ the city of Antioch was surprised when the idle multitude was fondly gazing on the amusements of the theatre. The splendid buildings of Antioch, private as well as public, were either pillaged or destroyed, and the numerous inhabitants were put to the sword, or led away into captivity. (Zosimus, I. i. p. 35) The tide of devastation was stopped for a moment by the resolution of the high priest of Emesa. Arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, he appeared at the head of a great body of fanatic peasants, armed only with slings, and defended his god and his property from the sacrilegious hands of the followers of Zoroaster.⁹⁷ But the ruin of Tarsus, and many other cities, furnishes a melancholy proof that, except in this single instance, the conquest of Syria and Cilicia scarcely interrupted the progress of the Persian army. The advantages of the narrow passes of Mount Taurus were abandoned, in which an invader, whose principal force consisted in his cavalry, would have been engaged in a very unequal combat. Sapor was permitted to form the siege of Caesarea, the capital of Cappadocia, a city, though of the second rank, which was supposed to contain 400,000 inhabitants. Demosthenes commanded in the place, not so much by the commission of the emperor as in the voluntary defense of his country. For a long time he deferred its fate; and, when at last Caesarea was betrayed by a physician's treachery, he cut his way through the Persians, who had been ordered to exert their utmost diligence to take him alive. This heroic chief escaped the power of a foe who might either have honored or punished his obstinate valor. However, many thousands of his fellow-citizens were involved in a general massacre, and Sapor is accused of treating his prisoners with wanton and unrelenting cruelty.⁹⁸ Much should undoubtedly be allowed for national animosity, much for humbled pride and impotent revenge. Yet,

⁹³ Hist. August. p. 191. As Macrinus was an enemy to the Christians, they charged him with being a magician.

⁹⁴ Zosimus, I. i. p. 33. Zonaras, I. xii. p. 630. Peter Patricius in the *Excerpta Legat.* p. 20

⁹⁵ Hist. August. p. 185. The reign of Cyriades appears in that collection prior to the death of Valerian; but I have preferred a probable series of events to the doubtful chronology of a most inaccurate writer.

⁹⁶ The sack of Antioch, anticipated by some historians, is assigned, by the decisive testimony of Aimilianus Marcellinus, to the reign of Gallienus, xxiii. 5.

⁹⁷ John Malala, tom. i. p. 391. He corrupts this probable event by some fabulous circumstances.

⁹⁸ Zonaras, I. xii. p. 630. Deep valleys were filled up with the slain. Crowds of prisoners were driven to water like beasts, and many perished for want of food.

upon the whole, it is certain that the same prince who, in Armenia, had displayed the mild aspect of a legislator, showed himself to the Romans under the stern features of a conqueror. He despaired of making any permanent establishment in the empire, and sought only to leave behind him a wasted desert, while he transported into Persia the people and the treasures of the provinces.⁹⁹

At the time when the East trembled at the name of Sapor, he received a present not unworthy of the greatest kings: a long train of camels laden with the most rare and valuable merchandises. The rich offering was accompanied with an epistle, respectful but not servile, from Odenathus, one of the noblest and most opulent senators of Palmyra.

Who is this Odenathus (said the haughty victor, and he commanded that the presents should be cast into the Euphrates), that he thus insolently presumes to write to his lord? If he entertains a hope of mitigating his punishment, let him fall prostrate before the foot of our throne with his hands bound behind his back. Should he hesitate, swift destruction shall be poured on his head, on his whole race, and on his country. (Peter Patricius in Excerpt. Leg. p. 29.)

The desperate extremity to which the Palmyrenian was reduced called into action all the latent powers of his soul. He met Sapor, but he met him in arms. Infusing his own spirit into a little army collected from the villages of Syria,¹⁰⁰ and the tents of the desert,¹⁰¹ he hovered round the Persian host, harassed their retreat, carried off part of the treasure, and, what was dearer than any treasure, several of the women of the Great King. The king was at last obliged to cross the Euphrates with some marks of haste and confusion. (Peter Patricius, p. 25) By this exploit, Odenathus laid the foundations of his future fame and fortunes. The majesty of Rome, oppressed by a Persian, was protected by a Syrian or Arab of Palmyra.

Boldness and Success of Odenathus Against Sapor; Treatment of Valerian

The voice of history, which is often little more than the organ of hatred or flattery, reproaches Sapor with a proud abuse of the rights of conquest. We are told that Valerian, in chains, but invested with the Imperial purple, was exposed to the multitude, a constant spectacle of fallen greatness; and that whenever the Persian monarch mounted on horseback, he placed his foot on the neck of a Roman emperor. Notwithstanding all the protests of his allies, who repeatedly advised him to remember the change of fortune, to dread the returning power of Rome, and to make his illustrious captive the pledge of peace, not the object of insult, Sapor still remained inflexible. When Valerian sunk under the weight of shame and grief, his skin, stuffed with straw, and formed into the likeness of a human figure, was preserved for ages in the most celebrated temple of Persia. A more real monument of triumph than the fancied trophies of brass and marble so often erected by Roman vanity.¹⁰² The tale is moral and pathetic, but the truth of it may very fairly be called in question. The letters still extant from the princes of the East to Sapor are manifest forgeries.¹⁰³ Nor is it natural to suppose that a jealous monarch should, even in the person of a rival, thus publicly degrade the majesty of kings. Whatever treatment the

⁹⁹ Zosimus, l. i. p. 25, asserts that Sapor, had he not preferred spoil to conquest, might have remained master of Asia.

¹⁰⁰ Latin text omitted. Rufus Victor, *The Augustan History* (p. 192), and several inscriptions agree in making Odenathus a citizen of Palmyra.

¹⁰¹ He possessed so powerful an interest among the wandering tribes that Procopius (*Bell. Persic.* 1. ii. c. 5) and John Malala (tom. i. p. 391) style him prince of the Saracens.

¹⁰² The Pagan writers lament and the Christian insults the misfortunes of Valerian. Their various testimonies are accurately collected by Tillemont, tom, iii. p. 739, etc. So little has been preserved of eastern history before Mahomet that the modern Persians are totally ignorant of the victory of Sapor, an event so glorious to their nation. *Bibliothèque Orientale*.

¹⁰³ One of these epistles is from Artavasdes, king of Armenia. Since Armenia was then a province in Persia, the king, kingdom, and epistle must be fictitious.

unfortunate Valerian might experience in Persia, it is at least certain that the only emperor of Rome who had ever fallen into the hands of the enemy, languished away his life in hopeless captivity.

Administration of Gallienus

The emperor Gallienus, who had long supported with impatience the censorial severity of his father and colleague, received the intelligence of his misfortunes with secret pleasure and avowed indifference. "I knew that my father was a mortal," he said, "and since he has acted as becomes a brave man, I am satisfied." While Rome lamented the fate of her sovereign, the savage coldness of his son was extolled by the servile courtiers, as the perfect firmness of a hero and a stoic. (See his Life in the Augustan History.) It is difficult to paint the light, the various, the inconstant character of Gallienus, which he displayed without constraint, as soon as he became sole possessor of the empire. In every art that he attempted, his lively genius enabled him to succeed; and as his genius was destitute of judgment, he attempted every art, except the important ones of war and government. He was a master of several curious but useless sciences, a ready orator, an elegant poet,¹⁰⁴ a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and a most contemptible prince. When the great emergencies of the state required his presence and attention, he was engaged in conversation with the philosopher Plotinus,¹⁰⁵ wasting his time in trifling or licentious pleasures, preparing his initiation to the Grecian mysteries, or soliciting a place in the Areopagus of Athens. His profuse magnificence insulted the general poverty, and the solemn ridicule of his triumphs impressed a deeper sense of the public disgrace.¹⁰⁶ The repeated intelligence of invasions, defeats, and rebellions, he received with a careless smile; and singling out, with affected contempt, some particular production of the lost province, he carelessly asked whether Rome must be ruined, unless it was supplied with linen from Egypt, and Arras cloth from Gaul? There were, however, a few short moments in the life of Gallienus, when, exasperated by some recent injury, he suddenly appeared the intrepid soldier and the cruel tyrant; till, satiated with blood, or fatigued by resistance, he insensibly sunk into the natural mildness and indolence of his character.¹⁰⁷

The 30 Tyrants

At a time when the reins of government were held with so loose a hand, it is not surprising that a crowd of usurpers should start up in every province of the empire against the son of Valerian. It was probably some ingenious fancy, of comparing the 30 tyrants of Rome with the 30 tyrants of Athens, that induced the writers of the Augustan History to select that celebrated number, which has been

¹⁰⁴ There is still extant a very pretty Epithalamium, composed by Gallienus for the nuptials of his nephews.

¹⁰⁵ He was on the point of giving Plotinus a ruined city of Campania, to try the experiment of realizing Plato's Republic. Life of Plotinus, by Porphyry, in Fabricius's Biblioth. Graec. l. iv.

¹⁰⁶ A medal which bears the head of Gallienus has perplexed the antiquarians by its legend and reverse; the former *Gallienae Augustae*, the latter *Ubique Pax*. M. Spanheim supposes that the coin was struck by some of the enemies of Gallienus, and was designed as a severe satire on that effeminate prince. But as the use of irony may seem unworthy of the gravity of the Roman mint, M. de Vallemont has deduced from a passage of Trebellius Polio (Hist. August. p. 198) an ingenious and natural solution. Galliena was first cousin to the emperor. By delivering Africa from the usurper Celsus, she deserved the title of Augusta. On a medal in the French king's collection, we read a similar inscription of *Faustina Augusta* round the head of Marcus Aurelius. With regard to the *Ubique Pax*, it is easily explained by the vanity of Gallienus, who seized, perhaps, the occasion of some momentary calm. *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres*, Janvier 1700, pp. 21—34.

¹⁰⁷ This singular character has, I believe, been fairly transmitted to us. The reign of his immediate successor was short and busy; and the historians who wrote before the elevation of the family of Constantine could not have the most remote interest to misrepresent the character of Gallienus.

gradually received into a popular appellation.¹⁰⁸ But in every light the parallel is idle and defective. What resemblance can we discover between a council of 30 persons, the united oppressors of a single city, and an uncertain list of independent rivals, who rose and fell in irregular succession through the extent of a vast empire? Nor can the number 30 be completed, unless we include in the account the women and children who were honored with the Imperial title. The reign of Gallienus, distracted as it was, produced only 19 pretenders to the throne: Cyriades, Macrianus, Balista, Odenathus, and Zenobia in the east; in Gaul, and the western provinces, Posthumus, Lollianus, Victorinus and his mother Victoria, Marius, and Tetricus; in Illyricum and the confines of the Danube, Ingenuus, Regillianus, and Aureolus; in Pontus,¹⁰⁹ Saturninus; in Isauria, Trebellianus; Piso in Thessaly; Valens in Achaia; Aemilianus in Egypt; and Celsus in Africa. To illustrate the obscure monuments of the life and death of each individual would prove a laborious task, alike barren of instruction and of amusement. We may content ourselves with investigating some general characters that most strongly mark the condition of the times, and the manners of the men, their pretensions, motives, fate, and destructive consequences of their usurpation. (Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1163, reckons them somewhat differently.)

Their Birth

It is sufficiently known that the odious title of Tyrant was often employed by the ancients to express the illegal seizure of supreme power, without any reference to the abuse of it. Several of the pretenders, who raised the standard of rebellion against the emperor Gallienus, were shining models of virtue, and almost all possessed a considerable share of vigor and ability. Their merit had recommended them to the favor of Valerian, and gradually promoted them to the most important commands of the empire. The generals who assumed the title of Augustus were either respected by their troops for their able conduct and severe discipline, or admired for valor and success in war, or beloved for frankness and generosity. The field of victory was often the scene of their election. Even the armor-maker Manus, the most contemptible of all the candidates for the purple, was distinguished however by intrepid courage, matchless strength, and blunt honesty.¹¹⁰ His mean and recent trade cast indeed an air of ridicule on his elevation; but his birth could not be more obscure than was that of the greater part of his rivals, who were born of peasants, and enlisted in the army as private soldiers. In times of confusion, every active genius finds the place assigned him by Nature. In a general state of war, military merit is the road to glory and greatness. Of the 19 tyrants, Tetricus only was a senator; Piso alone was a noble. The blood of Numa, through 28 successive generations, ran in the veins of Calphurnius Piso,¹¹¹ who, by female alliances, claimed a right of exhibiting, in his house, the images of Crassus and of the great Pompey.¹¹² His ancestors had been repeatedly dignified with all the honors which the commonwealth could bestow; and of all the ancient families of Rome, the Calphurnian alone had survived the tyranny of the Caesars. The personal qualities of Piso added new luster to his race. The usurper Valens, by whose order he was killed, confessed, with deep remorse, that even an enemy ought to have respected the sanctity of Piso. Although he died in arms against Gallienus, the senate, with the emperor's generous

¹⁰⁸ Pollio expresses the minutest anxiety to complete the number.

¹⁰⁹ The place of his reign is somewhat doubtful; but there *was* a tyrant in Pontus, and we are acquainted with the seat of all the others.

¹¹⁰ Speech of Marina, in the Augustan History, p. 197. The accidental identity of names was the only circumstance that could tempt Pollio to imitate Sallust.

¹¹¹ Latin text omitted.

¹¹² Tacit. Annal. xv. 48. Gist. i. 15. In the former of these passages we may venture to change *paterna* into *materna*. In every generation, from Augustus to Alexander Severus, one or more Pisos appear as consuls. A Piso was deemed worthy of the throne by Augustus (Tacit. Annal. i. 13). A second headed a formidable conspiracy against Nero; and a third was adopted and declared Caesar by Galba. 332

permission, decreed the triumphal ornaments to the memory of so virtuous a rebel.¹¹³

Their Rebellion

The lieutenants of Valerian were grateful to the father, whom they esteemed. They disdained to serve the luxurious indolence of his unworthy son. The throne of the Roman world was unsupported by any principle of loyalty; and treason against such a prince might easily be considered as patriotism to the state. Yet if we examine with candor the conduct of these usurpers, it will appear that they were much oftener driven into rebellion by their fears than urged to it by their ambition. They dreaded the cruel suspicions of Gallienus, but they equally feared the capricious violence of their troops. If the dangerous favor of the army had imprudently declared them deserving of the purple, they were marked for sure destruction; and even prudence would counsel them to secure a short enjoyment of empire, and rather to try the fortune of war than to expect the hand of an executioner. When the clamor of the soldiers invested the reluctant victims with the ensigns of sovereign authority, they sometimes mourned in secret their approaching fate. "You have lost," said Saturninus on the day of his elevation. "You have lost a useful commander, and you have made a very wretched emperor." (Hist. August. p. 196)

Their Deaths

Saturninus' apprehensions were justified by the repeated experience of revolutions. Of the 19 tyrants who started up under the reign of Gallienus, there was not one who enjoyed a life of peace or a natural death. As soon as they were invested with the bloody purple, they inspired their adherents with the same fears and ambition which had occasioned their own revolt. Encompassed with domestic conspiracy, military sedition, and civil war, they trembled on the edge of precipices, in which, after a longer or shorter term of anxiety, they were inevitably lost. These precarious monarchs received, however, such honors as the flattery of their respective armies and provinces could bestow; but their claim, founded on rebellion, could never obtain the sanction of law or history. Italy, Rome, and the senate, constantly adhered to the cause of Gallienus, and he alone was considered as the sovereign of the empire. That prince condescended indeed to acknowledge the victorious arms of Odenathus, who deserved the honorable distinction, by the respectful conduct which he always maintained toward the son of Valerian. With the general applause of the Romans, and the consent of Gallienus, the senate conferred the title of Augustus on the brave Palmyrenian. They seemed to entrust him with the government of the East, which he already possessed in so independent a manner that, like a private succession, he bequeathed it to his illustrious widow Zenobia.¹¹⁴

Fatal Consequence of the These Usurpations

The rapid and perpetual transitions from the cottage to the throne, and from the throne to the grave, might have amused an indifferent philosopher; were it possible for a philosopher to remain indifferent amid the general calamities of human kind. The election of these precarious emperors, their power and their death, were equally destructive to their subjects and adherents. The price of their fatal elevation was instantly discharged to the troops by an immense donation drawn from the bowels of the exhausted people. However virtuous was their character, however pure their intentions, they found themselves reduced to the hard necessity of supporting their usurpation by frequent acts of rapine and cruelty.

¹¹³ Hist. August. p. 195. The senate, in a moment of enthusiasm, seems to have presumed on the support of Gallienus.

¹¹⁴ The association of the brave Palmyrenian was the most popular act of the whole reign of Gallienus. Hist. August. p. 180. 334

When they fell, they involved armies and provinces in their fall. There is still extant a most savage mandate from Gallienus to one of his ministers, after the suppression of Ingeuuus, who had assumed the purple in Illyricum. Says that soft but inhuman prince:

It is not enough that you exterminate such as have appeared in arms. The chance of battle might have served me just as well. The male sex of every age must be annihilated, provided that, in the execution of the children and old men, you can contrive means to save our reputation. Let every one die who has dropped an expression, who has entertained a thought against me, against me, the son of Valerian, the father and brother of so many princes.¹¹⁵ Remember that Ingeuuus was made emperor: tear, kill, and cut in pieces. I write to you with my own hand, and would inspire you with my own feelings. (Hist. August. p. 188)

While the public forces of the state were dissipated in private quarrels, the defenseless provinces lay exposed to every invader. The bravest usurpers were compelled, by the perplexity of their situation, to conclude ignominious treaties with the common enemy, to purchase with oppressive tributes the neutrality or services of the barbarians, and to introduce hostile and independent nations into the heart of the Roman monarchy.¹¹⁶

Disorders of Sicily; Tumults of Alexandria; Rebellion of the Isaurians

Such were the barbarians, and such the tyrants, who, under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, dismembered the provinces, and reduced the empire to the lowest pitch of disgrace and ruin, from whence it seemed impossible that it should ever emerge. As far as the barrenness of materials would permit, we have attempted to trace, with order and perspicuity, the general events of that calamitous period. There still remain some particular facts:

- I. The disorders of Sicily
- II. The tumults of Alexandria
- III. The Isaurian rebellion, which may serve to reflect a strong light on the horrid picture.

Whenever numerous troops of bandits, multiplied by success and impunity, publicly defy, instead of eluding the justice of their country, we may safely infer that the excessive weakness of the government is felt and abused by the lowest ranks of the community. The situation of Sicily preserved it from the barbarians; nor could the disarmed province have supported a usurper. The sufferings of that once flourishing and still fertile island were inflicted by baser hands. A licentious crowd of slaves and peasants reigned for a while over the plundered country, and renewed the memory of the servile wars of more ancient times.¹¹⁷ Devastation, of which the farmer was either the victim or the accomplice, must have ruined the agriculture of Sicily. As the principal estates were the property of the opulent senators of Rome, who often enclosed within a farm the territory of an old republic, it is not improbable that this private injury might affect the capital more deeply than all the conquests of the Goths or the Persians.

The foundation of Alexandria was a noble design, at once conceived and executed by the son of Philip. The beautiful and regular form of that great city, second only to Rome itself, comprehended a

¹¹⁵ Gallienus had given the titles of Caesar and Augustus to his son Saloninus, slain at Cologne by the usurper Posthumus. A second son of Gallienus succeeded to the name and rank of his elder brother. Valerian, the brother of Gallienus, was also associated to the empire; several other brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces of the emperor formed a very numerous royal family. Tillemont, tom. iii. and M. de Brequigny in the *Memoires de l'Academie*, tom. xxxii. p. 262.

¹¹⁶ Regillianus had some bands of Roxolani in his service; Posthumus a body of Franks. It was perhaps in the character of auxiliaries that the latter introduced themselves into Spain.

¹¹⁷ The Augustan History, p. 177, calls it *servile bellum* (polite slave). Diodor. Sicul. xxxiv.

circumference of 15 miles (Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 10). It was peopled by three hundred thousand free inhabitants, besides at least an equal number of slaves. (Diodor. Sicul. 1. xvii. p. 590. Edit. Wesseling) The lucrative trade of Arabia and India flowed through the port of Alexandria to the capital and provinces of the empire. Idleness was unknown. Some were employed in blowing of glass, others in weaving of linen, others again manufacturing the papyrus. Men and women of every age were engaged in tile pursuits of industry, nor did even the blind or the lame want occupations suited to their condition. (See a very curious letter of Hadrian in Aug. Hist. p. 245) But the people of Alexandria, a various mixture of nations, united the vanity and inconstancy of the Greeks with the superstition and obstinacy of the Egyptians. The most trifling occasion, a transient scarcity of meat or vegetables, the neglect of an accustomed salutation, a mistake of precedence in the public baths, or a religious dispute (such as the sacrilegious murder of a divine cat.—Diodor. Sicul. I. i.) were at any time sufficient to kindle a sedition among that vast multitude, whose resentments were furious and implacable.¹¹⁸ After the captivity of Valerian and the insolence of his son had relaxed the authority of the laws, the Alexandrians abandoned themselves to the ungoverned rage of their passions. Their unhappy country was the theatre of a civil war which continued—with a few short and suspicious truces—more than 12 years. (Dionysius apud Euseb. Hist. Ecc. v. vii. p. 21; Ammian. xxii. 16) All intercourse was cut off between the several quarters of the afflicted city, every street was polluted with blood, every building of strength converted into a citadel; nor did the tumults subside till a considerable part of Alexandria was irretrievably ruined. The spacious and magnificent district of Bruchion, with its palaces and museum, the residence of the kings and philosophers of Egypt, is described, above a century afterward, as already reduced to its present state of dreary solitude.¹¹⁹

The obscure rebellion of Trebellianus, who assumed the purple in Isauria, a petty province of Asia Minor, was attended with strange and memorable consequences. The pageant of royalty was soon destroyed by an officer of Gallienus. But his followers, despairing of mercy, resolved to shake off their allegiance, not only to the emperor, but to the empire, and suddenly returned to the savage manners from which they had never perfectly been reclaimed. Their craggy rocks, a branch of the wide-extended Taurus, protected their inaccessible retreat. The tillage of some fertile valleys (Strabo, 1. xii. p. 569) supplied them with necessaries, and a habit of rapine with the luxuries of life. In the heart of the Roman monarchy, the Isaurians long continued a nation of wild barbarians. Succeeding princes, unable to reduce them to obedience either by arms or policy, were compelled to acknowledge their weakness by surrounding the that hostile and independent spot with a strong chain of fortifications (Hist. August. p. 197), which often proved insufficient to restrain the incursions of these domestic foes. The Isaurians, gradually extending their territory to the seacoast, subdued the western and mountainous part of Cilicia, formerly the nest of those daring pirates, against whom the republic had once been obliged to exert its utmost force, under the conduct of the great Pompey.¹²⁰

Famine and Pestilence; Diminution of the Human Species

Our habits of thinking so fondly connect the order of the universe, with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with floods, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies fictitious or exaggerated. (Hist. August. p. 177) But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which eradicated the produce of the present, and the hope of future harvests.

¹¹⁸ August. p. 195. This long and terrible sedition was first occasioned by a dispute between a soldier and a townsman about a pair of shoes.

¹¹⁹ Scaliger. Animadver. ad Euseb. Chron. p. 258. Three dissertations of M. Bonamy, in the Mem. de l'Academie, tom. ix.

¹²⁰ See Cellarius, Geogr. Antiq. tom. ii. p. 137, upon the limits of Isauria.

Famine is almost always followed by epidemics, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must however have contributed to the furious plague which, from the year 250 to 265 AD, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family, of the Roman Empire. During one period, 5,000 persons a day died in Rome; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.¹²¹

We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of 40 and 70 had been equal to the whole sum of claimants, from 14 to 80 years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus.¹²² Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves that above half the people of Alexandria had perished. We could also venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, suspecting that war, pestilence, and famine, had claimed half of the human species in only a few years.¹²³

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¹²¹ Hist. August. p. 177. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 24. Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 623. Euseb. Chronicon. Victor in Epitom. Victor in Caesar. Entropius, ix. 5. Orosius, vii. 21. Vol. I.—15

¹²² Euseb, Hist. Eceles. vii. 21. The fact is taken from the Letters of Dionysius, who, in the time of those troubles, was bishop of Alexandria.

¹²³ In a great number of parishes 11,000 persons were found between 14 and 80; 5,365 between 40 and 70. See Buffon, Histoire Naturelle, tom. ii. p. 500.