

## CHAPTER XI

### Reign of Claudius—Defeat of the Goths—Victories, Triumph, and Death of Aurelian

#### *Ad 268: Aureolus Invades Italy*

Under the deplorable reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the empire was oppressed and almost destroyed by the soldiers, tyrants, and barbarians. It was saved by a series of great princes, who derived their obscure origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum. Within a period of about 30 years, Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian and his colleagues, triumphed over the foreign and domestic enemies of the state, re-established, with military discipline, the strength of the frontiers, and deserved the glorious title of Restorers of the Roman world.

The removal of an effeminate tyrant made way for a succession of heroes. The indignation of the people imputed all their calamities to Gallienus, and the far greater part were, indeed, the consequence of his dissolute manners and careless administration. He was even destitute of a sense of honor, which so frequently supplies the absence of public virtue. And as long as he was permitted to enjoy the possession of Italy, a victory of the barbarians, the loss of a province, or the rebellion of a general, seldom disturbed the tranquil course of his pleasures. At length (AD 268), a considerable army, stationed on the Upper Danube, invested their leader Aureolus with the Imperial purple. He ignored the confined and barren reign over the mountains of Rhaetia, crossed the Alps, occupied Milan, threatened Rome, and challenged Gallienus to dispute in the field the sovereignty of Italy. The emperor, provoked by the insult, and alarmed by the instant danger, suddenly exerted that latent vigor which sometimes broke through the indolence of his temper. Forcing himself from the luxury of the palace, he appeared in arms at the head of his legions, and advanced beyond the Po to encounter his competitor. The corrupted name of Pontirolo<sup>1</sup> still preserves the memory of a bridge over the Adda, which, during the action, must have proved an object of the utmost importance to both armies. The Rhaetian usurper, after receiving a total defeat and a dangerous wound, retired into Milan. The siege of that great city was immediately formed; the walls were battered with every engine in use among the ancients; and Aureolus, doubtful of his internal strength, and hopeless of foreign succors, already anticipated the fatal consequences of unsuccessful rebellion.

#### *Aureolus Defeated and Besieged At Milan; Death of Gallienus*

His last resource was an attempt to seduce the loyalty of the besiegers. He scattered liars through their camp, inviting the troops to desert an unworthy master, who sacrificed the public happiness to his luxury, and the lives of his most valuable subjects to the slightest suspicions. The arts of Aureolus spread fears and discontent among the principal officers of his rival. A conspiracy was formed by Heraclianus, the Pretorian prefect, by Marcian, a general of rank and reputation, and by Cecrops, who commanded a numerous body of Dalmatian guards. The death of Gallienus was resolved; and notwithstanding their desire of first terminating the siege of Milan, the extreme danger which accompanied every moment's delay obliged them to hasten the execution of their daring purpose. At a late hour of the night (March 20, AD 268), but while the emperor still protracted the pleasures of the table, an alarm was suddenly given that Aureolus, at the head of all his forces, had made a desperate sally from the town. Gallienus, who was never deficient in personal bravery, started from his silken

<sup>1</sup> *Pons Aureoli*, 13 miles from Bergamo, and 32 from Milan. Cluver. *Italia Antiq.* tom. i. p. 245. Near this place, in the year 1703, the obstinate battle of Cassano was fought between the French and Austrians. The excellent relation of the Chevalier de Folard, who was present, gives a very distinct idea of the ground. Polybe de Folard, tom. iii. pp. 223—248.

couch, and, without allowing himself time either to put on his armor or to assemble his guards, mounted his horse, and rode full speed toward the supposed place of the attack. Encompassed by his declared or concealed enemies, he soon, amid the nocturnal tumult, caught a mortal arrow from an unknown hand. Before he expired, a patriotic sentiment rising in the mind of Gallienus induced him to name a deserving successor, and it was his last request that the Imperial ornaments should be delivered to Claudius, who then commanded a detached army in the neighborhood of Pavia. The report, at least, was diligently propagated and the order cheerfully obeyed by the conspirators, who had already agreed to place Claudius on the throne. On first hearing of the emperor's death, the troops expressed some suspicion and resentment, till the one was removed, and the other assuaged, by a bribe of 20 pieces of gold to each soldier. They then ratified the election, and acknowledged the merit of their new sovereign.<sup>2</sup>

The obscurity which covered the origin of Claudius, though it was afterward embellished by some flattering fictions,<sup>3</sup> sufficiently betrays the modest roots of his birth. We can only discover that he was a native of one of the provinces bordering on the Danube; that his youth was spent in arms, and that his modest valor attracted the favor and confidence of Decius. The senate and people already considered him as an excellent officer, equal to the most important trusts; and censured the inattention of Valerian, who suffered him to remain in the subordinate station of a tribune. But it was not long before that emperor distinguished the merit of Claudius. He declared him general and chief of the Illyrian frontier, with the command of all the troops in Thrace, Maesia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, the appointments of the prefect of Egypt, the establishment of the proconsul of Africa, and the sure prospect of the consulship. By his victories over the Goths, he deserved from the senate the honor of a statue, and excited the jealous apprehensions of Gallienus. It was impossible that a soldier could esteem so dissolute a sovereign, nor is it easy to conceal a just contempt. Some unguarded expressions which dropped from Claudius were officially transmitted to the royal ear. The emperor's answer to an officer of confidence describes in very lively colors his own character and that of the times:

“There is not anything capable of giving me more serious concern than the intelligence contained in your last dispatch;<sup>4</sup> that some malicious suggestions have indisposed toward us the mind of our friend and parent Claudius. As you regard your allegiance, use every means to appease his resentment, but conduct your negotiation with secrecy; let it not reach the knowledge of the Dacian troops; they are already provoked, and it might inflame their fury. I myself have sent him some presents—be it your care that he accepts them with pleasure. Above all, let him not suspect I am made acquainted with his imprudence. The fear of my anger might urge him to desperate counsels.”

The presents which accompanied this humble epistle, in which the monarch solicited a reconciliation with his discontented subject, consisted of a considerable sum of money, a splendid wardrobe, and a valuable service of silver and gold plate.<sup>5</sup> By such arts Gallienus softened the indignation and dispelled the fears of his Illyrian general; and, during the remainder of that reign, the formidable sword of Claudius was always drawn in the cause of a master whom he despised. At last, indeed, he received from the conspirators the bloody purple of Gallienus, but he had been absent from

<sup>2</sup> On the death of Gallienus, see Trebellius Pollio in *Hist. August.* p. 181. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 37. Zonaras. 1. xii. p. 634. Eutrop. ix. 11, Aurelius Victor in *Epitom. Victor in Caesar.* I have compared and blended them all, but have chiefly followed Aurelius Victor. who seems to have had the best memoirs.

<sup>3</sup> Some supposed him, oddly enough, to be a bastard of the younger Gordian. Others took advantage of the province of Dardania, to deduce his origin from Dardanus, and the ancient kings of Troy.

<sup>4</sup> *Notoria*, a periodical and official dispatch which the emperors received from the *frumentarii*, or agents dispersed through the provinces.

<sup>5</sup> *Hist. August.* p. 208. Gallienus describes the plate, vestments, etc., like a man who loved and understood those splendid trifles.

their camp and counsels. However he may have applauded the deed, we may candidly presume that he was innocent of its knowledge.<sup>6</sup> When Claudius ascended the throne he was about 54 years of age.

### *Death of Aureolus*

The siege of Milan was still continued, and Aureolus soon discovered that the success of his artifices had only raised up a more determined adversary. He attempted to negotiate with Claudius a treaty of alliance and partition. "Tell him," replied the intrepid emperor, "that such proposals should have been made to Gallienus. He, perhaps, might have listened to them with patience, and accepted a colleague as despicable as himself."<sup>7</sup> This stern refusal, and a last unsuccessful effort, obliged Aureolus to yield the city and himself to the discretion of the conqueror. The judgment of the army pronounced him worthy of death, and Claudius, after a feeble resistance, consented to the execution of the sentence. Nor was the zeal of the senate less ardent in the cause of their new sovereign. They ratified, perhaps with a sincere transport of zeal, the election of Claudius; and as his predecessor had shown himself the personal enemy of their order they exercised tinder the name of justice a severe revenge against, his friends and family. The senate was permitted to discharge the ungrateful office of punishment, and the emperor reserved for himself the pleasure and merits of obtaining by his intercession a general act of indemnity.<sup>8</sup>

### *Character of the Emperor Claudius*

Such ostentatious clemency discovers less of the real character of Claudius than a trifling circumstance in which he seems to have consulted only the dictates of his heart. The frequent rebellions of the provinces had involved almost every person in the guilt of treason, almost every estate in the case of confiscation; and Gallienus often displayed his liberality, by distributing among his officers the property of his subjects. On the accession of Claudius, an old woman threw herself at his feet, and complained that a general of the late emperor had obtained an arbitrary grant of her patrimony. This general was Claudius himself, who had not entirely escaped the contagion of the times. The emperor blushed at the reproach, but deserved the confidence which she had reposed in his equity. The confession of his fault was accompanied with immediate and ample restitution. (Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 137)

### *He Undertakes the Reformation of the Army*

In the arduous task which Claudius had undertaken of restoring the empire to its ancient splendor, it was first necessary to revive among his troops a sense of order and obedience. With the authority of a veteran commander, he represented to them that the relaxation of discipline had introduced a long train of disorders, the effects of which were at length experienced by the soldiers themselves. He said that a people ruined by oppression and indolent from despair, could no longer supply luxury or even subsistence to a large army. Also, the danger of each individual had increased with the despotism of the military order, since princes who tremble on the throne will guard their safety by the instant sacrifice of

<sup>6</sup> 6 Julian (Orat. i. p. 6) affirms that Claudius acquired the empire in a just and even holy manner. But we may distrust a kinsman's partiality.

<sup>7</sup> Hist. August. p. 203. There are some trifling differences concerning the circumstances of the last defeat and death of Aureolus.

<sup>8</sup> Aurelius Victor in Gallien. The people loudly prayed for the damnation of Gallienus. The senate decreed that his relations and servants should be thrown down headfirst from the Gemonian stairs. An obnoxious officer of the revenue had his eyes torn out while under examination.

every obnoxious subject. The emperor sermonized on the mischief of a lawless caprice which the soldiers could only gratify at the expense of their own blood. As their seditious elections had so frequently been followed by civil wars, which consumed the flower of the legions either in the field of battle or in the cruel abuse of victory. He painted in the liveliest colors the exhausted state of the treasury, the desolation of the provinces, the disgrace of the Roman name, and the insolent triumph of rapacious barbarians. It was against those barbarians, he declared, that he intended to point the first effort of their arms. Tetricus might reign over the West for a time, and even Zenobia might preserve the dominion of the East.<sup>9</sup> These usurpers were his personal adversaries. Nor could he think of indulging any private resentment till he had saved an empire whose impending ruin would, unless it was timely prevented, crush both the army and the people.

### *AD 269: The Goths Invade the Empire*

The various nations of Germany and Sarmatia, who fought under the Gothic standard, had (AD 269) already collected an armament more formidable than any which had yet issued from the Euxine. On the banks of the Niester, one of the great rivers that discharge themselves into that sea, they constructed a fleet of 2,000 or even of 6,000 vessels.<sup>10</sup> Incredible they may seem, these numbers would have been insufficient to transport their pretended army of 320,000 barbarians. Whatever might be the real strength of the Goths, the vigor and success of the expedition were not adequate to the greatness of the preparations. In their passage through the Bosphorus, the unskilled pilots were overpowered by the violence of the current; and while the multitude of their ships were crowded in a narrow channel, many were dashed against each other or against the shore. The barbarians made several descents on the coasts both of Europe and Asia. But the open country was already plundered, and they were repulsed with shame and loss from the fortified cities which they assaulted. A spirit of discouragement and division arose in the fleet, and some of their chiefs sailed away toward the islands of Crete and Cyprus. But the main body, pursuing a more steady course, anchored at length near the foot of Mount Athos, and assaulted the city of Thessalonica, the wealthy capital of all the Macedonian provinces. Their attacks, in which they displayed a fierce but artless bravery, were soon interrupted by the rapid approach of Claudius, hastening to a scene of action that deserved the presence of a warlike prince at the head of the remaining powers of the empire. Impatient for battle, the Goths immediately broke up their camp, relinquished the siege of Thessalonica, left their navy at the foot of Mount Athos, traversed the hills of Macedonia, and pressed forward to engage the last defense of Italy.

### *Distress and Firmness of Claudius*

We still possess an original letter addressed by Claudius to the senate and people on this memorable occasion. Said the emperor,

Conscript fathers, know that 320,000 Goths have invaded the Roman territory. If I vanquish them, your gratitude will reward my services. Should I fall, remember that I am the successor of Gallienus. The whole republic is fatigued and exhausted. We shall fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, Regillianus, Lollianus, Posthumus, Celsus, and a thousand others, whom a just contempt for Gallienus provoked into rebellion. We are in want of darts, spears, and shields. The strength of the empire, Gaul, and Spain, are usurped by Tetricus, and we blush to acknowledge that the archers of the East serve under the banners of Zenobia. Whatever we shall perform will be sufficiently

<sup>9</sup> Zonaras on this occasion mentions Posthumus; but the registers of the senate (Hist. August. p. 203) prove that Tetricus was already emperor of the western provinces.

<sup>10</sup> The Augustan History mentions the smaller, Zonaras the larger, number; the lively fancy of Montesquieu induced him to prefer the latter.

great.—Trebell. Pollio in Hist. August. p. 204.

The melancholy firmness of this epistle announces a hero careless of his fate, conscious of his danger, but still deriving a well-grounded hope from the resources of his own mind.

#### *AD 270: His Victory Over the Goths*

The event surpassed his own expectations and those of the world. By the most signal victories he delivered the empire from this host of barbarians, and was distinguished by posterity under the glorious title of the Gothic Claudius. The imperfect historians of an irregular war<sup>11</sup> do not enable us to describe the order and circumstances of his exploits. However, if we could be indulged in the allusion, we might distribute into three acts this memorable tragedy.

1. The decisive battle was fought near Naissus, a city of Dardania. The legions at first gave way, oppressed by numbers, and dismayed by misfortunes. Their ruin was inevitable, had not the abilities of their emperor prepared a seasonable relief. A large detachment rising out of the secret and difficult passes of the mountains, which, by his order, they had occupied, suddenly assailed the rear of the victorious Goths. The favorable instant was improved by the activity of Claudius. He revived the courage of his troops, restored their ranks, and pressed the barbarians on every side. Fifty thousand men are reported to have been slain in the battle of Naissus. Several large bodies of barbarians, covering their retreat with a movable fortification of wagons, retired, or rather escaped, from the field of slaughter.

2. We may presume that some insurmountable difficulty, the fatigue, perhaps, or the disobedience, of the conquerors, prevented Claudius from destroying the Goths in a single day. The war was diffused over time provinces of Maesia, Thrace, and Macedonia, and its operations drawn out into a variety of marches, surprises, and tumultuous engagements, as well by sea as by land. When the Romans suffered any loss, it was commonly occasioned by their own cowardice or rashness; but the superior talents of the emperor, his perfect knowledge of the country, and his judicious choice of measures as well as officers, assured on most occasions the success of his arms. The immense booty, the fruit of so many victories, consisted for the greater part of cattle and slaves. A select body of the Gothic youth was received among the Imperial troops; the remainder was sold into servitude; and so considerable was the number of female captives that every soldier obtained to his share two or three women. A circumstance from which we may conclude that the invaders entertained some designs of settlement as well as of plunder; since even in a naval expedition they were accompanied by their families.

3. The loss of their fleet, which was either taken or sunk, had intercepted the retreat of the Goths. A vast circle of Roman posts skillfully distributed, firmly supported, and gradually closing toward a common center, forced the barbarians into the most inaccessible parts of Mount Haemus, where they found a safe refuge, but a very scanty subsistence. During the course of a rigorous winter, in which they were besieged by the emperor's troops, famine and pestilence, desertion and the sword, continually diminished the imprisoned multitude. On the return of spring (AD 270), nothing appeared in arms except a hardy and desperate band, the remnant of that mighty host which had embarked at the mouth of the Niester.

<sup>11</sup> Hist. August. in Claud. Aurelian. et Prob. Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 38—42. Zonaras, i. xii. p. 638. Aurel. Victor in Epitom. Victor Junior in Caesar, Eutrop. ix. 11. Euseb. in Citron.

### *Death of Claudius*

The pestilence which swept away such numbers of the barbarians at length proved fatal to their conqueror. After a short but glorious reign of two years, Claudius expired at Sirmium, amid the tears and acclamations of his subjects. In his last illness, he convened the principal officers of the state and army, and in their presence recommended Aurelian, one of his generals, as the most deserving of the throne, and the best qualified to execute the great design which he himself had been permitted only to undertake. The virtues of Claudius, his valor, affability,<sup>12</sup> justice, and temperance, his love of fame and of his country, place him in that short list of emperors who added luster to the Roman purple. Those virtues, however, were celebrated with peculiar zeal and complacency by the courtly writers of the age of Constantine, who was the great-grandson of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius. The voice of flattery was soon taught to repeat, that the gods, who so hastily had snatched Claudius from the earth, rewarded his merit and piety by the perpetual establishment of the empire in his family.<sup>13</sup>

### *Claudius Recommends Aurelian As His Successor*

Notwithstanding these oracles, the greatness of the Flavian family (a name which it had pleased them to assume) was deferred more than 20 years. The elevation of Claudius occasioned the immediate ruin of his brother Quintilius, who possessed insufficient moderation or courage to descend into the private station to which the patriotism of the late emperor had condemned him. Without delay or reflection, he assumed the purple at Aquileia, where he commanded a considerable force; and though his reign lasted only 17 days, he had time to obtain the sanction of the senate and to experience a mutiny of the troops. As soon as he was informed that the great army of the Danube had invested the well-known valor of Aurelian with Imperial power, he sunk under the fame and merit of his rival. Ordering his veins to be opened, prudently withdrew himself from the unequal contest.<sup>14</sup>

### *Origin and Services of Aurelian*

The general design of this work will not permit us minutely to relate the actions of every emperor after he ascended the throne, much less to deduce the various fortunes of his private life. We shall only observe, that the father of Aurelian was a peasant of the territory of Sirmium, who occupied a small farm, the property of Aurelius, a rich senator. His warlike son enlisted in the troops as a common soldier, successively rose to the rank of a centurion, a tribune, the prefect of a legion, the inspector of the camp, the general, or, as it was then called, the duke, of a frontier. At length, during the Gothic war, he exercised the important office of commander-in-chief of the cavalry. In every station he distinguished himself by matchless valor,<sup>15</sup> rigid discipline, and successful conduct. He was invested with the consulship by the emperor Valerian, who styles him, in the pompous language of that age, the deliverer of Illyricam, the restorer of Gaul, and the rival of the Scipios. At the recommendation of

<sup>12</sup> According to Zonaras (l. xii. p. 638), before his death, Claudius invested him with the purple; but this singular fact is rather contradicted than confirmed by other writers.

<sup>13</sup> Life of Claudius by Pollio, and the orations of Mamertinus, Eumenius, and Julian. *Caesars of Julian*, p. 313. In Julian it was not adulation, but superstition and vanity.

<sup>14</sup> Zosimus, l. i. p. 42. Pollio (*Hist. August. P.* 207) allows him virtues, and says that, like Pertinax, he was killed by the licentious soldiers. According to Dexippus, he died of a disease.

<sup>15</sup> Theoclius (as quoted in the *Augustan History*, p. 211) affirms that in one day he killed, with his own hand, 48 Sarmatians, and in several subsequent engagements 930. This heroic valor was admired by the soldiers, and celebrated in their crude songs, the burden of which was *mille, mille, mille occidit* (thousand, thousand, thousand killings).

Valerian, a senator of the highest rank and merit, Ulpus Crinitus, whose blood was derived from the same source as that of Trajan, adopted the Pannonian peasant, gave him his daughter in marriage, and relieved with his ample fortune the honorable poverty which Aurelian had preserved inviolate.<sup>16</sup>

### *His Successful Reign*

The reign of Aurelian only lasted about 4 years and 9 months. However, every instant of that short period was filled by some memorable achievement. He put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, and destroyed the proud monarchy which Zenobia had erected in the East, on the ruins of the afflicted empire.

### *Severe Discipline*

It was the rigid attention of Aurelian, even to the minutest articles of discipline, which bestowed such uninterrupted success on his arms. His military regulations are contained in a very concise epistle to one of his inferior officers, who is commanded to enforce them, as he wishes to become a tribune or as he is desirous to live. Gaming, drinking, and the arts of divination, were severely prohibited. Aurelian expected that his soldiers should be modest, frugal, and laborious; that their armor should be constantly kept bright, their weapons sharp, their clothing and horses ready for immediate service. They should live in their quarters with chastity and sobriety, without damaging the corn fields, without stealing even a sheep, fowl, or bunch of grapes, without exacting from their landlords either salt, or oil, or wood. "The public allowance," continues the emperor, "is sufficient for their support; their wealth should be collected from the spoil of the enemy, not from the tears of the provincials."<sup>17</sup> A single instance will serve to display the rigor, and even cruelty, of Aurelian. One of the soldiers had seduced the wife of his host. The guilty wretch was fastened to two trees forcibly drawn toward each other, and his limbs were torn asunder by their sudden separation. A few such examples impressed a salutary consternation. The punishments of Aurelian were terrible, but he had seldom occasion to punish more than once the same offense. His own conduct gave a sanction to his laws, and the seditious legions dreaded a chief who had learned to obey, and who was worthy to command.

### *Aurelian Concludes A Treaty With The Goths*

The death of Claudius had revived the fainting spirit of the Goths. The troops which guarded the passes of Mount Haemus and the banks of the Danube, had been drawn away by the apprehension of a civil war. It seems probable that the remaining body of the Gothic and Vandalic tribes embraced the favorable opportunity, abandoned their settlements of the Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with new multitudes the destroying host of their countrymen. Their united numbers were at length encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and doubtful conflict ended only with the approach of night. (Zosim. 1. i. p. 45) Exhausted by so many calamities, which they had mutually endured and inflicted during a 20-year war, the Goths and the Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barbarians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to whose suffrage the

<sup>16</sup> Acholius (ap. Hist. August. p. 213) describes the ceremony of the adoption, as it was performed at Byzantium, in the presence of the emperor and his great officers.

<sup>17</sup> Hist. August. p. 211. This laconic epistle is truly the work of a soldier; it abounds with military phrases and words, some of which is difficult to understand. *Ferramenta samiata* is well explained by Salmasius. The former word means all offensive weapons, and is contrasted with *Arma*, defensive armor. The latter signifies keen and well sharpened.

prudence of Aurelian referred the decision of that important question. The Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of 2,000 auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expense. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity that when a party of 500 men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements. It is, however, not unlikely, that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs, contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person; to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education, and by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections.<sup>18</sup>

### *He Gives The Goths the Province of Dacia*

But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals.<sup>19</sup> His manly judgment convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and numbers to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry, and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master.<sup>20</sup> These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced, by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilized life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the North. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome, and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This mixed colony, which filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honor of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time the lucky though accidental resemblance of the name of Gaeta infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion that, in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamoixis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dexippus (ap. Excerpta Legat. p. 12) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths and discover their secrets. Hist. August. p. 247.

<sup>19</sup> Hist. August. p. 222. Eutrop. ix. 15 Sextus Rufus, c. 9. Lactantius de mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.

<sup>20</sup> The Wallachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language, and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. A Mem. Of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. Xxx.

<sup>21</sup> See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however (c. 22), maintained a short independence between the rivers Marisia and Crissia (Maros and Keres) which fell into the Teiss.

### *War With the Alemanni, Who Invade Italy*

While the vigorous and moderate conduct of Aurelian restored the Illyrian frontier, the nation of the Alemanni<sup>22</sup> violated the conditions of peace, which either Gallienus had purchased or Claudius had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field,<sup>23</sup> while the infantry was twice that number.<sup>24</sup> The first objects of their avarice were a few cities of the Rhaetian frontier; but their hopes soon rising with success, the rapid march of the Alemanni traced a line of devastation from the Danube to the Po.<sup>25</sup>

The emperor was (AD 270, Sept.) almost at the same time informed of the barbarian eruption and retreat. Collecting an active body of troops, he marched with silence and haste along the skirts of the Hercynian forest. The Alemanni, laden with the spoils of Italy, arrived at the Danube without suspecting that on the opposite bank, and in an advantageous post, a Roman army lay concealed and prepared to intercept their return. Aurelian indulged the fatal security of the barbarians, and permitted about half their forces to pass the river without disturbance or precaution. Their situation and astonishment gave him an easy victory while his skilful conduct improved the advantage. Disposing the legions in a semicircular form, he advanced the two horns of the crescent across the Danube, and wheeling them on a sudden toward the center, enclosed the rear of the German host. Wherever the dismayed barbarians cast their eyes, they beheld with despair a wasted country, a deep and rapid stream, and a victorious and implacable enemy.

### *Aurelian Vanquishes the Alemanni*

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer disdained to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the Imperial throne. Behind the throne, the consecrated images of the emperor, and his predecessors,<sup>26</sup> the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure (Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 210) taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they pardoned their treason, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace, and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation. He reproached the barbarians that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace. Finally, he dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to his unconditioned mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his

<sup>22</sup> Dexippus, pp. 7-12. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 43. Vopiscus in Aurelian in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names (Alemanni, Juthungi, and Marcomanni), it is evident that they mean the same people, and the same war but it requires some care to conciliate and explain them.

<sup>23</sup> Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chooses to translate 300,000; his version is equally repugnant to sense and grammar.

<sup>24</sup> We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.

<sup>25</sup> In Dexippus, we at present read Rhodanus. M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus.

<sup>26</sup> The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended. If to Caesar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle—a long line of the masters of the world.

resentment.<sup>27</sup> Aurelian had resigned a distant province to the Goths; but it was dangerous to trust or to pardon these traitorous barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

Immediately after this conference, it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia. He handed to his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded. With incredible diligence, but by a different road, they returned toward the mountains of Italy. (Hist. August. p. 215) Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy, whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterward the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the head of a chosen body of auxiliaries (among whom were the hostages and cavalry of the Vandals), and of all the Pretorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube. (Dexippus, p. 12)

As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Apennine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, attack, and pursuit of the numerous detachments. Notwithstanding this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged. (Victor Junior in Aurelian) The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow that, according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended. (Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216) The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march. The fury of their charge was irresistible; but at length, after a dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honor of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, 500 years before, had been fatal to Hannibal's brother.<sup>28</sup> Thus far the successful Germans had advanced along the Aemilian and Flaminian way, with a design of sacking the defenseless mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who, watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on their rear, found in this place the decisive moment of giving them a total and irretrievable defeat.<sup>29</sup> The flying remnant of their host was exterminated in a third and final battle near Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads of the Alemanni.

#### *AD 271: Superstitious Ceremonies*

Fear has been the original parent of superstition, and every new calamity urges trembling mortals to deprecate the wrath of their invisible enemies. Though the best hope of the republic was in the valor and conduct of Aurelian, yet such was the public consternation, when the barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of Rome, that, by a decree of the senate, the Sibylline books were consulted. Even the emperor himself, from a motive either of religion or of policy, recommended this salutary measure, chided the tardiness of the senate,<sup>30</sup> and offered to supply whatever expense, animals, or captives of any

<sup>27</sup> Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix Oration worthy of a Grecian sophist.

<sup>28</sup> The little river, or rather torrent, of Metaurus, near Fano, has been immortalized by finding such a historian as Livy and such a poet as Horace.

<sup>29</sup> It is recorded by an inscription found at Pezaro. Gruter. cclxxvi. 3.

<sup>30</sup> One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a Christian church, not in the temple of all the gods.

nation, the gods should require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it does not appear that any human victims redeemed the sins of the Roman people with their blood. The Sibylline books (AD 271, Jan. 11) enjoined ceremonies of a more harmless nature, processions of priests in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins. Purification of the city and adjacent country, and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However foolish in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of ghosts fighting on Aurelian's side, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reinforcement.<sup>31</sup>

### *Rome's Fortifications*

But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal strongholds, the experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The successors of Romulus had been surrounded the seven hills of Rome with an ancient wall more than thirteen miles long<sup>32</sup>. The vast enclosure may seem disproportionate to the strength and numbers of the infant state. But it was necessary to secure an ample extent of pasture and arable land, against the frequent and sudden incursions of the Latium tribes, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness, the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs.<sup>33</sup> The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near 50 miles,<sup>34</sup> but is reduced by accurate measurement to about 21 miles. (Nardini, *Roma Antica*, 1. i. c. 8) It was a great but melancholy labor, since the defense of the capital betrayed the monarchy's decline. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps (Tacit. *list. iv. 23*), were very far from entertaining a suspicion that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians.<sup>35</sup>

### *Aurelian Suppresses the Two Usurpers*

The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations of the North. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to reunite the dismembered parts of the empire, was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation. To complete Rome's disgrace, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

<sup>31</sup> Vopiscus, in *Hist. August.* pp. 215, 216, gives a long account of these ceremonies from the Registers of the senate.

<sup>32</sup> Plin. *Hist. Natur.* iii. 5. To confirm our idea, we may observe that for a long time, Mount Caelius was a grove of oaks, and Mount Viminal was overrun with osiers. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, the Aventine was vacant and solitary with osiers. Until the time of Augustus, the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying ground. The numerous inequalities, remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal, sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent valleys, were the primitive habitations of the Roman people.

<sup>33</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>34</sup> *Hist. August.* p. 222. Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.

<sup>35</sup> For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* pp. 216, 222. Zosimus, i. i. p. 43. Eutropius, ix. 15. Aurel. Victor in *Aurelian. Victor Junior* in *Aurelian.* Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in *Chronic.*

### *Succession of Usurpers in Gaul*

A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a competitor, who had assumed the purple at Metz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city. So, in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, he became the victim of their disappointed avarice.<sup>36</sup> The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments<sup>37</sup> of that prince were stained by a licentious passion, which he indulged in acts of violence, with too little regard to the laws of society, or even to those of love. He was slain at Cologne, by a conspiracy of jealous husbands, whose revenge would have appeared more justifiable had they spared the innocence of his son. After the murder of so many valiant princes it is somewhat remarkable that a female for a long time controlled the fierce legions of Gaul, and still more singular that she was the mother of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and to reign with a manly vigor under the name of those dependent emperors. Money of copper, silver, and gold was coined in her name; she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother of the Camps; her power ended only with her life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the ingratitude of Tetricus.<sup>38</sup>

### *Reign and Defeat of Tetricus*

When, at the instigation of his ambitious patroness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty, he was governor of the peaceful province of Aquitaine, an employment suited to his character and education. He reigned 4 or 5 years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he dreaded and by whom he was despised. The valor and fortune of Aurelian at length opened the prospect of a deliverance. He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life. Nor could he resign the scepter of the West, without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led (AD 271) his forces into the field against Aurelian, posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to the enemy, and with a few chosen friends deserted in the beginning of the action. Although disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, the rebel legions defended themselves with desperate valor, till they were cut in pieces, almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Chalons in Champagne.<sup>39</sup> The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians,<sup>40</sup> whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to cross the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity, and the power of Aurelian was acknowledged from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules.

As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Autun, alone and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of Gaul. After a siege of seven months they stormed and plundered that unfortunate city, already wasted by famine. (Eumen. in Vet. Panegyr. iv. 8) Lyons, on the contrary, had resisted with

<sup>36</sup> His competitor was Lollianus, or Aelianus, if indeed these names mean the same person. Tillemont, v. iii. p. 1137.

<sup>37</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>38</sup> Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. August. p. 200.

<sup>39</sup> Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. The two Victors, in the Lives of Gallienus aid Aurelian. Eutrop. ix. 13. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions. v. xxx) does not wish, and Tillemont (v. iii. p. 1189) does not dare to follow them. I have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other.

<sup>40</sup> Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions *Batavica*; some critics, without any reason, would dare change the word to *Bagaudicae*.

obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read of the punishment of Lyons,<sup>41</sup> but there is not any mention of the rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war: severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive.

*AD 272: Character of Zenobia—Her Beauty, Learning and Valor*

Aurelian had no sooner (AD 272) secured the person and provinces of Tetricus than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of an empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia.<sup>42</sup> She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equaled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity and valor. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady, these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, Syriac, and Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of Oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, who from a private station raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardor the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardor of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage, generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Otesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

*Avenges Her Husband's Death*

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason. His favorite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death.<sup>43</sup> His nephew, Maeonius, presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away

<sup>41</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246. Autun was not restored till the reign of Diocletian.

<sup>42</sup> Almost everything that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia is taken from their Lives in the Augustan History, by Trebellius Polio, pp. 192, 198.

<sup>43</sup> Hist. August. pp. 192. 193. Zosimus, l. i p. 36. Zonaras, L xii. p. 633. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent.

his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offense was soon forgot, but the punishment was remembered. Maconius (AD. 250), with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus. though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper,<sup>44</sup> was killed with his father. But Maconius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband.<sup>45</sup>

### *Her Reign of the East and West*

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, more than 5 years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction. But his martial widow, disdaining both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation. (Hist. August. pp. 180, 181) Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment: if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her strict economy was accused of avarice; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighboring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity and solicited her alliance. To the dominions of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt. The emperor Claudius acknowledged her merit, and was content, that, while he pursued the Gothic war, she should assert the dignity of the empire in the East.<sup>46</sup> The conduct, however, of Zenobia, was attended with some ambiguity; nor is it unlikely that she had conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successors of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons<sup>47</sup> a Latin education, and often showed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem, with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia. (Zosimus, l. i. p. 44) Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana after an obstinate siege, by the help of an insurgent. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers: a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher.<sup>48</sup> Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been

<sup>44</sup> Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him presents of gems and toys from the spoils of the enemy, which he received with infinite delight.

<sup>45</sup> Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.

<sup>46</sup> Hist. August. p. 198, Aurelian's testimony to her merit; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i. pp. 39, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballathus. It is supposed that the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Aurelian bestowed a small province of Armenia with the title of King; several of his medals are still extant. Tillemont, v. iii. P. 1190.

<sup>48</sup> Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) gives us an authentic letter, and a doubtful vision of Aurelian. Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.

engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and, as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms. (Zosimus, i. i. p. 46)

*Expedition of Aurelian, Who Defeats the Palmyrenians in the Battles of Antioch and Emesa*

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within a hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch,<sup>49</sup> and the second near Emesa.<sup>50</sup> In both, the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the meantime, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valor had been severely tried in the Alemannic war.<sup>51</sup> After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruits as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance<sup>52</sup> between the Gulf of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra increased into an opulent and independent city, connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce. It was suffered to observe a humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of Rome, and flourished more than 150 years in the subordinate though honorable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces and porticoes of Grecian architecture whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travelers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendor on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome. However, the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> At a place called Immae. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome mention only this first battle.

<sup>50</sup> Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 217, mentions only the second.

<sup>51</sup> Zosimus, 1. i. pp. 44-48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.

<sup>52</sup> It was 537 miles from Seleucia, and 203 from the nearest Coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words (Hist. Natur. v. 21), gives an excellent description of Palmyra.

<sup>53</sup> Some English travelers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra, about the end of the last century. Our curiosity

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has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra we may consult the masterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the Philosophical Transactions; Lowthorp's Abridgment. vol. iii. p. 518.

## *Palmyra Besieged By Aurelian*

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs. Nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who, with incessant vigor, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with an arrow. Writes Aurelian in an original letter,

The Roman people speak with contempt of the war which I am waging against a woman. They are ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, arrows, and every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided with two or three *balistoe*, and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto been favorable to all my undertakings. (Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 218.)

Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation. He offered to the queen a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult.

## *Zenobia's Behavior*

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army to return across the desert. By the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defense of their most natural ally. But fortune and the perseverance of Aurelian overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time,<sup>54</sup> distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succors that attempted to relieve Palmyra were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She (AD 273) mounted her fastest camels,<sup>55</sup> and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse. She was seized and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital soon afterward surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were all delivered to the conqueror. Aurelian left only a garrison of 600 archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war. It restored those provinces to the obedience of Rome that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome! The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a

<sup>54</sup> From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavored to extract the most probable date.

<sup>55</sup> Hist. August. p. 218. Zosimus, l. i. p. 50. Though the camel is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, who is either of the same or of a kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa on all occasions which require haste. The Arabs affirm that he will run over as much ground in one day as their fleetest horses can perform in eight or ten. Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, v. xi. p. 222. and Shaw's Travels p. 167.

Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign.” (Pollio in Hist. p. 199) But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamors of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution. She forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonize the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends. (Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219; Zosimus, 1. i. p. 51.)

### *Rebellion and Ruin of Palmyra*

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the Straits which divide Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face toward Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges (Hist. August. p. 219), that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion. Although his principal concern seems directed to the re-establishment of a temple of the Sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of 30 or 40 families, have erected their mud cottages within the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

### *Aurelian Suppress the Rebellion of Firmus in Egypt*

Another and a last labor still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian: to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. Firmus, the friend and ally—as he proudly styled himself—of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India, he had formed very intimate connections with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation on either coast of the Red Sea gave them an easy introduction into Upper Egypt. He inflamed the Egyptians with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude, broke into the city of Alexandria. There, he assumed the Imperial purple, coined money, published edicts, and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defense against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death. Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that, in little more than 3 years, he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. pp. 220, 242. As an instance of luxury, it is observed that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity. From the letter of Aurelian, we may justly infer that Firmus was the last of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.

### *AD 274: Aurelian's Triumph*

Since the foundation of Rome no general had more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; nor was a triumph (A. D. 274) ever celebrated with superior pride and magnificence.<sup>57</sup> The pomp was opened by 20 elephants, 4 royal tigers, and more than 200 of the most curious animals from every climate of the North, East, and South. They were followed by 1,600 gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheater. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth—Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China—all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor. He likewise displayed to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities. The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph, Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people were distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothic nation who had been taken in arms.<sup>58</sup> But every eye, disregarding the crowd of captives, was fixed on the emperor Tetricus, and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trousers,<sup>59</sup> a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beautiful figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn, on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants.<sup>60</sup> The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army, closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude, swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur, that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate.<sup>61</sup>

### *His Treatment of Tetricus and Zenobia*

But however, in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals, Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved toward them with a generous clemency which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who, without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently

<sup>57</sup> The triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and, on this occasion, they happen to be interesting. Hist. August. 220.

<sup>58</sup> Among the barbarian nations, women have often fought by the side of their husbands. But it is almost impossible that a society of Amazons should ever have existed in the old or new world.

<sup>59</sup> The use of *bracchae*, or trousers, was first considered in Italy as a Gallic and Barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances toward it. To encircle the legs and thighs with *fasciae*, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill health and effeminacy. In the age of Trajan, the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the poorest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.

<sup>60</sup> Most probably the former; the latter, seen on the medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned Cardinal Norris) an Oriental victory.

<sup>61</sup> The expression of Calphurnius (Eclog. i. 50). *Nullos ducet captiva triumphos* (none lead captive victory), as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.

strangled in prison, as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the Capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honorable repose. The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur, or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen soon turned into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century.<sup>62</sup> Tetricus and his son were reinstated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Caelian hill a magnificent palace, and, as soon as it was finished, invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance, he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the scepter of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the ornaments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterward invested with the government of Lucania,<sup>63</sup> and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy than to reign beyond the Alps? The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors. (Hist. August. p. 197)

### *His Magnificence and Devotion*

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, that, although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the Capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donations were distributed to the army and people, and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his Oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome. The Capitol and every other temple glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received over 15,000 pounds of gold.<sup>64</sup> This last was a magnificent structure, erected by the emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior priestess in a chapel of the Sun; a peculiar devotion to the god of Light was a sentiment which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his infancy; and every step of his elevation, every victory of his reign, fortified superstition by gratitude.<sup>65</sup>

### *He Suppresses A Sedition At Rome*

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the foreign and domestic foes of the Republic. We are assured that, by his salutary rigor, crimes and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious connivance, the luxuriant growth of a feeble and oppressive government, were eradicated throughout the Roman world. (Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221) But if we attentively reflect how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure, and if we remember that the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded the months allotted to the martial reign of Aurelian, we must confess that a few short intervals of peace

<sup>62</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 199. Hieronym. in Chron. Prosper in Chron. Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.

<sup>63</sup> Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. Eutropius, ix. 13. Victor Junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 195. says that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.

<sup>64</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. 222. Zosimus, i. i. p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (Euseb. in Chron.), but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.

<sup>65</sup> See in the Augustan History, p. 210, the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the Sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the Caesars of Julian. Commentaire de Spanheim, p. 109.

were insufficient for the arduous work of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the integrity of the coin was opposed by a formidable insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks out in one of his private letters:

Surely the gods have decreed that my life should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition within the walls has just now given birth to a very serious civil war. The workmen of the mint, at the instigation of Felicissimus, a slave to whom I had entrusted an employment in the finances, have risen in rebellion. They are at length suppressed; but 7,000 of my soldiers have been slain in the contest, of those troops whose ordinary station is in Dacia and the camps along the Danube.<sup>66</sup>

Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought on the Caelian hill. The workmen of the mint had adulterated the coin. The emperor restored the public credit, by delivering out good money in exchange for the bad, which the people were commanded to bring into the treasury.<sup>67</sup>

### *Observations*

We might content ourselves with relating this extraordinary transaction, but we cannot dissemble how much in its present form it appears to us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement of the coin is indeed well suited to the administration of Gallienus. Nor is it unlikely that the instruments of the corruption might dread the inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as well as the profit, must have been confined to a few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they could arm a people whom they had injured, against a monarch whom they had betrayed. We might naturally expect that such miscreants should have shared the public detestation with the informers and the other ministers of oppression. The reformation of the coin should have been an action equally popular with the destruction of those obsolete accounts which, by the emperor's orders, were burned in the forum of Trajan. (Hist. August. p. 222; Aurel. Victor) In an age when the principles of commerce were so imperfectly understood, the most desirable end might perhaps be effected by harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary grievance of such a nature can scarcely excite and support a serious civil war. The repetition of intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land or on the necessities of life, may at last provoke those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish their country. But the case is far otherwise in every operation which, by whatsoever expedients, restores the just value of money. The transient evil is soon obliterated by the permanent benefit, the loss is divided among multitudes. If a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible diminution of treasure, with their riches they at the same time lose the degree of weight and importance which they derived from the possession of them. However Aurelian might choose to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could only furnish a faint pretense to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, toward whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissension with the senate, the equestrian order, and the Pretorian guards.<sup>68</sup> Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube. Under the conduct of a martial sovereign, they had achieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

<sup>66</sup> Hist. August. p. 222, Aurelian calls those soldiers *Hiberi, Riparienses Castraiani, and Dacisci*.

<sup>67</sup> Zosimus, L i. p. 56. Eutropius, ix. 14. Aurel. Victor.

<sup>68</sup> It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. Vopiscus quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244.

## *Aurelian's Cruelty*

Whatever the cause or object of this rebellion, imputed with so little probability to the workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigor.<sup>69</sup> He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a citizen, chastised by military execution the slightest offences, and transferred the stern discipline of the camp into the civil administration of the laws. His love of justice often became a blind and furious passion; and whenever he deemed his own or the public safety endangered, he disregarded the rules of evidence and the proportion of punishments. The unprovoked rebellion with which the Romans rewarded his services exasperated his haughty spirit. The noblest families of the capital were involved in the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A hasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prosecution, and it proved fatal to one of the emperor's nephews. The executioners (if we may use the expression of a contemporary poet) were fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the unhappy senate lamented the death or absence of its most illustrious members.<sup>70</sup> Nor was the pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold his power by any other title than that of the sword, and governed by right of conquest an empire which he had saved and subdued.<sup>71</sup>

### *AD 275: He Marches Into the East and Is Assassinated*

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian were better suited to the command of an army than to the government of an empire.<sup>72</sup> Conscious of the character in which Nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he (AD 274, October) again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign war, and the Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valor, the emperor advanced as far as the Straits which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced that the most absolute power is a weak defense against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who had been accused of extortion. It was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he showed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march (AD 275, January), between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspirators, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and, after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful though severe reformer of a degenerate state.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. The two Victors. Eutropius, ix. 14. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43) mentions only three senators, and places their death before the eastern war.

<sup>70</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>71</sup> According to the younger Victor, he sometimes wore the diadem. *Deus* (God) and *Dominus* (Master) appear on his medals.

<sup>72</sup> It was the observation of Diocetian. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224.

<sup>73</sup> Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. Zosimus, l. i. P. 576. Eutrop. ix. 15. The two Victors.

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