JAMES WHITE

THE EIGHTEEN CHRISTIAN CENTURIES

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FIRST CENTURY

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Authors

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Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp.

THE FIRST CENTURY

THE BAD EMPERORS

Nobody disputes the usefulness of History. Many prefer it, even for interest and amusement, to the best novels and romances. But the extent of time over which it has stretched its range is appalling to the most laborious of readers. And as History is growing every day, and every nation is engaged in the manufacture of memorable events, it is pitiable to contemplate the fate of the historic student a hundred years hence. He is not allowed to cut off at one end, in proportion as he increases at the other. He is not allowed to forget Marlborough, in consideration of his accurate acquaintance with Wellington. His knowledge of the career of Napoleon is no excuse for ignorance of Julius Cæsar. All must be retained—victories, defeats—battles, sieges—knights in armour, soldiers in red; the charge at Marathon, the struggle at Inkermann—all these things, a thousand other things, at first apparently of no importance, but growing larger and larger as time develops their effects, till men look back in wonder that the acorn escaped their notice which has produced such a majestic oak,—a thousand other things still, for a moment rising in apparently irresistible power, and dying off apparently without cause, must be folded up in niches of the memory, ready to be brought forth when needed, and yet room be left for the future. And who can pretend to be qualified for so great a work? Most of us confess to rather dim recollections of things occurring in our own time,—in our own country—in our own parish; and some, contemplating the vast expanse of human history, its innumerable windings and perplexing variations, are inclined to give it up in despair, and have a sulky sort of gratification in determining to know nothing, since they cannot know all. All kings, they say, are pretty much alike, and whether he is called John in England, or Louis in France, doesn't make much difference. Nobles also are as similar as possible, and peoples are everywhere the same. Now, this, you see, though it ambitiously pretends to be ignorance, is, in fact, something infinitely worse. It is false knowledge. It might be very injurious to liberty, to honour, and to religion itself, if this wretched idea were to become common, for where would be the inducement to noble endeavour? to reform of abuses? to purity of life? Kings and nobles and peoples are not everywhere the same. They are not even *like* each other, or like themselves in the same land at different periods. They are in a perpetual series, not only of change, but of contrast. They are "variable as the sea,"—calm and turbulent, brilliant and dark by turns. And it is this which gives us the only chance of attaining clearness and distinctness in our historic views. It is by dissimilarities that things are individualized: now, how pleasant it would be if we could simplify and strengthen our recollections of different times, by getting personal portraits, as it were, of the various centuries, so as to escape the danger of confounding their dress or features. It would be impossible in that case to mistake the Spanish hat and feather of the sixteenth century for the steel helmet and closed vizor of the fourteenth. We should be able, in the same way, to distinguish between the modes of thought and principles of action of the early ages, and those of the present time. We should be able to point out anachronisms of feeling and manners if they occurred in the course of our reading, as well as of dress and language. It is surely worth while, therefore, to make an attempt to individualize the centuries, not by affixing to them any arbitrary marks of one's own, but by taking notice of the distinguishing quality they possess, and grouping round that, as a centre, the incidents which either produce this characteristic or are produced by it. What should we call the present century, for instance? We should at once name it the Century of Invention. The great war with Napoleon ending in 1815, exciting so many passions, and calling forth such energy, was but the natural introduction to the wider efforts and amazing progress of the succeeding forty years. Battles and bulletins, alliances and quarrels, ceased, but the intellect aroused by the struggle dashed into other channels. Commerce spread its humanizing influences over hitherto closed and unexplored regions;

the steamboat and railway began their wondrous career. The lightning was trained to be our courier in the electric telegraph, and the sun took our likenesses in the daguerreotype. How changed this century is in all its attributes and tendencies from its predecessor, let any man judge for himself, who compares the reigns of our first Hanoverian kings with that of our gracious queen.

In nothing, indeed, is the course of European history so remarkable as in the immense differences which intervals of a few years introduce. In the old monarchies of Asia, time and the world seem almost to stand still. The Indian, the Arab, the Chinese of a thousand years ago, wore the same clothes, thought the same thoughts, and led the same life as his successor of to-day. But with us the whole character of a people is changed in a lifetime. In a few years we are whirled out of all our associations. Names perhaps remain unaltered, but the inner life is different; modes of living, states of education, religious sentiments, great national events, foreign wars, or deep internal struggles—all leave such ineffaceable marks on the history of certain periods, that their influence can be traced through all the particulars of the time. The art of printing can be followed, on its first introduction, into the recesses of private life, as well as in the intercourse of nations. The Reformation of religion so entirely altered the relations which the states of the world bore to each other, that it may be said to have put a limit between old history and new, so that human character itself received a new development; and actions, both public and private, were regulated by principles hitherto unknown.

In one respect all the past centuries are alike,—that they have done their part towards the formation of this. We bear the impress, at this hour, of the great thoughts and high aspirations, the struggles, and even the crimes, of our ancestral ages; and yet they have no greater resemblance to the present, except in the unchangeable characteristics of human nature itself, than the remotest forefathers in a long line of ancestry, whose likenesses hang in the galleries of our hereditary nobles, bear to the existing owner of title and estate. The ancestor who fought in the wars of the Roses has a very different expression and dress from the other ancestor who cheated and lied (politically, of course) in the days of the early Georges. Yet from both the present proprietor is descended. He retains the somewhat rusty armour on an ostentatious nail in the hall, and the somewhat insincere memoirs in a secret drawer in the library, and we cannot deny that he is the joint production of the courage of the warrior and the duplicity of the statesman; anxious to defend what he believes to be the right, like the supporter of York or Lancaster—but trammelled by the ties of party, like the patriot of Sir Robert Walpole.

If we could affix to each century as characteristic a presentment as those portraits do of the steel-clad hero of Towton, or the be-wigged, be-buckled courtier of George the Second, our object would be gained. We should see a whole history in a glance at a century's face. If it were peculiarly marked by nature or accident, so much the more easy would it be to recognise the likeness. If the century was a warlike, quarrelsome century, and had scars across its brow; if it was a learned, plodding century, and wore spectacles on nose; if it was a frivolous, gay century, and simpered forever behind bouquets of flowers, or tripped on fantastic toe with a jewelled rapier at its side, there would be no mistaking the resemblance; there would also be no chance of confusing the actions: the legal century would not fight, the dancing century would not depose its king.

Taking our stand at the beginning of our era, there are only eighteen centuries with which we have to do, and how easily any of us get acquainted with the features and expression of eighteen of our friends! Not that we know every particular of their birth and education, or can enter into the minute parts of their character and feelings; but we soon know enough of them to distinguish them from each other. We soon can say of which of the eighteen such or such an action or opinion is characteristic. We shall not mistake the bold deed or eloquent statement of one as proceeding from another.

> "Boastful and rough, your first son is a squire.
> The next a tradesman, meek, and much a liar:
> Tom struts a soldier, open, bold, and brave:

Will sneaks a scrivener, an exceeding knave.
Is he a churchman? then he's fond of power:
A Quaker? sly: a Presbyterian? sour:
A smart free-thinker? all things in an hour."

Now, though it is impossible to put the characteristics of a whole century into such terse and powerful language as this, it cannot be doubted that each century, or considerable period, has its prevailing Thought,—a thought which it works out in almost all the ramifications of its course; which it receives from its predecessor in a totally different shape, and passes on to its successor in a still more altered form. Else why do we find the faith of one generation the ridicule and laughing-stock of the next? How did knighthood rise into the heroic regions of chivalry, and then sink in a succeeding period into the domain of burlesque? How did aristocracy in one age concentrate into kingship in another? And in a third, how did the golden ring of sovereignty lose its controlling power, and republics take their rise? How did the reverence of Europe settle at one time on the sword of Edward the Third, and at another on the periwig of Louis the Fourteenth? These and similar inquiries will lead us to the real principles and motive forces of a particular age, as they distinguished it from other ages. We shall label the centuries, as it were, with their characteristic marks, and know where to look for thoughts and incidents of a particular class and type.

Let us look at the first century.

Throughout the civilized world there is nothing but Rome. Under whatever form of government —under consuls, or triumvirs, or dictators—that wonderful city was mistress of the globe. Her internal dissensions had not weakened her power. While her streets were running with the blood of her citizens, her eagles were flying triumphant in Farther Asia and on the Rhine. Her old constitution had finally died off almost without a blow, and unconsciously the people, still talking of Cato and Brutus, became accustomed to the yoke. For seven-and-twenty years they had seen all the power of the state concentrated in one man; but the names of the offices of which their ancestors had been so proud were retained; and when Octavius, the nephew of the conqueror Julius Cæsar, placed himself above the law, it was only by uniting in his own person all the authority which the law had created. He was consul, tribune, prætor, pontifex, imperator,—whatever denomination conferred dignity and power; and by the legal exercise of all these trusts he had no rival and no check. He was finally presented by the senate with the lofty title of Augustus, which henceforth had a mysterious significance as the seal of imperial greatness, and his commands were obeyed without a murmur from the Tigris to the Tyne. But whilst in the enjoyment of this pre-eminence, the Roman emperor was unconscious that in a village of Judea, in the lowest rank of life, among the most contemned tribe of his dominions, his Master was born.

|A.D. 1.|

By this event the whole current of the world's history was changed. The great became small and the small great. Rome itself ceased to be the capital of the world, for men's eyes and hearts, when the wonderful story came to be known, were turned to Jerusalem. From her, commissioned emissaries were to proceed with greater powers than those of Roman prætors or governors. From her gates went forth Peter and John to preach the gospel. Down her steep streets rode Paul and his companions, breathing anger against the Church, and ere they reached Damascus, behold, the eyes of the persecutor are blinded with lightning, and his understanding illuminated with the same flash; and henceforth he proceeds, in lowliness and humility, to convey to others the glad tidings that had been revealed to himself. Away in all directions, but all radiating from Jerusalem, travelled the messengers of the amazing dispensation. Everywhere—in all centuries—in all regions, we shall encounter the results of their ministry; and as we watch the swelling of the mighty tide, first of Christian faith and then of priestly ambition, which overspread the fairest portions of the globe, we shall wonder more

and more at the apparent powerlessness of its source, and at the vast effects for good and evil which it has produced upon mankind.

What were they doing at Rome during the thirty-three years of our Saviour's sojourn upon earth? For the first fourteen of them Augustus was gathering round him the wits, and poets, and sages, who have made his reign immortal.

|A.D. 14.|

After that date his successor, Tiberius, built up by stealthy and slow degrees the most dreadful tyranny the world had ever seen,—a tyranny the results of which lasted long after the founders of it had expired. For from this period mankind had nothing to hope but from the bounty of the emperor. It is humiliating to reflect that the history of the world for so long a period consists of the deeds and dispositions of the successive rulers of Rome. All men, wherever their country, or whatever their position, were dependent, in greater or less degree, for their happiness or misery on the good or bad temper of an individual man. If he was cruel, as so many of them were, he filled the patricians of Rome with fear, and terrified the distant inhabitants of Thrace or Gaul. His benevolence, on the other hand, was felt at the extremities of the earth. No wonder that every one was on the watch for the first glimpse of a new emperor's character and disposition. What rejoicings in Italy and Greece and Africa, and all through Europe, when a trait of goodness was reported! and what a sinking of the heart when the old story was renewed, and a monster of cruelty succeeded to a monster of deceit! For the fearfullest thing in all the descriptions of Tiberius is the duplicity of his behaviour. He withdrew to an island in the sunniest part of the Mediterranean, and covered it with gorgeous buildings, and supplied it with all the implements of luxury and enjoyment. From this magnificent retirement he uttered a whisper, or made a motion with his hand, which displaced an Eastern monarch from his throne, or doomed a senator to death. He was never seen. He lived in the dreadful privacy of some fabled deity, and was only felt at the farthest ends of his empire by the unhappiness he occasioned; by his murders, and imprisonments, and every species of suffering, men's hearts and minds were bowed down beneath this invisible and irresistible oppressor. Self-respect was at an end, and liberty was not even wished for. The emperor had swallowed up the empire, and there was no authority or influence beside. This is the main feature of the first or Imperial Century, that, wherever we look, we see but one,—one gorged and bloated brutalized man, sitting on the throne of earthly power, and all the rest of mankind at his feet.

|A.D. 37.|

Humanity at its flower had culminated into a Tiberius; and when at last he was slain, and the world began to breathe, the sorrow was speedily deeper than before, for it was found that the Imperial tree had blossomed again, and that its fruit was a Caligula.

This was a person with much the same taste for blood as his predecessor, but he was more open in the gratification of this propensity. He did not wait for trial and sentence,—those dim mockeries of justice in which Tiberius sometimes indulged. He had a peculiar way of nodding with his head or pointing with his finger, and the executioner knew the sign. The man he nodded to died. For the more distinguished of the citizens he kept a box,—not of snuff, like some monarchs of the present day, but of some strong and instantaneous poison. Whoever refused a pinch died as a traitor, and whoever took one died of the fatal drug.

|A.D. 41.|

Even the degenerate Romans could not endure this long, and Chæreas, an officer of his guard, put him to death, after a sanguinary reign of four years.

Still the hideous catalogue goes on. Claudius, a nephew of Tiberius, is forced upon the unwilling senate by the spoilt soldiers of the capital, the Prætorian Guards. Colder, duller, more brutal than the rest, Claudius perhaps increased the misery of his country by the apathy and stupidity of his mind. The other tyrants had some limit to their wickedness, for they kept all the powers of the State in their own hands, but this man enlisted a countless host of favourites and courtiers in his crusade

against the happiness of mankind. Badly eminent among these was his wife, the infamous Messalina, whose name has become a symbol of all that is detestable in the female sex. Some people, indeed, in reading the history of this period, shut the book with a shudder, and will not believe it true. They prefer to think that authors of all lands and positions have agreed to paint a fancy picture of depravity and horror, than that such things were. But the facts are too well proved to be doubted. We see a dull, unimpassioned, moody despot; fond of blood, but too indolent to shed it himself, unless at the dictation of his fiendish partner and her friends; so brutalized that nothing amazed or disturbed him; so unobservant that, relying on his blindness, she went through the ostentatious ceremony of a public marriage with one of her paramours during the lifetime, almost under the eyes, of her husband; and yet to this frightful combination of ferocity and stupidity England owes its subjection to the Roman power, and all the blessings which Roman civilization—bringing as it did the lessons of Christianity in its train—was calculated to bestow. In the forty-fourth year of this century, and the third year of the reign of Claudius, Aulus Plautius landed in Britain at the head of a powerful army; and the tide of Victory and Settlement never subsided till the whole country, as far north as the Solway, submitted to the Eagles. The contrast between the central power at Rome, and the officials employed at a distance, continued for a long time the most remarkable circumstance in the history of the empire. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, vied with each other in exciting the terror and destroying the happiness of the world; but in the remote extremities of their command, their generals displayed the courage and virtue of an earlier age. They improved as well as conquered. They made roads, and built bridges, and cut down woods. They established military stations, which soon became centres of education and law. They deepened the Thames, and commenced those enormous embankments of the river, to which, in fact, London owes its existence, without being aware of the labour they bestowed upon the work. If by some misfortune a great fissure took place—as has occurred on a small scale once before—in these artificial dikes, it would task the greatest skill of modern engineers to repair the damage. They superseded the blood-stained ceremonies of the Druids with the more refined worship of the heathen deities, making Claudius himself a tutelary god, with priest and temple, in the town of Colchester; and this, though in our eyes the deification of one of the worst of men, was, perhaps, in the estimation of our predecessors, only the visible embodiment of settled government and beneficent power. But murder and treachery, and unspeakable iniquity, went their way as usual in the city of the Cæsars. Messalina was put to death, and another disgrace to womanhood, in the person of Agrippina, took her place beside the phlegmatic tyrant. Thirteen years had passed, when the boundary of human patience was attained, and Rome was startled one morning with the joyful news that her master was no more.

|A.D. 54.|

The combined cares of his loving spouse and a favourite physician had produced this happy result,—the one presenting him with a dish of deadly mushrooms, and the other painting his throat for a hoarseness with a poisoned feather.

Is there no hope for Rome or for mankind? Is there to be a perpetual succession of monster after monster, with no cessation in the dreadful line? It would be pleasant to conceal for a minute or two the name of the next emperor, that we might point to the glorious prospect now opening on the world. But the name has become so descriptive that deception is impossible. When the word Nero is said, little more is required. But it was not so at first; a brilliant sunrise never had so terrible a course, or so dark a setting. We still see in the earlier statues which remain of him the fine outline of his face, and can fancy what its expression must have been before the qualities of his heart had stamped their indelible impression on his features. For the first five years of his reign the world seemed lost as much in surprise as in admiration. Some of his actions were generous; none of them were cruel or revengeful. He was young, and seemed anxious to fulfil the duties of his position. But power and flattery had their usual effect. All that was good in him was turned into evil. He tortured the noblest of the citizens; and degraded the throne to such a degree by the expositions he made of himself, sometimes as a musician on the stage, sometimes as a charioteer in the arena, that if there had been

any Romans left they would have despised the tyrant more than they feared him. But there were no Romans left. The senators, the knights, the populace, vied with each other in submission to his power and encouragement of his vices. The rage of the monster, once excited, knew no bounds. He burned the city in the mere wantonness of crime, and fixed the blame on the unoffending Christians. These, regardless of age or condition or sex, he destroyed by every means in his power. He threw young maidens into the amphitheatre, where the hungry tigers leapt out upon them; he exposed the aged professors of the gospel to fight in single combat with the trained murderers of the circus, called the Gladiators; and once, in ferocious mockery of human suffering, he enclosed whole Christian families in a coating of pitch and other inflammable materials, and, setting fire to the covering, pursued his sport all night by the light of these living flambeaux. Some of his actions it is impossible to name. It will be sufficient to say that at the end of thirteen years the purple he disgraced was again reddened with blood. Terrified at the opposition that at last rose against him—deserted, of course, by the confederates of his wickedness—shrinking with unmanly cowardice from a defence which might have put off the evil day, he fled and hid himself from his pursuers. Agonized with fear, howling with repentant horror, he was indebted to one of his attendants for the blow which his own cowardly hand could not administer, and he died the basest, lowest, and most pitiless of all the emperors. And all those hopes he had disappointed, and all those iniquities he had perpetrated, at the age of thirty-two. He was the last of the line of Cæsar; and if that conqueror had foreseen that in so few years after his death the Senate of Rome would have been so debased, and the people of Rome so brutalized, he would have pardoned to Brutus the precautionary blow which was intended to prevent so great a calamity.

|A.D. 68.|

Galba was elected to fill his place, and was murdered in a few months.

The degraded prætorians then elevated one of the companions of Nero's guilty excesses to the throne in the person of Otho, but resistance was made to their selection.

|A.D. 69.|

The forces in Germany nominated Vitellius to the supreme authority; and Otho, either a voluptuary tired of life, or a craven incapable of exertion, committed suicide to save the miseries of civil war. But this calamity was averted by a nobler hand. Vitellius had only time to show that, in addition to the usual vices of the throne, he was addicted to the animal enjoyments of eating and drinking to an almost incredible degree, when he heard a voice from the walls of Jerusalem which hurled him from the seat he had so lately taken; for the legions engaged in that most memorable of sieges had decided on giving the empire of the world to the man who deserved it best, and had proclaimed their general, Flavius Vespasian, Imperator and Master of Rome.

|A.D. 70.|

Now we will pause, for we have come to the year seventy of this century, and a fit breathing-time to look round us and see what condition mankind has fallen into within a hundred years of the end of the Republic. We leave out of view the great empires of the farther East, where battles were won, and dynasties established on the plains of Hindostan, and within the Chinese Wall. The extent of our knowledge of Oriental affairs is limited to the circumference of the Roman power. Following that vast circle, we see it on all sides surrounded by tribes and nations who derive their sole illumination from its light, for unless the Roman conquests had extended to the confines of those barbaric states, we should have known nothing of their existence. Beyond that ring of fire it is almost matter of conjecture what must have been going on. Yet we learn from the traditions of many peoples, and can guess with some accuracy from the occurrences of a later period, what was the condition of those "outsiders," and what were their feelings and intentions with regard to the civilized portions of the world. Bend your eyes in any direction you please, and what names, what thoughts, suggest themselves to our minds! We see swarms of wild adventurers with wives and cattle traversing with no definite object the uncultivated districts beyond the Danube; occasionally pitching their tents, or even forming

more permanent establishments, around the roots of Caucasus and north of the Caspian Sea, where grass was more plentiful, and hills or marshes formed an easily defended barrier against enemies as uncivilized as themselves. Coming from no certain region—that is, forgetting in a few years of wandering the precise point from which they set out, pushed forward by the advancing waves of great national migrations in their rear—moving onward across the upper fields of Europe, but keeping themselves still cautiously from actual contact with the Roman limits, from those hordes of homeless, lawless savages are derived the most polished and greatest nations of the present day. Forming into newer combinations, and taking different names, their identity is scarcely to be recognised when, three or four centuries after this, they come into the daylight of history; but nobody can doubt that, during these preliminary ages, they were gathering their power together, hereafter, under the impulse of fresh additions, to be hurled like a dammed-up river upon the prostrate realm, carrying ruin and destruction in their course, but no less certainly than the overflowing Nile leaving the germs of future fertility, and enriching with newer vegetation the fields they had so ruthlessly submerged. And year by year the mighty mass goes on accumulating. The northern plains become peopled no one knows how. The vast forests eastward of the Rhine receive new accessions of warriors, who rapidly assimilate with the old. United in one common object of retaining the wild freedom of their tribe, and the possession of the lands they have seized, they have opposed the advance of the Roman legions into the uncultivated districts they call their own; they have even succeeded in destroying the military forces which guarded the Rhine, and have with difficulty been restrained from crossing the great river by a strong line of forts and castles, of which the remains astonish the traveller of the present day, as, with Murray's Guide-Book in his hand, he gazes upon their ruins between Bingen and Aix-la-Chapelle.

Repelled by these barriers, they cluster thicker than ever in the woods and valleys, to which the Romans have no means of penetrating. Southern Gaul submits, and becomes a civilized outpost of the central power; but far up in the wild regions of the north, and even to the eastward of the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland, the assemblage goes on. Scandinavia itself becomes over-crowded by the perpetual arrival of thousands of these armed and expatriated families, and sends her teeming populations to the east and south. But all these incidents, I must remind you, are occurring in darkness. We only know that the desert is becoming peopled with crowded millions, and that among them all there floats a confused notion of the greatness of the Roman power, the wealth of the cities and plains of Italy; and that, clustering in thicker swarms on the confines of civil government, the watchful eyes of unnumbered savage warriors are fixed on the territories lying rich and beautiful within the protection of the Roman name. So the whole Roman boundary gets gradually surrounded by barbaric hosts. Their trampings may be heard as they marshal their myriads and skirt the upper boundaries of Thrace; but as yet no actual conflict has occurred. A commotion may become observable among some of the farthest distant of the half intimidated of the German tribes; or an enterprising Roman settler beyond the frontier, or travelling merchant, who has penetrated to the neighbourhood of the Baltic, may bring back amazing reports of the fresh accumulations of unknown hordes of strange and threatening aspect; but the luxurious public in Rome receive them merely as interesting anecdotes to amuse their leisure or gratify their curiosity: they have no apprehension of what may be the result of those multitudinous arrivals. They do not foresee the gradual drawing closer to their outward defences —the struggle to get within their guarded lines—the fight that is surely coming between a sated, dull, degraded civilization on the one side, and a hungry, bold, ambitious savagery on the other. They trust every thing to the dignity of the Eternal City, and the watchfulness of the Emperor: for to this, his one idea of irresistible power equally for good or evil, the heart of the Roman was sure to turn. And for the eleven years of the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, the Roman did not appeal for protection against a foreign enemy in vain. Rome itself was compensated by shows and buildings—with a triumph and an arch—for the degradation in which it was held. But prætor and proconsul still pursued their course of oppressing the lands committed to their defence; and the subject, stripped of his goods, and hopeless of getting his wrongs redressed, had only the satisfaction of feeling that the sword he trembled at

was in the hand of a man and not of an incarnate demon. A poor consolation this when the blow was equally fatal. Vespasian, in fact, was fonder of money than of blood, and the empire rejoiced in having exchanged the agony of being murdered for the luxury of being fleeced.

|A.D. 79.|

With Titus, whom the fond gratitude of his subjects named the Delight of the human race, a new age of happiness was about to open on the world; but all the old horrors of the Cæsars were revived and magnified when he was succeeded, after a reign of two years, by his brother, the savage and cowardly Domitian.

|A.D. 81.|

With the exception of the brief period between the years 70 and 81, the whole century was spent in suffering and inflicting pain. The worst excesses of Nero and Caligula were now imitated and surpassed. The bonds of society became rapidly loosened. As in a shipwreck, the law of self-preservation was the only rule. No man could rely upon his neighbour, or his friend, or his nearest of kin. There were spies in every house, and an executioner at every door. An unconsidered word maliciously reported, or an accusation entirely false, brought death to the rich and great. To the unhappy class of men who in other times are called the favourites of fortune, because they are born to the possession of great ancestral names and hereditary estates, there was no escape from the jealous and avaricious hatred of the Emperor. If a patrician of this description lived in the splendour befitting his rank—he was currying favour with the mob! If he lived retired—he was trying to gain reputation by a pretence of giving up the world! If he had great talents—he was dangerous to the state! If he was dull and stupid—oh! don't believe it—he was only an imitative Brutus, concealing his deep designs under the semblance of fatuity! If a man of distinguished birth was rich, it was not a fitting condition for a subject—if he was poor, he was likely to be seduced into the wildest enterprises. So the prisons were filled by calumny and suspicion, and emptied by the executioner. A dreadful century this—the worst that ever entered into tale or history; for the memory of former glories and comparative freedom was still recent. A man who was sixty years old, in the midst of the terrors of Tiberius, had associated in his youth with the survivors of the Civil War, with men who had embraced Brutus and Cassius; he had seen the mild administration of Augustus, and perhaps had supped with Virgil and Horace in the house of Mæcenas. And now he was tortured till he named a slave or freedman of the Emperor his heir, and then executed to expedite the succession. There was a hideous jocularity in some of these imperial proceedings, which, however, was no laughing-matter at the time. When a senator was very wealthy, it was no unusual thing for Tiberius and his successors to create themselves the rich man's nearest relations by a decree of the Senate. The person so honoured by this graft upon his family tree seldom survived the operation many days. The emperor took possession of the property as heir-at-law and next of kin; and mourned for his uncle or brother—as the case might be—with the most edifying decorum.

But besides giving the general likeness of a period, it is necessary to individualize it still further by introducing, in the background of the picture, some incident by which it is peculiarly known, as we find Nelson generally represented with Trafalgar going on at the horizon, and Wellington sitting thoughtful on horseback in the foreground of the fire of Waterloo. Now, there cannot be a more distinguishing mark than a certain great military achievement which happened in the year 70 of this century, and is brought home to us, not only as a great historical event in itself, but as the commencement of a new era in human affairs, and the completion of a long line of threats and prophecies. This was the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. The accounts given us of this siege transcend in horror all other records of human sorrow. It was at the great annual feast of the Passover, when Jews from all parts of the world flocked to the capital of their nation to worship in the Temple, which to them was the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah. The time was come, and they did not know it, when God was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. More than a million strangers were resident within the walls. There was no room in house or hall for so vast a multitude; so they bivouacked in the

streets, and lay thick as leaves in the courts of the holy place. Suddenly the Roman trumpets blew. The Jews became inspired with fanatical hatred of the enemy, and insane confidence that some miracle would be wrought for their deliverance. They deliberated, and chose for their leaders the wildest and most enthusiastic of the crowd. They refused the offers of mercy and reconciliation made to them by Titus. They sent back insulting messages to the Roman general, and stood expectant on the walls to see the idolatrous legions smitten by lightning or swallowed up by an earthquake. But Titus advanced his forces and hemmed in the countless multitude of men, and women, and children—few able to resist, but all requiring to be fed. Famine and pestilence came on; but still the mad fanatics of the Temple determined to persevere. They occasionally opened a gate and rushed out with the cry of "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and were slaughtered by the unpitying hatred of the Roman soldiers. Their cruelty to their prisoners, when they succeeded in carrying off a few of their enemies, was great; but the patience of Titus at last gave way, and he soon bettered the instruction they gave him in pitilessness and blood. He drew a line of circumvallation closer round the city, and intercepted every supply; when deserters came over, he crucified them all round the trenches; when the worn-out people came forth, imploring to be suffered to pass through his ranks, he drove them back, that they might increase the scarcity by their lives, or the pestilence by adding to the heaps of unburied dead. Dissensions were raging all this time among the defenders themselves. They fought in the streets, in the houses, and heaped the floor and outcourts of the Temple with thousands of the slain. There was no help either from heaven or earth; eleven hundred thousand people had died of plague and the sword; and the rest were doomed to perish by more lingering torments. Nearest relations—sisters, brothers, fathers, wives—all forgot the ties of natural affection under this great necessity, and fought for a handful of meal, or the possession of some reptile's body if they were lucky enough to trace it to its hiding-place; and at last—the crown of all horrors—the daughter of Eleazer killed her own child and converted it into food. The measure of man's wrong and Heaven's vengeance was now full. The daily sacrifice ceased to be offered; voices were audible to the popular ear uttering in the Holy of Holies, "Let us go hence." The Romans rushed on—climbed over the neglected walls—forced their way into the upper Temple, and the gore flowed in streams so rapid and so deep that it seemed like a purple river! Large conduits had been made for the rapid conveyance away of the blood of bulls and goats offered in sacrifice; they all became choked now with the blood of the slaughtered people. At last the city was taken; the inhabitants were either dead or dying. Many were crushed as they lay expiring in the great tramplings of the triumphant Romans; many were recovered by food and shelter, and sold into slavery. The Temple and walls were levelled with the ground, and not one stone was left upon another. The plough passed over where palace and tower had been, and the Jewish dispensation was brought to a close.

History in ancient days was as exclusive as the court newsman in ours, and never published the movements of anybody below a senator or a consul. All the Browns and Smiths were left out of consideration; and yet to us who live in the days when those families—with the Joneses and Robinsons —form the great majority both in number and influence, it would be very interesting to have any certain intelligence of their predecessors during the first furies of the Empire. We have but faint descriptions even of the aristocracy, but what we hear of them shows, more clearly than any thing else, the frightful effect on morals and manliness of so uncontrolled a power as was vested in the Cæsars, and teaches us that the worst of despotisms is that which is established by the unholy union of the dregs of the population and the ruling power, against the peace and happiness and security of the middle class. You see how this combination of tyrant and mob succeeded in crushing all the layers of society which lay between them, till there were left only two agencies in all the world—the Emperor on his throne, and the millions fed by his bounty. The hereditary nobility—the safest bulwark of a people and least dangerous support of a throne—were extirpated before the end of the century, and impartiality makes us confess that they fell by their own fault. As if the restraints of shame had been thrown off with the last hope of liberty, the whole population broke forth into the

most incredible licentiousness. If the luxury of Lucullus had offended the common sense of propriety in the later days of the republic, there were numbers now who looked back upon his feasts as paltry entertainments, and on the wealth of Crœsus as poverty. The last of the Pompeys, in the time of Caligula, had estates so vast, that navigable rivers larger than the Thames performed the whole of their course from their fountain-head to the sea without leaving his domain. There were spendthrifts in the time of Tiberius who lavished thousands of pounds upon a supper. The pillage of the world had fallen into the hands of a few favoured families, and their example had introduced a prodigality and ostentation unheard of before. No one who regarded appearances travelled anywhere without a troop of Numidian horsemen, and outriders to clear the way. He was followed by a train of mules and sumpter-horses loaded with his vases of crystal—his richly-carved cups and dishes of silver and gold. But this profusion had its natural result in debt and degradation. The patricians who had been rivals of the imperial splendour became dependants on the imperial gifts; and the grandson of the conqueror of a kingdom, or the proconsul of the half of Asia, sold his ancestral palace, lived for a while on the contemptuous bounty of his master, and sank in the next generation into the nameless mass. Others, more skilful, preserved or improved their fortunes while they rioted in expense. By threats or promises, they prevailed on the less powerful to constitute them their heirs; they traded on the strength, or talents, or the beauty of their slaves, and lent money at such usurious interest that the borrower tried in vain to escape the shackles of the law, and ended by becoming the bondsman of the kind-hearted gentleman who had induced him to accept the loan.

If these were the habits of the rich, how were the poor treated? The free and penniless citizens of the capital were degraded and gratified at the same time. The wealthy vied with each other in buying the favour of the mob by shows and other entertainments, by gifts of money and donations of food. But when these arts failed, and popularity could no longer be obtained by merely defraying the expense of a combat of gladiators, the descendants of the old patricians—of the men who had bought the land on which the Gauls were encamped outside the gates of Rome—went down into the arena themselves and fought for the public entertainment. Laws indeed were passed even in the reign of Tiberius, and renewed at intervals after that time, against this shameful degradation, and the stage was interdicted to all who were not previously declared infamous by sentence of a court. But all was in vain. Ladies of the highest rank, and the loftiest-born of the nobility, actually petitioned for a decree of defamation, that they might give themselves up undisturbed to their favourite amusement. This perhaps added a zest to their enjoyment, and rapturous applauses must have hailed the entrance of the beautiful grandchild of Anthony or Agrippa, in the character and drapery of a warlike amazon —the louder the applause and greater the admiration. Yet in order to gratify them with such a sight, she had descended to the level of the convict, and received the brand of qualifying disgrace from a legal tribunal. But the faint barrier of this useless prohibition was thrown down by the policy and example of Domitian. The emperor himself appeared in the arena, and all restraint was at an end. Rather, there was a fury of emulation to copy so great a model, and “Rome’s proud dames, whose garments swept the ground,” forgot more than ever their rank and sex, and were proud, like their lovers and brothers, not merely to mount the stage in the lascivious costume of nymph or dryad, but to descend into the blood-stained lists of the Coliseum and murder each other with sword and spear. There is something strangely horrible in this transaction, when we read that it occurred for the first time in celebration of the games of Flora—the goddess of flowers and gardens, who, in old times, was worshipped under the blossomed apple-trees in the little orchards surrounding each cottage within the walls, and was propitiated with children’s games and chaplets hung upon the boughs. But now the loveliest of the noble daughters of the city lay dead upon the trampled sand. What was the effect upon the populace of these extraordinary shows?

Always stern and cruel, the Roman was now never satisfied unless with the spectacle of death. Sometimes in the midst of a play or pantomime the fierce lust of blood would seize him, and he would cry out for a combat of gladiators or nobles, who instantly obeyed; and after the fight was

over, and the corpses removed, the play would go on as if nothing had occurred. The banners of the empire still continued to bear the initial letters of the great words—the Senate and people of Rome. We have now, in this rapid survey, seen what both those great names have come to—the Senate crawling at the feet of the emperor, and the people living on charity and shows. The slaves fared worst of all, for they were despised by rich and poor. The sated voluptuary whose property they were sometimes found an excitement to his jaded spirits by having them tortured in his sight. They were allowed to die of starvation when they grew old, unless they were turned to use, as was done by one of their possessors, Vidius Pollio, who cast the fattest of his domestics into his fish-pond to feed his lampreys. The only other classes were the actors and musicians, the dwarfs and the philosophers. They contributed by their wit, or their uncouth shape, or their oracular sentences, to the amusement of their employers, and were safe. They were licensed characters, and could say what they chose, protected by the long-drawn countenance of the stoic, or the comic grimaces of the buffoon. So early as the time of Nero, the people he tyrannized and flattered were not less ruthless than himself. In his cruelty—in his vanity—in his frivolity, and his entire devotion to the gratification of his passions—he was a true representative of the men over whom he ruled. Emperor and subject had even then become fitted for each other, and flowers, we are credibly told by the historians, were hung for many years upon his tomb.

Humanity itself seemed to be sunk beyond the possibility of restoration; but we see now how necessary it was that our nature should reach its lowest point of depression to give full force to the great reaction which Christianity introduced. Men were slavishly bending at the footstool of a despot, trembling for life, bowed down by fear and misery, when suddenly it was reported that a great teacher had appeared for a while upon earth, and declared that all men were equal in the sight of God, for that God was the Father of all. The slave heard this in the intervals of his torture—the captive in his dungeon—the widow and the orphan. To the poor the gospel, or good news, was preached. It was this which made the trembling courtiers of the worst of the emperors slip out noiselessly from the palace, and hear from Paul of Tarsus or his disciples the new prospect that was opening on mankind. It spread quickly among those oppressed and hopeless multitudes. The subjection of the Roman empire—its misery and degradation—were only a means to an end. The harsher the laws of the tyrant, the more gracious seemed the words of Christ. The two masters were plainly set before them, which to choose. And who could hesitate? One said, “Tremble! suffer! die!” The other said, “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”

SECOND CENTURY

	Emperors.
A.D.	
	TRAJAN—(*continued.*) Third Persecution of the Christians.
117.	ADRIAN. Fourth Persecution of the Christians.
138.	ANTONINUS PIUS.
161.	MARCUS AURELIUS.
180.	COMMODUS.
193.	PERTINAX—DIDIUS, and NIGER—Defeated by
193.	SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS.

Authors

Pliny the Younger, Plutarch, Suetonius, Juvenal, Arrian, Ælian, Ptolemy, (Geographer,) Appian, Epictetus, Pausanias, Galen, (Physician,) Athenæus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenæus, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement Of Alexandria, Marcion, (Heretic.)

THE SECOND CENTURY

THE GOOD EMPERORS

In looking at the second century, we see a total difference in the expression, though the main features continue unchanged. There is still the central power at Rome, the same dependence everywhere else; but the central power is beneficent and wise. As if tired of the hereditary rule of succession which had ended in such a monster as Domitian, the world took refuge in a new system of appointing its chiefs, and perhaps thought it a recommendation of each successive emperor that he had no relationship to the last. We shall accordingly find that, after this period, the hereditary principle is excluded. It was remarked that, of the twelve first Cæsars, only two had died a natural death—for even in the case of Augustus the arts of the poisoner were suspected—and those two were Vespasian and Titus, men who had no claim to such an elevation in right of lofty birth. Birth, indeed, had ceased to be a recommendation. All the great names of the Republic had been carefully rooted out. Few people were inclined to boast of their ancestry when the proof of their pedigree acted as a sentence of death; for there was no surer passport to destruction in the times of the early emperors than a connection with the Julian line, or descent from a historic family. No one, therefore, took the trouble to inquire into the genealogy of Nerva, the old and generous man who succeeded the monster Domitian. |**A.D. 96.**|His nomination to the empire elevated him at once out of the sphere of these inquiries, for already the same superstitious reverence surrounded the name of Augustus which spreads its inviolable sanctity on the throne of Eastern monarchs. Whoever sits upon that, by whatever title, or however acquired, is the legitimate and unquestioned king. No rival, therefore, started up to contest the position either of Nerva himself, or of the stranger he nominated to succeed him. |**A.D. 102.**|Men bent in humble acquiescence when they knew, in the third year of this century, that their master was named Trajan,—that he was a Spaniard by birth, and the best general of Rome. For eighty years after that date the empire had rest. Life and property were comparatively secure, and society flowed on peaceably in deep and well-ascertained channels. A man might have been born at the end of the reign of Domitian, and die in extreme old age under the sway of the last of the Antonines, and never have known of insecurity or oppression—

> “Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
> Could touch him farther!”

No wonder those agreeable years were considered by the fond gratitude of the time, and the unavailing regrets of succeeding generations, the golden age of man. Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus—these are still great names, and are everywhere recognised as the most wonderful succession of sovereigns the world has ever seen. They are still called the “Good Emperors,” the “Wise Rulers.”

It is easy, indeed, to be good in comparison with Nero, and wise in comparison with Claudius; but the effect of the example of those infamous tyrants made it doubly difficult to be either good or wise. The world had become so accustomed to oppression, that it seemed at first surprised at the change that had taken place. The emperors had to create a knowledge of justice before their just acts could be appreciated. The same opposition other men have experienced in introducing bad and cruel measures was roused by their introduction of wise and salutary laws. What! no more summary executions, nor forfeitures of fortunes, nor banishments to the Danube? All men equal before the dread tribunal of the imperial judge? The world was surely coming to an end, if the emperor did not now and then poison a senator, or stab his brother, or throw half a dozen courtiers to the beasts! It

is likely enough that some of the younger Romans at first lamented those days of unlimited license and perpetual excitement; but in the course of time those wilder spirits must have died out, and the world gladly acquiesced in an existence of dull security and uninteresting peace. By the end of the reign of Trajan the records of the miseries of the last century must have been studied as curiosities —as historical students now look back on the extravagances and horrors of the French Revolution. Fortunately, men could not look forward to the times, more pitiable still, when their descendants should fall into greater sorrows than had been inflicted on mankind by the worst of the Cæsars, and they enjoyed their present immunity from suffering without any misgivings about the future. But a government which does every thing for a people renders it unable to do any thing for itself. The subject stood quietly by while the emperor filled all the offices of the State—guarded him, fed him, clothed him, treated him like a child, and reduced him at last to childlike dependence. An unjust proconsul, instead of being supported and encouraged in his exactions, was dismissed from his employment and forced to refund his ill-got gains,—the population, relieved from their oppressor, saw in his punishment the hand of an avenging Providence. The wakeful eye of the governor in Rome saw the hostile preparations of a tribe of barbarians beyond the Danube; and the legions, crossing the river, dispersed and subdued them before they had time to devastate the Roman fields. The peaceful colonist saw, in the suddenness of his deliverance, the foresight and benevolence of a divinity. No words were powerful enough to convey the sentiments of admiration awakened, by such vigour and goodness, in the breast of a luxurious and effeminate people; and accordingly, if we look a little closely into the personal attributes of the five good emperors, we shall see that some part of their glory is due to the exaggerations of love and gratitude.

Nerva reigned but sixteen months, and had no time to do more than display his kindness of disposition, and to name his successor. This was Trajan, a man who was not even a Roman by birth, but who was thought by his patron to have retained, in the distant province of Spain where he was born, the virtues which had disappeared in the centre and capital of the empire. The deficiency of Nerva's character had been its softness and want of force. The stern vigilance of Trajan made ample amends. He was the best-known soldier of his time, and revived once more the terror of the Roman arms. He conquered wherever he appeared; but his warlike impetuosity led him too far. He trod in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, and advanced farther eastward than any of the Roman armies had previously done. But his victories were fruitless: he attached no new country permanently to the empire, and derives all his glory now from the excellence of his internal administration. He began his government by declaring himself as subordinate to the laws as the meanest of the people. His wife, Pompeia Plotina, was worthy of such a husband, and said, on mounting the steps of the palace, that she should descend them unaltered from what she was. The emperor visited his friends on terms of equality, and had the greatness of mind, generally deficient in absolute princes, to bestow his confidence on those who deserved it. Somebody, a member perhaps of the old police who had made such fortunes in the time of Domitian by alarming the tyrant with stories of plots and assassinations, told Trajan one day to beware of his minister, who intended to murder him on the first opportunity. "Come again, and tell me all particulars to-morrow," said the emperor. In the mean time he went unbidden and supped with the accused. He was shaved by his barber—was attended for a mock illness by his surgeon—bathed in his bath—and ate his meat and drank his wine. On the following day the informer came. "Ah!" said Trajan, interrupting him in his accusation of Surenus, "if Surenus had wished to kill me, he would have done it last night."

|A.D. 117.|

The emperor died when returning from a distant expedition in the East, and Pompeia declared that he had long designated Adrian as his successor. This evidence was believed, and Adrian, also a Spaniard by birth, and eminent as a military commander, began his reign. Trajan had been a general —a conqueror, and had extended for a time the boundaries of the Roman power. But Adrian believed the empire was large enough already. He withdrew the eagles from the half-subdued provinces, and

contented himself with the natural limits which it was easy to defend. But within those limits his activity was unexampled. He journeyed from end to end of his immense domain, and for seventeen years never rested in one spot. News did not travel fast in those days—but the emperor did. Long before the inhabitants of Syria and Egypt heard that he had left Rome on an expedition to Britain, he had rushed through Gaul, crossed the Channel, inquired into the proceedings of the government officers at York, given orders for a wall to keep out the Caledonians, (an attempt which has proved utterly vain at all periods of English history, down to the present day,) and suddenly made his appearance among the bewildered dwellers in Ephesus or Carthage, to call tax-gatherers to order and to inspect the discipline of his troops. The master's eye was everywhere, for nobody knew on what point it was fixed. And such a master no kingdom has been able to boast of since. His talents were universal. He read every thing and forgot nothing. He was a musician, a poet, a philosopher. He studied medicine and mineralogy, and plead causes like Cicero, and sang like a singer at the opera. Perhaps it is difficult to judge impartially of the qualities of a Roman emperor. One day he found fault on a point of grammar with a learned man of the name of Favorinus. Favorinus could have defended himself and justified his language, but continued silent. His friends said to him, "Why didn't you answer the emperor's objections?" "Do you think," said the sensible grammarian, "I am going to enter into disputes with a man who commands thirty legions?" But the greatness of Adrian's character is, that he *did* command those thirty legions. He was severe and just; and Roman discipline was never more exact. The result of this was shown on the grand scale only once during this reign, and that was in the case of the revolted Jews. We have seen the state to which their Temple at Jerusalem was reduced by Titus. Fifty years had now passed, and the passionate love of the people for their native land had congregated them once more within their renovated walls, and raised up another temple on the site of the old. They still expected the Messiah, for the Messiah to them represented vengeance upon the Romans and triumph over the world. An impostor of the name of Barcho-chebas led three hundred thousand of them into the field. They were mad with national hatred, and inspired with fanatical hope. It took three years of desperate effort to quell this sedition; and then Adrian had his revenge. The country was laid waste. Fifty towns and a thousand villages were sacked and burned. The population, once more nearly exhausted by war and famine, furnished slaves, which were sold all over the East. Jerusalem itself felt the conqueror's hatred most. Its name was blotted out—it was called Ælia Capitolina; and, with ferocious mockery, over the gate of the new capital of Judea was affixed the statue of the unclean beast, the abomination of the Israelite. But nothing could keep the Jews from visiting the land of so many promises and so much glory. Whenever they had it in their power, they crept back from all quarters, if it were only to weep and die amid the ruins of their former power.

Trajan and Adrian had now made the world accustomed to justice in its rulers; and as far as regards their public conduct, this character is not to be denied. Yet in their private relations they were not so faultless. Trajan the great and good was a drunkard. To such a pitch did he carry this vice, that he gave orders that after a certain hour of the day none of his commands were to be obeyed. Adrian was worse: he was regardless of life; he put men to death for very small offences. An architect was asked how he liked a certain series of statues designed by the emperor and ranged in a sitting attitude round a temple which he had built. The architect was a humourist, not a courtier. "If the goddesses," he said, "take it into their heads to rise, they will never be able to get out at the door." A poor criticism, and not a good piece of wit, but not bad enough to justify his being beheaded; yet the answer cost the poor man his life. As Adrian grew older, he grew more reckless of the pain he gave. He had a brother-in-law ninety years of age, and there was a grandson of the old man aged eighteen. He had them both executed on proof or suspicion of a conspiracy. The popular feeling was revolted by the sight of the mingled blood of two sufferers so nearly related, at the opposite extremities of life. The old man, just before he died, protested his innocence, and uttered a revengeful prayer that Adrian might wish to die and find death impossible! This imprecation was fulfilled. The emperor was tortured with disease, and longed for deliverance in vain. He called round him his physicians,

and priests, and sorcerers, but they could give him no relief. He begged his slaves to kill him, and stabbed himself with a dagger; but in spite of all he could not die. Lingering on, and with no cessation of his pain, he must have had sad thoughts of the past, and no pleasant anticipations of the future, if, as we learn from the verses attributed to him, he believed in a future state. His lines still remain, but are indebted to Pope, who paraphrased them, for their Christian spirit and lofty aspiration:—

"Vital spark of heavenly flame!
Quit, oh, quit this mortal frame!
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh, the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life!

"Hark! they whisper! angels say,
Sister spirit, come away!
What is this absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirits, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?

"The world recedes; it disappears!
Heaven opens on my eyes! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring:
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
O Grave! where is thy victory?
O Death! where is thy sting?"

His wish was at last achieved. He died aged sixty-two, having reigned twenty-one years. In travelling and building his whole time was spent. Temples, theatres, bridges—wherever he went, these evidences of his wisdom or magnificence remained. He persecuted the Christians, but found persecution a useless proceeding against a sect who gloried in martyrdom, and whose martyrdoms were only followed by new conversions. He tried what an opposite course of conduct would do, and is said to have intended to erect a temple to Jesus Christ. "Take care what you do," said one of his counsellors: "if you permit an altar to the God of the Christians, those of the other gods will be deserted."

|A.D. 138.|

But now came to supreme authority the good and wise Antoninus Pius, who was as blameless in his private conduct as in his public acts. His fame extended farther than the Roman arms had ever reached. Distant kings, in lands of which the names were scarcely known in the Forum, took him as arbiter of their differences. The decision of the great man in Rome gave peace on the banks of the Indus. The barbarians themselves on the outskirts of his dominions were restrained by respect for a character so pure and power so wisely used. An occasional revolt in Britain was quelled by his lieutenants—an occasional conspiracy against his authority was caused by the discontent which turbulent spirits feel when restrained by law. The conspiracies were repressed, and on one occasion two of the ringleaders were put to death. The Senate was for making further inquiry into the plot. "Let us stop here," said the emperor. "I do not wish to find out how many people I have displeased." Some stories are told of him, which show how little he affected the state of a despotic ruler. A pedantic philosopher at Smyrna, of the name of Polemo, returned from a journey at a late hour, and found the proconsul of Rome lodged in his house. This proconsul was Antonine, who at that time had

been appointed to the office by Adrian. Instead of being honoured by such a guest, the philosopher stormed and raged, and made so much noise, that in the middle of the night the sleepless proconsul left the house and found quarters elsewhere. When years passed on, and Antonine was on the throne, Polemo had the audacity to present himself as an old acquaintance. “Ha! I remember him,” said the emperor: “let him have a room in the palace, but don’t let him leave it night or day.” The imprisonment was not long, for we find the same Polemo hero of another anecdote during this visit to Rome. He hissed a performer in the theatre, and stamped and screeched, and made such a disturbance that the unfortunate actor had to leave the stage. He complained of Polemo to the emperor. “Polemo!” exclaimed Antonine; “he forced you off the stage in the middle of the day, but he drove me from his house in the middle of the night, and yet I never appealed.” It would be pleasant if we could learn that Polemo did not get off so easily. But the twenty-two years of this reign of mildness and probity were brought to a close, and Marcus Aurelius succeeded in 161.

|A.D. 161|

Marcus Aurelius did no dishonour to the discernment of his friend and adoptive father Antoninus Pius. Studying philosophy and practising self-command, he emulated and surpassed the virtues of the self-denying leaders of his sect, and only broke through the rule he imposed on himself of clemency and mildness, when he found philosophy in danger of being counted a vain deceit, and the active duties of human brotherhood preferred to the theoretic rhapsodies on the same subject with which his works were filled. Times began to change. Men were dissatisfied with the unsubstantial dream of Platonist and Stoic. There were symptoms of an approaching alteration in human affairs, which perplexed the thoughtful and gave promise of impunity to the bad. Perhaps a man who, clothed in the imperial purple, bestowed so much study on the intellectual niceties of the Sophists, and endeavoured to keep his mind in a fit state for abstract speculation by scourging and starving his body, was not so fitted for the approaching crisis as a rougher and less contemplative nature would have been. Britain was in commotion, there were tumults on the Rhine, and in Armenia the Parthians cut the Roman legions to pieces. And scarcely were those troubles settled and punished, when a worse calamity befell the Roman empire. Its inviolability became a boast of the past. The fearful passions for conquest and rapine of the border-barbarians were roused. Barbaric cohorts encamped on the fields of Italy, and the hosts of wild men from the forests of the North pillaged the heaped-up treasures of the garden of the world. The emperor flew to the scene of danger, but the fatal word had been said. Italy was accessible from the Alps and from the sea; and, though a bloody defeat at Aquileia flung back the invaders, disordered and dispirited, over the mountains they had descended with such hopes, the struggle was but begun. The barbarians felt their power, and the old institutions of Rome were insufficient to resist future attacks. But to the aid of the old Roman institutions a new institution came, an institution which was destined to repel the barbarians by overcoming barbarism itself, and save the dignity of Rome by giving it the protection of the Cross. But at present—that is, during the reign of the philosophic Marcus Aurelius—a persecution raged against the Christians which seemed to render hopeless all chance of their success. The mild laws of Trajan and Adrian, and the favourable decrees of Antoninus Pius, were set aside by the contemptuous enmity of this explorer of the mysterious heights of virtue, which occasionally carried him out of sight of the lower but more important duties of life. An unsocial tribe the Christians were, who rigorously shut their eyes to the beauties of abstract perfection, and preferred the plain orders of the gospel to the most ambitious periods of the emperor. But the persecution of a sect so small and so obscure as the Christian was at that time, is scarcely perceptible as a diminution of the sum of human happiness secured to the world by the gentleness and equity which regulated all his actions. Here is an example of the way in which he treated rebels against his authority. An insurrection broke out in Syria and the East, headed by a pretended descendant of the patriot Cassius, who had conspired against Julius Cæsar. The emperor hurried to meet him—some say to resign the empire into his hands, to prevent the effusion of blood; but the usurper died in an obscure commotion, and nothing was left but to take vengeance on his

adherents. This is the letter the conqueror wrote to the Senate:—"I beseech you, conscript Fathers! not to punish the guilty with too much rigour. Let no Senator be put to death. Let the banished return to their country. I wish I could give back their lives to those who have died in this quarrel. Revenge is unworthy of an emperor. You will pardon, therefore, the children of Cassius, his son-in-law, and his wife. Pardon, did I say? Ah! what crime have they committed? Let them live in safety, let them retain all that Cassius possessed. Let them live in whatever place they choose, to be a monument of your clemency and mine."

In such hands as these the fortune of mankind was safe. A pity that the father's feelings got the better of his judgment in the choice of his successor. It is the one blot on his otherwise perfect disinterestedness. In dying, with such a monster as Commodus ready to leap into his seat, he must have felt how inexpressibly valuable his life would be to the Roman people. He perhaps saw the danger to which he exposed the world; for he committed his son to the care of his wisest counsellors, and begged him to continue the same course of government he had pursued. Perhaps he was tired of life, perhaps he sought refuge in his self-denying philosophy from the prospect he saw before him of a state of perpetual struggle and eventual overthrow. When the Tribune came for the last time to ask the watchword of the day, "Go to the rising sun," he said; "for me, I am just going to set."

And here the history of the Second Century should close. It is painful to go back again to the hideous scenes of anarchy and crime from which we have been delivered so long. What must the sage counsellors, the chosen companions and equals in age of the Antonines, have thought when all at once the face of affairs, which they must have believed eternal, was changed?—when the noblest and wisest in the land were again thrown heedlessly into the arena without trial?—when spies watched every meal, and the ferocious murderer on the throne seemed to gloat over the struggles of his victims? Yet, if they had reflected on the inevitable course of events, they must have seen that a government depending on the character of one man could never be relied on. Where, indeed, could any element of security be found? The very ground-work of society was overthrown. There was no independent body erect amid the general prostration at the footstool of the emperor. Local self-government had ceased except in name. All the towns which hitherto had been subordinate to Rome, but endowed at the same time with privileges which were worth defending, had been absorbed into the great whirlpool of imperial centralization, and were admitted to the rights of Roman citizenship,—now of little value, since it embraced every quarter of the empire. Jupiter and Juno, and the herd of effete gods and goddesses, if they had ever held any practical influence over the minds of men, had long sunk into contempt, except in so far as their rich establishments were defended by persons interested in their maintenance, and the processions and gaudy display of a foul and meretricious worship were pleasing to the depraved taste of the mob. But the religious principle, as a motive of action, or as a point of combination, was at an end. Augurs were still appointed, and laughed at the uselessness of their office; oracles were still uttered, and ridiculed as the offspring of ignorance and imposture; conflicting deities fought for pre-eminence, or compromised their differences by an amalgamation of their altars, and perhaps a division of their estates. It was against this state of society the early Fathers directed their warnings and denunciations. The world did certainly lie in darkness, and it was indispensable to warn the followers of Christ not to be conformed to the fashion of that fleeting time. Some, to escape the contagion of this miserable condition, when men were without hope, and without even the wretched consolation which a belief in a false god would have given them, fled to the wilds and caves. Hermits escaped equally the perils of sin and the hostility of the heathen. Believers were exhorted to flee from contamination, and some took the words in their literal meaning. But not all. Many remained, and fought the good fight in the front of the battle, as became the soldiers of the cross. In the midst of the anarchy and degradation which characterized the last years of the century, a society was surely and steadily advancing towards its full development, bound by rules in the midst of the helplessness of external law, and combined by strong faith, in a world of utter unbelief—an empire within an empire—soon to be the only specimen left either of government or mutual obligation, and finally to

absorb into its fresh and still-spreading organization the withered and impotent authority which had at first seen in it its enemy and destroyer, and found it at last its refuge and support. Yet at this very time the empire had never appeared so strong. By a stroke of policy, which the event proved to be injudicious, Marcus Aurelius, in the hope of diminishing the number of his enemies, had converted many thousands of the barbarians into his subjects. They had settlements assigned them within the charmed ring. What they had not been able to obtain by the sword was now assured to them by treaty. But the unity of the Roman empire by this means was destroyed. Men were admitted within the citadel who had no reverence implanted in them from their earliest years for the majesty of the Roman name. They saw the riches contained in the stronghold, and were only anxious to open the gates to their countrymen who were still outside the walls.

But before we enter on the downward course, and since we are now arrived at the period of the greatest apparent force and extent of the Roman empire, let us see what it consisted of, and what was the real amount of its power.

Viewed in comparison with some of the monarchies of the present day, neither its extent of territory, nor amount of population, nor number of soldiers, is very surprising. The Queen of England reigns over more subjects, and commands far mightier fleets and armies, than any of the Roman emperors. The empire of Russia is more extensive, and yet the historians of a few generations ago are lost in admiration of the power of Rome. The whole military force of the empire amounted to four hundred and fifty thousand men. The total number of vessels did not exceed a thousand. But see what were the advantages Rome possessed in the compactness of its territory and the unity of its government. The great Mediterranean Sea, peopled and cultivated on both its shores, was but a peaceful lake, on which the Roman galley had no enemy to fear, and the merchant-ship dreaded nothing but the winds and waves. There were no fortresses to be garrisoned on what are now the boundaries of jealous or hostile kingdoms. If the great circuit of the Roman State could be protected from barbarian inroads, the internal defence of all that vast enclosure could be left to the civil power. If the Black Sea and the Sea of Azoff could be kept clear of piratical adventurers, the broad highway of the Mediterranean was safe. A squadron near Gibraltar, a squadron at the Dardanelles, and the tribes which might possibly venture in from the ocean—the tribes which, slipping down from the Don or the Dnieper, might thread their way through the Hellespont and emerge into the Egean—were caught at their first appearance; and when the wisdom of the Romans had guarded the mouths of the Danube from the descent, in canoe or coracle, of the wild settlers on its upper banks, the peace and commerce of the whole empire were secured. With modern Europe the case is very different. There are boundaries to be guarded which occupy more soldiers than the territories are worth. Lines are arbitrarily fixed across the centre of a plain, or along the summit of a mountain, which it is a case of war to pass. Belgium defends her flats with a hundred thousand men, and the marshes of Holland are secured by sixty thousand Dutch. The State of Dessau in Germany, threatens its neighbours with fifteen hundred soldiers, while Reuss guards its dignity and independence with three hundred infantry and fifty horse. But the Great Powers, as they are called, take away from the peaceable and remunerative employments of trade or agriculture an amount of labour which would be an incalculable increase to the riches and happiness of the world. The aggregate soldiery of Europe is upwards of five millions of men,—just eleven times the largest calculation of the Roman legions. The ships of Europe—to the smaller of which the greatest galleys of the ancient world would scarcely serve as tenders—amount to 2113. The number of guns they carry, against which there is nothing we can take as a measure of value in ancient warfare, but which are now the greatest and surest criterions of military power, amounts to 45,367. But this does not give so clear a view of the alteration in relative power as is yielded by an inspection of some of the separate items. Gaul, included within the Rhine, was kept in order by six or seven legions. The French empire has on foot an army of six hundred and fifty thousand men, and a fleet of four hundred sail. Britain, which was garrisoned by thirty thousand men, had, in 1855, an army at home and abroad of six hundred and sixty thousand men, and a fleet

of five hundred and ninety-one ships of war, with an armament of seventeen thousand guns. The disjointed States which now constitute the Empire of Austria, and which occupied eight legions in their defence, are now in possession of an army of six hundred thousand men; and Prussia, whose array exceeds half a million of soldiers, was unheard of except in the discussions of geographers.[1]

|A.D. 181.|

With the death of the excellent Marcus Aurelius the golden age came to a close. Commodus sat on the throne, and renewed the wildest atrocities of the previous century. Nero was not more cruel—Domitian was not so reckless of human life. He fought in the arena against weakly-armed adversaries, and slew them without remorse. He polluted the whole city with blood, and made money by selling permissions to murder. Thirteen years exhausted the patience of the world, and a justifiable assassination put an end to his life. There was an old man of the name of Pertinax, originally a nickname derived from his obstinate or pertinacious disposition, who now made his appearance on the throne and perished in three months. It chanced that a certain rich man of the name of Didius was giving a supper the night of the murder to some friends. The dishes were rich, and the wine delicious. Inspired by the good cheer, the guests said, "Why don't you buy the empire? The soldiers have proclaimed that they will give it to the highest bidder." Didius knew the amount of his treasure, and was ambitious: he got up from table and hurried to the Prætorian camp. On the way he met the mutilated body of the murdered Pertinax, dragged through the streets with savage exultation. Nothing daunted, he arrived at the soldiers' tents. Another had been before him—Sulpician, the father-in-law and friend of the late emperor. A bribe had been offered to each soldier, so large that they were about to conclude the bargain; but Didius bade many sesterces more. The greedy soldiery looked from one to the other, and shouted with delight, as each new advance was made. **|A.D. 193.|**At last Sulpician was silent, and Didius had purchased the Roman world at the price of upwards of £200 to each soldier of the Prætorian guard. He entered the palace in state, and concluded the supper, which had been interrupted at his own house, on the viands prepared for Pertinax. But the excitement of the auction-room was too pleasant to be left to the troops in Rome. Offers were made to the legions in all the provinces, and Didius was threatened on every side. Even the distant garrisons of Britain named a candidate for the throne; and Claudius Albinus assumed the imperial purple, and crossed over into Gaul. More irritated still, the army in Syria elected its general, Pescennius Niger, emperor, and he prepared to dispute the prize; but quietly, steadily, with stern face and unrelenting heart, advancing from province to province, keeping his forces in strict subjection, and laying claim to supreme authority by the mere strength of his indomitable will, came forward Septimius Severus, and both the pretenders saw that their fate was sealed. Illyria and Gaul recognised his title at once. Albinus was happy to accept from him the subordinate title of Cæsar, and to rule as his lieutenant. Didius, whose bargain turned out rather ill, besought him to be content with half the empire. Severus slew the messengers who brought this proposition, and advanced in grim silence. The Senate assembled, and, by way of a pleasant reception for the Illyrian chief, requested Didius to prepare for death. The executioners found him clinging to life with unmanly tenacity, and killed him when he had reigned but seventy days. One other competitor remained, the general of the Syrian army—the closest friend of Severus, but now separated from him by the great temptation of an empire in dispute. This was Niger, from whom an obstinate resistance was expected, as he was equally famous for his courage and his skill. But fortune was on the side of Severus. Niger was conquered after a short struggle, and his head presented to the victor. Was Albinus still to live, and approach so near the throne as to have the rank of Cæsar? Assassins were employed to murder him, but he escaped their assault. The treachery of Severus brought many supporters to his rival. The Roman armies were ranged in hostile camps.

[1] The following is a carefully compiled table of the forces of Europe in the year 1854-55. Since that time the Russian fleet has been destroyed, but the diminution has been more than counterbalanced by the increased navies of the other powers.Military Forces of Europe in 1855.[1]Indian army 250,000, and militia 145,000, not included; making a total of 660,000[2]Taking an average of ten men to each gun, the sailors will be 453,670; which gives a total of fighting-men, 5,064,899!!!

Severus again was fortunate, and Albinus, dashing towards him to engage in combat, was slain before his eyes. He watched his dying agonies for some time, and then forced his horse to trample on the corpse. A man of harsh, implacable nature—not so much cruel as impenetrable to human feelings, and perhaps forming a just estimate of the favourable effect upon his fortunes of a disposition so calm, and yet so relentless. The Prætorians found they had appointed their master, and put the sword into his hand. He used it without remorse. He terrified the boldest with his imperturbable stillness; he summoned the seditious soldiery to wait on him at his camp. They were to come without arms, without their military dress, almost like suppliants, certainly not like the ferocious libertines they had been when they had sold the empire at the highest price. "Whoever of you wishes to live," said Severus, frowning coldly, "will depart from this, and never come within thirty leagues of Rome. Take their horses," he added to the other troops who had surrounded the Prætorians, "take their accoutrements, and chase them out of my sight." Did the Senate receive a milder treatment? On sending them the head of Albinus, he had written to the Conscript Fathers alarming them with the most dreadful threats. And now the time of execution had come. He made them an oration in praise of the proscriptions of Marius and Sylla, and forced them to deify the tyrant Commodus, who had hated them all his life. He then gave a signal to his train, and the streets ran with blood. All who had borne high office, all who were of distinguished birth, all who were famous for their wealth or popular with the citizens, were put to death. He crossed over to England and repressed a sedition there. His son Caracalla accompanied him, and commenced his career of warlike ardour and frightful ferocity, which can only be explained on the ground of his being mad. He tried even to murder his father, in open day, in the sight of the soldiers. He was stealing upon the old man, when a cry from the legion made him turn round. His inflexible eye fell upon Caracalla—the sword dropped from his unfilial hand—and dreadful anticipations of vengeance filled the assembly. The son was pardoned, but his accomplices, whether truly or falsely accused, perished by cruel deaths. At last the emperor felt his end approach. He summoned his sons Caracalla and Geta into his presence, recommended them to live in unity, and ended by the advice which has become the standing maxim of military despots, "Be generous to the soldiers, and trample on all beside."

With this hideous incarnation of unpitying firmness on the throne—hopeless of the future, and with dangers accumulating on every side, the Second Century came to an end, leaving the amazing contrast between its miserable close and the long period of its prosperity by which it will be remembered in all succeeding time.

THIRD CENTURY

	Emperors.
A.D.	
	SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS—(*continued.*) Fifth Persecution of the Christians.
211.	CARACALLA and GETA.
217.	MACRINUS.
218.	HELIOGABALUS.
222.	ALEXANDER SEVERUS.
235.	MAXIMIN. Sixth Persecution.
238.	MAXIMUS and BALBINUS
238.	GORDIAN.
244.	PHILIP THE ARABIAN.
249.	DECIUS. Seventh Persecution.
251.	VIBIUS.
251.	GALLUS.
254.	VALERIAN. Eighth Persecution.
260.	GALLIEN.
268.	CLAUDIUS THE SECOND.
270.	AURELIAN. Ninth Persecution.
275.	TACITUS.
276.	FLORIAN.
277.	PROBUS.
278.	CARUS.
278.	CARINUS and NUMERIAN.
284.	DIOCLETIAN and MAXIMIAN. Tenth and Last Persecution.

Authors

Clement of Alexandria, Dion Cassius, Origen, Cyprian, Plotinus, Longinus, Hippolitus Portuensis, Julius Africanus Celsus, Origen.

THE THIRD CENTURY

ANARCHY AND CONFUSION – GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We are now in the twelfth year of the Third Century. Septimius Severus has died at York, and Caracalla is let loose like a famished tiger upon Rome. He invites his brother Geta to meet him to settle some family feud in the apartment of their mother, and stabs him in her arms. The rest of his reign is worthy of this beginning, and it would be fatiguing and perplexing to the memory to record his other acts. Fortunately it is not required; nor is it necessary to follow minutely the course of his successors. What we require is only a general view of the proceedings of this century, and that can be gained without wading through all the blood and horrors with which the throne of the world is surrounded. Conclusive evidence was obtained in this century that the organization of Roman government was defective in securing the first necessities of civilized life. When we talk of civilization, we are too apt to limit the meaning of the word to its mere embellishments, such as arts and sciences; but the true distinction between it and barbarism is, that the one presents a state of society under the protection of just and well-administered law, and the other is left to the chance government of brute force. There was now great wealth in Rome—great luxury—a high admiration of painting, poetry, and sculpture—much learning, and probably infinite refinement of manners and address. But it was not a civilized state. Life was of no value—property was not secure. A series of madmen seized supreme authority, and overthrew all the distinctions between right and wrong. Murder was legalized, and rapine openly encouraged. It is a sort of satisfaction to perceive that few of those atrocious malefactors escaped altogether the punishment of their crimes. If Caracalla slays his brother and orders a peaceable province to be destroyed, there is a Macrinus at hand to put the monster to death. |**A.D. 218.**|But Macrinus, relying on the goodness of his intentions, neglects the soldiery, and is supplanted by a boy of seventeen—so handsome that he won the admiration of the rudest of the legionaries, and so gentle and captivating in his manners that he strengthened the effect his beauty had produced. He was priest of the Temple of the Sun at Emesa in Phœnicia; and by the arts of his grandmother, who was sister to one of the former empresses, and the report that she cunningly spread abroad that he was the son of their favourite Caracalla, the affection of the dissolute soldiery knew no bounds. Macrinus was soon slaughtered, and the long-haired priest of Baal seated on the throne of the Cæsars, under the name of Heliogabalus. As might be expected, the sudden alteration in his fortunes was fatal to his character. All the excesses of his predecessors were surpassed. His extravagance rapidly exhausted the resources of the empire. His floors were spread with gold-dust. His dresses, jewels, and golden ornaments were never worn twice, but went to his slaves and parasites. He created his grandmother a member of the Senate, with rank next after the consuls; and established a rival Senate, composed of ladies, presided over by his mother. Their jurisdiction was not very hurtful to the State, for it only extended to dresses and precedence of ranks, and the etiquette to be observed in visiting each other. But the evil dispositions of the emperor were shown in other ways. He had a cousin of the name of Alexander, and entertained an unbounded jealousy of his popularity with the soldiers. Attempts at poison and direct assassination were resorted to in vain. The public sympathy began to rise in his favour. The Prætorians formally took him under their protection; and when Heliogabalus, reckless of their menaces, again attempted the life of Alexander, the troops revolted, proclaimed death to the infatuated emperor, and slew him and his mother at the same time.

A.D. 222

Alexander was now enthroned—a youth of sixteen; gifted with higher qualities than the debased century in which he lived could altogether appreciate. But the origin of his noblest sentiments is traced to the teaching he had received from his mother, in which the precepts of Christianity were not omitted. When he appointed the governor of a province, he published his name some time before, and requested if any one knew of a disqualification, to have it sent in for his consideration. "It is thus the Christians appoint their pastors," he said, "and I will do the same with my representatives." When his justice, moderation, and equity were fully recognised, the beauty of the quotation, which was continually in his mouth, was admired by all, even though they were ignorant of the book it came from: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." He trusted the wisest of his counsellors, the great legalists of the empire, with the introduction of new laws to curb the wickedness of the time. But the multiplicity of laws proves the decline of states. In the ancient Rome of the kings and earlier consuls, the statutes were contained in forty decisions, which were afterwards enlarged into the laws of the Twelve Tables, consisting of one hundred and fifty texts. The profligacy of some emperors, the vanity of others, had loaded the statute-book with an innumerable mass of edicts, senatus-consultums, prætorial rescripts, and customary laws. It was impossible to extract order or regularity from such a chaos of conflicting rules. The great work was left for a later prince; at present we can only praise the goodness of the emperor's intention. But Alexander, justly called Severus, from the simplicity of his life and manners, has held the throne too long. The Prætorians have been thirteen years without the donation consequent on a new accession.

Among the favourite leaders selected by Alexander for their military qualifications was one Maximin, a Thracian peasant, of whose strength and stature incredible things are told. He was upwards of eight feet high, could tire down a horse at the gallop on foot, could break its leg by a blow of his hand, could overthrow thirty wrestlers without drawing breath, and maintained this prodigious force by eating forty pounds of meat, and drinking an amphora and a half, or twelve quarts, of wine. This giant had the bravery for which his countrymen the Goths have always been celebrated. He rose to high rank in the Roman service; and when at last nothing seemed to stand between him and the throne but his patron and benefactor, ambition blinded him to every thing but his own advancement. He murdered the wise and generous Alexander, and presented for the first time in history the spectacle of a barbarian master of the Roman world. Other emperors had been born in distant portions of the empire; an African had trampled on Roman greatness in the person of Septimius Severus; a Phœnician priest had disgraced the purple in the person of Heliogabalus; Africa, however, was a Roman province, and Emesa a Roman town. But here sat the colossal representative of the terrible Goths of Thrace, speaking a language half Getic, half Latin, which no one could easily understand; fierce, haughty, and revengeful, and cherishing a ferocious hatred of the subjects who trembled before him—a hatred probably implanted in him in his childhood by the patriotic songs with which the warriors of his tribe kept alive their enmity and contempt for the Roman name. The Roman name had indeed by this time lost all its authority. The army, recruited from all parts of the empire, and including a great number of barbarians in its ranks, was no longer a bulwark against foreign invasion. Maximin, bestowing the chief commands on Pannonians and other mercenaries, treated the empire as a conquered country. He seized on all the wealth he could discover—melted all the golden statues, as valuable from their artistic beauty as for the metal of which they were composed—and was threatening an approach to Rome to exterminate the Senate and sack the devoted town. In this extremity the Senate resumed its long-forgotten power, and named as emperors two men of the name of Gordian—father and son—with instructions "to resist the enemy." But father and son perished in a few weeks, and still the terrible Goth came on. His son, a giant like himself, but beautiful as the colossal statue of a young Apollo, shared in all the feelings of his father. Terrified at its approaching

doom, the Senate once more nominated two men to the purple, Maximus and Balbinus: Balbinus, the favourite, perhaps, of the aristocracy, by the descent he claimed from an illustrious ancestry; while Maximus recommended himself to the now perverted taste of the commonalty by having been a carter. Neither was popular with the army; and, to please the soldiers, a son or nephew of the younger Gordian was associated with them on the throne. But nothing could have resisted the infuriated legions of the gigantic Maximin; they were marching with wonderful expedition towards their revenge. At Aquileia they met an opposition; the town shut its gates and manned its walls, for it knew what would be the fate of a city given up to the tender mercies of the Goths. Meanwhile the approach of the destroyer produced great agitation in Rome. The people rose upon the Prætorians, and enlisted the gladiators on their side. Many thousands were slain, and at last a peace was made by the intercession of the youthful Gordian. Glad of the cessation of this civic tumult, the population of Rome betook itself to the theatres and shows. Suddenly, while the games were going on, it was announced that the army before Aquileia had mutinied and that both the Maximins were slain. |**A.D. 235.**|All at once the amphitheatre was emptied; by an impulse of grateful piety, the emperors and people hurried into the temples of the gods, and offered up thanks for their deliverance. The wretched people were premature in their rejoicing. In less than three months the spoiled Prætorians were offended with the precaution taken by the emperors in surrounding themselves with German guards. They assaulted the palace, and put Maximus and Balbinus to death. Gordian the Third was now sole emperor, and the final struggle with the barbarians drew nearer and nearer.

Constantly crossing the frontiers, and willingly received in the Roman ranks, the communities who had been long settled on the Roman confines were not the utterly uncultivated tribes which their name would seem to denote. There was a conterminous civilization which made the two peoples scarcely distinguishable at their point of contact, but which died off as the distance from the Roman line increased. Thus, an original settler on the eastern bank of the Rhine was probably as cultivated and intelligent as a Roman colonist on the other side; but farther up, at the Weser and the Elbe, the old ferocity and roughness remained. Fresh importations from the unknown East were continually taking place; the dwellers in the plains of Pannonia, now habituated to pasturage and trade, found safety from the hordes which pressed upon them from their own original settlements beyond the Caucasus, by crossing the boundary river; and by this means the banks were held by cognate but hostile peoples, who could, however, easily be reconciled by a joint expedition against Rome. New combinations had taken place in the interior of the great expanses not included in the Roman limits. The Germans were no longer the natural enemies of the empire. They furnished many soldiers for its defence, and several chiefs to command its forces. But all round the external circuit of those half-conciliated tribes rose up vast confederacies of warlike nations. There were Cheruski, and Sicambri, and Attuarians, and Bruttuarians, and Catti, all regularly enrolled under the name of “Franks,” or the brave. The Sarmatians or Sclaves performed the same part on the northeastern frontier; and we have already seen that the irresistible Goths had found their way, one by one, across the boundary, and cleared the path for their successors. The old enemies of Rome on the extreme east, the Parthians, had fallen under the power of a renovated mountain-race, and of a king, who founded the great dynasty of the Sassanides, and claimed the restoration of Egypt and Armenia as ancient dependencies of the Persian crown. To resist all these, there was, in the year 241, only a gentle-tempered youth, dressed in the purple which had so lost its original grandeur, and relying for his guidance on the wisdom of his tutors, and for his life on the forbearance of the Prætorians. The tutors were wise and just, and victory at first gave some sort of dignity to the reign of Gordian. |**A.D. 244.**|The Franks were conquered at Mayence; but Gordian, three years after, was murdered in the East; and Philip, an Arabian, whose father had been a robber of the desert, was acknowledged emperor by senate and army. Treachery, ambition, and murder pursued their course. There was no succession to the throne. Sometimes one general, luckier or wiser than the rest, appeared the sole governor of the State. At other times there were numberless rivals all claiming the empire and threatening vengeance on their opponents. Yet

amidst this tumult of undistinguishable pretenders, fortune placed at the head of affairs some of the best and greatest men whom the Roman world ever produced. There was Valerian, whom all parties agreed in considering the most virtuous and enlightened man of his time. |**A.D. 253.**|Scarcely any opposition was made to his promotion; and yet, with all his good qualities, he was the man to whom Rome owed the greatest degradation it had yet sustained. He was taken prisoner by Sapor, the Persian king, and condemned, with other captive monarchs, to draw the car of his conqueror. No offers of ransom could deliver the brave and unfortunate prince. He died amid his deriding enemies, who hung up his skin as an offering to their gods. Then, after some years, in which there were twenty emperors at one time, with army drawn up against army, and cities delivered to massacre and rapine by all parties in turn, there arose one of the strong minds which make themselves felt throughout a whole period, and arrest for a while the downward course of states. |**A.D. 276.**|The emperor Probus, son of a man who had originally been a gardener, had distinguished himself under Aurelian, the conqueror of Palmyra, and, having survived all his competitors, had time to devote himself to the restoration of discipline and the introduction of purer laws. His victories over the encroaching barbarians were decided, but ineffectual. New myriads still pressed forward to take the place of the slain. On one occasion he crossed the Rhine in pursuit of the revolted Germans, overtook them at the Necker, and killed in battle four hundred thousand men. Nine kings threw themselves at the emperor's feet. Many thousand barbarians enlisted in the Roman army. Sixty great cities were taken, and made offerings of golden crowns. The whole country was laid waste. "There was nothing left," he boasted to the Senate, "but bare fields, as if they had never been cultivated." So much the worse for the Romans. The barbarians looked with keener eyes across the river at the rich lands which had never been ravaged, and sent messages to all the tribes in the distant forests, that, having no occasion for pruning-hooks, they had turned them into swords. But Probus showed a still more doubtful policy in other quarters. When he conquered the Vandals and Burgundians, he sent their warriors to keep the Caledonians in subjection on the Tyne. The Britons he transported to Mœsia or Greece. What intermixtures of race may have arisen from these transplantations it is impossible to say; but the one feeling was common to all the barbarians, that Rome was weak and they were strong. He settled a large detachment of Franks on the shores of the Black Sea; and of these an almost incredible but well-authenticated story is told. They seized or built themselves boats. They swept through the Dardanelles, and ravaged the isles of Greece. They pursued their piratical career down the Mediterranean, passed the pillars of Hercules into the Great Sea, and, rounding Spain and France, rowed up the Elbe into the midst of their astonished countrymen, who had long given them up for dead. A fatal adventure this for the safety of the Roman shores; for there were the wild fishermen of Friesland, and the audacious Angles of Schleswig and Holstein, who heard of this strange exploit, and saw that no coast was too distant to be reached by their oar and sail. But if these forced settlements of barbarians on Roman soil were impolitic, the generous Probus did not feel their bad effect. His warlike qualities awed his foes, and his inflexible justice was appreciated by the hardy warriors of the North, who had not yet sunk under the debasing civilization of Rome. In Asia his arms were attended with equal success. He subdued the Persians, and extended his conquests into Ethiopia and the farthest regions of the East, bringing back some of its conquered natives to swell the triumph at Rome and terrify the citizens with their strange and hideous appearance. But Probus himself must yield to the law which regulated the fate of Roman emperors. He died by treachery and the sword. All that the empire could do was to join in the epitaph pronounced over him by the barbarians, "Here lies the emperor Probus, whose life and actions corresponded to his name."

Three or four more fantastic figures, "which the likeness of a kingly crown have on," pass before our eyes, and at last we observe the powerful and substantial form of Diocletian, and feel once more we have to do with a real man. |**A.D. 284.**|A Druidess, we are told, had prophesied that he should attain his highest wish if he killed a wild boar. In all his hunting expeditions he was constantly on the look-out, spear in hand, for an encounter with the long-tusked monster. Unluckily for a man

who had offended Diocletian before, and who had basely murdered his predecessor, his name was Aper; and unluckily, also, *aper* is Latin for a boar. This fact will perhaps be thought to account for the prophecy. It accounts, at all events, for its fulfilment; for, the wretched Aper being led before the throne, Diocletian descended the steps and plunged a dagger into his chest, exclaiming, "I have killed the wild boar of the prediction." This is a painful example of how unlucky it is to have a name that can be punned upon. Determined to secure the support of what he thought the strongest body in the State, he gratified the priests by the severest of all the many persecutions to which the Christians had been exposed. By way of further showing his adhesion to the old faith, he solemnly assumed the name of Jove, and bestowed on his partner on the throne the inferior title of Hercules. In spite of these truculent and absurd proceedings, Diocletian was not altogether destitute of the softer feelings. The friend he associated with him on the throne—dividing the empire between them as too large a burden for one to sustain—was called Maximian. They had both originally been slaves, and had neither of them received a liberal education. Yet they protected the arts, they encouraged literature, and were the patrons of modest merit wherever it could be found. They each adopted a Cæsar, or lieutenant of the empire, and hoped that, by a legal division of duties among four, the ambition of their generals would be prevented. But the limits of the empire were too extended even for the vigilance of them all. In Britain, Carausius raised the standard of revolt, giving it the noble name of national independence; and, with the instinctive wisdom which has been the safeguard of our island ever since, he rested his whole chance of success upon his fleet. Invasion was rendered impossible by the care with which he guarded the shore, and it is not inconceivable that even at that early time the maritime career of Britain might have been begun and maintained, if treason, as usual, had not cut short the efforts of Carausius, who was soon after murdered by his friend Allectus. The subdivision of the empire was a successful experiment as regarded its external safety, but within, it was the cause of bitter complaining. There were four sumptuous courts to be maintained, and four imperial armies to be paid. Taxes rose, and allegiance waxed cold. The Cæsars were young, and looked probably with an evil eye on the two old men who stood between them and the name of emperor. However it may be, after many victories and much domestic trouble, Diocletian resolved to lay aside the burden of empire and retire into private life. His colleague Maximian felt, or affected to feel, the same distaste for power, and on the same day they quitted the purple; one at Nicomedia, the other at Milan. Diocletian retired to Salona, a town in his native Dalmatia, and occupied himself with rural pursuits. He was asked after a while to reassume his authority, but he said to the persons who made him the request, "I wish you would come to Salona and see the cabbages I have planted with my own hands, and after that you would never wish me to remount the throne."

The characteristic of this century is its utter confusion and want of order. There was no longer the unity even of despotism at Rome to make a common centre round which every thing revolved. There were tyrants and competitors for power in every quarter of the empire—no settled authority, no government or security, left. In the midst of this relaxation of every rule of life, grew surely, but unobserved, the Christian Church, which drew strength from the very helplessness of the civil state, and was forced, in self-defence, to establish a regular organization in order to extend to its members the inestimable benefits of regularity and law. Under many of the emperors Christianity was proscribed; its disciples were put to excruciating deaths, and their property confiscated; but at that very time its inner development increased and strengthened. The community appointed its teachers, its deacons, its office-bearers of every kind; it supported them in their endeavours—it yielded to their directions; and in time a certain amount of authority was considered to be inherent in the office of pastor, which extended beyond the mere expounding of the gospel or administration of the sacraments. The chief pastor became the guide, perhaps the judge, of the whole flock. While it is absurd, therefore, in those disastrous times of weakness and persecution to talk in pompous terms of the succession of the Bishops of Rome, and make out vain catalogues of lordly prelates who sat on the throne of St. Peter, it is incontestable that, from the earliest period, the Christian converts held their

meetings—by stealth indeed, and under fear of detection—and obeyed certain canons of their own constitution. These secret associations rapidly spread their ramifications into every great city of the empire. When by the friendship, or the fellowship, of the emperor, as in the case of the Arabian Philip, a pause was given to their fears and sufferings, certain buildings were set apart for their religious exercises; and we read, during this century, of basilicas, or churches, in Rome and other towns. The subtlety of the Greek intellect had already led to endless heresies and the wildest departures from the simplicity of the gospel. The Western mind was more calm, and better adapted to be the lawgiver of a new order of society composed of elements so rough and discordant as the barbarians, whose approach was now inevitably foreseen. With its well-defined hierarchy—its graduated ranks, and the fitness of the offices for the purposes of their creation; with its array of martyrs ready to suffer, and clear-headed leaders fitted to command, the Western Church could look calmly forward to the time when its organization would make it the most powerful, or perhaps the only, body in the State; and so early as the middle of this century the seeds of worldly ambition developed themselves in a schism, not on a point of doctrine, but on the possession of authority. A double nomination had made the anomalous appointment of two chief pastors at the same time. Neither would yield, and each had his supporters. All were under the ban of the civil power. They had recourse to spiritual weapons; and we read, for the first time in ecclesiastical history, of mutual excommunications. Novatian—under his breath, however, for fear of being thrown to the wild beasts for raising a disturbance—thundered his anathemas against Cornelius as an intruder, while Cornelius retorted by proclaiming Novatian an impostor, as he had not the concurrence of the people in his election. This gives us a convincing proof of the popular form of appointing bishops or presbyters in those early days, and prepares us for the energy with which the electors supported the authority of their favourite priests.

But, while this new internal element was spreading life among the decayed institutions of the empire, we have, in this century, the first appearance, in great force, of the future conquerors and renovators of the body politic from without. It is pleasant to think that the centuries cast themselves more and more loose from their connection with Rome after this date, and that the barbarians can vindicate a separate place in history for themselves. In the first century, the bad emperors broke the strength of Rome by their cruelty and extravagance. In the second century, the good emperors carried on the work of weakening the empire by the softening and enervating effects of their gentle and protective policy. The third century unites the evil qualities of the other two, for the people were equally rendered incapable of defending themselves by the unheard-of atrocities of some of the tyrants who oppressed them and the mistaken measures of the more benevolent rulers, in committing the guardianship of the citizens to the swords of a foreign soldiery, leaving them but the wretched alternative of being ravaged and massacred by an irruption of savage tribes or pillaged and insulted by those in the emperor's pay.

The empire had long been surrounded by its foes. |**A.D. 273.**|It will suffice to read the long list of captives who were led in triumph behind the car of Aurelian when he returned from foreign war, to see the fearful array of harsh-sounding names which have afterwards been softened into those of great and civilized nations. It is in following the course of some of these that we shall see how the present distribution of forces in Europe took place, and escape from the polluted atmosphere of Imperial Rome. In that memorable triumph appeared Goths, Alans, Roxolans, Franks, Sarmatians, Vandals, Allemans, Arabs, Indians, Bactrians, Iberians, Saracens, Armenians, Persians, Palmyreans, Egyptians, and ten Gothic women dressed in men's apparel and fully armed. These were, perhaps, the representatives of a large body of female warriors, and are a sign of the recent settlement of the tribe to which they belonged. They had not yet given up the habits of their march, where all were equally engaged in carrying the property and arms of the nation, and where the females encouraged the young men of the expedition by witnessing and sometimes sharing their exploits in battle.

The triumph of Probus, when only seven years had passed, presents us with a list of the same peoples, often conquered but never subdued. Their defeats, indeed, had the double effect of showing

to them their own ability to recruit their forces, and of strengthening the degraded people of Rome in the belief of their invincibility. After the loss of a battle, the Gothic or Burgundian chief fell back upon the confederated tribes in his rear; a portion of his army either visited Rome in the character of captives, or enlisted in the ranks of the conquerors. In either case, the wealth of the great city and the undefended state of the empire were permanently fixed in their minds; the populace, on the other hand, had the luxury of a noble show and double rations of bread—the more ambitious of the emperors acting on the professed maxim that the citizen had no duty but to enjoy the goods provided for him by the governing power, and that if he was fed by public doles, and amused with public games, the purpose of his life was attained. The idlest man was the safest subject. A triumph was, therefore, more an instrument of degradation than an encouragement to patriotic exertion. The name of Roman citizen was now extended to all the inhabitants of the empire. The freeman of York was a Roman citizen. Had he any patriotic pride in keeping the soil of Italy undivided? The nation had become too diffuse for the exercise of this local and combining virtue. The love of country, which in the small states of Greece secured the individual's affection to his native city, and yet was powerful enough to extend over the whole of the Hellenic territories, was lost altogether when it was required to expand itself over a region as wide as Europe. It is in this sense that empires fall to pieces by their own weight. The Roman power broke up from within. Its religion was a source of division, not of union—its mixture of nations, and tongues, and usages, lost their cohesion. And nothing was left at the end of this century to preserve it from total dissolution, but the personal qualities of some great rulers and the memory of its former fame.

FOURTH CENTURY

Emperors.	
A.D.	
304.	GALERIUS and CONSTANTIUS.
305.	MAXIMIN.
306.	CONSTANTINE.
337.	CONSTANTINE II., CONSTANS and CONSTANTIUS.
361.	JULIAN THE APOSTATE.
363.	JOVIAN.

A.D.	*West.*		A.D.	*East.*
364.	VALENTINIAN.		364.	VALENS.
367.	GRATIAN.			
375.	VALENTINIAN II.		379.	THEODOSIUS.
395.	HONORIUS.		395.	ARCADIUS.

Authors

Donatus, Eutropius, St. Athanasius, Ausonius, Claudian, Arnobius, (303,) Lactantius, (306,) Eusebius, (315,) Arius, (316,) Gregory Nazianzen, (320-389,) Basil the Great, Bishop Of Cesarea, (330-379,) Ambrose, (340-397,) Augustine (353-429,) Theodoret, (386-457,) Martin, Bishop of Tours.

THE FOURTH CENTURY

THE REMOVAL TO CONSTANTINOPLE – ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY – APOSTASY OF JULIAN – SETTLEMENT OF THE GOTHS

As the memory of the old liberties of Rome died out, a nearer approach was made to the ostentatious despotisms of the East. Aurelian, in 270, was the first emperor who encircled his head with a diadem; and Diocletian, in 284, formed his court on the model of the most gorgeous royalties of Asia. On admission into his presence, the Roman Senator, formerly the equal of the ruler, prostrated himself at his feet. Titles of the most unmanly adulation were lavished on the fortunate slave or herdsman who had risen to supreme power. He was clothed in robes of purple and violet, and loaded with an incalculable wealth of jewels and gold. It was from deep policy that Diocletian introduced this system. Ceremony imposes on the vulgar, and makes intimacy impossible. Etiquette is the refuge of failing power, and compensates by external show for inherent weakness, as stiffness and formality are the refuge of dulness and mediocrity in private life. There was now, therefore, seated on the throne, which was shaken by every commotion, a personage assuming more majestic rank, and affecting far loftier state and dignity, than Augustus had ventured on while the strength of the old Republic gave irresistible force to the new empire, or than the Antonines had dreamt of when the prosperity of Rome was apparently at its height. But there was still some feeling, if not of self-respect, at least of resistance to pretension, in the populace and Senators of the capital. Diocletian visited Rome but once. He was attacked in lampoons, and ridiculed in satirical songs. His colleague established his residence in the military post of Milan. We are not, therefore, to feel surprised that an Orientalized authority sought its natural seat in the land of ancient despotisms, and that many of the emperors had cast longing eyes on the beautiful towns of Asia Minor, and even on the far-off cities of Mesopotamia, as more congenial localities for their barbaric splendours. By a sort of compromise between his European origin and Asiatic tastes, the emperor Constantine, after many struggles with his competitors, having attained the sole authority, transferred the seat of empire from Rome to a city he had built on the extreme limits of Europe, and only divided from Asia by a narrow sea. All succeeding ages have agreed in extolling the situation of this city, called, after its founder, Constantinople, as the finest that could have been chosen. All ages, from the day of its erection till the hour in which we live, have agreed that it is fitted, in the hands of a great and enterprising power, to be the metropolis and arbiter of the world; and Constantinople is, therefore, condemned to the melancholy fate of being the useless and unappreciated capital of a horde of irreclaimable barbarians. To this magnificent city Constantine removed the throne in 329, and for nearly a thousand years after that, while Rome was sacked in innumerable invasions, and all the capitals of Europe were successively occupied by contending armies, Constantinople, safe in her two narrow outlets, and rich in her command of the two continents, continued unconquered, and even unassailed.

Rome was stripped, that Constantinople might be filled. All the wealth of Italy was carried across the Ægean. The Roman Senator was invited to remove with his establishment. He found, on arriving at his new home, that by a complimentary attention of the emperor, a fac-simile of his Roman palace had been prepared for him on the Propontis. The seven hills of the new capital responded to the seven hills of the old. There were villas for retirement along the smiling shores of the Dardanelles or of the Bosphorus, as fine in climate, and perhaps equal in romantic beauty, to Baiæ or Brundusium. There was a capital, as noble a piece of architecture as the one they had left, but without the sanctity of its thousand years of existence, or the glory of its unnumbered triumphs. One omission was the subject of remark and lamentation. The temples were nowhere to be seen. The images of the gods were left at Rome in the solitude of their deserted shrines, for Constantine had determined that Constantinople

should, from its very foundation, be the residence of a Christian people. Churches were built, and a priesthood appointed. Yet, with the policy which characterized the Church at that time, he made as little change as possible in the external forms. There is still extant a transfer of certain properties from the old establishment to the new. There are contributions of wax for the candles, of frankincense and myrrh for the censers, and vestures for the officiating priests as before. Only the object of worship is changed, and the images of the heathen gods and heroes are replaced with statues of the apostles and martyrs.

It is difficult to gather a true idea of this first of the Christian emperors from the historians of after-times. The accounts of him by contemporary writers are equally conflicting. The favourers of the old superstition describe him as a monster of perfidy and cruelty. The Church, raised to supremacy by his favour, sees nothing in him but the greatest of men—the seer of visions, the visible favourite of the Almighty, and the predestined overthrower of the powers of evil. The easy credulity of an emancipated people believed whatever the flattery of the courtiers invented. His mother Helena made a journey to Jerusalem, and was rewarded for the pious pilgrimage by the discovery of the True Cross. Chapels and altars were raised upon all the places famous in Christian story; relics were collected from all quarters, and we are early led to fear that the simplicity of the gospel is endangered by its approach to the throne, and that Constantine's object was rather to raise and strengthen a hierarchy of ecclesiastical supporters than to give full scope to the doctrine of truth. But not the less wonderful, not the less by the divine appointment, was this unhoped-for triumph of Christianity, that its advancement formed part of the ambitious scheme of a worldly and unprincipled conqueror. Rather it may be taken as one among the thousand proofs with which history presents us, that the greatest blessings to mankind are produced irrespective of the character or qualities of the apparent author. A warrior is raised in the desert when required to be let loose upon a worn-out society as the scourge of God; a blood-stained soldier is placed on the throne of the world when the time has come for the earthly predominance of the gospel. But neither is Attila to be blamed nor Constantine to be praised.

It was the spirit of his system of government to form every society on a strictly monarchical model. There was everywhere introduced a clearly-defined subordination of ranks and dignities. Diocletian, we saw, surrounded the throne with a state and ceremony which kept the imperial person sacred from the common gaze. Constantine perfected his work by establishing a titled nobility, who were to stand between the throne and the people, giving dignity to the one, and impressing fresh awe upon the other. In all previous ages it had been the office that gave importance to the man. To be a member of the Senate was a mark of distinction; a long descent from a great historic name was looked on with respect; and the heroic deeds of the thousand years of Roman struggle had founded an aristocracy which owed its high position either to personal actions or hereditary claims. But now that the emperors had so long concentrated in themselves all the great offices of the State—now that the bad rulers of the first century had degraded the Senate by filling it with their creatures, the good rulers of the second century had made it merely the recorder of their decrees, and the anarchy of the third century had changed or obliterated its functions altogether—there was no way left to the ambitious Roman to distinguish himself except by the favour of the emperor. The throne became, as it has since continued in all strictly monarchical countries, the fountain of honour. It was not the people who could name a man to the consulship or appoint him to the command of an army. It was not even in the power of the emperor to find offices of dignity for all whom he wished to advance. So a method was discovered by which vanity or friendship could be gratified, and employment be reserved for the deserving at the same time. Instead of endangering an expedition against the Parthians by intrusting it to a rich and powerful courtier who desired to have the rank of general, the emperor simply named him Nobilissimus, or Patricius, or Illustris, and the gratified favourite, the "most noble," the "patrician," or the "illustrious," took place with the highest officers of the State. A certain title gave him equal rank with the Senator, the judge, or the consul. The diversity of these honorary distinctions became very great. There were the clarissimi—the perfectissimi—

and the egregii—bearing the same relative dignity in the court-guide of the fourth century, as the dukes, marquises, earls, and viscounts of the peerage-books of the present day. But so much did all distinction flow from proximity to the throne, that all these high-sounding names owed their value to the fact of their being bestowed on the associates of the sovereign. The word Count, which is still the title borne by foreign nobles, comes from the Latin word which means "companion." There was a Comes, or Companion, of the Sacred Couch, or lord chamberlain—the Companion of the Imperial Service, or lord high steward—a Companion of the Imperial Stables, or lord high constable; through all these dignitaries, step above step, the glorious ascent extended, till it ended in the Companion of Private Affairs, or confidential secretary. At the head of all, sacred and unapproachable, stood the embodied Power of the Roman world, who, as he had given titles to all the magnates of his court, heaped also a great many on himself. His principal appellation, however, was not as in our degenerate days "Majesty," whether "Most Catholic," "Most Christian," or "Most Orthodox," but consisted in the rather ambitious attribute—eternity. "Your Eternity" was the phrase addressed to some miserable individual whose reign was ended in a month. It was proposed by this division of the Roman aristocracy to furnish the empire with a body for show and a body for use; the latter consisting of the real generals of the armies and administrators of the provinces. And with this view the two were kept distinct; but military discipline suffered by this partition. The generals became discontented when they saw wealth and dignities heaped upon the titular nobles of the court; and to prevent the danger arising from ill will among the legions on the frontier, the emperor withdrew the best of his soldiers from the posts where they kept the barbarians in check, and entirely destroyed their military spirit by separating them into small bodies and stationing them in towns. This exposed the empire to the foreign foes who still menaced it from the other side of the boundary, and gave fresh settlements in the heart of the country to the thousands of barbarian youth who had taken service with the eagles. In every legion there was a considerable proportion of this foreign element: in every district of the empire, therefore, there were now settled the advanced guards of the unavoidable invasion. Men with barbaric names, which the Romans could not pronounce, walked about Roman towns dressed in Roman uniforms and clothed with Roman titles. There were consulars and patricians in Ravenna and Naples, whose fathers had danced the war-dance of defiance when beginning their march from the Vistula and the Carpathian range.

All these troops must be supported—all these dignitaries maintained in luxury. How was this done? The ordinary revenue of the empire in the time of Constantine has been computed at forty millions of our money a year. Not a very large amount when you consider the number of the population; but this is the sum which reached the treasury. The gross amount must have been far larger, and an ingenious machinery was invented by which the tax was rigorously collected; and this machinery, by a ludicrous perversion of terms, was made to include one of the most numerous classes of the artificial nobility created by the imperial will. In all the towns of the empire some little remains were still to be found of the ancient municipal government, of which practically they had long been deprived. There were nominal magistrates still; and among these the *Curials* held a distinguished rank. They were the men who, in the days of freedom, had filled the civic dignities of their native city—the aldermen, we should perhaps call them, or, more nearly, the justices of the peace. They were now ranked with the peerage, but with certain duties attached to their elevation which few can have regarded in the light of privilege or favour. To qualify them for rank, they were bound to be in possession of a certain amount of land. They were, therefore, a territorial aristocracy, and never was any territorial aristocracy more constantly under the consideration of the government. It was the duty of the curials to distribute the tax-papers in their district; but, in addition to this, it was unfortunately their duty to see that the sum assessed on the town and neighbourhood was paid up to the last penny. When there was any deficiency, was the emperor to suffer? Were the nobilissimi, the patricii, the egregii, to lose their salaries? Oh, no! As long as the now ennobled curial retained an acre of his estate, or could raise a mortgage on his house, the full amount was extracted. The tax went up to

Rome, and the curial, if there had been a poor's house in those days, would have gone into it—for he was stripped of all. His farm was seized, his cattle were escheated; and when the defalcation was very great, himself, his wife and children were led into the market and sold as slaves. Nothing so rapidly destroyed what might have been the germ of a middle class as this legalized spoliation of the smaller landholders. Below this rank there was absolutely nothing left of the citizenship of ancient times. Artificers and workmen formed themselves into companies; but the trades were exercised principally by slaves for the benefit of their owners. These slaves formed now by far the greatest part of the Roman population, and though their lot had gradually become softened as their numbers increased, and the domestic bondsman had little to complain of except the greatest of all sorrows, the loss of freedom, the position of the rural labourers was still very bad. There were some of them slaves in every sense of the word—mere chattels, which were not so valuable as horse or dog. But the fate of others was so far mitigated that they could not be sold separate from their family—that they could not be sold except along with the land; and at last glimpses appear of a sort of rent paid for certain portions of the lord's estate in full of all other requirements. But this process had again to be gone through when many centuries had elapsed, and a new state of society had been fully established, and it will be sufficient to remind you that in the fourth century, to which we are now come, the Roman world consisted of a monarchy where all the greatness and magnificence of the empire were concentrated on the emperor and his court; that the monarchical system was rapidly pervading the Church; and that below these two distinct but connected powers there was no people, properly so called—the country was oppressed and ruined, and the ancient dignity of Rome transplanted to new and foreign quarters, at the sacrifice of all its oldest and most elevating associations. The half-depopulated city of Romulus and the Kings—of the Consuls and Augustus, looked with ill-disguised hatred and contempt on the modern rival which denied her the name of Capital, and while fresh from the builder's hand, robbed her of the name of the Eternal City. We shall see great events spring from this jealousy of the two towns. In the mean time, we shall finish our view of Constantine by recording the greatness of his military skill, and merely protest against the enrolment in the list of *saints* of a man who filled his family circle with blood—who murdered his wife, his son, and his nephew, encouraged the contending factions of the now disputatious Church—gave a fallacious support to the orthodox Athanasius, and died after a superstitious baptism at the hands of the heretical Arius. |**A.D. 337.**|An unbiassed judgment must pronounce him a great politician, who played with both parties as his tools, a Christian from expediency and not from conviction. It is a pity that the subserviency of the Greek communion has placed him in the number of its holy witnesses, for we are told by a historian that when the emperor, after the dreadful crimes he had perpetrated, applied at the heathen shrines for expiatory rites, the priests of the false gods had truly answered, "there are no purifications for such deeds as these." But nothing could be refused to the benefactor of the Church. The great ecclesiastical council of this age, (325), consisting of three hundred and eighteen bishops, and presided over by Constantine in person, gave the Nicene Creed as the result of their labours—a creed which is still the symbol of Christendom, but which consists more of a condemnation of the heresies which were then in the ascendant, than in the plain enunciation of the Christian faith. A layman, we are told, an auditor of the learned debates in this great assembly, a man of clear and simple common sense, met some of the disputants, and addressed them in these words:—"Arguers! Christ and his apostles delivered to us, not the art of disputation, nor empty eloquence, but a plain and simple rule which is maintained by faith and good works." The disputants, we are further told, were so struck with this undeniable truth that they acknowledged their error at once.

But not yet firm and impregnable were the bulwarks of Christianity. |**A.D. 360.**|While dreaming anchorites in the deserts of Thebais were repeating the results of fasting and insanity as the manifestation of divine favour, the world was startled from its security by the appalling discovery that the emperor himself, the young and vigorous Julian, was a follower of the old philosophers, and a worshipper of the ancient gods. And a dangerous antagonist he was, even independent of his temporal

power. His personal character was irreproachable, his learning and talent beyond dispute, and his eloquence and dialectic skill sharpened and improved by an education in Athens itself. Less than forty years had elapsed since Constantine pronounced the sentence of banishment on the heathen deities. It was not possible that the Christian truth was in every instance received where the old falsehood was driven away. We may therefore conclude, without the aid of historic evidence, that there must have been innumerable districts—villages in far-off valleys, hidden places up among the hills—where the name of Christ had not yet penetrated, and all that was known was, that the shrine of the local gods was overthrown, and the priests of the old ceremonial proscribed. When we remember that the heathen worship entered into almost all the changes of the social and family life—that its sanction was necessary at the wedding—that its auguries were indispensable at births—that it crowned the statue of the household god with flowers—that it kept alive the fire upon the altar of the emperor—and that it was the guardian of the tombs of the departed, as it had been the principal consolation during the funeral rites,—we shall perceive that, irrespective of absolute faith in his system of belief, the cessation of the priest's office must have been a serious calamity. The heathen establishment had been enriched by the piety or ostentation of many generations. There must have been still alive many who had been turned out of their comfortable temples, many who viewed the assumption of Christianity into the State as a political engine to strengthen the tyranny under which the nations groaned. We may see that self-interest and patriotism may easily have been combined in the effort made by the old faith to regain the supremacy it had lost. The Emperor Julian endeavoured to lift up the fallen gods. He persecuted the Christians, not with fire and sword, but with contempt. He scorned and tolerated. He preached moderation, self-denial, and purity of life, and practised all these virtues to an extent unknown upon a throne, and even then unusual in a bishop's palace.

How those Christian graces, giving a charm and dignity to the apostate emperor, must have received a still higher authority from the painful contrast they presented to the agitated condition and corrupted morals of the Christian Church! Everywhere there was war and treachery, and ambition and unbelief. Half the great sees were held by Arians, who raved against the orthodox; and the other half were held by Athanasius and his followers, who accused their adversaries of being "more cruel than the Scythians, and more irreconcilable than tigers." At Rome itself there was an orthodox bishop and an Arian rival. It is not surprising that Julian, disgusted with the scenes presented to him by the mutual rage of the Christian sects, thought the surest method of restoring unity to the empire would be to silence all the contending parties and reintroduce the peaceful pageantries of the old Pantheon. If some of the fanciful annotators of the new faith had allegorized the facts of Christianity till they ceased to be facts at all, Julian performed the same office for the heathen gods. Jupiter and the rest were embodiments of the hidden powers of nature. Vulcan was the personification of human skill, and Venus the beautiful representative of connubial affection. But men's minds were now too sharpened with the contact they had had with the real to be satisfied with such fallacies as these. Eloquent teachers arose, who separated the eternal truths of revelation from the accessories with which they were temporarily combined. Ridicule was retorted on the emperor, who had sneered at the Christian services. Who, indeed, who had caught the slightest view of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, could abstain from laughing at the laborious heathenism of the master of the world? He cut the wood for sacrifice, he slew the goat or bull, and, falling down on his knees, puffed with distended cheeks the sacred fire. He marched to the temple of Venus between two rows of dissolute and drunken worshippers, striving in vain by face and attitude to repress the shouts of riotous exultation and the jeers of the spectators. Then, wherever he went he was surrounded by pythonesses, and augurs, and fortune-tellers, magicians who could work miracles, and necromancers who could raise the dead. When he restored a statue to its ancient niche, he was rewarded by a shake of its head; when he hung up a picture of Thetis or Amphitrite, she winked in sign of satisfaction. Where miracles are not believed, the performance of them is fatal. But his expenditure of money in honouring the gods was more real, and had clearer results. He nearly exhausted the empire by the number of beasts he

slew. He sent enormous offerings to the shrines of Dodona, and Delos, and Delphi. He rebuilt the temples, which time or Christian hatred had destroyed; and, by way of giving life to his new polity, he condescended to imitate the sect be despised, in its form of worship, in its advocacy of charity, peace, and good will, and in its institutions of celibacy and retirement, which, indeed, had been a portion of heathen virtue before it was admitted into the Christian Church. But his affected contempt soon degenerated into persecution. He would have no soldiers who did not serve his gods. Many resigned their swords. He called the Christians "Galileans," and robbed them of their property and despitefully used them, to try the sincerity of their faith. "Does not your law command you," he said, "to submit to injury, and to renounce your worldly goods? Well, I take possession of your riches that your march to heaven may be unencumbered." All moderation was now thrown off on both sides. Resistance was made by the Christians, and extermination threatened by the emperor. In the midst of these contentions he was called eastward to resist the aggression of Sapor, the Persian king. An arrow stretched Julian on his couch. He called round him his chief philosophers and priests. With them, in imitation of Socrates, he entered into deep discussions about the soul. |**A.D. 363.**|Nothing more heroic than his end, or more eloquent than his parting discourse. But death did not soften the animosity of his foes. The Christians boasted that the arrow was sent by an angel, that visions had foretold the persecutor's fall, and that so would perish all the enemies of God. The adherents of the emperor in return blamed the Galileans as his assassins, and boldly pointed to Athanasius, the leader of the Christians, as the culprit. Athanasius would certainly not have scrupled to rid the world of such an Agag and Holofernes, but it is more probable that the death occurred without either a miracle or a murder. The successors of Julian were enemies of the apostate. They speedily restored their fellow-believers to the supremacy they had lost. A ferocious hymn of exultation by Gregory of Nazianzen was chanted far and wide. Cries of joy and execration resounded in market-places, and churches, and theatres. The market-places had been closed against the Christians, their churches had been interdicted, and the theatres shut up, by the overstrained asceticism of the deceased. It was perceived that Christianity had taken deeper root than the apostate had believed, and henceforth no effort could be made to revivify the old superstition. After a nominal election of Jovian, the choice of the soldiers fell on two of their favourite leaders, Valentinian and Valens, brothers, and sufferers in the late persecutions for their faith. Named emperors of the Roman world, they came to an amicable division of the empire into East and West. Valens remained in Constantinople to guard the frontiers of the Danube and the Euphrates; while Valentinian, who saw great clouds darkening over Italy and Gaul, fixed his imperial residence in the strong city of Milan. The separation took place in 364, and henceforth the stream of history flows in two distinct and gradually diverging channels. This century has already been marked by the removal of the seat of power to Constantinople; by the attempt at the restoration of Paganism by Julian; and we have now to dwell for a little on the third and greatest incident of all, the invasion of the Goths, and final settlement of hostile warriors on the Roman soil.

Names that have retained their sound and established themselves as household words in Europe now meet as at every turn. Valentinian is engaged in resisting the Saxons. The Britons, the Scots, the Germans, are pushing their claims to independence; and in the farther East, the persecutions and tyranny of the contemptible Valens are suddenly suspended by the news that a people hitherto unheard of had made their appearance within an easy march of the boundary, and that universal terror had taken possession of the soldiers of the empire. Who were those soldiers? We have seen for many years that the policy of the emperors had been to introduce the barbarians into the military service of the State, and to expose the wasted and helpless inhabitants to the rapacity of their tax-gatherers. This system had been carried to such a pitch, that it is probable there were none but mercenaries of the most varying interests in the Roman ranks. Yet such is the effect of discipline, and the pride of military combination, that all other feelings gave way before it. The Gothic chief, now invested with command in the Roman armies, turned his arms against his countrymen. The Albanian, the Saxon, the Briton, elevated to the rank of duke or count, looked back on Marius and Cæsar as their

lineal predecessors in opposing and conquering the enemies of Rome. The names of the generals and magistrates, accordingly, which we encounter after this date, have a strangely barbaric sound. There are Ricimer, and Marcomir, and Arbogast—and finally, the name which overtopped and outlived them all, the name of Alaric the Goth. Now, the Goths, we have seen, had been settled for many generations on the northern side of the Danube. Much intercourse must have taken place between the inhabitants of the two banks. There must have been trade, and love, and quarrellings, and rejoicings. At shorter and shorter intervals the bravest of the tribes must have passed over into the Roman territory and joined the Legions. Occasionally a timid or despotic emperor would suddenly order his armies across, and carry fire and sword into the unsuspecting country. But on the whole, the terms on which they lived were not hostile, for the ties which united the two peoples were numerous and strong. Even the languages in the course of time must have come to be mutually intelligible, and we read of Gothic leaders who were excellent judges of Homer and seldom travelled without a few chosen books. This being the case, what was the consternation of the almost civilized Goths in the fertile levels of the present Wallachia and Moldavia to hear that an innumerable horde of dreadful savages, calling themselves Huns and Magyars, had appeared on the western shore of the Black Sea, and spread over the land, destroying, murdering, burning whatever lay in their way! Cooped up for an unknown period, it appeared, on the northeastern side of the Palus Mæotis, now better known to us as the Sea of Azof —living on fish out of the Don, and on the cattle of the long steppes which extend across the Volga, these sons of the Scythian desert had never been heard of either by the Goths or Romans. A hideous people to behold, as the perverted imagination of poet or painter could produce. They were low in stature, but broad-shouldered and strong. Their wide cheek-bones and small eyes gave them a savage and cruel expression, which was increased by their want of nose, for the only visible appearance of that indispensable organ consisted of two holes sunk into the square expanse of their faces. Fear is not a flattering painter, but from these rude descriptions it is easy to recognise the Calmuck countenance; and when we add their small horses, long spears, and prodigious lightness and activity, we shall see a very close resemblance between them and their successors in the same district, the Russian Cossacks of the Don. On, on, came the torrent of these pitiless, fearless, ugly, dirty, irresistible foes. The Goths, terrified at their aspect, and bewildered with the accounts they heard of their numbers and mode of warfare, petitioned the emperor to give them an asylum on the Roman side. Their prayer was granted on condition of depositing their children and arms in Roman hands. They had no time to squabble about terms. Every thing was agreed to. Boats manned by Roman soldiers were busy, day and night in transporting the Gothic exiles to the Roman side. Arms and jewels, and wives and children, the furniture of their tents, and idols of their gods, all got safely across the guarding river. The Huns, the Alans, and the other unsightly hordes who had gathered in the pursuit, came down to the bank, and shouted useless defiance and threats of vengeance. The broad Danube rolled between; and there rested that night on the Roman soil a whole nation, different in interest, in manners and religion, from the population they had joined, numbering upwards of a million souls, bound together by every thing that constitutes the unity of a people. The avarice and injustice of the Roman authorities negatived the clause of the agreement that stipulated for the surrender of the Gothic arms. To redeem their swords and spears, they parted with the silver and gold they had amassed in their predatory incursions on the Roman territory. They know that once in possession of their weapons they could soon reclaim all they gave—and in no long time the attempt was made. Fritigern, the leader of their name, led them against the armies of Rome. Insulted at their audacity, the Emperor Valens, at the head of three hundred thousand men, met them in the plain of Adrianople. The existence of the Gothic people was at stake. |**A.D. 379.**|They fought with desperation and hatred. The emperor was defeated, leaving two-thirds of his army on the field of battle. Seeking safety in a cottage at the side of the road, he was burned by the inexorable pursuers, who, gathering up their broken lines, marched steadily through the intervening levels and gazed with enraptured eyes on the glittering towers and pinnacles of Constantinople itself. But the walls were high and strongly armed. The barbarians were inveigled

into a negotiation, and mastered by the unequal powers of lying at all times characteristic of the Greeks. Fritigern consented to withdraw his troops: some were embodied in the levies of the empire, and others dispersed in different provinces. Those settled in Thrace were faithful to their employers, and resisted their ancient enemies the Huns; but the great body of the discontented conquerors were ready for fresh assaults on the Roman land. Theodosius, called to the throne in 379, succeeded in staving off the evil day; but when the final partition of the empire took place between his two sons—Honorius and Arcadius—there was nothing to oppose the terrible onset of the Goths. |**A.D. 394.**|At their head was Alaric, the descendant of their original chiefs, and himself the bravest of his warriors. He broke into Greece, forcing his way through Thermopylæ, and devastated the native seats of poetry and the arts with fire and sword. The ruler at Constantinople heard of his advance with terror, and opposed to him the Vandal Stilicho, the greatest of his generals. But the wily Alaric declined to fight, and out-manœuvred his enemies, escaping to the sure fastnesses of Epirus, and sat down sullen and discontented, meditating further expeditions into richer plains, and already seeing before him the prostrate cities of Italy. The terror of Arcadius tried in vain to soften his rage, or satisfy his ambition with vain titles, among others, that of Count of the Illyrian Border. The spirit of aggression was fairly roused. All the Gothic settlers in the Roman territory were ready to join their countrymen in one great and combined attack;—and with this position of the personages of the drama, the curtain falls on the fourth century, while preparations for the great catastrophe are going on.

FIFTH CENTURY

	Emperors.
A.D.	*West.*
	HONORIUS—(*cont.*)
424.	VALENTINIAN III.
455.	PETRONIUS MAXIMUS.
455.	AVITUS.
457.	MAJORIANUS.
461.	SEVERUS.
467.	ANTHEMIUS.
472.	OLIBIUS.
473.	GLYCERIUS.
474.	JULIUS NEPOS.
475.	AUGUSTULUS ROMULUS.

A.D.	*East.*
	ARCADIUS—(*cont.*)
408.	THEODOSIUS II.
450.	MARCIAN.
457.	LEO THE GREAT.
474.	ZENO.
491.	ANASTASIUS.

	King of the Franks.
A.D.	
481.	CLOVIS.

	King of Italy.
A.D.	
489.	THEODORIC.

Authors

Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Pelagius, (405,) Sidonius Apollinaris, Patricius, Macrobius, Vicentius of Lerins, (died 450,) Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, (412-444.)

THE FIFTH CENTURY

END OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE – FORMATION OF MODERN STATES – GROWTH OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

We find the same actors on the stage when the curtain rises again, but circumstances have greatly changed. After his escape from Stilicho, Alaric had been "lifted on the shield," the wild and picturesque way in which the warlike Goths nominated their kings, and henceforth was considered the monarch of a separate and independent people, no longer the mere leader of a band of predatory barbarians. In this new character he entered into treaties with the emperors of Constantinople or Rome, and broke them, as if he had already been the sovereign of a civilized state.

In 403 he broke up from his secure retreat on the Adriatic, and burst into Italy, spreading fire and famine wherever he went. Honorius, the Emperor of the West, fled from Milan, and was besieged in Asti by the Goths. Here would have ended the imperial dynasty, some years before its time, if it had not been for the watchful Stilicho. This Vandal chief flew to the rescue of Honorius, repulsed Alaric with great slaughter, and delivered his master from his dangerous position. The grateful emperor entered Rome in triumph, and for the last time the Circus streamed with the blood of beasts and men. |**A.D. 408.**|He retired after this display to the inaccessible marshes of Ravenna, at the mouths of the Po, and, secure in that fortress, sent an order to have his preserver and benefactor murdered; Stilicho, the only hope of Rome, was assassinated, and Alaric once more saw all Italy within his grasp. It was not only the Goths who followed Alaric's command. All the barbarians, of whatever name or race, who had been transplanted either as slaves or soldiers—Alans, Franks, and Germans—rallied round the advancing king, for the impolitic Honorius had issued an order for the extermination of all the tribes. There were Britons, and Saxons, and Suabians. It was an insurrection of all the manly elements of society against the indescribable depravation of the inhabitants of the Peninsula. The wildest barbarian blushed in the midst of his ignorance and rudeness to hear of the manners of the highest and most distinguished families in Rome. Nobody could hold out a hand to avert the judgment that was about to fall on the devoted city. Ambassadors indeed appeared, and bought a short delay at the price of many thousand pounds' weight of gold and silver, and of large quantities of silk; but these were only additional incitements to the cupidity of the invader. Tribe after tribe rose up with fresh fury; warriors of every hue and shape, and with every manner of equipment. The handsome Goth in his iron cuirass; the Alan with his saddle covered with human skin; the German making a hideous sound by shrieking on the sharp edge of his shield; and the countryman of Alaric himself sounding the "horn of battle," which terrified the Romans with its ominous note—all started forward on the march. At the head of each detachment rode a band, singing songs of exultation and defiance; and the Romans, stupefied with fear, saw these innumerable swarms defile towards the Milvian bridge and close up every access to the town. There was no corn from Sicily or Africa; a pest raged in every house, and hunger reduced the inhabitants to despair. The gates were thrown open, and all the pent-up animosity of the desert was poured out upon the mistress and corrupter of the world. For six days the city was given up to remorseless slaughter and universal pillage. The wealth was incalculable. The captives were sold as slaves. The palaces were overthrown, and the river choked with carcasses and the treasures of art which the barbarians could not appreciate. "The new Babylon," cries Bossuet, the great Bishop of Meaux, "rival of the old, swelled out like her with her successes, and, triumphing in her pleasures and riches, encountered as great a fall." And no man lamented her fate.

|**A.D. 410.**|

Alaric, who had thus achieved a victory denied to Hannibal and Pyrrhus, resolved to push his conquests to the end of Italy. But on his march towards the Straits of Sicily, illness overtook him. His

life had been unlike that of other men, and his burial was to excite the wonder of the Bruttians, among whom he died. A large river was turned from its course, and in its channel a deep grave was dug and ornamented with monumental stone. To this the body of the barbaric king was carried, clothed in full armour, and accompanied with some of the richest spoils of Rome; and then the stream was turned on again, the prisoners who had executed the works were slaughtered to conceal the secret of the tomb, and nobody has ever found out where the Gothic king reposes. But while the Busentino flowed peaceably on, and guarded the body of the conqueror from the revenge of the Romans, new perils were gathering round the throne of the Western emperor. As if the duration of the empire had been inseparably connected with the capital, the reverence of mankind was never bestowed on Milan or Ravenna, in which the court was now established, as it had been upon Rome. Britain had already thrown off the distant yoke, and submitted to the Saxon invaders. Spain had also peaceably accepted the rule of the three kindred tribes of Sueves and Alans and Vandals. Gaul itself had given its adhesion to the Burgundians (who fixed their seat in the district which still bears their name) and offered a feeble resistance to any fresh invader. Ataulf, the brother of Alaric, came to the rescue of the empire, and of course completed the destruction. He married the sister of Honorius, and retained her as a hostage of the emperor's good faith. He promised to restore the revolted provinces to their former master, and succeeded in overthrowing some competitors who had started up to dispute with Ravenna the wrecks of former power. He then forced his way into Spain, and the hopes of the degenerate Romans were high. But murder, as usual, stopped the career of Ataulf, and all was changed. |**A.D. 415.**|The emperor ratified the possessions which he could not dispute, and in the first twenty years of this century three separate kingdoms were established in Europe. This was soon followed by a Vandal conquest of the shores of Africa, which raised Carthage once more to commercial importance, united Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia to the new-founded state, and by the creation of a fleet gained the command of the Mediterranean Sea, and threatened Constantinople itself.

With so many provinces not only torn from the empire, but erected into hostile kingdoms, nothing was wanting but some new irruption into the still dependent territories to put a final end to the Roman name. And a new incursion came. In the very involved relations existing between the emperors of the East and West, it is difficult to follow the course of events with any clearness. While the deluded populace of Constantinople were rejoicing in the fall of their Italian rival, they heard with amazement, in 441, that a savage potentate, who had pitched his tents in the plains of Pannonia and Thrace, and kept round him, for defence or conquest, seven hundred thousand of those hideous-featured Huns who had spread devastation and terror all over the populations of Asia, from the borders of China to the Don, had determined on stretching his conquests over the whole world, and merely hesitated with which of the doomed empires to begin his career. His name was Attila, or, according to its native pronunciation, Etzel; and it soon resounded, louder and more terrifying than that of Alaric the Goth. The Emperor of the East sent an embassy to this dreadful neighbour, a minute account of which remains, and from which we learn the barbaric pomp and ceremony of the leader of the Huns, and the perfidy and debasement of the Greeks. An attempt was made to poison the redoubtable chief, and he complained of the guilty ambassador to the very person who had given him his instructions for the deed. Unsatisfied with the result, the Hunnish monarch advanced his camp. Constantinople, anxious to ward off the blow from itself, descanted to the savage king on the exposed condition and ill-defended wealth of the Italian towns. Treachery of another kind came to his aid. An offended sister of the emperor sent to Attila her ring as a mark of espousal, and he now claimed a portion of the empire as the dowry of his bride. When this was refused, he reiterated his old claim of satisfaction for the attempt upon his life, and ravaged the fields of Belgium and Gaul, in the double character of avenger of an insult and claimant of an inheritance. It does not much matter under what plea a barbarous chieftain, with six hundred thousand warriors, makes a demand. It must be answered sword in hand, or on the knees. The newly-established Frankish and Burgundian kings gathered their forces in defence of their Christian faith and their recently-acquired dominions. Attila retired from Orleans,

of which he had commenced the siege, and chose for the battle-field, which was to decide the destiny of the world, a vast plain not far from Châlons, on the Marne, where his cavalry would have room to act, and waited the assault of all the forces that France and Italy could collect. The Visigoths prepared for the decisive engagement under their king, Theodoric; the Franks of the Saal under Meroveg; the Ripuarian Franks, the Saxons, and the Burgundians were under leaders of their own. |**A.D. 451.**|It was a fight in which were brought face to face the two conquering races of the world, and upon its result it depended whether Europe was to be ruled by a dynasty of Calmucks or left to her free progress under her Gothic and Teutonic kings. Three hundred thousand corpses marked the severity of the struggle, but victory rested with the West. Attila retreated from Gaul, and wreaked his vengeance on the Italian cities. He destroyed Aquileia, whose terrified inhabitants hid themselves in the marshes and lagoons which afterwards bore the palaces of Venice; Vicenza, Padua, and Verona were spoiled and burned. Pavia and Milan submitted without resistance. On approaching Rome, the venerable bishop, Saint Leo, met the devastating Hun, and by the gravity of his appearance, the ransom he offered, and perhaps the mystic dignity which still rested upon the city whose cause he pleaded, prevailed on him to retire. Shortly after, the chief of this brief and terrible visitation died in his tent on the banks of the Danube, and left no lasting memorial of his irruption except the depopulation his cruelty had caused, and the ruin he had spread over some of the fairest regions of the earth.

But Rome, spared by the influence of the bishop from the ravage of the Huns, could not escape the destroying enmity of Genseric and the Vandals. Dashing across from Africa, these furious conquerors destroyed for destruction's sake, and affixed the name of Vandalism on whatever is harsh and unrefined. For fourteen days the spoilers were at work in Rome, and it is only wonderful that after so many plunderings any thing worth plundering remained. When the sated Vandals crossed to Carthage again, the Gothic and Suevic kings gave the purple to whatever puppet they chose. Afraid still to invest themselves with the insignia of the Imperial power, they bestowed them or took them away, and at last rendered the throne and the crown so contemptible, that when Odoacer was proclaimed King of Italy, the phantom assembly which still called itself the Roman Senate sent back to Constantinople the tiara and purple robe, in sign that the Western Empire had passed away. Zeno, the Eastern ruler, retained the ornaments of the departed sovereignty, and sent to the Herulean Odoacer the title of "Patrician," sole emblem left of the greatness and antiquity of the Roman name. It may be interesting to remember that the last who wore the Imperial crown was a youth who would probably have escaped the recognition of posterity altogether, if he had not, by a sort of cruel mockery of his misfortunes, borne the names of Romulus Augustulus—the former recalling the great founder of the city, and the latter the first of the Imperial line.

Thus, then, in 476, Rome came to her deserved and terrible end; and before we trace the influence of this great event upon the succeeding centuries, it will be worth while to devote a few words to the cause of its overthrow. These were evidently three—the ineradicable barbarity and selfishness of the Roman character, the depravation of manners in the capital, and the want of some combining influence to bind all the parts of the various empire into a whole. From the earliest incidents in the history of Rome, we gather that she was utterly regardless of human life or suffering. Her treatment of her vanquished enemies, and her laws upon parental authority, upon slaves and debtors, show the pitiless disposition of her people. Look at her citizens at any period of her career —her populace or her consuls—in the field of battle or in the forum, you will always find them the true descendants of those blood-stained refugees, who established their den of robbers on the seven hills, and pretended they were led by a man who had been suckled by a wolf. While conquest was their object, this sanguinary disposition enabled them to perform great exploits; but when victory had secured to them the blessings of peace and safety, the same thirst for excitement continued. They cried out for blood in the amphitheatre, and had no pleasure in any display which was not accompanied with pain. The rival chief who had perilled their supremacy in the field was led in ferocious triumph at the wheel of his conqueror, and beheaded or flogged to death at the gate of the Capitol. The wounded

gladiator looked round the benches of the arena in hopes of seeing the thumbs of the spectators turned down—the signal for his life being spared; but matrons and maids, the high and the low, looked with unmoved faces upon his agonies, and gave the signal for his death without remorse. They were the same people, even in their amusements, who gave order for the destruction of Numantium and Carthage. But cruelty was not enough. They sank into the wildest vices of sensuality, and lost the dignity of manhood, and the last feelings of self-respect. Never was a nation so easily habituated to slavery. They licked the hand that struck them hardest. They hung garlands for a long time on the tomb of Nero. They insisted on being revenged on the murderers of Commodus, and frequently slew more citizens in broils in the street and quarrels in the theatre, than had fought at Cannæ or Zama. It might have been hoped that the cruelty which characterized the days of their military aggression would be softened down when they had become the acknowledged rulers of the world. Luxury itself, it might be thought, would be inconsistent with the sight of blood. But in this utterly detestable race the two extremes of human society seemed to have the same result. The brutal, half-clothed savage of an early age conveyed his tastes as well as his conquests to the enervated voluptuary of the empire. The virtues, such as they were, of that former period—contempt of danger, unfaltering resolution, and a certain simplicity of life—had departed, and all the bad features were exaggerated. Religion also had disappeared. Even a false religion, if sincerely entertained, is a bond of union among all who profess its faith. But between Rome and its colonies, and between man and man, there was soon no community of belief. The sweltering wretches in the Forum sneered at the existence of Bacchus in the midst of his mysteries, and imitated the actions of their gods, while they laughed at the hypocrisy of priests and augurs, who treated them as divine. A cruel, depraved, godless people—these were the Romans who had enslaved the world with their arms and corrupted it with their civilization. When their capital fell, men felt relieved from a burden and shame. The lessons of Christianity had been thrown away on a population too gross and too truculent to receive them. Some of gentler mould than others had received the Saviour; but to the mass of Romans the language of peace and justice, of forgiveness and brotherhood, was unknown. It was to be the worthier recipients of a pure and elevating faith, that the Goth was called from his wilderness and the German from his forest.

But the faith had to be purified itself before it was fitted for the reception of the new conquerors of the world. The dissensions of the Christian Churches had added only a fresh element of weakness to the empire of Rome. There were heretics everywhere, supporting their opinions with bigotry and violence—Arians, Sabellians, Montanists, and fifty names besides. Torn by these parties, dishonoured by pretended conversions, the result of flattery and ambition, the Christian Church was further weakened by the effect of wealth and luxury upon its chiefs. While contending with rival sects upon some point of discipline or doctrine, they made themselves so notorious for the desire of riches, and the infamous arts they practised to get themselves appointed heirs of the rich members of their congregations, that a law was passed making a conveyance in favour of a priest invalid. And it is not from Pagan enemies or heretical rivals we learn this—it is from the letters still extant of the most honoured Fathers of the Church. One of them tells us that the Prefect Pretextatus, alluding to the luxury of the Pontiffs, and to the magnificence of their apparel, said to Pope Damasus, “Make me Bishop of Rome, and I will turn Christian.” “Far, then,” says a Roman Catholic historian of our own day, “from strengthening the Roman world with its virtues, the Christian society seemed to have adopted the vices it was its office to overcome.” But the fall of Roman power was the resurrection of Christianity. It had a Resurrection, because it had had a Death, and a new world was now prepared for its reception. Its everlasting truths, indeed, had been full of life and vigour all through the sad period of Roman depravation, but the ground was unfitted for their growth; and the great characteristic of this century is not the conquest of Rome by Alaric the Goth, or the dreadful assault on Europe by Attila the Hun, or the final abolition of the old capital of the world by Odoacer the Herulean, but rather the ecclesiastical chaos which spread over the earth. The age of martyrs had passed—the philosophers had begun their pestiferous tamperings with the facts of revelation—and over all rioted

and stormed an ambitious and worldly priesthood, who hated their opponents with more bitterness than the heathens had displayed against the Christians, and ran wild in every species of lawlessness and vice. The deserts and caves which used to give retreat to meditative worshippers or timid believers, now teemed with thousands of furious and fanatical monks, who rushed occasionally into the great cities of the empire, and filled their streets with blood and rapine. Guided by no less fanatical bishops, they spread murder and terror over whole provinces. Alexandria stood in more fear of these professed recluses than of an army of hostile soldiers. "There is a race," says Eunapius, "called monks—men indeed in form, but hogs in life, who practise and allow abominable things. Whoever wears a black robe, and is not ashamed of filthy garments, and presents a dirty face to the public view, obtains a tyrannical authority." False miracles, absurd prophecies, and ludicrous visions were the instruments with which these and other impostors established their power. Mad enthusiasts imprisoned themselves in dungeons, or exposed themselves on the tops of pillars, naked, except by the growth of their tangled hair, and the coating of filth upon their persons,—and gained credit among the ignorant for self-denial and abnegation of the world.

All the high offices of the Church were so lucrative and honourable as to be the object of universal desire.

To be established archbishop of a diocese cost more lives than the conquest of a province. When the Christian community needed support from without, they had recourse to some rich or powerful individual, some general of an army, or governor of a district, and begged him to assume the pastoral staff in exchange for his military sword. Sometimes the assembled crowd cried out the name of a favourite who was not even known to be a Christian, and the mitre was conveyed by acclamation to a person who had to undergo the ceremonies of baptism and ordination before he could place it on his head. Sometimes the exigencies of the congregation required a scholar or an orator for its head. It applied to a philosopher to undertake its direction. He objected that his philosophy had been declared inconsistent with the Christian faith, and his mode of life contrary to Christian precept. They forgave him his philosophy, his horses and hounds, his wife and children, and constituted him their chief. Age was of no consequence. A youth of eighteen has been saluted bishop by a cry which seemed to the multitude the direct inspiration of Heaven, and seated in the chair of his dignity almost without his knowledge. Once established on his episcopal seat, he had no superior. The Roman Bishop had not yet asserted his supremacy over the Church. Each prelate was sovereign Pontiff of his own see, and his doctrines for a long time regulated the doctrines of his flock. Under former bishops, Milan had been Arian, under Ambrose it was orthodox, and with a change of master might have been Arian again. The emperors had occasionally interfered with their authoritative decisions, but generally the dispute was left in divided dioceses to be settled by argument, when the rivals' tempers allowed such a mode of warfare, but more frequently by armed bands of the retainers of the respective creeds, and sometimes by an appeal to miracles. But with this century a new spirit of bitterness was let loose upon the Church. Councils were held, at which the doctrines of the minority were declared dangerous to the State, and the civil power was invoked to carry the sentence into effect. In Africa, where the great name of Augustin of Hippo admitted no opposition, the Donatists, though represented by no less than two hundred and seventy-nine prelates, were condemned as heretics, and given over to the persecuting sword. But in other quarters the dissidents looked for support to the civil power, when it happened to be of their opinion in Church affairs. Rome chose Clovis, the politic and energetic Frank, for its guardian and protector, and the Arians threw themselves in the same way on the support of the Visigoths and Burgundians. A difference of faith became a pretext for war. Clovis, who envied his neighbours their territories south of the Loire, led an expedition against them, crying, "It is shameful to see those Arians in possession of such goodly lands!" and everywhere a vast activity was perceptible in the Church, because its interests were now connected with those of kings and peoples. In earlier times, discussions were carried on on a great variety of doctrines which, though widely spread, were not yet authoritatively declared to be articles of faith. St. Jerome himself, and others, had had to

defend their opinions against the attacks of various adversaries, who, without ceasing to be considered true members of the Church, wrote powerfully against the worship of martyrs and their relics; against the miracles professedly wrought at their tombs; against fasting, austerities, and celibacy. No appeal was made on those occasions either to the Bishop of Rome as head of the Church, or to the emperor as head of the State. Now, however, the spirit of moderation was banished, and the decrees of councils were considered superior to private or even diocesan judgment. Life and freedom of discussion were at an end under an enforced and rigid uniformity. But the struggle lasted through the century. It was the period of great convulsions in the State, and disputations, wranglings, and struggle in the Church. How these, in a State tortured by perpetual change, and a Church filled with energy and fire, acted upon each other, may easily be supposed. The doubtful and unsteady civil government had subordinated itself to the turbulent ardour of the perplexed but highly-animated Church. After the conquest of Rome, where was the barbaric conqueror to look for any guide to internal unity, or any relic of the vanished empire by which to connect himself with the past? There was only the Church, which was now not only the professed teacher of obedience, peace, and holiness, but the only undestroyed institution of the State. The old population of Rome had been wasted by the sword, and famine, and deportation. The emperors of the West had left the scene; the Roman Senate was no more. There was but one authority which had any influence on the wretched crowd who had returned to their ancient capital, or sought refuge in its ruined palaces or grass-grown streets from the pursuit of their foes; and that was the Bishop of the Christian congregation—whose palace had been given to him by Constantine—who claimed already the inheritance of St. Peter—and who carried to the new government either the support of a willing people, or the enmity of a seditious mob.

|A.D. 489.|

A new hero came upon the scene in the person of Theodoric, the Ostrogoth. Odoacer tried in vain to resist the two hundred thousand warriors of this tribe who poured upon Italy in 490, and, after a long resistance in Ravenna, yielded the kingdom of Italy to his rival. Theodoric, though an Arian, cultivated the good opinion of the orthodox, and gained the favour of the Roman Bishop. He had almost a superstitious veneration for the dignities of ancient Rome. He treated with respect an assembly which called itself the Senate, but did not allow his love of antiquity to blind him to the degeneracy of the present race. He interdicted arms to all men of Roman blood, and tried in vain to prevent his followers from using the appellation “Roman” as their bitterest form of contempt. Lands were distributed to his followers, and they occupied and improved a full third of Italy. Equal laws were provided for both populations, but he forbade the toga and the schools to his countrymen, and left the studies and refinements of life, and offices of civil dignity, to the native race. The hand that holds the pen, he said, becomes unfitted for the sword. But, barbarian as he was called, he restored the prosperity which the fairest region of the earth had lost under the emperors. Bridges, aqueducts, theatres, baths, were repaired; palaces and churches built. Agriculture was encouraged, attempts were made to drain the Pontine Marshes; iron-mines were worked in Dalmatia, and gold-mines in Bruttium. Large fleets protected the coasts of the Mediterranean from pirates and invaders. Population increased, taxes were diminished; and a ruler who could neither read nor write attracted to his court all the learned men of his time. Already the energy of a new and enterprising people was felt to the extremities of his dominions. A new race, also, was established in Gaul. Klodwig, leader of the Franks, received baptism at the hands of St. Remi in 496, and began the great line of French rulers, who, passing his name through the softened sound of Clovis, presented, in the different families who succeeded him, eighteen kings of the name of Louis, as if commemorative of the founder of the monarchy.

In England the petty kingdoms of the Heptarchy were in the course of formation, and though, when viewed closely, we seemed a divided and even hostile collection of individual tribes, the historian combines the separate elements, and tells us that, before the fifth century expired, another

branch of the barbarians had settled into form and order, and that the Anglo-Saxon race had taken possession of its place.

With these newly-founded States rising with fresh vigour from among the decayed and festering remains of an older society, we look hopefully forward to what the future years will show us.

SIXTH CENTURY

	Kings of the Franks.
A.D.	
	CLOVIS.—(*cont.*)
511.	CHILDEBERT, THIERRY, CLOTAIRE, CLODOMIR.
559.	CLOTAIRE (sole King).
562.	CHARIBERT, GONTRAN, SIGEBERT and CHILDERIC.
584.	CLOTAIRE II., (of Soissons.)
596.	THIERRY II., THEODOBERT, (of Paris and Austrasia.)

	Emperors of the East.
A.D.	
	ANASTASIUS.—(*cont.*)
518.	JUSTIN.
527.	JUSTINIAN I.
565.	JUSTIN II.
578.	TIBERIUS II.
582.	MAURICE.

Authors

Boethius, Procopius, Gildas, Gregory of Tours, Columba, (520-597,) Priscian, Columbanus, Benedict, Evagrius, (Scholasticus,) Fulgentius, Gregory the Great.

THE SIXTH CENTURY

BELISARIUS AND NARSES IN ITALY – SETTLEMENT OF THE LOMBARDS – LAWS OF JUSTINIAN – BIRTH OF MOHAMMED

Theodoric, though not laying claim to universal empire in right of his possession of Rome and Italy, exercised a sort of supremacy over his contemporaries by his wisdom and power. He also strengthened his position by family alliances. His wife was sister of Klodwig or Clovis, King of the Franks. He married his own sister to Hunric, King of the Vandals, his niece to the Thuringian king. One of his daughters he gave to Sigismund, King of the Burgundians, and the other to Alaric the Second, King of the Visigoths. Relying on the double influence which his relationship and reputation secured to him, he rebuked or praised the potentates of Europe as if they had been his children, and gave them advice in the various exigencies of their affairs, to which they implicitly submitted. He would fain have kept alive what was left of the old Roman civilization, and heaped honours on the Senator Cassiodorus, one of the last writers of Rome. “We send you this man as ambassador,” he said to the King of the Burgundians, “that your people may no longer pretend to be our equals when they perceive what manner of men we have among us.” But his rule, though generous, was strict. He imprisoned the Bishop of Rome for disobedience of orders in a commission he had given him, and repressed discontent and the quarrels of the factions with an unsparing hand. But the death of this great and wise sovereign showed on what unstable foundations a barbaric power is built. Frightful tragedies were enacted in his family. His daughter was murdered by her nephew, whom she had associated with her in the guardianship of her son. But vengeance overtook the wrong-doer, and a strange revolution occurred in the history of the world. The emperor reigning at Constantinople was the celebrated Justinian. He saw into what a confused condition the affairs of the new conquerors of Italy had fallen. Rallying round him all the recollections of the past—giving command of his armies to one of the great men who start up unexpectedly in the most hopeless periods of history, whose name, Belisarius, still continues to be familiar to our ears—and rousing the hostile nationalities to come to his aid, he poured into the peninsula an army with Roman discipline and the union which community of interests affords. |**A.D. 535.**|In a remarkably short space of time, Belisarius achieved the conquest of Italy. The opposing soldiers threw down their arms at sight of the well-remembered eagles. The nations threw off the supremacy of the Ostrogoths. Belisarius had already overthrown the kingdom of the Vandals and restored Africa to the empire of the East. He took Naples, and put the inhabitants to the sword. He advanced upon Rome, which the Goths deserted at his approach. The walls of the great city were restored, and a victory over the fugitives at Perugia seemed to secure the whole land to its ancient masters. But Witig, the Ostrogoth, gathered courage from despair. He besought assistance from the Franks, who had now taken possession of Burgundy; and volunteers from all quarters flocked to his standard, for he had promised them the spoils of Milan. Milan was immensely rich, and had espoused the orthodox faith. The assailants were Arians, and intent on plunder. Such destruction had scarcely been seen since the memorable slaughter of the Huns at Châlons on the Marne. The Ostrogoths and Burgundian Franks broke into the town, and the streets were piled up with the corpses of all the inhabitants. There were three hundred thousand put to death, and multitudes had died of famine and disease. The ferocity was useless, and Belisarius was already on the march; Witig was conquered, in open fight, while he was busy besieging Rome; Ravenna itself, his capital, was taken, and the Ostrogothic king was led in triumph along the streets of Constantinople.

|**A.D. 540.**|

But the conqueror of the Ostrogoths fell into disfavour at court. He was summoned home, and a great man, whom his presence in Italy had kept in check, availed himself of his absence. Totila seemed

indeed worthy to succeed to the empire of his countryman Theodoric. He again peopled the utterly exhausted Rome; he restored its buildings, and lived among the new-comers himself, encouraging their efforts to give it once more the appearance of the capital of the world. But these efforts were in vain. There was no possibility of reviving the old fiction of the identity of the freshly-imported inhabitants and the countrymen of Scipio and Cæsar. Only one link was possible between the old state of things and the new. It was strange that it was left for the Christian Bishop to bridge over the chasm that separated the Rome of the Consulship and the Empire from the capital of the Goths. Yet so it was. While the short duration of the reigns of the barbaric kings prevented the most sanguine from looking forward to the stability of any power for the future, the immunity already granted to the clerical order, and the sanctuary afforded, in the midst of the wildest excesses of siege and storm, by their shrines and churches, had affixed a character of inviolability and permanence to the influence of the ecclesiastical chief. At Constantinople, the presence of the sovereign, who affected a grandeur to which the pretensions to divinity of the Roman emperors had been modesty and simplicity, kept the dignity of the Bishop in a very secondary place. But at Rome there was no one left to dispute his rank. His office claimed a duration of upwards of four hundred years; and though at first his predecessors had been fugitives and martyrs, and even now his power had no foundation except in the willing obedience of the members of his flock, the necessity of his position had forced him to extend his claims beyond the mere requirements of his spiritual rule. During the ephemeral occupations of the city by Vandals and Huns and Ostrogoths, and all the tribes who successively took possession of the great capital, he had been recognised as the representative of the most influential portion of the inhabitants. As it naturally followed that the higher the rank of a ruler or intercessor was, the more likely his success would be, the Christians of the orthodox persuasion had the wisdom to raise their Bishop as high as they could. He had stood between the devoted city and the Huns; he had promised obedience or threatened resistance to the Goths, according to the conduct pursued with regard to his flock by the conquerors. He had also lent to Belisarius all the weight of his authority in restoring the power of the emperors, and from this time the Bishop of Rome became a great civil as well as ecclesiastical officer. All parties in turn united in trying to win him over to their cause—the Arian kings, by kindness and forbearance to his adherents; and the orthodox, by increasing the rights and privileges of his see. And already the policy of the Roman Pontiffs began to take the path it has never deserted since. They looked out in all quarters for assistance in their schemes of ambition and conquest. Emissaries were despatched into many nations to convert them, not from heathenism to Christianity, but from independence to an acknowledgment of their subjection to Rome. It was seen already that a great spiritual empire might be founded upon the ruins of the old Roman world, and spread itself over the perplexed and unstable politics of the barbaric tribes. No means, accordingly, were left untried to extend the conquests of the spiritual Cæsar. When Clovis the Frank was converted by the entreaties of his wife from Arianism to the creed of the Roman Church, the orthodox bishops of France considered it a victory over their enemies, though these enemies were their countrymen and neighbours. And from henceforth we find the different confessions of faith to have more influence in the setting up or overthrowing of kingdoms than the strength of armies or the skill of generals. Narses, who was appointed the successor of Belisarius, was a believer in the decrees of the Council of Nice. His orthodoxy won him the support of all the orthodox Huns and Heruleans and Lombards, who formed an army of infuriated missionaries rather than of soldiers, and gained to his cause the majority of the Ostrogoths whom it was his task to fight. Totila in vain tried to bear up against this invasion. The heretical Ostrogoths, expelled from the towns by their orthodox fellow-citizens, and ill supported by the inhabitants of the lands they traversed, were defeated in several battles; and at last, when the resisting forces were reduced to the paltry number of seven thousand men, their spirits broken by defeat, and a continuance in Italy made useless by the hostile feelings of the population, they applied to Narses for some means of saving their lives. He furnished them with vessels, which carried them from the lands which, sixty years before, had been assigned them by the great Theodoric, and they

found an obscure termination to so strange and checkered a career, by being lost and mingled in the crowded populations of Constantinople. This was in 553. The Ostrogoths disappear from history. The Visigoths have still a settlement at the southwest of France and in the rich regions of Spain, but they are isolated by their position, and are divided into different branches. The Franks are a great and seemingly well-cemented race between the Rhine and the sea. The Burgundians have a form of government and code of laws which keep them distinct and powerful. There are nations rising into independence in Germany. In England, Christianity has formed a bond which practically gives firmness and unity to the kingdoms of the Heptarchy; and it might be expected that, having seen so many tribes of strange and varying aspect emerge from the unknown regions of the East, we should have little to do but watch the gradual enlightenment of those various races, and see them assuming, by slow degrees, their present respective places; but the undiscovered extremities of the earth were again to pour forth a swarm of invaders, who plunged Italy back into its old state of barbarism and oppression, and established a new people in the midst of its already confused and intermixed populations.

Somewhere up between the Aller and the Oder there had been settled, from some unknown period, a people of wild and uncultivated habits, who had occasionally appeared in small detachments in the various gatherings of barbarians who had forced their way into the South. Following the irresistible impulse which seems to impel all the settlers in the North, they traversed the regions already occupied by the Heruleans and the Gepides, and paused, as all previous invasions had done, on the outer boundary of the Danube. These were the Longobards or Lombards, so called from the spears, *bardi*, with which they were armed; and not long they required to wait till a favourable opportunity occurred for them to cross the stream. In the hurried levies of Narses some of them had offered their services, and had been present at the victory over Totila the Goth. They returned, in all probability, to their companions, and soon the hearts of the whole tribe were set upon the conquest of the beautiful region their countrymen had seen. If they hesitated to undertake so long an expedition, two incidents occurred which made it indispensable. Flying in wild fury and dismay from the face of a pursuing enemy, the Avars, themselves a ferocious Asiatic horde which had terrified the Eastern Empire, came and joined themselves to the Lombards. With united forces, all their tents, and wives and children, their horses and cattle, this dreadful alliance began their progress to Italy. The other incident was, that in revenge for the injustice of his master, and dreading his further malice, Narses himself invited their assistance. Alboin, the Lombard king, was chief of the expedition. He had been refused the hand of Rosamund, the daughter of Cunimond, chief of the Gepides. He poured the combined armies of Lombards and Avars upon the unfortunate tribe, slew the king with his own hand, and, according to the inhuman fashion of his race, formed his drinking-cup of his enemy's skull. He married Rosamund, and pursued his victorious career. He crossed the Julian Alps, made himself master of Milan and the dependent territories, and was lifted on the shield as King of Italy. At a festival in honour of his successes, he forced his favourite wine-goblet into the hands of his wife. She recognised the fearful vessel, and shuddered while she put her lips to the brim. But hatred took possession of her heart. She promised her hand and throne to Kilmich, one of her attendants, if he would take vengeance on the tyrant who had offered her so intolerable a wrong. The attendant was won by the bride, and slew Alboin. But justice pursued the murderers. They were discovered, and fled to Ravenna, where the Exarch held his court. Saved thus from human retribution, Rosamund brought her fate upon herself. Captivated with the prospect of marrying the Exarch, she presented a poisoned cup to Kilmich, now become her husband, as he came from the bath. The effect was immediate, and the agonies he felt told him too surely the author of his death. |**A.D. 575.**|He just lived long enough to stab the wretched woman with his dagger, and this frightful domestic tragedy was brought to a close.

Alboin had divided his dominion into many little states and dukedoms. A kind of anarchy succeeded the strong government of the remorseless and clear-sighted king, and enemies began to arise in different directions. The Franks from the south of France began to cross the Alps. The Greek

settlements began to menace the Lombards from the South. Internal disunion was quelled by the public danger, and Antharis, the son of Cleph, was nominated king. To strengthen himself against the orthodox Franks, he professed himself a Christian and joined the Arian communion. With the aid of his co-religionists he repelled the invaders, and had time, in the intervals of their assaults, to extend his conquests to the south of the peninsula. There he overthrew the settlements which owned the Empire of the East; and coming to the extreme end of Italy, the savage ruler pushed his war-horse into the water as deep as it would go, and, standing up in his stirrups, threw forward his javelin with all his strength, saying, "That is the boundary of the Lombard power." Unhappily for the unity of that distracted land, the warrior's boast was unfounded, and it has continued ever since a prey to discord and division. |**A.D. 591.**|Another kingdom, however, was added to the roll of European states; and this was the last settlement permanently made on the old Roman territory.

The Lombards were a less civilized horde than any of their predecessors. The Ostrogoths had rapidly assimilated themselves to the people who surrounded them, but the Lombards looked with haughty disdain on the population they had subdued. By portioning the country among the chiefs of the expedition, they commenced the first experiment on a great scale of what afterwards expanded into the feudal system. There were among them, as among the other northern settlers, an elective king and an hereditary nobility, owing suit and service to their chief, and exacting the same from their dependants; and already we see the working of this similarity of constitution in the diffusion throughout the whole of Europe of the monarchical and aristocratic principle, which is still the characteristic of most of our modern states. From this century some authors date the origin of what are called the "Middle Ages," forming the great and obscure gulf between ancient and modern times. Others, indeed, wish to fix the commencement of the Middle Ages at a much earlier date—even so far back as the reign of Constantine. They found this inclination on the fact that to him we are indebted for the settlement of barbarians within the empire, and the institution of a titled nobility dependent on the crown. But many things were needed besides these to constitute the state of manners and polity which we recognise as those of the Middle Ages, and above them all the establishment of the monarchical principle in ecclesiastical government, and the recognition of a sovereign priest. This was now close at hand, and its approach was heralded by many appearances.

How, indeed, could the Church deprive itself of the organization which it saw so powerful and so successful in civil affairs? A machinery was all ready to produce an exact copy of the forms of temporal administration. There were bishops to be analogous to the great feudataries of the crown; priests and rectors to represent the smaller freeholders dependent on the greater barons; but where was the monarch by whom the whole system was to be combined and all the links of the great chain held together by a point of central union? The want of this had been so felt, that we might naturally have expected a claim to universal superiority to have long ere this been made by a Pope of Rome, the ancient seat of the temporal power. But with his residence perpetually a prey to fresh inroads, a heretical king merely granting him toleration and protection, the pretension would have been too absurd during the troubles of Italy, and it was not advanced for several years. The necessity of the case, however, was such, that a voice was heard from another quarter calling for universal obedience, and this was uttered by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Rome, we must remember, had by this time lost a great portion of her ancient fame. It was reserved for this wonderful city to rise again into all her former grandeur, by the restoration of learning and the knowledge of what she had been. At this period all that was known of her by the ignorant barbarians was, that she was a fresh-repaired and half-peopled town, which had been sacked and ruined five times within a century, that her inhabitants were collected from all parts of the world, and that she was liable to a repetition of her former misfortunes. They knew nothing of the great men who had raised her to such pre-eminence. She had sunk even from being the capital of Italy, and could therefore make no intelligible claim to be considered the capital of the world. Constantinople, on the other hand, which, by our system of education, we are taught to look upon as a very modern creation compared with the Rome of the old heroic ages of the

kings and consuls, was at that period a magnificent metropolis, which had been the seat of government for three hundred years. The majesty of the Roman name had transferred itself to that new locality, and nothing was more natural than that the Patriarch of the city of Constantine, which had been imperial from its origin, and had never been defiled by the presence of a Pagan temple, should claim for himself and his see a pre-eminence both in power and holiness. Accordingly, a demand was made in 588 for the recognition throughout the Christian world of the universal headship of the bishopric of Constantinople. But at that time there was a bishop of Rome, whom his successors have gratefully dignified with the epithet of Great, who stood up in defence, not of his own see only, but of all the bishoprics in Europe. Gregory published, in answer to the audacious claim of the Eastern patriarch, a vigorous protest, in which these remarkable words occur:—"This I declare with confidence, that whoso designates himself Universal Priest, or, in the pride of his heart, consents to be so named—he is the forerunner of Antichrist." It was therefore to Rome, on the broad ground of the Christian equality of all the chief pastors of the Church, that we owe this solemn declaration against the pretensions of the ambitious John of Constantinople.

But Constantinople itself was about to fade from the minds of men. Dissatisfied with the opposition to its supremacy, the Eastern Church became separated in interest and discipline and doctrine from its Western branch. The intercourse between the two was hostile, and in a short time nearly ceased. The empire also was so deeply engaged in defending its boundaries against the Persians and other enemies in Asia, that it took small heed of the proceedings of its late dependencies, the newly-founded kingdoms in Europe. It is probable that the refined and ostentatious court of Justinian, divided as it was into fanatical parties about some of the deepest and some of the most unimportant mysteries of the faith, and contending with equal bitterness about the charioteers of the amphitheatre according as their colours were green or blue, looked with profound contempt on the struggles after better government and greater enlightenment of the rabble of Franks, and Lombards, and Burgundians, who had settled themselves in the distant lands of the West. The interior regulations of Justinian formed a strange contrast with the grandeur and success of his foreign policy. By his lieutenants Belisarius and Narses, he had reconquered the lost inheritance of his predecessors, and held in full sovereignty for a while the fertile shores of Africa, rescued from the debasing hold of the Vandals; he had cleared Italy of Ostrogoths, Spain even had yielded an unwilling obedience, and his name was reverenced in the great confederacy of the Germanic peoples who held the lands from the Atlantic eastward to Hungary, and from Marseilles to the mouth of the Elbe. But his home was the scene of every weakness and wickedness that can disgrace the name of man. Kept in slavish submission to his wife, he did not see, what all the rest of the world saw, that she was the basest of her sex, and a disgrace to the place he gave her. Beginning as a dancer at the theatre, she passed through every grade of infamy and vice, till the name of Theodora became a synonym for every thing vile and shameless. Yet this man, successful in war and politic in action, though contemptible in private life, had the genius of a legislator, and left a memorial of his abilities which extended its influence through all the nations which succeeded to any portion of the Roman dominion, and has shaped and modified the jurisprudence of all succeeding times. He was not so much a maker of new laws, as a restorer and simplifier of the old; and as the efforts of Justinian in this direction were one of the great features by which the sixth century is distinguished, it will be useful to devote a page or two to explain in what his work consisted.

The Roman laws had become so numerous and so contradictory that the administration of justice was impossible, even where the judges were upright and intelligent. The mere word of an emperor had been considered a decree, and legally binding for all future time. No lapse of years seems to have brought a law once promulgated into desuetude. The people, therefore, groaned under the uncertainty of the statutes, which was further increased by the innumerable glosses or interpretations put upon them by the lawyers. All the decisions which had ever been given by the fifty-four emperors, from Adrian to Justinian, were in full force. All the commentaries made upon them by advocates

and judges, and all the sentences delivered in accordance with them, were contained in thousands of volumes; and the result was, when Justinian came to the throne in 526, that there was no point of law on which any man could be sure. He employed the greatest jurisconsults of that time, Trebonian and others, to bring some order into the chaos; and such was the diligence of the commissioners, that in fourteen months they produced the Justinian Code in twelve books, containing a condensation of all previous constitutions. **A.D. 527.**In the course of seven years, two hundred laws and fifty judgments were added by the emperor himself, and a new edition of the Code was published in 534. I**A.D. 533.**IUnder the name of Institutes appeared a new manual for the legal students in the great schools of Constantinople, Berytus, and Rome, where the principles of Roman law are succinctly laid down. The third of his great works was one for the completion of which he gave Trebonian and his assessors ten years. It is called the Digest or Pandects of Justinian, because in it were digested, or put in order in a general collection, the best decisions of the courts, and the opinions and treatises of the ablest lawyers. All previous codes were ransacked, and two thousand volumes of legal argument condensed; and in three years the indefatigable law-reformers published their work, wherein three million leading judgments were reduced to a hundred and fifty thousand. Future confusion was guarded against by a commandment of the emperor abolishing all previous laws and making it penal to add note or comment to the collection now completed. The sentences delivered by the emperor, after the appearance of the Pandects, were published under the name of the Novellæ; and with this great clearing-out of the Augean stable of ancient law, the salutary labours of Trebonian came to a close. In those laws are to be seen both the virtues and the vices of their origin. They sprang from the wise liberality of a despot, and handle the rights of subjects, in their relation to each other, with the equanimity and justice of a power immeasurably raised above them all. But the unlimited supremacy of the ruler is maintained as the sole foundation for the laws themselves. So we see in these collections, and in the spirit which they have spread over all the codes which have taken them for their model, a combination of humanity and probity in the civil law, with a tendency to exalt to a ridiculous excess the authority of the governing power.

This has been a century of wonderful revolutions. We have seen the kingdom of the Ostrogoths take the lead in Europe under the wise government of Theodoric the Great. We have seen it overthrown by an army of very small size, consisting of the very forces they had so recently triumphed over in every battle; and finally, after the victories over them of Belisarius and Narses, we have seen the last small remnant of their name removed from Italy altogether and eradicated from history for all future time. But, strange as this reassertion of the Greek supremacy was, the rapidity of its overthrow was stranger still. A new people came upon the stage, and established the Lombard power. The empire contracted itself within its former narrow bounds, and kept up the phantom of its superiority merely by the residence of an Exarch, or provincial governor, at Ravenna. The fiction of its power was further maintained by the Emperor's official recognition of certain rulers, and his ratification of the election of the Roman bishops. But in all essentials the influence had departed from Constantinople, and the Western monarchies were separated from the East.

In the Northwest, the confederacy of the Franks, which had consolidated into one immense and powerful kingdom under Clovis, became separated, weakened, and converted into open enemies under his degenerate successors.

But as the century drew to a close, a circumstance occurred, far away from the scene of all these proceedings, which had a greater influence on human affairs than the reconquest of Italy or the establishment of France. This was the marriage of a young man in a town of Arabia with the widow of his former master. In 564 this young man was born in Mecca, where his family had long held the high office of custodiers and guardians of the famous Caaba, which was popularly believed to be the stone that covered the grave of Abraham. But when he was still a child his father died, and he was left to the care of his uncle. The simplicity of the Arab character is shown in the way in which the young noble was brought up. Abu Taleb initiated him in the science of war and the

mysteries of commerce. He managed his horse and sword like an accomplished cavalier, and followed the caravan as a merchant through the desert. Gifted with a high poetical temperament, and soaring above the grovelling superstitions of the people surrounding him, he used to retire to meditate on the great questions of man's relation to his Maker, which the inquiring mind can never avoid. Meditation led to excitement. He saw visions and dreamed dreams. He saw great things before him, if he could become the leader and lawgiver of his race. But he was poor and unknown. His mistress Cadijah saw the aspirations of her noble servant, and offered him her hand. He was now at leisure to mature the schemes of national regeneration and religious improvement which had occupied him so long, and devoted himself more than ever to study and contemplation. This was Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, who retired in 594 to perfect his scheme, and whose empire, before many years elapsed, extended from India to Spain, and menaced Christianity and Europe at the same time from the Pyrenees and the Danube.

SEVENTH CENTURY

	Kings of the Franks.
A.D.	
	THIERRY II. and THEODOBERT II.—(*cont.*)
614.	CLOTAIRE III. (sole king.)
628.	DAGOBERT and CHARIBERT.
638.	SIGEBERT and CLOVIS II.
654.	CHILDERIC II.
679.	THIERRY IV.
692.	CLOVIS III. (PEPIN, Mayor.)
695.	CHILDEBERT III. (do.)

	Emperors of the East.
A.D.	
	MAURICE—(*cont.*)
602.	PHOCAS.
611.	HERACLIUS.
641.	CONSTANTINE, (and others.)
642.	CONSTANS.
668.	CONSTANTIUS V.
685.	JUSTINIAN II.
695.	LEONTIUS.
697.	TIBERIUS.

Authors

Nennius, (620,) Bede, (674-735,) Aldhelm, Adamnanus.

THE SEVENTH CENTURY

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.