

Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Aemilianus, Valerian And Gallienus--Part I.

The Emperors Decius, Gallus, Aemilianus, Valerian, And
Gallienus.--The General Irruption Of The Barbari Ans.--The
Thirty Tyrants.

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

There is not, for instance, any difficulty in conceiving, that the successive murders of so many emperors had loosened all the ties of allegiance between the prince and people; that all the generals of Philip were disposed to imitate the example of their master; and that

the caprice of armies, long since habituated to frequent and violent revolutions, might every day raise to the throne the most obscure of their fellow-soldiers. History can only add, that the rebellion against the emperor Philip broke out in the summer of the year two hundred and forty-nine, among the legions of Maesia; and that a subaltern officer, [1] named Marinus, was the object of their seditious choice. Philip was alarmed. He dreaded lest the treason of the Maesian army should prove the first spark of a general conflagration. Distracted with the consciousness of his guilt and of his danger, he communicated the intelligence to the senate. A gloomy silence prevailed, the effect of fear, and perhaps of disaffection; till at length Decius, one of the assembly, assuming a spirit worthy of his noble extraction, ventured to discover more intrepidity than the emperor seemed to possess. He treated the whole business with contempt, as a hasty and inconsiderate tumult, and Philip's rival as a phantom of royalty, who in a very few days would be destroyed by the same inconstancy that had created him. The speedy completion of the prophecy inspired Philip with a just esteem for so able a counsellor; and Decius appeared to him the only person capable of restoring peace and discipline to an army whose tumultuous spirit did not immediately subside after the murder of Marinus. Decius, [2] who long resisted his own nomination, seems to have insinuated the danger of presenting a leader of merit to the angry and apprehensive minds of the soldiers; and his prediction was again confirmed by the event. The legions of Maesia forced their judge to become their accomplice. They left him only the alternative of death or the purple. His subsequent conduct, after that decisive measure, was unavoidable. He conducted, or

followed, his army to the confines of Italy, whither Philip, collecting all his force to repel the formidable competitor whom he had raised up, advanced to meet him. The Imperial troops were superior in number; but the rebels formed an army of veterans, commanded by an able and experienced leader. Philip was either killed in the battle, or put to death a few days afterwards at Verona. His son and associate in the empire was massacred at Rome by the Praetorian guards; and the victorious Decius, with more favorable circumstances than the ambition of that age can usually plead, was universally acknowledged by the senate and provinces. It is reported, that, immediately after his reluctant acceptance of the title of Augustus, he had assured Philip, by a private message, of his innocence and loyalty, solemnly protesting, that, on his arrival on Italy, he would resign the Imperial ornaments, and return to the condition of an obedient subject. His professions might be sincere; but in the situation where fortune had placed him, it was scarcely possible that he could either forgive or be forgiven. [3]

[Footnote 1: The expression used by Zosimus and Zonaras may signify that Marinus commanded a century, a cohort, or a legion.]

[Footnote 2: His birth at Bubalia, a little village in Pannonia, (Eutrop. ix. Victor. in Caesarib. et Epitom.,) seems to contradict, unless it was merely accidental, his supposed descent from the Decii. Six hundred years had bestowed nobility on the Decii: but at the commencement of that period, they were only plebeians of merit, and among the first who shared the consulship with the haughty patricians.

Plebeine Deciorum animae, &c. Juvenal, Sat. viii. 254. See the spirited speech of Decius, in Livy. x. 9, 10.]

[Footnote 3: Zosimus, l. i. p. 20, c. 22. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 624, edit. Louvre.]

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

In the beginning of the sixth century, and after the conquest of Italy, the Goths, in possession of present greatness, very naturally indulged themselves in the prospect of past and of future glory. They wished to preserve the memory of their ancestors, and to transmit to posterity their own achievements. The principal minister of the court of Ravenna, the learned Cassiodorus, gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history, which consisted of twelve books, now reduced to the imperfect abridgment of Jornandes. [4] These writers passed with the most artful conciseness over the misfortunes of the nation, celebrated its successful valor, and adorned the triumph with many Asiatic trophies, that more properly belonged to the people of Scythia. On the faith of

ancient songs, the uncertain, but the only memorials of barbarians, they deduced the first origin of the Goths from the vast island, or peninsula, of Scandinavia. [5] [501] That extreme country of the North was not unknown to the conquerors of Italy: the ties of ancient consanguinity had been strengthened by recent offices of friendship; and a Scandinavian king had cheerfully abdicated his savage greatness, that he might pass the remainder of his days in the peaceful and polished court of Ravenna. [6] Many vestiges, which cannot be ascribed to the arts of popular vanity, attest the ancient residence of the Goths in the countries beyond the Rhine. From the time of the geographer Ptolemy, the southern part of Sweden seems to have continued in the possession of the less enterprising remnant of the nation, and a large territory is even at present divided into east and west Gothland. During the middle ages, (from the ninth to the twelfth century,) whilst Christianity was advancing with a slow progress into the North, the Goths and the Swedes composed two distinct and sometimes hostile members of the same monarchy. [7] The latter of these two names has prevailed without extinguishing the former. The Swedes, who might well be satisfied with their own fame in arms, have, in every age, claimed the kindred glory of the Goths. In a moment of discontent against the court of Rome, Charles the Twelfth insinuated, that his victorious troops were not degenerated from their brave ancestors, who had already subdued the mistress of the world. [8]

[Footnote 4: See the prefaces of Cassiodorus and Jornandes; it is surprising that the latter should be omitted in the excellent edition,

published by Grotius, of the Gothic writers.]

[Footnote 5: On the authority of Ablavius, Jornandes quotes some old Gothic chronicles in verse. De Reb. Geticis, c. 4.]

[Footnote 501: The Goths have inhabited Scandinavia, but it was not their original habitation. This great nation was anciently of the Suevian race; it occupied, in the time of Tacitus, and long before, Mecklenburgh, Pomerania Southern Prussia and the north-west of Poland. A little before the birth of J. C., and in the first years of that century, they belonged to the kingdom of Marbod, king of the Marcomanni: but Cotwalda, a young Gothic prince, delivered them from that tyranny, and established his own power over the kingdom of the Marcomanni, already much weakened by the victories of Tiberius. The power of the Goths at that time must have been great: it was probably from them that the Sinus Codanus (the Baltic) took this name, as it was afterwards called Mare Suevicum, and Mare Venedicum, during the superiority of the proper Suevi and the Venedi. The epoch in which the Goths passed into Scandinavia is unknown. See Adelung, Hist. of Anc. Germany, p. 200. Gatterer, Hist. Univ. 458.--G. ----M. St. Martin observes, that the Scandinavian descent of the Goths rests on the authority of Jornandes, who professed to derive it from the traditions of the Goths. He is supported by Procopius and Paulus Diaconus. Yet the Goths are unquestionably the same with the Getae of the earlier historians. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, Hist. du bas Empire, iii. 324. The identity of the Getae and Goths is by no means generally admitted. On the whole,

they seem to be one vast branch of the Indo-Teutonic race, who spread irregularly towards the north of Europe, and at different periods, and in different regions, came in contact with the more civilized nations of the south. At this period, there seems to have been a reflux of these Gothic tribes from the North. Malte Brun considers that there are strong grounds for receiving the Islandic traditions commented by the Danish Varro, M. Suhm. From these, and the voyage of Pytheas, which Malte Brun considers genuine, the Goths were in possession of Scandinavia, Ey-Gothland, 250 years before J. C., and of a tract on the continent (Reid-Gothland) between the mouths of the Vistula and the Oder. In their southern migration, they followed the course of the Vistula; afterwards, of the Dnieper. Malte Brun, *Geogr.* i. p. 387, edit. 1832. Geijer, the historian of Sweden, ably maintains the Scandinavian origin of the Goths. The Gothic language, according to Bopp, is the link between the Sanscrit and the modern Teutonic dialects: "I think that I am reading Sanscrit when I am reading Olphilas." Bopp, *Conjugations System der Sanscrit Sprache*, preface, p. x--M.]

[Footnote 6: Jornandes, c. 3.]

[Footnote 7: See in the Prolegomena of Grotius some large extracts from Adam of Bremen, and Saxo-Grammaticus. The former wrote in the year 1077, the latter flourished about the year 1200.]

[Footnote 8: Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII.* 1. iii. When the Austrians desired the aid of the court of Rome against Gustavus

Adolphus, they always represented that conqueror as the lineal successor of Alaric. Harte's History of Gustavus, vol. ii. p. 123.]

Till the end of the eleventh century, a celebrated temple subsisted at Upsal, the most considerable town of the Swedes and Goths. It was enriched with the gold which the Scandinavians had acquired in their piratical adventures, and sanctified by the uncouth representations of the three principal deities, the god of war, the goddess of generation, and the god of thunder. In the general festival, that was solemnized every ninth year, nine animals of every species (without excepting the human) were sacrificed, and their bleeding bodies suspended in the sacred grove adjacent to the temple. [9] The only traces that now subsist of this barbaric superstition are contained in the Edda, [901] a system of mythology, compiled in Iceland about the thirteenth century, and studied by the learned of Denmark and Sweden, as the most valuable remains of their ancient traditions.

[Footnote 9: See Adam of Bremen in Grotii Prolegomenis, p. 105. The temple of Upsal was destroyed by Ingo, king of Sweden, who began his reign in the year 1075, and about fourscore years afterwards, a Christian cathedral was erected on its ruins. See Dalin's History of Sweden, in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnee*.]

[Footnote 901: The Eddas have at length been made accessible to European scholars by the completion of the publication of the Saemundine Edda by the Arna Magnaeae Commission, in 3 vols. 4to., with a copious lexicon of

northern mythology.--M.]

Notwithstanding the mysterious obscurity of the Edda, we can easily distinguish two persons confounded under the name of Odin; the god of war, and the great legislator of Scandinavia. The latter, the Mahomet of the North, instituted a religion adapted to the climate and to the people. Numerous tribes on either side of the Baltic were subdued by the invincible valor of Odin, by his persuasive eloquence, and by the fame which he acquired of a most skilful magician. The faith that he had propagated, during a long and prosperous life, he confirmed by a voluntary death. Apprehensive of the ignominious approach of disease and infirmity, he resolved to expire as became a warrior. In a solemn assembly of the Swedes and Goths, he wounded himself in nine mortal places, hastening away (as he asserted with his dying voice) to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the God of war. [10]

[Footnote 10: Mallet, Introduction a l'Histoire du Dannemarc.]

The native and proper habitation of Odin is distinguished by the appellation of As-gard. The happy resemblance of that name with As-burg, or As-of, [11] words of a similar signification, has given rise to an historical system of so pleasing a contexture, that we could almost wish to persuade ourselves of its truth. It is supposed that Odin was the chief of a tribe of barbarians which dwelt on the banks of the Lake Maeotis, till the fall of Mithridates and the arms of Pompey menaced the North with servitude. That Odin, yielding with indignant fury to a power

which he was unable to resist, conducted his tribe from the frontiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden, with the great design of forming, in that inaccessible retreat of freedom, a religion and a people, which, in some remote age, might be subservient to his immortal revenge; when his invincible Goths, armed with martial fanaticism, should issue in numerous swarms from the neighborhood of the Polar circle, to chastise the oppressors of mankind. [12]

[Footnote 11: Mallet, c. iv. p. 55, has collected from Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Stephanus Byzantinus, the vestiges of such a city and people.]

[Footnote 12: This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducting the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause, might supply the noble groundwork of an epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history. According to the obvious sense of the Edda, and the interpretation of the most skilful critics, As-gard, instead of denoting a real city of the Asiatic Sarmatia, is the fictitious appellation of the mystic abode of the gods, the Olympus of Scandinavia; from whence the prophet was supposed to descend, when he announced his new religion to the Gothic nations, who were already seated in the southern parts of Sweden. * Note: A curious letter may be consulted on this subject from the Swede, Ihre counsellor in the Chancery of Upsal, printed at Upsal by Edman, in 1772 and translated into German by M. Schlozer. Gottingen, printed for Dietericht, 1779.--G. ----Gibbon, at a later period of his work, recanted his opinion of the truth of this expedition of Odin. The

Asiatic origin of the Goths is almost certain from the affinity of their language to the Sanscrit and Persian; but their northern writers, when all mythology was reduced to hero worship.--M.]

If so many successive generations of Goths were capable of preserving a faint tradition of their Scandinavian origin, we must not expect, from such unlettered barbarians, any distinct account of the time and circumstances of their emigration. To cross the Baltic was an easy and natural attempt. The inhabitants of Sweden were masters of a sufficient number of large vessels, with oars, [13] and the distance is little more than one hundred miles from Carlscoon to the nearest ports of Pomerania and Prussia. Here, at length, we land on firm and historic ground. At least as early as the Christian aera, [14] and as late as the age of the Antonines, [15] the Goths were established towards the mouth of the Vistula, and in that fertile province where the commercial cities of Thorn, Elbing, Koningsberg, and Dantzick, were long afterwards founded. [16] Westward of the Goths, the numerous tribes of the Vandals were spread along the banks of the Oder, and the sea-coast of Pomerania and Mecklenburgh. A striking resemblance of manners, complexion, religion, and language, seemed to indicate that the Vandals and the Goths were originally one great people. [17] The latter appear to have been subdivided into Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Gepidae. [18] The distinction among the Vandals was more strongly marked by the independent names of Heruli, Burgundians, Lombards, and a variety of other petty states, many of which, in a future age, expanded themselves into powerful monarchies. [181]

[Footnote 13: Tacit. Germania, c. 44.]

[Footnote 14: Tacit. Annal. ii. 62. If we could yield a firm assent to the navigations of Pytheas of Marseilles, we must allow that the Goths had passed the Baltic at least three hundred years before Christ.]

[Footnote 15: Ptolemy, l. ii.]

[Footnote 16: By the German colonies who followed the arms of the Teutonic knights. The conquest and conversion of Prussia were completed by those adventurers in the thirteenth century.]

[Footnote 17: Pliny (Hist. Natur. iv. 14) and Procopius (in Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 1) agree in this opinion. They lived in distant ages, and possessed different means of investigating the truth.]

[Footnote 18: The Ostro and Visi, the eastern and western Goths, obtained those denominations from their original seats in Scandinavia. In all their future marches and settlements they preserved, with their names, the same relative situation. When they first departed from Sweden, the infant colony was contained in three vessels. The third, being a heavy sailer, lagged behind, and the crew, which afterwards swelled into a nation, received from that circumstance the appellation of Gepidae or Loiterers. Jornandes, c. 17. * Note: It was not in Scandinavia that the Goths were divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths;

that division took place after their irruption into Dacia in the third century: those who came from Mecklenburgh and Pomerania were called Visigoths; those who came from the south of Prussia, and the northwest of Poland, called themselves Ostrogoths. Adelung, Hist. All. p. 202 Gatterer, Hist. Univ. 431.--G.]

[Footnote 181: This opinion is by no means probable. The Vandals and the Goths equally belonged to the great division of the Suevi, but the two tribes were very different. Those who have treated on this part of history, appear to me to have neglected to remark that the ancients almost always gave the name of the dominant and conquering people to all the weaker and conquered races. So Pliny calls Vindeli, Vandals, all the people of the north-east of Europe, because at that epoch the Vandals were doubtless the conquering tribe. Caesar, on the contrary, ranges under the name of Suevi, many of the tribes whom Pliny reckons as Vandals, because the Suevi, properly so called, were then the most powerful tribe in Germany. When the Goths, become in their turn conquerors, had subjugated the nations whom they encountered on their way, these nations lost their name with their liberty, and became of Gothic origin. The Vandals themselves were then considered as Goths; the Heruli, the Gepidae, &c., suffered the same fate. A common origin was thus attributed to tribes who had only been united by the conquests of some dominant nation, and this confusion has given rise to a number of historical errors.--G. ----M. St. Martin has a learned note (to Le Beau, v. 261) on the origin of the Vandals. The difficulty appears to be in rejecting the close analogy of the name with the Vend or Wendish race,

who were of Sclavonian, not of Suevian or German, origin. M. St. Martin supposes that the different races spread from the head of the Adriatic to the Baltic, and even the Veneti, on the shores of the Adriatic, the Vindelici, the tribes which gave their name to Vindobena, Vindoduna, Vindonissa, were branches of the same stock with the Sclavonian Venedi, who at one time gave their name to the Baltic; that they all spoke dialects of the Wendish language, which still prevails in Carinthia, Carniola, part of Bohemia, and Lusatia, and is hardly extinct in Mecklenburgh and Pomerania. The Vandal race, once so fearfully celebrated in the annals of mankind, has so utterly perished from the face of the earth, that we are not aware that any vestiges of their language can be traced, so as to throw light on the disputed question of their German, their Sclavonian, or independent origin. The weight of ancient authority seems against M. St. Martin's opinion. Compare, on the Vandals, Malte Brun. 394. Also Gibbon's note, c. xli. n. 38.--M.]

In the age of the Antonines, the Goths were still seated in Prussia. About the reign of Alexander Severus, the Roman province of Dacia had already experienced their proximity by frequent and destructive inroads. [19] In this interval, therefore, of about seventy years, we must place the second migration of about seventy years, we must place the second migration of the Goths from the Baltic to the Euxine; but the cause that produced it lies concealed among the various motives which actuate the conduct of unsettled barbarians. Either a pestilence or a famine, a victory or a defeat, an oracle of the gods or the eloquence of a daring leader, were sufficient to impel the Gothic arms on the milder climates

of the south. Besides the influence of a martial religion, the numbers and spirit of the Goths were equal to the most dangerous adventures. The use of round bucklers and short swords rendered them formidable in a close engagement; the manly obedience which they yielded to hereditary kings, gave uncommon union and stability to their councils; [20] and the renowned Amala, the hero of that age, and the tenth ancestor of Theodoric, king of Italy, enforced, by the ascendant of personal merit, the prerogative of his birth, which he derived from the Anses, or demi gods of the Gothic nation. [21]

[Footnote 19: See a fragment of Peter Patricius in the *Excerpta Legationum* and with regard to its probable date, see Tillemont, *Hist, des Empereurs*, tom. iii. p. 346.]

[Footnote 20: *Omnium harum gentium insigne, rotunda scuta, breves gladii, et erga reges obsequium.* Tacit. *Germania*, c. 43. The Goths probably acquired their iron by the commerce of amber.]

[Footnote 21: Jornandes, c. 13, 14.]

The fame of a great enterprise excited the bravest warriors from all the Vandalic states of Germany, many of whom are seen a few years afterwards combating under the common standard of the Goths. [22] The first motions of the emigrants carried them to the banks of the Prypec, a river universally conceived by the ancients to be the southern branch of the Borysthenes. [23] The windings of that great stream through the plains

of Poland and Russia gave a direction to their line of march, and a constant supply of fresh water and pasturage to their numerous herds of cattle. They followed the unknown course of the river, confident in their valor, and careless of whatever power might oppose their progress. The Bastarnae and the Venedi were the first who presented themselves; and the flower of their youth, either from choice or compulsion, increased the Gothic army. The Bastarnae dwelt on the northern side of the Carpathian Mountains: the immense tract of land that separated the Bastarnae from the savages of Finland was possessed, or rather wasted, by the Venedi; [24] we have some reason to believe that the first of these nations, which distinguished itself in the Macedonian war, [25] and was afterwards divided into the formidable tribes of the Peucini, the Borani, the Carpi, &c., derived its origin from the Germans. [251] With better authority, a Sarmatian extraction may be assigned to the Venedi, who rendered themselves so famous in the middle ages. [26] But the confusion of blood and manners on that doubtful frontier often perplexed the most accurate observers. [27] As the Goths advanced near the Euxine Sea, they encountered a purer race of Sarmatians, the Jazyges, the Alani, [271] and the Roxolani; and they were probably the first Germans who saw the mouths of the Borysthenes, and of the Tanais. If we inquire into the characteristic marks of the people of Germany and of Sarmatia, we shall discover that those two great portions of human kind were principally distinguished by fixed huts or movable tents, by a close dress or flowing garments, by the marriage of one or of several wives, by a military force, consisting, for the most part, either of infantry or cavalry; and above all, by the use of the Teutonic, or of the

Sclavonian language; the last of which has been diffused by conquest, from the confines of Italy to the neighborhood of Japan.

[Footnote 22: The Heruli, and the Uregundi or Burgundi, are particularly mentioned. See Mascou's History of the Germans, l. v. A passage in the Augustan History, p. 28, seems to allude to this great emigration.

The Marcomannic war was partly occasioned by the pressure of barbarous tribes, who fled before the arms of more northern barbarians.]

[Footnote 23: D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, and the third part of his incomparable map of Europe.]

[Footnote 24: Tacit. Germania, c. 46.]

[Footnote 25: Cluver. Germ. Antiqua, l. iii. c. 43.]

[Footnote 251: The Bastarnae cannot be considered original inhabitants of Germany Strabo and Tacitus appear to doubt it; Pliny alone calls them Germans: Ptolemy and Dion treat them as Scythians, a vague appellation at this period of history; Livy, Plutarch, and Diodorus Siculus, call them Gauls, and this is the most probable opinion. They descended from the Gauls who entered Germany under Signoesus. They are always found associated with other Gaulish tribes, such as the Boll, the Taurisci, &c., and not to the German tribes. The names of their chiefs or princes, Chlonix, Chlondicus. Deldon, are not German names. Those who were settled in the island of Peuce in the Danube, took the name of Peucini.

The Carpi appear in 237 as a Suevian tribe who had made an irruption into Maesia. Afterwards they reappear under the Ostrogoths, with whom they were probably blended. Adelung, p. 236, 278.--G.]

[Footnote 26: The Venedi, the Slavi, and the Antes, were the three great tribes of the same people. Jornandes, 24. * Note Dagger: They formed the great Sclavonian nation.--G.]

[Footnote 27: Tacitus most assuredly deserves that title, and even his cautious suspense is a proof of his diligent inquiries.]

[Footnote 271: Jac. Reineggs supposed that he had found, in the mountains of Caucasus, some descendants of the Alani. The Tartars call them Edeki-Alan: they speak a peculiar dialect of the ancient language of the Tartars of Caucasus. See J. Reineggs' Descr. of Caucasus, p. 11, 13.--G. According to Klaproth, they are the Ossetes of the present day in Mount Caucasus and were the same with the Albanians of antiquity. Klaproth, Hist. de l'Asie, p. 180.--M.]