

Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.--Part II.

The death of Claudius had revived the fainting spirit of the Goths. The troops which guarded the passes of Mount Haemus, and the banks of the Danube, had been drawn away by the apprehension of a civil war; and it seems probable that the remaining body of the Gothic and Vandalic tribes embraced the favorable opportunity, abandoned their settlements of the Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with new multitudes the destroying host of their countrymen. Their united numbers were at length encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and doubtful conflict ended only with the approach of night. [20] Exhausted by so many calamities, which they had mutually endured and inflicted during a twenty years' war, the Goths and the Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barbarians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to whose suffrage the prudence of Aurelian referred the decision of that important question. The Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of two thousand auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expense. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity, that when a party of five hundred men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader should be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements. [201] It is, however, not unlikely, that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs,

contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person: to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education, and by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections. [21]

[Footnote 20: Zosimus, l. i. p. 45.]

[Footnote 201: The five hundred stragglers were all slain.--M.]

[Footnote 21: Dexipphus (ap. Excerpta Legat. p. 12) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths and discover their secrets. Hist. August. p. 247.]

But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals.

[22] His manly judgment convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and populousness to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry, and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name

detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master. [23] These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced, by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilized life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the North. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome, and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This various colony, which filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honor of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time, the lucky though accidental resemblance of the name of Getae, [231] infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion, that in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamolxis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius. [24]

[Footnote 22: Hist. August. p. 222. Eutrop. ix. 15. Sextus Rufus, c. 9. de Mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.]

[Footnote 23: The Walachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. See a Memoir

of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom.
xxx.]

[Footnote 23: The connection between the Getae and the Goths is still in
my opinion incorrectly maintained by some learned writers--M.]

[Footnote 24: See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however,
(c. 22,) maintained a short independence between the Rivers Marisia and
Crissia, (Maros and Keres,) which fell into the Teiss.]

While the vigorous and moderate conduct of Aurelian restored the
Illyrian frontier, the nation of the Alemanni [25] violated the
conditions of peace, which either Gallienus had purchased, or Claudius
had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to
arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field, [26] and the numbers
of the infantry doubled those of the cavalry. [27] The first objects
of their avarice were a few cities of the Rhaetian frontier; but their
hopes soon rising with success, the rapid march of the Alemanni traced a
line of devastation from the Danube to the Po. [28]

[Footnote 25: Dexippus, p. 7--12. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Vopiscus in
Aurelian in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names,
(Alemanni Juthungi, and Marcomanni,) it is evident that they mean the
same people, and the same war; but it requires some care to conciliate
and explain them.]

[Footnote 26: Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chooses to translate three hundred thousand: his version is equally repugnant to sense and to grammar.]

[Footnote 27: We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.]

[Footnote 28: In Dexippus, we at present read Rhodanus: M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus.]

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

implacable enemy.

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer disdained to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the Imperial throne. Behind the throne the consecrated images of the emperor, and his predecessors, [29] the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure [30] taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they extenuated their perfidy, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace, and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation, reproached the barbarians, that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace, and finally dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to this unconditional mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his resentment. [31] Aurelian had resigned a distant province to the Goths; but it was

dangerous to trust or to pardon these perfidious barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

[Footnote 29: The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended; if to Caesar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle; a long line of the masters of the world.]

[Footnote 30: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 210.]

[Footnote 31: Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix oration, worthy of a Grecian sophist.]

Immediately after this conference, it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia.

He devolved on his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded; and with incredible diligence, but by a different road, returned towards the mountains of Italy. [32] Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were

commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterwards, the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the head of a chosen body of auxiliaries, (among whom were the hostages and cavalry of the Vandals,) and of all the Praetorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube. [33]

[Footnote 32: Hist. August. p. 215.]

[Footnote 33: Dexippus, p. 12.]

As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Apennine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, the attack, and the pursuit of the numerous detachments. Notwithstanding this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged. [34] The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow, that, according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended. [35] The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march.

The fury of their charge was irresistible; but, at length, after a

dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honor of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, five hundred years before, had been fatal to the brother of Hannibal. [36] Thus far the successful Germans had advanced along the Aemilian and Flaminian way, with a design of sacking the defenceless mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who, watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on their rear, found in this place the decisive moment of giving them a total and irretrievable defeat. [37] The flying remnant of their host was exterminated in a third and last battle near Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads of the Alemanni.

[Footnote 34: Victor Junior in Aurelian.]

[Footnote 35: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216.]

[Footnote 36: The little river, or rather torrent, of, Metaurus, near Fano, has been immortalized, by finding such an historian as Livy, and such a poet as Horace.]

[Footnote 37: It is recorded by an inscription found at Pesaro. See Gruter cclxxvi. 3.]

Fear has been the original parent of superstition, and every new calamity urges trembling mortals to deprecate the wrath of their invisible enemies. Though the best hope of the republic was in the valor

and conduct of Aurelian, yet such was the public consternation, when the barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of Rome, that, by a decree of the senate the Sibylline books were consulted. Even the emperor himself from a motive either of religion or of policy, recommended this salutary measure, chided the tardiness of the senate, [38] and offered to supply whatever expense, whatever animals, whatever captives of any nation, the gods should require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it does not appear, that any human victims expiated with their blood the sins of the Roman people. The Sibylline books enjoined ceremonies of a more harmless nature, processions of priests in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins; lustrations of the city and adjacent country; and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However puerile in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of spectres combating on the side of Aurelian, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reenforcement. [39]

[Footnote 38: One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a Christian church, not in the temple of all the gods.]

[Footnote 39: Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 215, 216, gives a long account of these ceremonies from the Registers of the senate.]

But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal ramparts, the

experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The seven hills of Rome had been surrounded, by the successors of Romulus, with an ancient wall of more than thirteen miles. [40] The vast enclosure may seem disproportioned to the strength and numbers of the infant state. But it was necessary to secure an ample extent of pasture and arable land, against the frequent and sudden incursions of the tribes of Latium, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness, the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs. [41] The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near fifty, [42] but is reduced by accurate measurement to about twenty-one miles. [43] It was a great but a melancholy labor, since the defence of the capital betrayed the decline of the monarchy. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps, [44] were very far from entertaining a suspicion, that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians. [45]

[Footnote 40: Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5. To confirm our idea, we may observe, that for a long time Mount Caelius was a grove of oaks, and Mount Viminal was overrun with osiers; that, in the fourth century, the Aventine was a vacant and solitary retirement; that, till the time of Augustus, the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying-ground; and that

the numerous inequalities, remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal, sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent valleys, were the primitive habitations of the Roman people. But this subject would require a dissertation.]

[Footnote 41: Exspatiantia tecta multas addidere urbes, is the expression of Pliny.]

[Footnote 42: Hist. August. p. 222. Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.]

[Footnote 43: See Nardini, Roman Antica, l. i. c. 8. * Note: But compare Gibbon, ch. xli. note 77.--M.]

[Footnote 44: Tacit. Hist. iv. 23.]

[Footnote 45: For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216, 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Eutropius, ix. 15. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian Victor Junior in Aurelian. Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in Chronic]

The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations of the North. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to reunite the dismembered parts of the empire,

was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation; and to complete the ignominy of Rome, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a competitor, who had assumed the purple at Mentz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city; and in the seventh year of his reign, became the victim of their disappointed avarice. [46] The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments [47] of that prince were stained by a licentious passion, which he indulged in acts of violence, with too little regard to the laws of society, or even to those of love. [48] He was slain at Cologne, by a conspiracy of jealous husbands, whose revenge would have appeared more justifiable, had they spared the innocence of his son. After the murder of so many valiant princes, it is somewhat remarkable, that a female for a long time controlled the fierce legions of Gaul, and still more singular, that she was the mother of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and to reign with a manly vigor under the name of those dependent emperors. Money of copper, of silver, and

of gold, was coined in her name; she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother of the Camps: her power ended only with her life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the ingratitude of Tetricus. [49]

[Footnote 46: His competitor was Lollianus, or Aelianus, if, indeed, these names mean the same person. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1177.

Note: The medals which bear the name of Lollianus are considered forgeries except one in the museum of the Prince of Waldeck there are many extent bearing the name of Laelianus, which appears to have been that of the competitor of Posthumus. Eckhel. Doct. Num. t. vi. 149--G.]

[Footnote 47: The character of this prince by Julius Aterianus (ap. Hist. August. p. 187) is worth transcribing, as it seems fair and impartial Victorino qui Post Junium Posthumium Gallias rexit neminem existemo praeferendum; non in virtute Trajanum; non Antoninum in clementia; non in gravitate Nervam; non in gubernando aerario Vespasianum; non in Censura totius vitae ac severitate militari Pertinacem vel Severum. Sed omnia haec libido et cupiditas voluptatis mulieriae sic perdidit, ut nemo audeat virtutes ejus in literas mittere quem constat omnium judicio meruisse puniri.]

[Footnote 48: He ravished the wife of Attitianus, an actuary, or army agent, Hist. August. p. 186. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian.]

[Footnote 49: Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. August. p. 200.]

When, at the instigation of his ambitious patroness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty, he was governor of the peaceful province of Aquitaine, an employment suited to his character and education. He reigned four or five years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he dreaded, and by whom he was despised. The valor and fortune of Aurelian at length opened the prospect of a deliverance. He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life; nor could he resign the sceptre of the West without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led his forces into the field, against Aurelian, posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to his enemy, and with a few chosen friends deserted in the beginning of the action. The rebel legions, though disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, defended themselves with desperate valor, till they were cut in pieces almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Chalons in Champagne. [50] The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians, [51] whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to repass the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity, and the power of Aurelian was acknowledged from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules.

[Footnote 50: Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. Vopiscus in Hist. August.

p. 220. The two Victors, in the lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. Eutrop.
ix. 13. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but
with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of
Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.) does not
wish, and Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 1189) does not dare to follow them. I
have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other.]

[Footnote 51: Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions Batavicoe;
some critics, without any reason, would fain alter the word to
Bagandicoe.] As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Autun, alone
and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of
Gaul. After a siege of seven months, they stormed and plundered that
unfortunate city, already wasted by famine. [52] Lyons, on the contrary,
had resisted with obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read
of the punishment of Lyons, [53] but there is not any mention of the
rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war; severely to
remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is
profitable, gratitude is expensive.

[Footnote 52: Eumen. in Vet. Panegy. iv. 8.]

[Footnote 53: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246. Autun was not restored
till the reign of Diocletian. See Eumenius de restaurandis scholis.]

Aurelian had no sooner secured the person and provinces of Tetricus,
than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra

and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. [54] She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, [541] equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity [55] and valor. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion, (for in speaking of a lady these trifles become important.) Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

[Footnote 54: Almost everything that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia is taken from their lives in the Augustan History, by Trebeljus Pollio; see p. 192, 198.]

[Footnote 541: According to some Christian writers, Zenobia was a Jewess. (Jost Geschichte der Israel. iv. 16. Hist. of Jews, iii. 175.)--M.]

[Footnote 55: She never admitted her husband's embraces but for the sake of posterity. If her hopes were baffled, in the ensuing month she reiterated the experiment.]

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, [551] who, from a private station, raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardor the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardor of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage, generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

[Footnote 551: According to Zosimus, Odenathus was of a noble family in Palmyra and according to Procopius, he was prince of the Saracens, who inhabit the banks of the Euphrates. Echhel. Doct. Num. vii. 489.--G.]