

DECISIVE BATTLES.

By the dread words, striking his brow, and thrice
Cried he aloud in anguish, "Varus! Varus!
Give back my legions, Varus!"

And now the world-wide conquerors shrunk and feared
For fatherland and home,
The lance to raise; and 'mongst those false to Rome
The death-lot rolled,* and still they shrunk and feared;
"For she her face hath turned
The victor goddess," cried those cowards—(for aye
Be it!)—"from Rome and Romans, and her day
Is done"—and still he mourned,
And cried aloud in anguish, "Varus! Varus!
Give back my legions, Varus!"†

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS BETWEEN ARMINIUS'S VICTORY OVER VARUS
AND THE BATTLE OF CHALONS.

A. D. 43. The Romans commence the conquest of Britain, Claudius being then Emperor of Rome. The population of this island was then Celtic. In about forty years all the tribes south of the Clyde were subdued, and their land made a Roman province.
58-60. Successful campaigns of the Roman general Corbulo against the Parthians.

64. First persecutions of the Christians at Rome under Nero.
68-70. Civil wars in the Roman world. The Emperors Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius cut off successively by violent deaths. Vespasian becomes Emperor.

70. Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans under Titus.
83. Futile attack of Domitian on the Germans.
86. Beginning of the wars between the Romans and the Dacians.
98-117. Trajan emperor of Rome. Under him the empire acquires its greatest territorial extent by his conquests in Dacia and in the East. His successor, Hadrian, abandons the provinces beyond the Euphrates which Trajan had conquered.

138-180. Era of the Antonines.
167-176. A long and desperate war between Rome and a great confederacy of the German nations. Marcus Antoninus at last succeeds in repelling them.

192-197. Civil wars throughout the Roman world. Severus becomes emperor. He relaxes the discipline of the soldiers. After his death in 211, the series of military insurrections, civil wars, and murders of emperors recommences.

226. Artaxerxes (Ardisheer) overthrows the Parthian and restores the Persian kingdom in Asia. He attacks the Roman possessions in the East.

* See *supra*, p. 139.

† I have taken this translation from an anonymous writer in "Frazer," two years ago.

BATTLE OF CHALONS.

250. The Goths invade the Roman provinces. The Emperor Decius is defeated and slain by them.

253-260. The Franks and Alemanni invade Gaul, Spain, and Africa. The Goths attack Asia Minor and Greece. The Persians conquer Armenia. Their king, Sapor, defeats the Roman Emperor Valerian, and takes him prisoner. General distress of the Roman empire.

268-283. The Emperors Claudius, Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, and Carus defeat the various enemies of Rome, and restore order in the Roman state.

285. Diocletian divides and reorganizes the Roman empire. After his abdication in 305 a fresh series of civil wars and confusion ensues. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, reunites the empire in 324.

330. Constantine makes Constantinople the seat of empire instead of Rome.

363. The Emperor Julian is killed in action against the Persians.

364-375. The empire is again divided, Valentinian being Emperor of the West, and Valens of the East. Valentinian repulses the Alemanni, and other German invaders from Gaul. Splendor of the Gothic kingdom under Hermanric, north of the Danube.

375-395. The Huns attack the Goths, who implore the protection of the Roman emperor of the East. The Goths are allowed to pass the Danube, and to settle in the Roman provinces. A war soon breaks out between them and the Romans, and the Emperor Valens and his army are destroyed by them. They ravage the Roman territories. The Emperor Theodosius reduces them to submission. They retain settlements in Thrace and Asia Minor.

395. Final division of the Roman empire between Arcadius and Honorius, the two sons of Theodosius. The Goths revolt, and under Alaric attack various parts of both the Roman empires.

410. Alaric takes the city of Rome.

412. The Goths march into Gaul, and in 414 into Spain, which had been invaded by hosts of Vandals, Suevi, Alani, and other Germanic nations. Britain is formally abandoned by the Roman empire of the West.

428. Genseric, king of the Vandals, conquers the Roman province of North Africa.

441. The Huns attack the Eastern empire.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF CHALONS, A. D. 451.

The discomfiture of the mighty attempt of Attila to found a new anti-Christian dynasty upon the wreck of the temporal power of Rome, at the

end of the term of twelve hundred years to which its duration had been limited by the forebodings of the heathen.—HERBERT.

A BROAD expanse of plains, the *Campi Catalaunici* of the ancients, spreads far and wide around the city of Chalons, in the northeast of France. The long rows of poplars, through which the River Marne winds its way, and a few thinly-scattered villages, are almost the only objects that vary the monotonous aspect of the greater part of this region. But about five miles from Chalons, near the little hamlets of Chape and Cuperly, the ground is indented and heaped up in ranges of grassy mounds and trenches, which attest the work of man's hands in ages past, and which, to the practiced eye, demonstrate that this quiet spot has once been the fortified position of a huge military host.

Local tradition gives to these ancient earth-works the name of Attila's Camp. Nor is there any reason to question the correctness of the title, or to doubt that behind these very ramparts it was that 1400 years ago the most powerful heathen king that ever ruled in Europe mustered the remnants of his vast army, which had striven on these plains against the Christian soldiery of Thoulouse and Rome. Here it was that Attila prepared to resist to the death his victors in the field; and here he heaped up the treasures of his camp into one vast pile, which was to be his funeral pyre should his camp be stormed. It was here that the Gothic and Italian forces watched, but dared not assail their enemy in his despair, after that great and terrible day of battle when

"The sound
Of conflict was overpast, the shout of all
Whom earth could send from her remotest bounds,
Heathen or faithful; from thy hundred mouths,
That feed the Caspian with Riphean snows,
Huge Volga! from famed Hypanis, which once
Cradled the Hun; from all the countless realms
Between Imaus and that utmost strand
Where columns of Herculean rock confront
The blown Atlantic; Roman, Goth, and Hun,
And Scythian strength of chivalry, that tread
The cold Codanian shore, or what far lands
Inhospitable drink Cimmerian floods,
Franks, Saxons, Suevic, and Sarmatian chiefs,
And who from green Armorica or Spain
Flocked to the work of death."

The victory which the Roman general, Aetius, with his Gothic allies, had then gained over the Huns, was the last victory of imperial Rome. But among the long *Fasti* of her triumphs, few can be found that for their importance and ultimate benefit to mankind, are comparable with this expiring effort of her arms. It did not, indeed, open to her any new career of conquest—it did not consoli-

* Herbert's "Attila," book 1, line 13.

date the relics of her power—it did not turn the rapid ebb of her fortunes. The mission of imperial Rome was, in truth, already accomplished. She had received and transmitted through her once ample dominion the civilization of Greece. She had broken up the barriers of narrow nationalities among the various states and tribes that dwelt around the coasts of the Mediterranean. She had fused these and many other races into one organized empire, bound together by a community of laws, of government, and institutions. Under the shelter of her full power the True Faith had arisen in the earth, and during the years of her decline it had been nourished to maturity, it had overspread all the provinces that ever obeyed her sway.* For no beneficial purpose to mankind could the dominion of the seven-hilled city have been restored or prolonged. But it was all-important to mankind what nations should divide among them Rome's rich inheritance of empire. Whether, the Germanic and Gothic warriors should form states and kingdoms out of the fragments of her dominions, and become the free members of the commonwealth of Christian Europe; or whether pagan savages from the wilds of Central Asia, should crush the relics of classic civilization and the early institutions of the Christianized Germans in one hopeless chaos of barbaric conquest. The Christian Visigoths of King Theodoric fought and triumphed at Chalons side by side with the legions of Aetius. Their joint victory over the Hunnish host not only rescued for a time from destruction the old age of Rome, but preserved for centuries of power and glory the Germanic element in the civilization of modern Europe.

In order to estimate the full importance to mankind of the battle of Chalons, we must keep steadily in mind who and what the Germans were, and the important distinctions between them and the numerous other races that assailed the Roman empire; and it is to be understood that the Gothic and Scandinavian nations are included in the German race. Now, "in two remarkable traits, the Germans differed from the Sarmatic as well as from the Slavic nations, and, indeed, from all those other races to whom the Greeks and Romans gave the designation of barbarians. I allude to their personal freedom and regard for the rights of men; secondly, to the respect paid by them to the female sex, and the chastity for which the latter were celebrated among the people of the North. These were the foundations of that probity of character, self-respect, and purity of manners which may be traced among the Germans and Goths even during pagan times, and which, when their sentiments were enlightened by Christianity, brought out those splendid traits of character which distinguish the age of chivalry and romance."† What the intermixture of the German stock with the

* See the Introduction to Ranke's "History of the Popes."

† See Prichard's "Researches into the Physical History of Man," vol. III., p. 423.

classic, at the fall of the Western empire, has done for mankind, may be best felt by watching, with Arnold, over how large a portion of the earth the influence of the German element is now extended.

"It affects, more or less, the whole west of Europe, from the head of the Gulf of Bothnia to the most southern promontory of Sicily, from the Oder and the Adriatic to the Hebrides and to Lisbon. It is true that the language spoken over a large portion of this space is not predominantly German; but even in France, and Italy, and Spain, the influence of the Franks, Burgundians, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Lombards, while it has colored even the language, has in blood and institutions left its mark legibly and indelibly. Germany, the Low countries, Switzerland for the most part, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; and our own islands, are all in language, in blood, and in institutions, German most decidedly. But all South America is peopled with Spaniards and Portuguese; all North America, and all Australia, with Englishmen. I say nothing of the prospects and influence of the German race in Africa and in India: it is enough to say that half of Europe, and all America and Australia, are German, more or less completely, in race, in language, or in institutions, or in all."

By the middle of the fifth century, Germanic nations had settled themselves in many of the fairest regions of the Roman empire, had imposed their yoke on the provincials, and had undergone, to a considerable extent, that moral conquest which the arts and refinements of the vanquished in arms have so often achieved over the rough victor. The Visigoths held the north of Spain, and Gaul south of the Loire. Franks, Alemanni, Alans, and Burgundians had established themselves in other Gallic provinces, and the Suevi were masters of a large southern portion of the Spanish peninsula. A king of the Vandals reigned in North Africa; and the Ostrogoths had firmly planted themselves in the provinces north of Italy. Of these powers and principalities, that of the Visigoths, under their king Theodoric, son of Alaric, was by far the first in power and in civilization.

The pressure of the Huns upon Europe had first been felt in the fourth century of our era. They had long been formidable to the Chinese empire, but the ascendancy in arms which another nomadic tribe of Central Asia, the Siempi, gained over them, drove the Huns from their Chinese conquests westward; and this movement once being communicated to the whole chain of barbaric nations that dwelt northward of the Black Sea and the Roman empire, tribe after tribe of savage warriors broke in upon the barriers of civilized Europe, "Velat unda supervenit undam." The Huns crossed the Tanais into Europe in 375 and rapidly reduced to subjection the Alans, the Ostrogoths, and other tribes that

* Arnold's "Lectures on Modern History," p. 35.

were then dwelling along the course of the Danube. The armies of the Roman emperor that tried to check their progress were cut to pieces by them, and Pannonia and other provinces south of the Danube were speedily occupied by the victorious cavalry of these new invaders. Not merely the degenerate Romans, but the bold and hardy warriors of Germany and Scandinavia, were appalled at the number, the ferocity, the ghastly appearance and the lightning-like rapidity of the Huns. Strange and loathsome legends were coined and credited, which attributed their origin to the union of

"Secret, black, and midnight hags,"

with the evil spirits of the wilderness.

Tribe after tribe, and city after city, fell before them. Then came a pause in their career of conquest in southwestern Europe, caused probably by dissensions among their chiefs, and also by their arms being employed in attacks upon the Scandinavian nations. But when Attila (or Atzel, as he is called in the Hungarian language) became their ruler, the torrent of their arms was directed with augmented terrors upon the west and the south, and their myriads marched beneath the guidance of one master-mind to the overthrow both of the new and the old powers of the earth. Recent events have thrown such a strong interest over every thing connected with the Hungarian name, that even the terrible renown of Attila now impresses us the more vividly through our sympathizing admiration of the exploits of those who claim to be descended from his warriors, and "ambitiously insert the name of Attila among their native kings." The authenticity of this martial genealogy is denied by some writers and questioned by more. But it is at least certain that the Magyaar of Arpad, who are the immediate ancestors of the bulk of the modern Hungarians, and who conquered the country which bears the name of Hungary in A.D. 889, were of the same stock of mankind as were the Huns of Attila, even if they did not belong to the same subdivision of that stock. Nor is there any improbability in the tradition that after Attila's death many of his warriors remained in Hungary, and that their descendants afterward joined the Huns of Arpad in their career of conquest. It is certain that Attila made Hungary the seat of his empire. It seems also susceptible of clear proof that the territory was then called Hungvar and Attila's soldiers Hungvari. Both the Huns of Attila and those of Arpad came from the family of nomadic nations whose primitive regions were those vast wildernesses of High Asia which are included between the Altaic and the Himalayan mountain chains. The inroads of these tribes upon the lower regions of Asia and into Europe have caused many of the most remarkable revolutions in the history of the world. There is every reason to believe that swarms of these nations made their way into distant parts of the earth, at periods long before the date of the Scythian invasion of Asia, which is the earliest

inroad of the nomadic race that history records. The first, as far as we can conjecture, in respect to the time of their descent, were the Finnish and Ugrian tribes, who appear to have come down from the Altaic border of High Asia toward the northwest, in which direction they advanced to the Uralian Mountains. There they established themselves; and that mountain chain, with its valleys and pasture lands, became to them a new country, whence they sent out colonies on every side; but the Ugrian colony, which, under Arpad, occupied Hungary, and became the ancestors of the bulk of the present Hungarian nation, did not quit their settlements on the Uralian Mountains till a very late period, and not until four centuries after the time when Attila led from the primary seats of the nomadic races in High Asia the host with which he advanced into the heart of France.* That host was Turkish, but closely allied in origin, language, and habits with the Finno-Ugrian settlers on the Ural.

Attila's fame has not come down to us through the partial and suspicious medium of chroniclers and poets of his own race. It is not from Hunnish authorities that we learn the extent of his might: it is from his enemies, from the literature and the legends of the nations whom he afflicted with his arms, that we draw the unquestionable evidence of his greatness. Besides the express narratives of Byzantine, Latin, and Gothic writers, we have the strongest proof of the stern reality of Attila's conquests in the extent to which he and his Huns have been the themes of the earliest German and Scandinavian lays. Wild as many of those legends are, they bear concurrent and certain testimony to the awe with which the memory of Attila was regarded by the bold warriors who composed and delighted in them. Attila's exploits, and the wonders of his unearthly steel and magic sword, repeatedly occur in the Sagas of Norway and Iceland; and the celebrated *Nibelungen Lied*, the most ancient of Germanic poetry, is full of them. There *Etsel*, or *Attila*, is described as the wearer of twelve mighty crowns, and as promising to his bride the lands of thirty kings whom his irresistible sword had subdued. He is, in fact, the hero of the latter part of this remarkable poem; and it is at his capital city, *Etselenburgh*, which evidently corresponds to the modern *Buda*, that much of its action takes place.

When we turn from the legendary to the historic Attila, we see clearly that he was not one of the vulgar herd of barbaric conquerors. Consummate military skill may be traced in his campaigns; and he relied far less on the brute force of armies for the aggrandizement of his empire, than on the unbounded influence over the affections of friends and the fears of foes which his genius enabled him to acquire. Austerely sober in his private life—severely just on the judgment seat—conspicuous among a nation

* See Pritchard's "Researches into the Physical History of Mankind."

of warriors for hardihood, strength, and skill in every martial exercise—grave and deliberate in counsel, but rapid and remorseless in execution, he gave safety and security to all who were under his dominion, while he waged a warfare of extermination against all who opposed or sought to escape from it. He watched the national passions, the prejudices, the creeds, and the superstitions of the varied nations over which he ruled, and of those which he sought to reduce beneath his sway: all these feelings he had the skill to turn to his own account. His own warriors believed him to be the inspired favorite of their deities, and followed him with fanatic zeal; his enemies looked on him as the pre-appointed minister of heaven's wrath against themselves; and though they believed not in his creed, their own made them tremble before him.

In one of his early campaigns he appeared before his troops with an ancient iron sword in his grasp, which he told them was the god of war whom their ancestors had worshipped. It is certain that the nomadic tribes of Northern Asia, whom Herodotus described under the name of Scythians, from the earliest times worshipped as their god a bare sword. That sword-god was supposed, in Attila's time, to have disappeared from earth; but the Hunnish king now claimed to have received it by special revelation. It was said that a herdsman, who was tracking in the desert a wounded heifer by the drops of blood, found the mysterious sword standing fixed in the ground, as if it had darted down from heaven. The herdsman bore it to Attila, who thenceforth was believed by the Huns to wield the Spirit of Death in battle, and their seers prophesied that that sword was to destroy the world. A Roman,* who was on an embassy to the Hunnish camp, recorded in his memoirs Attila's acquisition of this supernatural weapon, and the immense influence over the minds of the barbaric tribes which its possession gave him. In the title which he assumed we shall see the skill with which he availed himself of the legends and creeds of other nations as well as of his own. He designated himself "ATTILA, Descendant of the Great Nimrod. Nurtured in Engaddi. By the Grace of God, King of the Huns, the Goths, the Danes, and the Medes. The Dread of the World."

Herbert states that Attila is represented on an old medallion with a Teraphim, or a head, on his breast; and the same writer adds, "We know, from the 'Hamartigeneia' of Prudentius, that Nimrod, with a snaky-haired head, was the object of adoration of the heretical followers of Marcion; and the same head was the palladium set up by Antiochus Epiphanes over the gates of Antioch, though it has been called the visage of Charon. The memory of Nimrod was certainly regarded with mystic veneration by many; and by asserting himself to be the heir of that mighty hunter before the Lord, he vindicated to himself at least the whole Babylonian kingdom."

* Priscus upud Jornandem.

"The singular assertion in his style, that he was nurtured in Engaddi, where he certainly had never been, will be more easily understood on reference to the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelations, concerning the woman clothed with the sun, who was to bring forth in the wilderness 'where she hath a place prepared of God'—a man-child, who was to contend with the dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and rule all nations with a rod of iron. This prophecy was at that time understood universally by the sincere Christians to refer to the birth of Constantine, who was to overwhelm the paganism of the city on the seven hills and it is still so explained; but it is evident that the heathens must have looked on it in a different light, and regarded it as a foretelling of the birth of that Great One who should master the temporal power of Rome. The assertion, therefore, that he was nurtured in Engaddi, is a claim to be looked upon as that man-child who was to be brought forth in a place prepared of God in the wilderness. Engaddi means a place of palms and vines in the desert; it was hard by Zoar, the city of refuge, which was saved in the Vale of Siddim, of Demons, when the rest were destroyed by fire and brimstone from the Lord in heaven, and might, therefore, be especially called a place prepared of God in the wilderness."

It is obvious enough why he styled himself "By the Grace of God, King of the Huns and Goths;" and it seems far from difficult to see why he added the names of the Medes and the Danes. His armies had been engaged in warfare against the Persian kingdom of the Sassanidæ, and it is certain* that he meditated the invasion and overthrow of the Medo-Persian power. Probably some of the northern provinces of that kingdom had been compelled to pay him tribute; and this would account for his styling himself King of the Medes, they being his remotest subjects to the south. From a similar cause, he may have called himself King of the Danes, as his power may well have extended northward as far as the nearest of the Scandinavian nations, and this mention of Medes and Danes as his subjects would serve at once to indicate the vast extent of his dominion.†

The immense territory north of the Danube and Black Sea and eastward of Caucasus, over which Attila ruled, first in conjunction with his brother Bleda, and afterward alone, cannot be very accurately defined, but it must have comprised within it, besides the Huns, many nations of Slavie, Gothic, Teutonic, and Finnish origin. South also of the Danube, the country, from the River Sau as far as Novi in Thrace, was a Hunnish province. Such was the empire of the Huns in A.D. 445; a memorable year, in which

* See the narrative of Priscus.

† In the "Nibelungen Lied," the old poet who describes the reception of the heroine Chromhild by Attila (Etzel), says that Attila's dominions were so vast, that among his subject-warriors there were Russian, Greek, Walachian, Polish, and even Danish knights.

Attila founded Buda on the Danube as his capital city, and ridded himself of his brother by a crime which seems to have been prompted not only by selfish ambition, but also by a desire of turning to his purpose the legends and forebodings which then were universally spread throughout the Roman empire, and must have been well known to the watchful and ruthless Hun.

The year 445 of our era completed the twelfth century from the foundation of Rome, according to the best chronologers. It had always been believed among the Romans that the twelve vultures, which were said to have appeared to Romulus when he founded the city, signified the time during which the Roman power should endure. The twelve vultures denoted twelve centuries. This interpretation of the vision of the birds of destiny was current among learned Romans, even when there was yet many of the twelve centuries to run, and while the imperial city was at the zenith of its power. But as the allotted time drew nearer and nearer to its conclusion, and as Rome grew weaker and weaker beneath the blows of barbaric invaders, the terrible omen was more and more talked and thought of; and in Attila's time, men watched for the momentary extinction of the Roman state with the last beat of the last vulture's wing. Moreover, among the numerous legends connected with the foundation of the city, and the fratricidal death of Remus, there was one most terrible one, which told that Romulus did not put his brother to death in accident or in hasty quarrel, but that

"He slew his gallant twin
With inexorable sin."

deliberately, and in compliance with the warnings of supernatural power. The shedding of a brother's blood was believed to have been the price at which the founder of Rome had purchased from destiny her twelve centuries of existence.*

We may imagine, therefore, with what terror in this, the twelve hundredth year after the foundation of Rome, the inhabitants of the Roman empire must have heard the tidings that the royal brethren, Attila and Bleda, had founded a new capital on the Danube, which was designed to rule over the ancient capital on the Tiber; and that Attila, like Romulus, had consecrated the foundations of his new city by murdering his brother; so that for the new cycle of centuries then about to commence, dominion had been bought from the gloomy spirits of destiny in favor of the Hun by a sacrifice of equal awe and value with that which had formerly obtained it for the Roman.

It is to be remembered that not only the pagans, but also the

* See a curious justification of Attila for murdering his brother, by a zealous Hungarian advocate, in the note to Pray's "Annales Hunnorum," p. 117. The example of Romulus is the main authority quoted.

Christians of that age, knew and believed in these legends and omens, however they might differ as to the nature of the superhuman agency by which such mysteries had been made known to mankind. And we may observe, with Herbert, a modern learned dignitary of our church, how remarkably this augury was fulfilled; for "if to the twelve centuries denoted by the twelve vultures that appeared to Romulus, we add for the six birds that appeared to Remus six lustra, or periods of five years each, by which the Romans were wont to number their time, it brings us precisely to the year 476, in which the Roman empire was finally extinguished by Odoacer."

An attempt to assassinate Attila, made, or supposed to have been made, at the instigation of Theodoric the younger, the Emperor of Constantinople, drew the Hunnish armies, in 445, upon the Eastern empire, and delayed for a time the destined blow against Rome. Probably a more important cause of delay was the revolt of some of the Hunnish tribes to the north of the Black Sea against Attila, which broke out about this period, and is cursorily mentioned by the Byzantine writers. Attila quelled this revolt, and having thus consolidated his power, and having punished the presumption of the Eastern Roman emperor by fearful ravages of his fairest provinces, Attila, in 450 A.D., prepared to set his vast forces in motion for the conquest of Western Europe. He sought unsuccessfully by diplomatic intrigues to detach the King of the Visigoths from his alliance with Rome, and he resolved first to crush the power of Theodoric, and then to advance with overwhelming power to trample out the last sparks of the doomed Roman empire.

A strange invitation from a Roman princess gave him a pretext for the war, and threw an air of chivalric enterprise over his invasion. Honoria, sister of Valentinian III., the Emperor of the West, had sent to Attila to offer him her hand and her supposed right to share in the imperial power. This had been discovered by the Romans, and Honoria had been forthwith closely imprisoned. Attila now pretended to take up arms in behalf of his self-promised bride, and proclaimed that he was about to march to Rome to redress Honoria's wrongs. Ambition and spite against her brother must have been the sole motives that led the lady to woo the royal Hun; for Attila's face and person had all the natural ugliness of his race, and the description given of him by a Byzantine ambassador must have been well known in the imperial courts. Herbert has well versified the portrait drawn by Priscus of the great enemy of both Byzantium and Rome:

"Terrific was his semblance, in no mold
Of beautiful proportion cast; his limbs
Nothing exalted, but with sinews braced
Of Chalybean temper, agile, lithe,
And swifter than the roe; his ample chest

Was overbrow'd by a gigantic head,
With eyes keen, deeply sunk, and small, that gleam'd
Strangely in wrath as though some spirit unclean
Within that corporal tenement install'd
Look'd from its windows, but with temper'd fire
Beam'd mildly on the unresisting. Thin
His beard and hoary: his flat nostrils crown'd
A cicatrized, swart visage; but, withal,
That questionable shape such glory wore
That mortals quail'd beneath him."

Two chiefs of the Franks, who were then settled on the Lower Rhine, were at this period engaged in a feud with each other, and while one of them appealed to the Romans for aid, the other invoked the assistance and protection of the Huns. Attila thus obtained an ally whose co-operation secured for him the passage of the Rhine, and it was this circumstance which caused him to take a northward route from Hungary for his attack upon Gaul. The muster of the Hunnish hosts was swollen by warriors of every tribe that they had subjugated; nor is there any reason to suspect the old chroniclers of wilful exaggeration in estimating Attila's army at seven hundred thousand strong. Having crossed the Rhine probably a little below Coblenz, he defeated the King of the Burgundians, who endeavored to bar his progress. He then divided his vast forces into two armies, one of which marched northwest upon Tongres and Arras, and the other cities of that part of France, while the main body, under Attila himself, advanced up the Moselle, and destroyed Besançon and other towns in the country of the Burgundians. One of the latest and best biographers of Attila* well observes, that, "having thus conquered the eastern part of France, Attila prepared for an invasion of the West Gothic territories beyond the Loire. He marched upon Orleans, where he intended to force the passage of that river, and only a little attention is requisite to enable us to perceive that he proceeded on a systematic plan: he had his right wing on the north for the protection of his Frank allies; his left wing on the south for the purpose of preventing the Burgundians from rallying, and of menacing the passes of the Alps from Italy; and he led his center toward the chief object of the campaign—the conquest of Orleans, and an easy passage into the West Gothic dominion. The whole plan is very like that of the allied powers in 1814, with this difference, that their left wing entered France through the defiles of the Jura, in the direction of Lyons, and that the military object of the campaign was the capture of Paris."

It was not until the year 451 that the Huns commenced the siege of Orleans; and during their campaign in Eastern Gaul, the Roman general Aetius had strenuously exerted himself in collecting and organizing such an army as might, when united to the soldiery

* Biographical Dictionary commenced by the Useful Knowledge Society in 1844.

of the Visigoths, be fit to face the Huns in the field. He enlisted every subject of the Roman empire whom patriotism, courage, or compulsion could collect beneath the standards; and round these troops, which assumed the once proud title of the legions of Rome, he arrayed the large forces of barbaric auxiliaries, whom pay, persuasion, or the general hate and dread of the Huns brought to the camp of the last of the Roman generals. King Theodoric exerted himself with equal energy. Orleans resisted her besiegers bravely as in after times. The passage of the Loire was skilfully defended against the Huns; and Aetius and Theodoric, after much maneuvering and difficulty, effected a junction of their armies to the south of that important river.

On the advance of the allies upon Orleans, Attila instantly broke up the siege of that city, and retreated toward the Marne. He did not choose to risk a decisive battle with only the central corps of his army against the combined power of his enemies, and he therefore fell back upon his base of operations, calling in his wings from Arras and Besançon, and concentrating the whole of the Hunnish forces on the vast plains of Chalons-sur-Marne. A glance at the map will show how scientifically this place was chosen by the Hunnish general as the point for his scattered forces to converge upon; and the nature of the ground was eminently favorable for the operations of cavalry, the arm in which Attila's strength peculiarly lay.

It was during the retreat from Orleans that a Christian hermit is reported to have approached the Hunnish king, and said to him, "Thou art the Scourge of God for the chastisement of the Christians." Attila instantly assumed this new title of terror, which thenceforth became the appellation by which he was most widely and most fearfully known.

The confederate armies of Romans and Visigoths at last met their great adversary face to face on the ample battle-ground of the Chalons plains. Aetius commanded on the right of the allies; King Theodoric on the left; and Sangiban, king of the Alans, whose fidelity was suspected, was placed purposely in the center, and in the very front of the battle. Attila commanded his center in person, at the head of his own countrymen, while the Ostrogoths, the Gepidæ, and the other subject allies of the Huns were drawn up on the wings. Some maneuvering appears to have occurred before the engagement, in which Aetius had the advantage, inasmuch as he succeeded in occupying a sloping hill, which commanded the left flank of the Huns. Attila saw the importance of the position taken by Aetius on the high ground, and commenced the battle by a furious attack on this part of the Roman line, in which he seems to have detached some of his best troops from his center to aid his left. The Romans, having the advantage of the ground, repulsed the Huns, and while the allies gained this advantage on the right, their left, under King Theodoric, assailed the

Ostrogoths, who formed the right of Attila's army. The gallant king was himself struck down by a javelin, as he rode onward at the head of his men; and his own cavalry charging over him, trampled him to death in the confusion. But the Visigoths, infuriated, not dispirited, by their monarch's fall, routed the enemies opposed to them, and then wheeled upon the flank of the Hunnish center, which had been engaged in a sanguinary and indecisive contest with the Alans.

In this peril Attila made his center fall back upon his camp; and when the shelter of its entrenchments and wagons had once been gained, the Hunnish archers repulsed, without difficulty, the charges of the vengeful Gothic cavalry. Aetius had not pressed the advantage which he gained on his side of the field, and when night fell over the wild scene of havoc, Attila's left was still undefeated, but his right had been routed, and his center forced back upon his camp.

Expecting an assault on the morrow, Attila stationed his best archers in front of the cars and wagons, which were drawn up as a fortification along his lines, and made every preparation for a desperate resistance. But the "Scourge of God" resolved that no man should boast of the honor of having either captured or slain him, and he caused to be raised in the center of his encampment a huge pyramid of the wooden saddles of his cavalry: round it he heaped the spoils and the wealth that he had won; on it he stationed his wives who had accompanied him in the campaign; and on the summit Attila placed himself, ready to perish in the flames, and bask the victorious foe of their choicest booty, should they succeed in storming his defenses.

But when the morning broke and revealed the extent of the carnage with which the plains were heaped for miles, the successful allies saw also and respected the resolute attitude of their antagonist. Neither were any measures taken to blockade him in his camp, and so to extort by famine that submission which it was too plainly perilous to enforce with the sword. Attila was allowed to march back the remnants of his army without molestation, and even with the semblance of success.

It is probable that the crafty Aetius was unwilling to be too victorious. He dreaded the glory which his allies the Visigoths had acquired, and feared that Rome might find a second Aleric in Prince Thorismund, who had signalized himself in the battle, and had been chosen on the field to succeed his father Theodoric. He persuaded the young king to return at once to his capital, and thus relieved himself at the same time of the presence of a dangerous friend, as well as of a formidable though beaten foe.

Attila's attacks on the Western empire were soon renewed, but never with such peril to the civilized world as had menaced it before his defeat at Chalons; and on his death two years after that battle, the vast empire which his genius had founded was soon dis-