

ble wisdom in every action of his life ; and that he had acquired such an intimate knowledge of his heavenly guests, as readily to distinguish the voice of Jupiter from that of Minerva, and the form of Apollo from the figure of Hercules." In short, this wise and philosophic emperor was, in matters of religion, one of the weakest, most bigoted, and superstitious of mankind.

Fortunately for Christianity, he died at a very early age. He intended to revenge the injuries which the empire had sustained from Sapor, and prepared to carry war into the heart of Asia. After a dangerous march through Assyria, and the siege and reduction of some of the principal towns, he advanced to the banks of the Tigris. Here, in an engagement with the Persians, Julian was slain at the age of thirty-one.

It is generally acknowledged that he had uncommon talents, and many of the virtues of a great prince ; had not these virtues and great talents been disgraced by his inveterate hatred to Christianity, from the doctrines of which religion he had early apostatized.\* Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem is well known. The supernatural check said to have been given to that attempt by an eruption of flames from the earth has occasioned much learned theological controversy. I shall not enter into the question ; but must remark that the story is related by Julian's own friendly historian, Ammianus,† a sincere pagan, whose evidence in this matter is therefore less suspicious.

The death of Julian struck despair into the hearts of the Roman army. A leader, however, was immediately required, and the choice fell upon Jovian, a captain in the domestic guards. Though luxurious and even dissolute in his manners, he possessed many excellent qualities. A negotiation with Sapor was in the present conjuncture absolutely necessary. But the Persian, confident of his advantages, insisted on terms dishonorable to the Romans. He demanded five provinces to be restored, which had

\* Prudentius gives the following very just and impartial character of Julian.

" ——— Ductor fortissimus armis,  
Conditor et legum celeberrimus ; ore manuque  
Consultor patriæ ; sed non consultor habendæ  
Religionis, amans tercentùm millia Divùm :  
Perfidus ille Deo : sed non perfidus orbi."  
Prudent. Apoth. 450, &c.

† Dr. Howel, in his valuable History of the World, has given the life of Julian almost in the words of Ammianus Marcellinus, who was an officer in Julian's army, and a witness of all his exploits ; an impartial biographer, for he blames as well as praises.—The abilities of Julian are sufficiently proved by his own literary compositions. In his Satire, termed the *Misopogon*, or Beard-hater, he paints his own character with freedom and with wit ; and we learn more from it, of the real dispositions of this singular man, than from the narratives of his historians. (The *Misopogon* is well abridged by Dr. Howel, vol. ii. c. i. s. 5.) His moral fable, entitled the *Cæsars*, is one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit. For an abstract of it, see Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. 24.

been ceded by his grandfather to Galerius ; and required, besides, several towns in Mesopotamia. It was absolutely necessary to grant these conditions, though the empire agreed to them with general dissatisfaction.

Jovian, having thus secured a peace, applied himself with zeal to the happiness of his subjects. He favored Christianity, and sought to heal the wounds which that religion had received from his predecessor. He showed, in the means which he adopted for promoting it, a policy equally artful with that of Julian for its destruction. In a council which he assembled at Antioch, he declared his resolution that no man should be molested on account of his religious tenets. He recalled the banished Christians, admitting them with the pagans, equally, to the exercise of all public employments ; these commencements promised a happy reign ; but the hopes of the empire were blasted as soon as they were formed, for Jovian died at the age of thirty-three, after a reign only of seven months.\*

The army then in Bithynia chose Valentinian for their emperor—a man of obscure birth, but of considerable military reputation. He was illiterate, severe in his manners, and excessively avaricious ; yet in other respects deserving of the throne. As soon as he was elected, he was urged to name a colleague. "You have elected me," said he, "your emperor ; it is now my province to command, and it is yours to obey. I shall choose for myself a colleague, whom I think proper, and when I judge expedient." He afterwards named his brother Valens, to whom he gave the dominion of the East, reserving to himself the West. Valens had to oppose Sapor, who now attempted the conquest of Armenia ; and Valentinian the barbarians, who poured down upon the western empire from every quarter. Previous, however, to any warlike expedition, Valentinian thought it necessary to establish a good political arrangement at home. The clergy had formerly been exempted from taxes, but Valentinian thought that, as the interest of the state was the concern of all its members, no order should be privileged. Though a Christian himself, his zeal was subservient to policy. He interfered in no theological disputes, leaving these to be determined by the clergy ; and so far was he from persecuting the pagans, that he allowed them an unlimited toleration. These prudent measures prevented all religious disturbances ; and the Christian religion silently made greater progress than if it had been intemperately promoted by the ardor of a zealot.

Valentinian now marched into Gaul, and repelled the Alemanni

\* The accounts of his death are various. Ammianus says, "He was suffocated in his sleep, either by the vapor of a newly-plastered room or the smoke of coals, or that he died of a surfeit."—Ammian. xxv. 10.

and other barbarous tribes, in a series of successful engagements. In these, however, the severity of his disposition was rigorously felt, and the Roman name was disgraced by many atrocious actions.

Valentinian gave peace to the Western empire; but the East was distracted by the imprudent zeal of Valens, who, intemperately promoting the cause of Arianism, invited a swarm of enemies upon the empire who, in the end, entirely subverted it. These were the Goths, a people originally inhabiting the country of Scandinavia, which the ancient authors have termed the nursery of the human race; *officina humani generis*. Montesquieu accounts for those prodigious inundations from the North, which argue an astonishing populousness of those countries which sent them out, by saying, "that the violence of the Romans had forced the peoples of the South to retire to the North," and that they now regorged upon the empire;\* but we know of no violences equal to the production of that effect, and the barbarians who invaded the empire retained no traces of a southern origin, but showed, in their manners, customs, and laws, a genius and character entirely their own and strongly distinct from that of the nations of the South. Some centuries before the Christian era, the Goths had emigrated from the North; and some of their tribes, the Vandals, Heruli, and Lombards, had established themselves in Germany. In the second century, a vast body had fixed their residence on the banks of the Palus Mæotis; and had thence extended their conquests with great rapidity. Under the reign of Valens, they took possession of the province of Dacia, and were distinguished by the appellation of Ostrogoths and Visigoths, or Eastern and Western Goths—the first inhabiting the coasts of the Euxine Sea, and towards the mouth of the Danube; the latter dwelling along the banks of that river. They were a remarkable people; and their manners, laws, government, and customs are highly deserving of particular attention, as the great fountain from which the manners and policy of all the European nations are at this day derived. It will not, therefore, be impertinent to bestow some time in giving a particular view of this people, which I shall do when I have brought the Roman history to its period.

Julian had despised these invaders, and the terror of his name had kept them quiet during his reign. Procopius, the cousin of Julian, had attempted to wrest the throne from Valens, and obtained for that purpose the assistance of the Goths; but that emperor engaged them with success and compelled them to repossess the Danube. Valentinian, in the meantime, engaged with the Alemanni in Germany, died upon that expedition, and was succeeded by Gratian, his eldest son, who was then in the sixteenth year of

\* Mont., Grand. et Décad., chap. xvi.

his age. He had borne the title of Augustus from his ninth year, and his right to the empire was not disputed. The army joined with him his brother, Valentinian II., an infant four years old. The youth and inexperience of Gratian led him, in the beginning of his reign, to authorize some tyrannical and cruel acts, which appeared contrary to his natural disposition. Valens, in the mean time, in the East filled the empire with daily examples of vice and tyranny. He was detested by his subjects, and consequently exposed to frequent conspiracies, which, in their punishment, gave fresh display to his sanguinary disposition.

While the Eastern empire thus groaned under a vicious prince, a new race of barbarians came down from the North in a resistless torrent, which affected almost every quarter of Europe. These were the Huns, a race of Tartars or Siberians—unknown till then by the European nations; though they had long before that period been the terror of the Chinese, who are supposed to have built their famous wall to defend themselves from their invasions.

The occasion of this irruption into Europe appears to have been a civil war among themselves, in which the vanquished party were driven to the South. The Goths, a comparatively civilized people, looked upon the Huns as monsters; they fled before them. The Visigoths, who were first attacked, entreated the Romans to receive them into their dominions. Valens, who was no politician, was flattered by their request, and immediately granted them a settlement in Thrace. The Ostrogoths next appeared, and demanded the same protection. Valens now began to fear the consequences of harboring such a multitude of strangers, and he refused their demand; but the frontiers of the empire being ill defended, the Ostrogoths, disregarding his refusal, passed forward without opposition, and overpowered Thrace like a deluge. Valens hastily concluded a peace with Sapor, the Persian, to march to the defence of that province; but he had discharged the greatest part of the old troops, trusting that these very invaders would be the defence of the empire. His army was raw and undisciplined; Fritigern, king of the Goths, cut them to pieces in the battle of Adrianople, and Valens himself perished in the engagement. These northern strangers were now unresisted. They ravaged Achaia and Pannonia; the considerable towns alone holding out against them, and these only because they knew not the art of besieging.

Gratian, in this critical juncture, arriving at Constantinople, assumed Theodosius, an able general, for his colleague in the empire, who was, in every sense, worthy of his dignity. To great courage and magnanimity Theodosius joined an honorable and virtuous disposition; though, as a Christian emperor, his character has, of course, been aspersed by Pagan historians. He enacted many excellent laws. His religious zeal perhaps transported him too far; certainly some of the laws which he framed against heretics are rigorous in the extreme. Gratian, his colleague, was

equally zealous, and yet more imprudent. He provoked the Pagans by persecution and the destruction of their temples, so that he became, from that cause alone, an object of hatred to the greatest part of his subjects.

Upon the death of Gratian, his infant son, Valentinian II., succeeded to the Western empire, which was, in the meantime, governed by Theodosius as his guardian. This prince, who obtained and who deserved the epithet of *great*, ruled the empire for eighteen years with consummate ability. He was at first obliged to yield the government of Britain and the Gauls to the prefect of Maximus, who had obtained the absolute command of the troops in those provinces, and confident of his powers, had demanded a share of the empire. This concession emboldened Maximus to aim at the sovereignty of the whole. He invaded Italy, and took possession of Rome, while the young Valentinian, with his mother Justina, fled for refuge to Thessalonica. But Theodosius marching against the usurper, defeated him in a decisive engagement in Pannonia, and allowed him to be massacred by the victorious troops. Valentinian was thus restored to the sovereignty of the West by the arms of his guardian. But the young prince soon after fell a sacrifice to the treason of one of his generals, Arbogastes; and Theodosius, defeating Arbogastes, remained sole emperor of the East and West.

The character of this prince was worthy of the best ages of the Roman state. The wisdom of the laws of Theodosius procured him the esteem and affection of his subjects; the success of his arms kept in terror the surrounding barbarians. His domestic character was amiable and respectable, though sullied at times by an intemperance of passion which led him into some acts of inhumanity, for which, in his cool moments, he suffered the keenest remorse. Under a series of princes like Theodosius, the Roman empire might have once more regained its ancient dignity and splendor; but the weakness of its successors blasted all those pleasing expectations.

The reign of Theodosius was the era of the downfall of the Pagan religion in the Roman empire, and the full *establishment of Christianity*. As this great revolution in human affairs is of the utmost importance, in far more than a mere political point of view, we shall consider it at some length in the succeeding chapter.

