

pursued, seems to have been as malignant as that which was emptied upon Nero.

A tumultuous band, with oaths and imprecations, rushed to the tent of Galba. The heroic old man, conscious that no resistance would be of any avail, as the assassins burst into his tent, looked up calmly and said, "If you wish for my head, here it is. I am willing at any time to surrender it for the good of the people." The words were hardly uttered ere the heavy broadsword of a Roman soldier fell with its keen edge upon his neck, and his head rolled upon the floor of the tent. Another seized it by the hair, thrust a pike into the palpitating flesh, and, with shoutings of tumultuous thousands, the gory trophy was paraded through the camp. His body was kicked about, until one of his slaves dug a hole and buried it. Thus died Galba, after a reign of but three months. The senate, overawed by the army, and impotent, ratified the foul deed, and Otho was declared emperor. Such was the condition of Rome A. D. 67.

It is supposed that the apostle Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome during the persecution under Nero. Chrysostom says that a cup-bearer and a concubine of Nero, through the preaching of the apostle, became converts to the religion of Jesus, and that this so enraged the tyrant, that Paul was immediately beheaded.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EMPERORS, GOOD AND BAD.

FROM A. D. 67 TO A. D. 133.

OTHO AND VITELLIUS.—THE CONFLICT.—THE TRIUMPH OF VESPASIAN.—TITUS DESTROYS JERUSALEM.—HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE.—SUCCESSION OF DOMITIAN.—ADORNMENT OF THE CAPITOL.—HIS DEPRAVITY AND DEATH.—THE CROWN CONFERRED ON NERVA.—TRAJAN, ASSOCIATE EMPEROR.—REIGN OF TRAJAN.—HIS COLUMN.—CORRESPONDENCE WITH PLINY.—CONQUESTS OF TRAJAN.—REIGN OF ADRIAN.—ANTONINUS PIUS.—HIS NOBLE CHARACTER.—MARCUS AURELIUS.—VEEUS, HIS COLLEAGUE.—DEATH OF AURELIUS.

OTHO was one of the parasites of Nero, having passed his youth in the midst of the corruption and debauchery of the imperial palace. He had surrendered to Nero his very beautiful and very infamous wife Poppæa, which wife, soon after died from a kick which she received from her regal spouse, just before she was about to give birth to a child. Otho had received, in exchange for his wife, the proconsulship of Lusitania, one of the provinces of Spain. He had squandered all his vast resources, and was hopelessly embarrassed by debt.

There was, at that time, at the head of the Roman legions on the banks of the Danube, a general by the name of Aulus Vitellius. He was descended from one of the most illustrious families in Rome, and had received his education, in all the luxuries and vices of the times, in company with Tiberius Cæsar, in his retreat at Capreæ. Hearing of the death of Nero, immediately followed by the death of Galba, Vitellius secured, with large bribes and promises, the coöperation of his army, and had himself proclaimed emperor, with all the military parade of his camp. Otho and Vitellius were both instantly on the march to settle their claims on the field of battle.

The armies, nearly seventy thousand strong on either side, met on the plains of Lombardy, near Mantua. For a week they fought with prodigious slaughter, and with wavering success. At length Otho was hopelessly defeated, and accordingly he ran a sword through his heart, after a nominal reign of three months; and the exultant Vitellius advanced to Rome to assume the imperial purple. The obsequious senate promptly declared him emperor, and he took up his residence in the palaces of the Cæsars. Vitellius was neither cruel nor tyrannical, in the ordinary meaning of those words; he merely surrendered himself to every possible degree of voluptuousness, and self-indulgence, thus securing for himself universal contempt. He even equaled Nero in debauchery. To have exceeded him, surpassed mortal powers. The expenses of his table for four months amounted to a sum equal to thirty millions of dollars.

There was but little to excite fear in the character of such an effeminate voluptuary; and a conspiracy was soon in progress for his overthrow. Vespasian, a Roman general who had acquired some renown in the wars in Germany and in Britain, and who had been consul at Rome, was at this time in command of an army in Judea. He resolved with his soldiers to drive the usurper, of whom Rome was weary, from his throne. It was not difficult for Vespasian to induce his soldiers to proclaim him emperor. The conflict was short, but sanguinary. Though Vitellius displayed no energy, his generals and his soldiers, in danger of losing the spoils of office, fought fiercely. But Vespasian, having sent able generals to Italy, was victorious, and Rome itself capitulated, after a bloody battle beneath its walls and through its streets, during which the beautiful capitol, the pride of the city, was reduced to ashes. Vespasian still remained in the east, and Antony had command of the army sent against Rome. Vitellius was dragged from an obscure corner in the house of a slave, where he had hid himself, and was paraded through the streets, with

his hands bound behind him and a rope about his neck, until, after hours of ignominy and torture, he was beaten to death with the clubs of the soldiers. His body was then dragged over the pavements, and the mangled mass, having lost nearly all semblance of humanity, was thrown into the Tiber.

The senate now united with the army in declaring Vespasian emperor. Vespasian was at this time at Alexandria, in Egypt. The Jews had rebelled against their Roman masters, and Vespasian was then organizing an army to besiege Jerusalem. His eldest son, Titus, was an exceedingly dissipated young man, who had been educated at the court of Nero, having been an intimate friend of the unfortunate prince Britannicus. The emperor entrusted the command of the army which was to march upon Jerusalem to this young man, while he proceeded to Rome to administer the government of the empire. Having a high reputation as a man of ability and integrity, he was received with great rejoicing by the Roman people.

The siege of Jerusalem, and its destruction A. D. 70, is one of the most memorable events in the history of the world. Human nature, perhaps, has never before or since endured such woes. It is impossible for the imagination to conceive more appalling horrors, or sufferings more terrible than were then experienced. The reader will find these scenes of rage, despair, and woe minutely detailed by the pen of Josephus. The siege lasted six months. The city was entirely demolished. In accordance with the prediction of our Saviour, not one stone was left upon another. The very foundations of Jerusalem were plowed up, so that even the ruins of the city could hardly be found. A million of Jews perished in the siege, and one hundred thousand taken captive were sold into slavery. All Judea was thus brought into perfect and unresisting submission to the conqueror.

Titus, with the spoil of Jerusalem, and his long train of captives, returned in triumph to Rome. In commemoration

of this great victory, a triumphal arch was erected, which remains, almost perfect, to the present day. Vespasian proved one of the best of the Roman emperors. He devoted himself with great energy and sagacity to the public weal, and after a reign of ten years, died respected and beloved. Feeling that his end was approaching, he said, "An emperor should die standing;" and aided by his friends he rose from his couch and expired, sustained by their arms. Vespasian reared the gigantic amphitheater, called the Coliseum, the ruins of which still attract the wonder and admiration of the world. It furnished seats for eighty thousand spectators, and standing room for twenty thousand more.

Titus succeeded his father. His character had undergone a wonderful and most salutary change. Abandoning all the vicious practices of his youth, he became distinguished as the exemplar of virtue and the guardian of liberty. With almost unexampled self-devotion, he engaged in the work of doing good. His memorable saying, *Perdidi diem*, "I have lost a day," when one day had passed in which no opportunity had occurred of doing good, is characteristic of his disposition and his habits. Beautifully has the sentiment been versified in the words:

"Count that day lost, whose low descending sun
Views at thy hand no worthy action done."

It was during the reign of Titus, A. D. 79, that the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were buried beneath the lava and ashes of Vesuvius. After being lost sixteen hundred years, they were discovered in the beginning of the last century. These cities, thus wonderfully brought to light, reveal much of the social habits and customs of that day. The renowned general Agricola, during the reign of Titus, was very efficient in promoting the civilization of the barbarous natives of Britain. He introduced the Roman modes of dress and living, encouraged education, and promoted a taste for the fine arts.

The reign of Titus was short. He had a brother Domitian, a man of utterly depraved nature, who was eager to grasp the scepter. It is supposed that he poisoned Titus, for the emperor was suddenly seized with a violent and strange sickness, which speedily caused his death, in the forty-first year of his age, after a reign of but about two years.

Domitian ascended the throne which he had purchased by the murder of his brother. His character was a compound of imbecility, folly, jealousy, and ambition. Jealous of the renown Agricola was acquiring, in conflict with the barbarians of Britain, he caused him to be poisoned, as is generally supposed. His conduct exposed him to universal ridicule and contempt. Wishing to enjoy a triumphal entrance into Rome, he dressed a large number of slaves to grace his triumph, as if they had been captives taken in war. He had gold and silver statues of himself placed in every conspicuous position; and assuming divine honors, required that all men should address him with the titles they gave to the Deity. Those whom he deemed his enemies were mercilessly punished with death, accompanied with all conceivable tortures. The slightest suspicion led to condemnation. Upon the Christians he wreaked vengeance, indiscriminating and pitiless. Ambitious of fame he rebuilt, with wonderful splendor, the capitol, which was burnt during the war between Vitellius and Vespasian. The gilding, alone, of the capitol, cost over twelve millions of our money. The profusion of his expenditure was such, that Martial says, in one of his epigrams, "If the emperor had called in all his debts, Jupiter himself, even though he had made a general auction of Olympus, would have been unable to pay two shillings in the pound."

The tyrant was accustomed to write down, in a pocket-tablet, the names of those he intended to destroy. His infamous wife, Domitia, accidentally got a peep at the tablet, while her husband was sleeping, and, to her consternation, found her own name, with that of others, in the fatal list. She

immediately informed those who were doomed to die with her. A successful conspiracy was instantly entered into, and the thrust of a dagger from one of the doomed men, rid the world of the monster Domitian. In his character not a redeeming trait could be found to mitigate the enormity of his depravity.

The tidings of the death of Domitian was hailed, throughout Rome, with universal acclaim. His statues were demolished, the inscriptions he had cut erased; and his memory was consigned to infamy. The senate, apprehensive that the army might anticipate them in the choice of a successor, on the very day of the tyrant's death, conferred the imperial purple upon Nerva, a venerable and virtuous old man of sixty-five, but of no force of character. Upon coming to the throne he took an oath that no senator during his reign should be punished with death, whatever his crime. He recalled all the Christians who had been driven from Rome by the persecution of Nero. The army did not like this humane sovereign, and conspired for his overthrow.

The emperor, not knowing how to deal with difficulties so stubborn, and finding the cares of government too heavy for him to bear, summoned to his aid, as a copartner upon the throne, Trajan, a general of much renown, then in command of an army upon the Danube. Nerva had hardly taken this important step, ere he suddenly died, after an eventful reign of but little more than a year. Trajan assumed the scepter.

The Dacians had been for some time in the habit of crossing the Danube and making destructive inroads upon the Roman empire. Domitian, lost in luxury, devoted but little thought to the protection of his frontiers. Trajan raised a powerful army, marched into Dacia, conquered the barbarians in a decisive battle, and compelled the humiliated king to acknowledge himself a vassal of the Roman empire. But Trajan had hardly returned to Rome, ere the Dacians were again in revolt. Again the emperor turned upon his foes.

That Dacia might be more accessible to his armies and thus more easily kept in subjection, he constructed a bridge across the Danube. This stupendous structure consisted of twenty-two arches. The ruins, which still remain, testify to the amazing skill of the Roman architects. The Dacians fought with great courage and military prowess, but after a conflict of five years they were effectually subdued, and a new province, thirteen hundred miles in circumference, became an integral part of the Roman empire. The vestiges of the military road trod by these legions, from the banks of the Danube through the heart of Dacia even to Bender, on the river Dneister, may still be traced.

The conquest was deemed so important, that a magnificent column was raised, to commemorate it. This column, one hundred and eighteen feet in height, and surmounted by the statue of the emperor, was entwined by a spiral belt, upon which were sculptured all the principal events of the expedition. The shaft still stands, one of the most admired works of art in the world. Napoleon adopted it as the model of the world-renowned column, reared to his honor, or rather, to the honor of his army, in the Place Vendome.

Trajan did not look with a friendly eye upon the rapid advances which Christianity was making throughout the empire. The spirit of Christianity prohibited war, and Trajan was emulous of military glory. Christianity forbade unlawful sensual indulgence, and Trajan was a voluptuary. Still he was a kind hearted man, naturally humane, and he had but little heart zealously to persecute those whose innocence and purity of life could not but command his respect.

Trajan had appointed Pliny, a nephew of the illustrious philosopher of the same name, as **governor** of the province of Pontus, in Asia Minor. There were very many Christians in that region, and as many severe edicts had been issued in Rome against them, which it was the duty of Pliny to see

executed, and as his humane spirit revolted against such cruelty, as needless and impolitic, he was perplexed, and wrote to the emperor for instructions. Pliny's letter was written about A. D. 106.

Trajan in his reply says :

"You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry you have made concerning Christians. For, truly, no one general rule can be laid down which will apply itself to all cases. They must not be sought after. If they are brought before you and convicted, let them be capitally punished, yet with this restriction, that if any renounce christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, he shall obtain pardon for the future, on his repentance. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to; for the precedent would be of the worst sort, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of my government."

Animated by the love of conquest, and that renown which conquest brings, Trajan, in imitation of Alexander, commenced a march of invasion through the barbarous and little known nations of the East. He placed himself at the head of his troops, lamenting that he was so far advanced in life that he could hardly hope to eclipse the renown of the great Grecian conqueror. Traversing the whole extent of Asia Minor, he crossed the Euphrates, and, in an uninterrupted career of conquest, advanced to the Tigris. Leaving subjugated nations behind him, the announcement of whose names excited the wonder and admiration of ambitious Rome, he descended even to the Persian gulf. Here, building a fleet, he embarked his army, and ravaged the coasts of Arabia, compelling all the kings of those regions to confess themselves as vassals of the empire. He was preparing to follow the route of Alexander, and to extend his conquests to the remote Indies, when death, that sovereign whom even a Roman emperor must obey, summoned him to the spirit land. The approach of the king of

terrors led Trajan to endeavor to reach his home in Rome, before he should die. With failing heart he left the army, and turned to retrace his steps. But death was inexorable, and the emperor had but reached Cilicia when he died, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, after a reign of nineteen years.

When Trajan left his triumphant army, on the shores of the Persian gulf, he intrusted its command to his nephew Adrian, who had been his companion in many wars, and was a man of much military renown. The army proclaimed him emperor, and Rome accepted the appointment. He had the virtues and the vices of a kind-hearted pagan, being affable to his friends, constitutionally humane, but a perfect demon when his passions were aroused. Conscious of the feeble grasp with which the empire held its barbarian conquests beyond the Danube, and beyond the Euphrates, he wished to contract the limits of the empire, and to consolidate his power. The stupendous bridge which Trajan had constructed across the Danube, Adrian destroyed, lest it should facilitate the incursions of the barbarians.

With a splendid retinue, Adrian undertook to visit all the provinces of his empire. He entered Gaul; thence proceeded to Germany, Holland, and Britain. During this visit, he ordered the construction of that famous wall, the ruins of which are still visible, from the Solway Firth to the mouth of the Tyne, to protect the Roman territory from the incursions of the barbaric Picts and Caledonians. He returned to Rome through Spain, and after tarrying a short time in the capital, visited Greece, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Wherever he went, he reformed abuses, and encouraged improvements. At Athens he was so favorably impressed with what he learned respecting Christians, that he endeavored to discourage persecution, and wished to recognize christianity, and to give Christ a niche in the temple with all the other gods.

From Greece and Syria, Adrian passed over to Africa. Among other great and salutary enterprises he ordered Car