

thage to be rebuilt, giving the new city the name of Adrianople. But a few fishermen's huts, at that time occupied the site of a city which had contained seven hundred thousand inhabitants. Returning to Rome, he again resumed his journey, and passing through Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria, visited Arabia and Egypt. No monarch, before or since, has had such an empire under his sway. At Alexandria he repaired Pompey's tomb, that had fallen into ruins. In Palestine he ordered the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Jews engaged in the work with their customary ardor, and, elated with hopes that God had interposed in their behalf, and that the day of their deliverance had come, they rose in insurrection. The terrible energies of the Roman empire were turned against them. After one thousand of their chief towns had been destroyed, and six hundred thousand of their inhabitants had perished on the field of battle, the Jews were again chastised into sullen submission.

Adrian was one of the most highly accomplished men in the Roman empire, alike remarkable for personal beauty, intellectual culture, and polished manners. Many anecdotes are related illustrative of his humanity and moderation. But his ungovernable passions at times deprived him of all self-control, and in the delirium of his anger he at times perpetrated deeds of great cruelty. Social purity was a virtue almost unknown in pagan Rome. The court and the camp of Adrian exhibited a harem of unblushing vice. He was, from youth, celebrated for his fine scholarship, and his memory was so extraordinary, that having once read a book he could immediately repeat the whole. It is also reported that he could call every soldier in his army by name. The temple of Olympian Jupiter, in Athens, commenced five hundred years before, was finished by Adrian.

After thirteen years spent in these useful travels, Adrian returned to Rome an infirm old man. The cruelty of the slave code he mitigated very essentially. With insatiable

thirst for information, and a very high appreciation of all intellectual eminence, he courted the society of all the celebrated men in literature, science, and art. But disease was making rapid inroads upon his frame, and his sufferings, at times, were so great that he frequently was heard to exclaim, "How miserable a thing it is to seek death and not to find it." Upon his couch of pain and death he wrote the following touching lines:

"Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula?
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos."

Prior has endeavored to translate or imitate this stanza in the following lines, which but feebly express the spirit of the original:

"Poor little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together;
And dost thou plume thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou knowest not whither?
Thy humorous vein, thy pleasing folly,
Lie all neglected, all forgot;
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou dread'st, and hop'st thou know'st not what?"

It is said that he died, in the sixty-second year of his age, repeating the above words, so illustrative of the gloom which must have ever darkened the last hours of a reflective pagan. His prosperous reign had continued nearly twenty-two years. Adrian, who had no son, was anxious to transmit the empire to one worthy of the imperial bequest. There was a senator by the name of Titus Antoninus, a man of about fifty years of age, of such unblemished integrity and purity of morals, as to secure the full confidence of the sagacious emperor. The people, in honor of his virtues, surnamed him Pious. For this man Adrian cherished the highest esteem. But there was a beautiful boy in the court, but seventeen years of age, one Marcus Aurelius, whose singular fascination of character and

manners had won the affection of the emperor. Adrian loved the boy as if he had been his own child, and yet his sense of propriety would not allow him to place the destinies of perhaps one hundred and fifty millions of people in the hands of one so youthful, and whose character was, as yet, so immature and untried. He, therefore, compromised the matter and appointed Antoninus his successor, with the condition that he should adopt Marcus as his son, and transmit to him the crown.

Antoninus was true to his trust, and immediately adopting Marcus, bound him to his family, by marriage with his daughter Faustina. The father associated the adopted son so intimately with him in the government of the empire, that history usually speaks of their united reigns. The Roman empire had never before been so well governed, and never before had been so prosperous and happy as under the reign of these excellent men; proving that the happiness of a people depends far more upon the character of the rulers than upon the form of government; and proving, also, that the only effectual way of ameliorating the condition of the human family is by the regeneration of human hearts.

Antoninus nobly protected the Christians, issuing a decree that "if any one shall for the future molest the Christians, and accuse them merely on account of their religion, let the person who is arraigned be discharged, though he is found to be a Christian, and the accuser be punished according to the rigor of the law."

He often quoted the beautiful words of Scipio: "I had rather preserve the life of a citizen than destroy a thousand enemies."

The remains of a wall are still traced, which he reared to protect the Britons from the incursions of the Picts and Scots. After a reign of about twenty-one years, he died at the age of seventy-four, A. D. 161. The senate reared a column to his memory, which still stands, and it has been well said of him

"He is almost the only monarch that has lived without spilling the blood of his countrymen or his enemies."

The death of Antoninus left Marcus Aurelius, who, from his adoption, had also taken the name of Antoninus, in sole occupancy of the throne. Imitating Pious, whose memory he revered, he adopted a young noble by the name of Verus, as his partner on the throne. But the adoption proved exceedingly unfortunate; for Verus developed almost every vice, unredeemed by any virtue. It so happened that just at this time the Parthians made a very fierce, desolating, and sanguinary irruption into Syria. Verus marched with an army to punish them, while Marcus Aurelius remained in Rome, to attend to the general administration of the empire. Verus, however, having advanced as far as Antioch, committed the army to his generals, while he remained there in his metropolitan palace, indulging in every possible excess of voluptuousness and debauchery, where he soon died.

Aurelius, relieved from the embarrassment which the conduct of his vicious and imbecile colleague had ever caused, now, with renewed vigor, assailed the multitudinous foes which had risen up against the empire, and crushed them all. One of the legions of his army, consisting of between four and six thousand men, was composed entirely of Christians. The fact is attested by both Christian and heathen writers, that on the eve of an engagement on an arid plain, when the army of Aurelius was perishing with thirst, a terrible tempest arose, and amid flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, the refreshing rain in floods fell upon the Roman camp, which the soldiers caught in their helmets, thus obtaining an abundant supply, while at the same time a terrible storm of hail fell upon the barbarian camp, throwing them into such confusion that they were easily routed and cut to pieces.

Marcus Aurelius was so impressed with this apparent miracle, which he regarded as an interposition in his behalf by the Christian's God, that he issued a decree prohibiting

further persecution, and wrote to the senate in their favor. Independently of his rank, Aurelius was in character and acquirements a distinguished man. Many of his philosophical and humane sayings are still quoted, and remains of his writings, which are still read with interest, give him a high position among the classic writers of antiquity. While devoting himself with untiring diligence to the welfare of his subjects, even giving popular lectures to the masses of the people in Rome, upon all matters pertaining to their domestic welfare, tidings came that the Russian Tartars were invading the empire. The emperor grasped his sword, and having reached Vienna, in this his last campaign, was seized by the plague, and suddenly died about the year 180, in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and the nineteenth of his reign.

CHAPTER XIX.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE DECLINE AND FALL.

FROM A. D. 180 TO A. D. 235.

MARCUS AURELIUS.—PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY.—COMMODOUS.—HIS DEATH.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE DECLINE AND FALL.—THE PRETORIAN GUARD.—ITS CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE.—THE THRONE SOLD AT AUCTION.—JULIAN.—THE RIVAL EMPERORS.—TRIUMPH OF SEVERUS.—HIS PERFIDY.—REIGN OF CARACALLA AND GETA.—MURDER OF GETA.—ASSASSINATION OF CARACALLA.—MACRINUS.—HIS SHORT REIGN AND DEATH.—ELAGABALUS.—BOTH PONTIFF AND EMPEROR.—HIS EXTRAORDINARY DEPRAVITY.—ANECDOTES OF MAXIMIN.

ALL writers unite in the praises of Marcus Aurelius, the second of the Antonines, as he is sometimes called. Still he displayed one trait of character which has ever given occasion for perplexing comment. His wife, Faustina, beautiful, fascinating, and sensual to the highest degree, was notorious and unblushing in her amours. She affected no concealment. Reveling with the gay voluptuaries of the court in the most luxurious and wanton dissoluteness, she left her philosophic and phlegmatic husband to the meditations of his study and the schemes of his cabinet.

Marcus Aurelius seemed to be the only man in the empire who was utterly indifferent to this libidinousness of his spouse. Avowing himself a disciple of Zeno the stoic, and in his renowned "Meditations" advocating that philosophy, which renders it essential to virtue that one should be indifferent, so far as his inward happiness is concerned, to all external things, Aurelius did not allow the shameless conduct of his wife to disturb his serenity in the slightest degree. On the contrary, the more gross her crimes the more he lavished upon her caresses, endearing epithets, and titles of honor. Even her