

"How dared you to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome?"

With an adroit admixture of flattery and firmness she replied, "Because I disdained to consider a Gallienus as a Roman emperor. Aurelian alone I recognize as my conqueror and sovereign."

The victor was not merciful. Longinus was sent to the block. Terrible vengeance was wreaked upon the reconquered territory, in which women, children, and old men fell in indiscriminate slaughter beneath the swords of the Roman soldiers. Zenobia was carried a prisoner to Rome, to grace the triumph. Such a triumph Rome had not witnessed for ages. It was the dying flicker of the lamp. Twenty elephants, four tigers, and two hundred of the most imposing animals of the east led the pompous procession. Sixteen hundred gladiators engaged in mortal combat in the amphitheater. The vast plunder of the armies, from the sack of oriental cities was ostentatiously paraded. An immense train of prisoners followed—slaves captured from Gaul, Spain, Germany, and all the nations of the east. Conspicuous among these, arresting every eye, was Tetricus, the insurgent chief of the west, and Zenobia, the defiant queen of the east.

Zenobia, radiant in pensive beauty, and robed in the most gorgeous attire of the orient, walked fettered with chains of gold, and almost sinking beneath the weight of jewelry and precious stones. The gold chain which encircled her neck was so heavy that a slave supported a portion of it. The gorgeous chariot of the queen, empty, and drawn by Arabian chargers magnificently caparisoned, followed the captive. The triumphal car of Aurelian then appeared, harnessed to four stags. The senators, in their robes of office, the bannered army, and a vast concourse of the populace closed the procession.

The emperor, however, treated the most distinguished of his captives very generously. Many of the maidens, after receiving a finished education, were joined in honorable wedlock

to the generals of the armies. Zenobia was placed in the enjoyment of an elegant villa at Tivoli, about twenty miles from Rome, with ample supplies for her wants. Even Tetricus was restored to his forfeited rank and fortune. He reared a magnificent palace on the Caelian hill, and invited the emperor to sup with him. They remained on the most friendly terms for the rest of life.

But there was no peace for tumultuous Rome. One sedition within the walls was only quelled by the sacrifice of seven thousand of the imperial troops. Aurelian was terribly severe in discipline. The cruelest tortures, and death in its most awful forms, did not touch his sympathies. Ever accustomed to war, he regarded life as of but little moment, and transferred the stern rule of the camp into all civil affairs. His severities excited constant conspiracies, and the conspiracies led to new severities. The most illustrious men in Rome were sent to the block. The executioner was constantly busy, and the prisons were ever crowded.

A few months after his great triumph, he again placed himself at the head of his armies, in a march upon Persia. He had arrived as far as the Thracian Bosphorus, when some of his principal officers, learning that they were doomed to death, fell upon him in his tent, and cut him down. He fought fiercely for his life, but was overpowered.

It is strange that any one should have been willing to accept the Roman scepter, since it so invariably led to assassination. For two centuries, out of the great number of emperors, but three or four had died a natural death. The virtuous and the vicious, the mild and the severe, were alike doomed to a bloody end. The army adored Aurelian, and were determined that none of the conspirators should gain the throne. They therefore sent a deputation to the senate requesting that Aurelian should be placed in the number of the gods, and that a successor should be chosen at Rome, worthy of the imperial purple. The senate detested Aurelian, who had ruled them

with military rigor. They rejoiced to hear of his death, and were astonished and delighted at the deference, so unusual, with which they were treated by the army. But there was now no member of the senate who was willing to accept the crown. Three times the senate returned this answer, and three times the army reiterated its request. For nearly eight months, Rome was without a sovereign, and perhaps never before were the affairs of the empire better administered, since the efficient generals and magistrates Aurelian had appointed, still continued in power. The Roman legions yet remained encamped upon the banks of the Bosphorus.

But this state of things could not long continue. Intelligence reached Rome that a new flood of barbarians had swept across the Rhine, and were ravaging Gaul. The Persian monarch was also threatening all the east. There was a venerable senator, Tacitus, a descendant of the renowned historian, seventy-five years of age. He possessed vast wealth, had twice been consul, and his character was singularly pure, for those days of pollution. The voice of the people called loudly for Tacitus. Alarmed, he had sought the retirement of his villa. Being summoned to the senate, he was, with universal acclaim, greeted as Tacitus Augustus. He struggled to escape the dangerous honor.

"Are these limbs," said he, "fitted to sustain the weight of armor, or to practice the exercises of the camp? My exhausted strength scarcely enables me to discharge the duties of a senator. Can you hope that the legions will respect a weak old man, whose days have been spent in the shade of peace and retirement? Can you desire that I should ever find reason to regret the favorable opinion of the senate?"

Tacitus was compelled to be emperor. The army demanded his immediate presence. He hastened to the Bosphorus, put his troops in motion, and had arrived within about one hundred and fifty miles of the Euphrates, when he was murdered by his soldiers, after a reign of seven months.

The legions, now in Cappadocia, a province washed by the Euphrates, were not disposed to wait the tardy movements of the senate, and immediately elected Probus, one of their generals, emperor. Probus was a soldier, and his reign was an incessant battle. The foes of Rome were numberless. He led every assault; was ever the first to scale a rampart, or to break into the camp of the foe. After thus fighting for six years to drive back the enemy crowding upon the empire from the east, the west, and the north, Probus died the natural death of the Roman sovereigns. A party of mutineers rushed upon him as he was superintending the draining of a marsh, work which displeased them, and pierced him with a hundred daggers.

The army looked quietly on as the assassins wiped their bloody weapons, and then elected Carus, a captain of the guard, emperor, and simply sent word to the senate, in utter disregard of the prerogatives of that body, that the army had provided Rome with a sovereign. Carus was an old, bald-headed man, and marshaling his troops for a campaign in the East, he declared that he would make Persia bare as his own skull. The hardy soldier, in mid-winter, marched his troops through Thrace and Asia Minor, and reached the confines of Persia. The Persian monarch, alarmed, sent an ambassador to negotiate, if possible, a peace. The envoys, accustomed to the magnificence of oriental courts, were astonished to find the Roman emperor seated upon the grass, eating his supper of cold bacon and peas. A coarse woollen garment, of purple dye, was the only external indication of his dignity. The demands of Carus were such that the Persians retired without coming to terms, and the Roman legions ravaged Mesopotamia mercilessly, extending their arms beyond the Tigris.

As usual, a conspiracy was formed for the death of Carus. On the night of Christmas, A. D. 283, a fearful tempest arose. The mutineers, as the lightning was flashing along the sky, and peals of thunder shook the camp, rushed upon Carus,

reposing in his tent, murdered him, set fire to the curtains, and burned his body in the flames of his own pavilion. The story was sent to Rome that the tent was struck by lightning, an indication that the gods wished the army to abandon the Persian enterprise and return to Rome.

CHAPTER XXI.

DIVISIONS OF THE EMPIRE.

FROM A. D. 283 TO A. D. 330.

CARINUS AND NUMERIAN.—ANECDOTE OF DIOCLETIAN.—HIS ACCESSION.—SAGACIOUS ARRANGEMENTS.—THE FOUR EMPERORS.—WARS OF THE BARBARIANS.—THE TWO NEW CAPITALS, MILAN AND NICOMEDIA.—DECADENCE OF ROME.—ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN.—HIS RETIREMENT AND DEATH.—CONSTANTIUS AND CONSTANTINE.—THE OVERTHROW OF MAXENTIUS, MAXIMIN, AND LICINIUS.—CONSTANTINE SOLE EMPEROR.—TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY OVER PERSECUTION.—CONSTANTINE ADOPTS CHRISTIANITY.—BYZANTIUM CHANGED TO CONSTANTINOPLE.—THE GROWTH AND SPLENDOR OF THE CITY.

THE army appointed the two sons of Carus to the imperial dignity. One of these, Carinus, was in Gaul. The other, Numerian, had accompanied his father to Persia. The soldiers, weary of the distant war, insisted on being led back to Italy. Numerian, sick and suffering severely from inflammation of the eyes, was compelled to yield to the demands of the troops. The army, by slow marches, retraced its steps, eight months being occupied in reaching the Bosphorus. Numerian was conveyed in a litter, shut up from the light, and he issued his daily orders through his minister, Aper. He at length died, and Aper, concealing his death, continued, from the imperial pavilion, to proclaim mandates to the army in the name of the invisible sovereign. They had already reached the Bosphorus, when the suspicions of the army were excited, and the soldiers, breaking into the regal tent, discovered the embalmed body of the emperor. Aper, accused of his murder, was seized and brought before a military tribunal. At the same time, with unanimous voice, the army chose Diocletian emperor, who was in command of the guard. Diocletian