

king quickly withdrew again into his own realm, and his death in 453, which had as its result the dissolution of the Hunnish kingdom, freed the Western Empire from a dangerous enemy. The weakling Valentinianus gave ill thanks to his saviour; Aëtius, the last support of the Western realm, fell a victim to the envy of the Emperor and a clique of courtiers (454). In the very next year a like fate befell Valentinianus (455).

*The Last Days of the Empire of the West (455-476).—*After the death of Valentinianus III., who left no son, the imperial throne was seized by a succession of usurpers who for the most part had short reigns and were spiritless tools in the hands of German captains or of the more vigorous court of the Eastern Empire. A decisive part like that of Stilico and Aëtius was played for some time by a German general Ricimer (died 472), who bestowed the Imperial dignity he himself despised upon several noble Romans. Under these phantom Emperors the new German settlements on Roman soil gained an ever firmer footing and became more and more dangerous to the empire. Italy in particular had to suffer heavily from the attacks of the Vandal Geiserich, who with others subjected Rome in 455 to a terrible sack (hence the proverbial 'Vandalism').

The last of the Western Emperors, Romulus Augustulus, a lad of seventeen, who by the irony of fate united in his name that of the first king and that of the first emperor, was dethroned by Odoacar, a German captain of mercenaries, and a German kingdom on Italian soil took the place of the Imperial government.

*Conclusion.*—To end 'Roman history' with the fall of the Imperial throne of the West, as has become customary in modern historical treatment, has no intrinsic justification. Roman history long lives on in the Empire of the East; even in the 6th century one of its greatest rulers, the Emperor Justinian (527-565), combined in a united empire large portions of the western half. But efforts of this kind had no lasting effect, and the German states in the peninsula of the Apennines made influence from the East more and more impracticable. In this sense we may say that the dethronement of Romulus Augustulus put an end to the history of the 'Roman Empire.' The history of the