

moderation. Each of them left the throne not to one of his own descendants, but to the most worthy citizen. The following princes were the most remarkable: Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.

Trajan was styled Optimus because of his clemency. He favored industry, commerce, literature and art. He added Dacia (Roumania of to-day) to the Empire and pushed his conquests beyond the Tigris. There is however, one blot on his fame, the persecution of the Christians, who though not hunted were punished when denounced.

Hadrian, an able ruler, visited all the provinces of the Empire and erected numerous monuments.

Antoninus Pius, the greatest Roman Emperor, was a real father to his subjects and ordered the Christians to be treated with tolerance.

Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher and general. Like Trajan, he persecuted the Christians. With him ended the "Golden Age" of the Roman Empire.

During the century that followed the downfall of the Antonines (192-285), the Empire was at the mercy of the army. The latter proclaimed the emperors or massacred them according to their whims, thus paving the way for the decay of the Empire.

Septimius Severus, founder of the Syrian dynasty, was a brave warlike soldier who maintained order in the Empire, but unfortunately, he stained his memory by persecuting the Christians. The other Emperors of the Syrian dynasty were a disgrace to their name: Caracalla, killed his own brother, decimated the Senate and massacred 20,000 of his brother's partisans. Elagabalus, the worst of the Romans emperors, was a model of vice, cruelty and extravagance.

Alexander Severus, the last of the Syrian Dynasty, was assassinated at the age of twenty-six.

Then came a period of military anarchy. Each army invested its general with the imperial purple; the country saw as many as nineteen emperors at the same time.

The noted Emperors of this period were: Maximin, the giant who persecuted the Christians; Decius, who incited the most terrible persecution of the Christians; Valerian, who ordered the eighth persecution. Having been made prisoner by the King of Persia, he was compelled to serve for five years, as a foot stool to the king when mounting his horse. Lastly came Aurelian who was also a persecutor of the Christians.

The dissolution of the Empire was imminent. The barbarians from the North were overwhelming it when Diocletian was named Emperor. He was a man of bravery and skill. He chose as a colleague Maximian Hercules to whom he gave the title of