

saints nor soldiers, and the Huns made these their helpless prey. City after city was taken and ruined. The fate of Metz will serve as an example of the policy of the Huns. In this city, as we are told, priests and infants alike were slain, and the flourishing city was so utterly destroyed that only a chapel of St. Stephen was left to mark its site. Its able-bodied inhabitants were probably reserved to be sold as slaves.

And now, in the prosecution of his ruinous march, Attila fixed his camp before the walls of Orleans, a city which he designed to make the central post of the dominion which he hoped to establish in Gaul. It was to be his fortified centre of conquest. Upon it rested the fate of the whole great province.

Orleans lay behind its walls trembling with dread, as the neigh of the Hunnish horses sounded in its ears, as the standards of the Hunnish host floated in the air. Yet it was not quite defenceless. Its walls had been recently strengthened. Behind them lay a force of soldiers, or of armed citizens, who repelled the first assaults of the foe. An army was known to be marching to its relief. All was not lost.

Forty years earlier Rome had fallen before Alaric, the Goth. The empire was now in the last stages of decrepitude. Yet by fortunate chance it had an able soldier at the head of its armies, Ætius, the noblest son of declining Rome. "The graceful figure of Ætius," says a contemporary historian, "was not above the middle stature; but his manly limbs were admirably formed for strength, beauty, and agility; and he excelled in the martial exercises of managing