

An Hour with the Editor

THE ROMAN EMPERORS

The Emperor Valentinian was succeeded by his son Gratian, whose mother was his father's first wife and whom he had divorced. There was a son by his second wife, but he was only an infant. Gratian, who was eighteen years of age at the time of his father's death, made a nominal recognition of the claims of his half-brother, but asserted his own right to rule during the latter's childhood. He was a young man of great energy and determination, and one of his first acts was to advance against the Goths, who were pressing hard upon the eastern frontiers and against whom his uncle Valens was making an ineffectual resistance.

Nothing is known with certainty of the origin of the Goths. Tradition assigns them a home on the shores of the Baltic in the time of Alexander the Great, but nothing appears about them in history with any accuracy until about the year 225, when they began to create disturbances upon the northeastern frontier of the Empire. From that time until the year 378 they were almost constantly at war with Rome. It will perhaps be remembered by those who have read this series of articles that in the reign of Claudius they advanced against the Romans with a great fleet only to be driven back with enormous loss by that able soldier. There was then peace of a sort between them and the Empire, and when the Huns began to press upon them in their irresistible march across Europe, the Goths implored and received the protection of Valens, who permitted them to settle in large numbers in the eastern provinces and in those south of the Danube. Discord, however, arose between them and the government, and the result was an uprising, which eventuated in a great battle fought near Hadrianople in which Valens lost his life and the Romans were defeated with great slaughter. We have already seen that the power of the Empire was seriously weakened by a defeat experienced not long before at the hands of the Sarmatians. This greatly lessened the fighting force of the Romans, and it was followed by the awful slaughter in the retreat from Persia. The Imperial army was therefore in no condition to sustain another bloody defeat, and although many a gallant resistance was made in after years, it may be said without exaggeration that the Roman Empire received its death blow on the ninth of August 378, when Valens was slain, and with him more than two-thirds of the Roman army, the remainder seeking safety in disordered flight. After this disaster it was clearly only a matter of time when the end must come, and the great imperial fabric, which had been built up by more than ten centuries of sacrifice, courage and wisdom, would fall before the relentless Barbarians of the North.

Shortly after the death of Valens, Gratian selected Theodosius as the Emperor of the East, and he himself confined his energies to the defence and administration of the West. In this he was not very successful. A religious bigot, he persecuted his pagan subjects relentlessly, and even those who were adjudged to be heretical among the Christians were made to suffer all manner of punishments. By his activity in this respect he gained the applause of the ecclesiastical authorities, but he won the distrust of many of his subjects. Maximus, who commanded the legions in Britain, raised the standard of revolt, and landing on the coast of Gaul defeated Gratian, who was afterwards slain by emissaries despatched for that purpose by the victorious rebel.

Theodosius, who has been called the Great but without any special claim for this distinguishing title, was the son of Theodosius, a Roman general, who was undoubtedly the greatest soldier of his time. His services to the Empire in Britain, Spain and Africa were very conspicuous, but his career was cut off by a base murder. His son exhibited many of the qualities of his father, and his elevation to the throne of the East by Gratian was recognized as and proved to be a wise act. His first step was to sow dissensions among the Goths, and he did this so successfully that this powerful tribe became divided into two branches, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, and it is under such names that they appear thereafter in history. He was able to win the confidence of the former, but the latter were impatient of restraint and attempted an invasion backed by a great force of Scythians. Theodosius met them at the Danube and defeated them with great slaughter. Having made the northeastern frontier temporarily safe, he determined to overthrow Maximus, who had declared himself Emperor of the West after the death of Gratian, and to restore the throne to young Valentinian, son of the Emperor of that name. With this object he marched westward with an army composed chiefly of Barbarian levies and encountered the forces of Maximus, whose troops were made up of Gauls and Allemanni. We have the spectacle of two rival Emperors contending for dominion over Rome led not a true Roman soldier in either of the armies. The campaign which ensued was favorable to Theodosius and Maximus was taken prisoner and slain. The Empire was by this event re-united under one ruler, and Theodosius set himself to the task of making his control secure. His death, however, which occurred four months later, put an end to all his plans.

Theodosius was nominally a Christian, although he was not baptized until long after

attaining manhood. Previous to that incident he had been looked upon as a ruler of much justice and moderation, although he had only been in office but a short time. Immediately after his baptism he became intensely hostile to every aspect of Christianity except that favored by the ecclesiastics by whom he was surrounded, and who were of the school of Athanasius. He made a decree to the effect that the Nicæan exposition of the faith alone should be held throughout Christendom, and he ordered the confiscation of the property of all persons who refused to accept it. Those whose beliefs were the most opposed to the doctrines with which the name of Athanasius has been associated, were either banished from the kingdom or sentenced to death. Theodosius was exceedingly cruel in his administration. He seems to have been wholly under the influence of the ecclesiastics, who compelled him to humiliate himself before the Bishop of Milan and acknowledge the supremacy of the ecclesiastical power over the temporal. He received the title "great" at the hands of the clergy, partly to magnify their own achievements in subjecting him to their influence and partly to distinguish him from his grandson who reigned over the East for forty-two years, and who was perhaps as feeble a sovereign as ever held the sceptre. The Roman Emperors, that is he was the last to rule over both the West and the East. We shall, however, follow the story of the Empire of the West until it was extinguished by the northern invaders.

TALES OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

The Story of Ninos and Semiramis

According to the oldest stories of Assyria, it was under the chief Ninos that that country reached the zenith of her glory. Ninos had reduced to subjection Babylonia, Media, Armenia and all the provinces between the Indies and the Mediterranean. "He built a capital for himself," writes Maspero, "on the banks of the Tigris, in the form of a parallelogram, measuring a hundred and fifty stadia in length, ninety stadia in width; altogether, the walls were four hundred and eighty stadia in circumference." He so beautified the city of Nineveh, that it attracted the attention of the whole world. In person he was tall and commanding, with a noble countenance, affable and gracious in his manner; he won the admiration of all who met him, and many princesses in distant lands were offered him as wives, for so the kings of weaker states hoped to curry favor with the ruler of a powerful kingdom. But, the story goes, Ninos had looked upon the fairest faces in all Egypt, and remained unmoved, he accepted the priceless gifts the vassal kings offered, and placed them in his harem, a harem that he never visited, for when he was not at war upon the frontiers, he was laying out maps for new cities, renovating old ones, building palaces, superintending vast schemes of irrigation; in short, he was a king who considered nothing too great or too small for his personal undertaking, from the offering of the sacrifice in the temple, or the leading of his army in battle, to the planting of corn in the field, or the bestowal of food and raiment upon the poor.

One summer the Barbarians under Oxus invaded the country, and were so numerous, so fierce and courageous, that it was a difficult matter to force them to withdraw. At length they were compelled to retire to Bactria, where Ninos besieged them. The defeat of the Barbarians in this instance was said to have been due to the brave sagacity of the wife of one of the king's captains. Ninos met this woman for the first time face to face, after he had heard of her marvelous exploits, when she was resting in her husband Oannes' tent, weary from a day on the battle-field. Her name was Semiramis, and her beauty was magnificent and seductive. Ninos, for the first time in his life, felt his heart beat faster at the sight of a woman. While he sat beside her, she told him the story of her past. It was such a marvelous story, that it enhanced her charm in the king's eyes, and made her seem all the more desirable, for she told him her mother was a goddess, and that she had been ministered to by the loving spirits all through her wonderful childhood, when adopted by the shepherd Semas, she had wandered and played on the Assyrian hills.

Whatever became of Oannes we do not know, but the old story tells us that Ninos carried her away, and made her his wife, and she seems to have been a very willing captive, though she made a very poor return for Ninos' love, for after a few years she killed the king in order to rule in his stead.

Upon her accession to power she made Babylon a far greater city than Nineveh, and enlarged the walls and ramparts, the roadway upon the top of the latter being wide enough for six chariots to drive abreast. She raised a wonderful temple to the god Bel in the middle of the city, built bridges and quays, and made a harbor in the Euphrates.

When disturbances broke out, she commanded her army in person, and "wherever she went she left records of her passage behind her, cutting her way through mountains, quarrying a path through the solid rock, making broad highways for herself, bringing rebellious tribes beneath her yoke, and raising tumult to mark the tombs of such