BROOKS ADAMS

THE LAW OF CIVILIZATION AND DECAY

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Содержание

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PREFACE

In offering to the public a second edition of *The Law of Civilization and Decay* I take the opportunity to say emphatically that such value as the essay may have lies in its freedom from any preconceived bias. All theories contained in the book, whether religious or economic, are the effect, and not the cause, of the way in which the facts unfolded themselves. I have been passive.

The value of history lies not in the multitude of facts collected, but in their relation to each other, and in this respect an author can have no larger responsibility than any other scientific observer. If the sequence of events seems to indicate the existence of a law governing social development, such a law may be suggested, but to approve or disapprove of it would be as futile as to discuss the moral bearings of gravitation.

Some years ago, when writing a sketch of the history of the colony of Massachusetts Bay, I became deeply interested in certain religious aspects of the Reformation, which seemed hardly reconcilable with the theories usually advanced to explain

them. After the book had been published, I continued reading theology, and, step by step, was led back, through the schoolmen and the crusades, to the revival of the pilgrimage to Palestine, which followed upon the conversion of the Huns. As ferocious pagans, the Huns had long closed the road to Constantinople; but the change which swept over Europe after the year 1000, when Saint Stephen was crowned, was unmistakable; the West received an impulsion from the East. I thus became convinced that religious enthusiasm, which, by stimulating the pilgrimage, restored communication between the Bosphorus and the Rhine, was the power which produced the accelerated movement culminating in modern centralization.

Meanwhile I thought I had discovered not only that faith, during the eleventh, twelfth, and early thirteenth centuries, spoke by preference through architecture, but also that in France and Syria, at least, a precise relation existed between the ecclesiastical and military systems of building, and that the one could not be understood without the other. In the commercial cities of the same epoch, on the contrary, the religious idea assumed no definite form of artistic expression, for the Gothic never flourished in Venice, Genoa, Pisa, or Florence, nor did any pure school of architecture thrive in the mercantile atmosphere. Furthermore, commerce from the outset seemed antagonistic to the imagination, for a universal decay of architecture set in throughout Europe after the great commercial expansion of the thirteenth century; and the inference I drew from these facts

was, that the economic instinct must have chosen some other medium by which to express itself. My observations led me to suppose that the coinage might be such a medium, and I ultimately concluded that, if the development of a mercantile community is to be understood, it must be approached through its money.

Another conviction forced upon my mind, by the examination of long periods of history, was the exceedingly small part played by conscious thought in moulding the fate of men. At the moment of action the human being almost invariably obeys an instinct, like an animal; only after action has ceased does he reflect.

These controlling instincts are involuntary, and divide men into species distinct enough to cause opposite effects under identical conditions. For instance, impelled by fear, one type will rush upon an enemy, and another will run away; while the love of women or of money has stamped certain races as sharply as ferocity or cunning has stamped the lion or the fox.

Like other personal characteristics, the peculiarities of the mind are apparently strongly hereditary, and, if these instincts be transmitted from generation to generation, it is plain that, as the external world changes, those who receive this heritage must rise or fall in the social scale, according as their nervous system is well or ill adapted to the conditions to which they are born. Nothing is commoner, for example, than to find families who have been famous in one century sinking into obscurity in the next, not because the children have degenerated, but because a certain

field of activity which afforded the ancestor full scope, has been closed against his offspring. Particularly has this been true in revolutionary epochs such as the Reformation; and families so situated have very generally become extinct.

When this stage had been reached, the Reformation began to wear a new aspect, but several years elapsed before I saw whither my studies led. Only very slowly did a sequence of cause and effect take shape in my mind, a sequence wholly unexpected in character, whose growth resembled the arrangement of the fragments of an inscription, which cannot be read until the stones have been set in a determined order. Finally, as the historical work neared an end, I perceived that the intellectual phenomena under examination fell into a series which seemed to correspond, somewhat closely, with the laws which are supposed to regulate the movements of the material universe.

Theories can be tested only by applying them to facts, and the facts relating to successive phases of human thought, whether conscious or unconscious, constitute history; therefore, if intellectual phenomena are evolved in a regular sequence, history, like matter, must be governed by law. In support of such a conjecture, I venture to offer an hypothesis by which to classify a few of the more interesting intellectual phases through which human society must, apparently, pass, in its oscillations between barbarism and civilization, or, what amounts to the same thing, in its movement from a condition of physical dispersion to one of concentration. The accompanying volume contains

the evidence which suggested the hypothesis, although, it seems hardly necessary to add, an essay of this size on so vast a subject can only be regarded as a suggestion.

The theory proposed is based upon the accepted scientific principle that the law of force and energy is of universal application in nature, and that animal life is one of the outlets through which solar energy is dissipated.

Starting from this fundamental proposition, the first deduction is, that, as human societies are forms of animal life, these societies must differ among themselves in energy, in proportion as nature has endowed them, more or less abundantly, with energetic material.

Thought is one of the manifestations of human energy, and among the earlier and simpler phases of thought, two stand conspicuous – Fear and Greed. Fear, which, by stimulating the imagination, creates a belief in an invisible world, and ultimately develops a priesthood; and Greed, which dissipates energy in war and trade.

Probably the velocity of the social movement of any community is proportionate to its energy and mass, and its centralization is proportionate to its velocity; therefore, as human movement is accelerated, societies centralize. In the earlier stages of concentration, fear appears to be the channel through which energy finds the readiest outlet; accordingly, in primitive and scattered communities, the imagination is vivid, and the mental types produced are religious, military, artistic. As consolidation

advances, fear yields to greed, and the economic organism tends to supersede the emotional and martial.

Whenever a race is so richly endowed with the energetic material that it does not expend all its energy in the daily struggle for life, the surplus may be stored in the shape of wealth; and this stock of stored energy may be transferred from community to community, either by conquest, or by superiority in economic competition.

However large may be the store of energy accumulated by conquest, a race must, sooner or later, reach the limit of its martial energy, when it must enter on the phase of economic competition. But, as the economic organism radically differs from the emotional and martial, the effect of economic competition has been, perhaps invariably, to dissipate the energy amassed by war.

When surplus energy has accumulated in such bulk as to preponderate over productive energy, it becomes the controlling social force. Thenceforward, capital is autocratic, and energy vents itself through those organisms best fitted to give expression to the power of capital. In this last stage of consolidation, the economic, and, perhaps, the scientific intellect is propagated, while the imagination fades, and the emotional, the martial, and the artistic types of manhood decay. When a social velocity has been attained at which the waste of energetic material is so great that the martial and imaginative stocks fail to reproduce themselves, intensifying competition appears to generate two

extreme economic types, – the usurer in his most formidable aspect, and the peasant whose nervous system is best adapted to thrive on scanty nutriment. At length a point must be reached when pressure can go no further, and then, perhaps, one of two results may follow: A stationary period may supervene, which may last until ended by war, by exhaustion, or by both combined, as seems to have been the case with the Eastern Empire; or, as in the Western, disintegration may set in, the civilized population may perish, and a reversion may take place to a primitive form of organism.

The evidence, however, seems to point to the conclusion that, when a highly centralized society disintegrates, under the pressure of economic competition, it is because the energy of the race has been exhausted. Consequently, the survivors of such a community lack the power necessary for renewed concentration, and must probably remain inert until supplied with fresh energetic material by the infusion of barbarian blood.

BROOKS ADAMS.

Quincy, August 20, 1896.

CHAPTER I
THE ROMANS

When the Romans first emerged from the mist of fable, they were already a race of land-owners who held their property in severalty, and, as the right of alienation was established, the formation of relatively large estates had begun. The ordinary family, however, held, perhaps, twelve acres, and, as the land was arable, and the staple grain, it supported a dense rural population. The husbandmen who tilled this land were of the martial type, and, probably for that reason, though supremely gifted as administrators and soldiers, were ill-fitted to endure the strain of the unrestricted economic competition of a centralized society. Consequently their conquests had hardly consolidated before decay set in, a decay whose causes may be traced back until they are lost in the dawn of history.

The Latins had little economic versatility; they lacked the instinct of the Greeks for commerce, or of the Syrians and Hindoos for manufactures. They were essentially land-owners, and, when endowed with the acquisitive faculty, usurers. The latter early developed into a distinct species, at once more subtle of intellect and more tenacious of life than the farmers, and on the disparity between these two types of men, the fate of all subsequent civilization has hinged. At a remote antiquity Roman

society divided into creditors and debtors; as it consolidated, the power of the former increased, thus intensifying the pressure on the weak, until, when centralization culminated under the Cæsars, reproduction slackened, disintegration set in, and, after some centuries of decline, the Middle Ages began.

The history of the monarchy must probably always remain a matter of conjecture, but it seems reasonably certain that the expulsion of the Tarquins was the victory of an hereditary monied caste, which succeeded in concentrating the functions of government in a practically self-perpetuating body drawn from their own order.[1] Niebuhr has demonstrated, in one of his most striking chapters, that usury was originally a patrician privilege; and some of the fiercest struggles of the early republic seem to have been decided against the oligarchy by wealthy plebeians, who were determined to break down the monopoly in money-lending. At all events, the conditions of life evidently favoured the growth of the instinct which causes its possessor to suck the vitality of the economically weak; and Macaulay, in the preface to *Virginia*, has given so vivid a picture of the dominant class, that one passage at least should be read entire.

> "The ruling class in Rome was a monied class; and it made and administered the laws with a view solely to its own interest. Thus the relation between lender and borrower was mixed up with the relation between sovereign and subject. The great men held a large portion of the community in

[1] *History of Rome*, Mommsen, Dickson's trans., i. 288, 290.

> dependence by means of advances at enormous usury. The law of debt, framed by creditors, and for the protection of creditors, was the most horrible that has ever been known among men. The liberty, and even the life, of the insolvent were at the mercy of the patrician money-lenders. Children often became slaves in consequence of the misfortunes of their parents. The debtor was imprisoned, not in a public gaol under the care of impartial public functionaries, but in a private workhouse belonging to the creditor. Frightful stories were told respecting these dungeons."

But a prisoner is an expense, and the patricians wanted money. Their problem was to exhaust the productive power of the debtor before selling him, and, as slaves have less energy than freemen, a system was devised by which the plebeians were left on their land, and stimulated to labour by the hope of redeeming themselves and their children from servitude. Niebuhr has explained at length how this was done.

For money weighed out a person could pledge himself, his family, and all that belonged to him. In this condition he became *nexus*, and remained in possession of his property until breach of condition, when the creditor could proceed by summary process.[2] Such a contract satisfied the requirements, and the

[2] *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., i. 576. Niebuhr has been followed in the text, although the "nexum" is one of the vexed points of Roman law. (See *Über das altrömische Schuldrecht*, Savigny.) The precise form of the contract is, however, perhaps, not very important for the matter in hand, as most scholars seem agreed that it resembled a mortgage, the breach of whose condition involved not only the loss of the pledge, but the personal liberty of the debtor. See *Gaius*, iv. 21.

usurers had then only to invent a judgment for debt severe enough to force the debtor to become *nexus* when the alternative was offered him. This presented no difficulty. When an action was begun the defendant had thirty days of grace, and was then arrested and brought before the prætor. If he could neither pay nor find security, he was fettered with irons weighing not less than fifteen pounds, and taken home by the plaintiff. There he was allowed a pound of corn a day, and given sixty days in which to settle. If he failed, he was taken again before the prætor and sentenced. Under this sentence he might be sold or executed, and, where there were several plaintiffs, they might cut him up among them, nor was any individual liable for carving more than his share.[3] A man so sentenced involved his descendants, and therefore, rather than submit, the whole debtor class became *nexi*, toiling for ever to fulfil contracts quite beyond their strength, and year by year sinking more hopelessly into debt, for ordinarily the accumulated interest soon raised "the principal to many times its original amount."[4] Niebuhr has thus summed up the economic situation: —

> "To understand the condition of the plebeian debtors, let the reader, if he is a man of business, imagine that the whole of the private debts in a given country were turned into bills at a year, bearing interest at twenty per cent or more; and that the non-payment of them were followed on

[3] *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., ii. 599. But compare *Aulus Gellius*, xx. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 582.

summary process by imprisonment, and by the transfer of the debtor's whole property to his creditor, even though it exceeded what he owed. We do not need those further circumstances, which are incompatible with our manners, the personal slavery of the debtor and of his children, to form an estimate of the fearful condition of the unfortunate plebeians."[5]

Thus the usurer first exhausted a family and then sold it; and as his class fed on insolvency and controlled legislation, the laws were as ingeniously contrived for creating debt, as for making it profitable when contracted. One characteristic device was the power given the magistrate of fining for "offences against order." Under this head "men might include any accusations they pleased, and by the higher grades in the scale of fines they might accomplish whatever they desired."[6] As the capitalists owned the courts and administered justice, they had the means at hand of ruining any plebeian whose property was tempting. Nevertheless, the stronghold of usury lay in the fiscal system, which down to the fall of the Empire was an engine for working bankruptcy. Rome's policy was to farm the taxes; that is to say, after assessment, to sell them to a publican, who collected what he could. The business was profitable in proportion as it was extortionate, and the country was subjected to a levy unregulated by law, and conducted to enrich speculators. "Ubi publicanus est," said Livy,

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[5] *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., i. 583.

[6] *History of Rome*, Mommsen, Dickson's trans., i. 472.

quoting the Senate, "ibi aut jus publicum vanum, aut libertatem sociis nullam esse."[7]

Usury was the cream of this business. The custom was to lend to defaulters at such high rates of interest that insolvency was nearly certain to follow; then the people were taken on execution, and slave-hunting formed a regular branch of the revenue service. In Cicero's time whole provinces of Asia Minor were stripped bare by the traffic. The effect upon the Latin society of the fifth century before Christ was singularly destructive. Italy was filled with petty states in chronic war, the troops were an unpaid militia, which comprised the whole able-bodied population, and though the farms yielded enough for the family in good times, when the males were with the legions labour was certain to be lacking. The campaigns therefore brought want, and with want came the inability to pay taxes.

As late as the Tunic War, Regulus asked to be relieved from his command, because the death of his slave and the incompetence of his hired man left his fields uncared for; and if a general and a consul were pinched by absence, the case of the men in the ranks can be imagined. Even in victory the lot of the common soldier was hard enough, for, beside the chance of wounds and disease, there was the certain loss of time, for which no compensation was made. Though the plebeians formed the whole infantry of the line, they received no part of the conquered lands, and even the plunder was taken from

[7] Livy, xlv. 18.

them, and appropriated by the patricians to their private use.[8] In defeat, the open country was overrun, the cattle were driven off or slaughtered, the fruit trees cut down, the crops laid waste, and the houses burned. In speaking of the Gallic invasion, Niebuhr has pointed out that the ravaging of the enemy, and the new taxes laid to rebuild the ruined public works, led to general insolvency.[9]

Such conditions fostered the rapid propagation of distinct types of mind, and at a very early period Romans had been bred destitute of the martial instinct, but more crafty and more tenacious of life than the soldier. These were the men who conceived and enforced the usury laws, and who held to personal pledges as the dearest privilege of their order; nor does Livy attempt to disguise the fact "that every patrician house was a gaol for debtors; and that in seasons of great distress, after every sitting of the courts, herds of sentenced slaves were led away in chains to the houses of the nobless."[10]

Of this redoubtable type the Claudian family was a famous specimen, and the picture which has been drawn by Macaulay of the great usurer, Appius Claudius, the decemvir, is so brilliant that it cannot be omitted.

> "Appius Claudius Crassus … was descended from a long line of ancestors distinguished by their haughty demeanour, and by the inflexibility with which they had withstood

[8] *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., i. 583.

[9] *Ibid.*, ii. 603.

[10] *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., i. 574.

all the demands of the plebeian order. While the political conduct and the deportment of the Claudian nobles drew upon them the fiercest public hatred, they were accused of wanting, if any credit is due to the early history of Rome, a class of qualities which, in a military commonwealth, is sufficient to cover a multitude of offences. The chiefs of the family appear to have been eloquent, versed in civil business, and learned after the fashion of their age; but in war they were not distinguished by skill or valour. Some of them, as if conscious where their weakness lay, had, when filling the highest magistracies, taken internal administration as their department of public business, and left the military command to their colleagues. One of them had been entrusted with an army, and had failed ignominiously. None of them had been honoured with a triumph…

"His grandfather, called, like himself, Appius Claudius, had left a name as much detested as that of Sextus Tarquinius. This elder Appius had been consul more than seventy years before the introduction of the Licinian Laws. By availing himself of a singular crisis in public feeling, he had obtained the consent of the commons to the abolition of the tribuneship, and had been the chief of that Council of Ten to which the whole direction of the State had been committed. In a few months his administration had become universally odious. It had been swept away by an irresistible outbreak of popular fury; and its memory was still held in abhorrence by the whole city. The immediate cause of the downfall of this execrable government was said to have been

an attempt made by Appius Claudius upon the chastity of a beautiful young girl of humble birth. The story ran that the Decemvir, unable to succeed by bribes and solicitations, resorted to an outrageous act of tyranny. A vile dependant of the Claudian house laid claim to the damsel as his slave. The cause was brought before the tribunal of Appius. The wicked magistrate, in defiance of the clearest proofs, gave judgment for the claimant. But the girl's father, a brave soldier, saved her from servitude and dishonour by stabbing her to the heart in the sight of the whole Forum. That blow was the signal for a general explosion. Camp and city rose at once; the Ten were pulled down; the tribuneship was re-established; and Appius escaped the hands of the executioner only by a voluntary death."[11]

Virginia was slain in 449 B.C., just in the midst of the long convulsion which began with the secession to the Mons Sacer, and ended with the Licinian Laws. During this century and a quarter, usury drained the Roman vitality low. Niebuhr was doubtless right in his conjecture that the mutinous legions were filled with nexi to whom the continuance of the existing status meant slavery, and Mommsen also pointed out that the convulsions of the third and fourth centuries, in which it seemed as though Roman society must disintegrate, were caused by "the insolvency of the middle class of land-holders."[12]

Had Italy been more tranquil, it is not inconceivable that the

[11] Preface to *Virginia*.

[12] *History of Rome*, Mommsen, Dickson's trans., i. 484.

small farmers might even then have sunk into the serfdom which awaited them under the Empire, for in peace the patricians might have been able to repress insurrection with their clients; but the accumulation of capital had hardly begun, and several centuries were to elapse before money was to take its ultimate form in a standing army. Meanwhile, troops were needed almost every year to defend the city; and, as the legions were a militia, they were the enemy and not the instrument of wealth. Until the organization of a permanent paid police they were, however, the highest expression of force, and, when opposed to them, the monied oligarchy was helpless, as was proved by the secession to the Mons Sacer. The storm gathered slowly. The rural population was ground down under the usury laws, and in 495 B.C. the farmers refused to respond to the levy. The consul Publius Servilius had to suspend prosecutions for debt and to liberate debtors in prison; but at the end of the campaign the promises he had made in the moment of danger were repudiated by Appius Claudius, who rigorously enforced the usury legislation, and who was, for the time, too strong to be opposed.

That year the men submitted, but the next the legions had again to be embodied; they again returned victorious; their demands were again rejected; and then, instead of disbanding, they marched in martial array into the district of Crustumeria, and occupied the hill which ever after was called the Sacred Mount.[13] Resistance was not even attempted; and precisely the

[13] See *History of Rome*, Mommsen, Dickson's trans., i. 298–9.

same surrender was repeated in 449. When Virginius stabbed his daughter he fled to the camp, and his comrades seized the standards and marched for Rome. The Senate yielded at once, decreed the abolition of the Decemvirate, and the triumphant cohorts, drawn up upon the Aventine, chose their tribunes.

Finally, in the last great struggle, when Camillus was made dictator to coerce the people, he found himself impotent. The monied oligarchy collapsed when confronted with an armed force; and Camillus, reduced to act as mediator, vowed a temple to Concord, on the passage of the Licinian Laws.[14] The Licinian Laws provided for a partial liquidation, and also for an increase of the means of the debtor class by redistribution of the public land. This land had been seized in war, and had been monopolized by the patricians without any particular legal right. Licinius obtained a statute by which back payments of interest should be applied to extinguishing the principal of debts, and balances then remaining due should be liquidated in three annual instalments. He also limited the quantity of the public domain which could be held by any individual, and directed that the residue which remained after the reduction of all estates to that standard should be distributed in five-acre lots.

Pyrrhus saw with a soldier's eye that Rome's strength did not lie in her generals, who were frequently his inferiors, but in her farmers, whom he could not crush by defeat, and this was the class which was favoured by the Licinian Laws. They multiplied

[14] See *History of Rome*, Niebuhr, Hare's trans., iii. 22, 30.

greatly when the usurers capitulated, and, as Macaulay remarked, the effect of the reform was "singularly happy and glorious." It was indeed no less than the conquest of Italy. Rome, "while the disabilities of the plebeians continued … was scarcely able to maintain her ground against the Volscians and Hernicans. When those disabilities were removed, she rapidly became more than a match for Carthage and Macedon."[15]

But nature's very bounty to the Roman husbandman and soldier proved his ruin. Patient of suffering, enduring of fatigue, wise in council, fierce in war, he routed all who opposed him; and yet the vigorous mind and the robust frame which made him victorious in battle, were his weakness when at peace. He needed costly nutriment, and when brought into free economic competition with Africans and Asiatics, he starved. Such competition resulted directly from foreign conquests, and came rapidly when Italy had consolidated, and the Italians began to extend their power over other races. Nearly five centuries intervened between the foundation of the city and the defeat of Pyrrhus, but within little more than two hundred years from the victory of Beneventum, Rome was mistress of the world.

Indeed, beyond the peninsula, there was not much, save Carthage, to stop the march of the legions. After the death of Alexander, in 323 B.C., Greece fell into decline, and by 200, when Rome attacked Macedon, she was in decrepitude. The population of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt was not martial, and

[15] Preface to *Virginia*, Macaulay.

had never been able to cope in battle with the western races; while Spain and Gaul, though inhabited by fierce and hardy tribes, lacked cohesion, and could not withstand the onset of organized and disciplined troops. Distance, therefore, rather than hostile military force, fixed the limit of the ancient centralization, for the Romans were not maritime, and consequently failed to absorb India or discover America. Thus their relatively imperfect movement made the most material difference between the ancient and modern economic system.

By conquest the countries inhabited by races of a low vitality and great tenacity of life were opened both for trade and slaving, and their cheap labour exterminated the husbandmen of Italy. Particularly after the annexation of Asia Minor this labour overran Sicily, and the cultivation of the cereals by the natives became impossible when the island had been parcelled out into great estates stocked by capitalists with eastern slaves who, at Rome, undersold all competitors. During the second century the precious metals poured into Latium in a flood, great fortunes were amassed and invested in land, and the Asiatic provinces of the Empire were swept of their men in order to make these investments pay. No data remain by which to estimate, even approximately, the size of this involuntary migration, but it must have reached enormous numbers, for sixty thousand captives were the common booty of a campaign, and after provinces were annexed they were depopulated by the publicans.

The best field hands came from the regions where poverty had

always been extreme, and where, for countless generations, men had been inured to toil on scanty food. Districts like Bithynia and Syria, where slaves could be bought for little or nothing, had always been tilled by races far more tenacious of life than any Europeans. After Lucullus plundered Pontus, a slave brought only four drachmæ, or, perhaps, seventy cents.[16] On the other hand, competition grew sharper among the Italians themselves. As capital accumulated in the hands of the strongest, the poor grew poorer, and pauperism spread. As early as the Marsian War, in 90 B.C., Lucius Marcius Philippus estimated that there were only two thousand wealthy families among the burgesses. In about three hundred years nature had culled a pure plutocracy from what had been originally an essentially martial race.

The primitive Roman was a high order of husbandman, who could only when well fed flourish and multiply. He was adapted to that stage of society when the remnants of caste gave a certain fixity of tenure to the farmer, and when prices were maintained by the cost of communication with foreign countries. As the world centralized, through conquest, these barriers were swept away. Economic competition became free, land tended to concentrate in fewer and fewer hands, and this land was worked by eastern slaves, who reduced the wages of labour to the lowest point at which the human being can survive.

The effect was to split society in halves, the basis being servile, and the freemen being separated into a series of classes,

[16] *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, Wallon, ii. 38.

according to the economic power of the mind. Wealth formed the title to nobility of the great oligarchy which thus came to constitute the core of the Empire. At the head stood the senators, whose rank was hereditary unless they lost their property, for to be a senator a man had to be rich. Augustus fixed $48,000 as the minimum of the senatorial fortune, and made up the deficiency to certain favoured families,[17] but Tiberius summarily ejected spendthrifts.[18] All Latin literature is redolent of money. Tacitus, with an opulent connection, never failed to speak with disdain of the base-born, or, in other words, of the less prosperous. "Poppæus Sabinus, a man of humble birth," raised to position by the caprice of two emperors;[19] "Cassius Severus, a man of mean extraction";[20] and, in the poetry of antiquity, there are few more famous lines than those in which Juvenal has described the burden of poverty:

> "Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat
> Res angusta domi."[21]

Perhaps no modern writer has been so imbued with the spirit of the later Empire as Fustel de Coulanges, and on this subject he has been emphatic. Not only were the Romans not democratic,

[17] Suet. *Aug.*, ii. 41.

[18] Tacitus, *Ann.*, ii. 48.

[19] *Ann.*, vi. 39.

[20] *Ibid.*, iv. 21.

[21] *Sat.*, iii. 164.

but at no period of her history did Rome love equality. In the Republic rank was determined by wealth. The census was the basis of the social system. Every citizen had to declare his fortune before a magistrate, and his grade was then assigned him. "Poverty and wealth established the legal differences between men."

The first line of demarcation lay between those who owned land and those who did not. The former were *assidui*: householders rooted in the soil. The latter were *proletarians*. The *proletarians* were equal in their poverty; but the *assidui* were unequal in their wealth, and were consequently divided into five classes. Among these categories all was unequal – taxes, military service, and political rights. They did not mix together.

"If one transports oneself to the last century of the Republic … one finds there an aristocracy as strongly consolidated as the ancient patrician… At the summit came the senatorial order. To belong to it the first condition was to possess a great fortune… The Roman mind did not understand that a poor man could belong to the aristocracy, or that a rich man was not part of it."[22]

Archaic customs lingered late in Rome, for the city was not a centre of commercial exchanges; and long after the death of Alexander, when Greece passed its meridian, the Republic kept its copper coinage. Regulus farmed his field with a single slave and a hired servant, and there was, in truth, nothing extraordinary in the famous meeting with Cincinnatus at the

[22] *L'Invasion Germanique*, Fustel de Coulanges, 146–157.

plough, although such simplicity astonished a contemporary of Augustus. Advancing centralization swept away these ancient customs, a centralization whose march is, perhaps, as sharply marked by the migration of vagrants to the cities, as by any single phenomenon. Vagrant paupers formed the proletariat for whose relief the "Frumentariæ Leges" were framed; and yet, though poor-laws in some form are considered a necessity in modern times, few institutions of antiquity have been more severely criticised than those regulating charity. From the time of Cato downward, the tendency has been to maintain that at Rome demagogues fed the rabble at the cost of the lives of the free-holders.

Probably the exact converse is the truth; the public gifts of food appear to have been the effect of the ruin of agriculture, and not its cause. After the Italian husbandmen had been made insolvent by the competition of races of lower vitality, they flocked starving to the capital, but it was only reluctantly that the great speculators in grain, who controlled the Senate, admitted the necessity of granting State aid to the class whom they had destroyed.

Long before the Punic Wars the Carthaginians had farmed Sicily on capitalistic principles; that is to say, they had stocked domains with slaves, and had traded on the basis of large sales and narrow profits. The Romans when they annexed the island only carried out this system to its logical end. Having all Asia Minor to draw upon for labour, they deliberately starved and

overworked their field-hands, since it was cheaper to buy others than to lose command of the market. The familiar story of the outbreak of the Servile War, about 134 B.C., shows how far the contemporaries of the Sicilian speculators believed them capable of going.

Damophilus, an opulent Sicilian landlord, being one day implored by his slaves to have pity on their nakedness and misery, indignantly demanded why they went hungry and cold, with arms in their hands, and the country before them. Then he bound them to stakes and flayed them with the lash.[23]

The reduction of Syracuse by Marcellus broke the Carthaginian power in the island, and, after the fall of Agrigentum in 210 B.C., the pacification of the country went on rapidly. Probably from the outset, even in the matter of transportation, the provinces of the mainland were at a disadvantage because of the cheapness of sea freights, but at all events the opening of the Sicilian grain trade had an immediate and disastrous effect on Italy. The migration of vagrants to Rome began forthwith, and within seven years, 203 B.C., a public distribution of wheat took place, probably by the advice of Scipio. Nevertheless the charity was private and not gratuitous. On the contrary, a charge of six sesterces, or twenty-five cents the bushel, was made, apparently near half the market rate, a price pretty regularly maintained on such occasions down to the

[23] Diod. xxxiv. 38. On the subject of the Sicilian slavery, see *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, Wallon, ii. 300 *et seq.*

Empire. This interval comprehended the whole period of the Sicilian supremacy in the corn trade, for in 30 B.C. Egypt was annexed by Augustus.

The distress which followed upon free trade with Egypt finally broke down the resistance of the rich to gratuitous relief for the poor. Previously the opposition to State aid had been so stubborn that until 123 B.C. no legal provision whatever was made for paupers; and yet the account left by Polybius of the condition of Lombardy toward the middle of the second century shows the complete wreck of agriculture.

"The yield of corn in this district is so abundant that wheat is often sold at four obols a Sicilian medimnus [about eight cents by the bushel, or a little less than two sesterces], barley at two, or a metretes of wine for an equal measure of barley… The cheapness and abundance of all articles of food may also be clearly shown from the fact that travellers in these parts, when stopping at inns, do not bargain for particular articles, but simply ask what the charge is per head for board. And for the most part the innkeepers are content" with half an as (about half a cent) a day.[24]

These prices indicate a lack of demand so complete, that the debtors among the peasantry must have been ruined, and yet tax-payers remained obdurate. Gratuitous distributions were tried in 58 B.C. by the Lex Clodia, but soon abandoned as costly, and Cæsar applied himself to reducing the outlay on the needy. He

[24] *Polybius*, ii. 15, Shuckburgh's trans.

hoped to reach his end by cutting down the number of grain-receivers one-half, by providing that no grain should be given away except on presentation of a ticket, and by ordering that the number of ticket-holders should not be increased. The law of nature prevailed against him, for the absorption of Egypt in the economic system of the Empire, marked, in the words of Mommsen "the end of the old and the beginning of a new epoch."[25]

Among the races which have survived through ages upon scanty nutriment, none have, perhaps, excelled the Egyptian fellah. Even in the East no peasantry has probably been so continuously overworked, so under-paid, and so taxed.

> "If it is the aim of the State to work out the utmost possible amount from its territory, in the Old World the Lagids were absolutely the masters of statecraft. In particular they were in this sphere the instructors and the models of the Cæsars."[26]

In the first century Egypt was, as it still is, preeminently a land of cheap labour; but it was also something more. The valley of the Nile, enriched by the overflow of the river, returned an hundred-fold, without manure; and this wonderful district was administered, not like an ordinary province, but like a private farm belonging to the citizens of Rome. The emperor reserved it to himself. How large a revenue he drew from it is immaterial;

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[25] *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Mommsen, ii. 233.

[26] *Ibid.*, ii. 239.

it suffices that one-third of all the grain consumed in the capital came from thence. According to Athenæus, some of the grain ships in use were about 420 feet long by 57 broad, or nearly the size of a modern steamer in the Atlantic trade.[27] From the beginning of the Christian era, therefore, the wages of the Egyptian fellah regulated the price of the cereals within the limits where trade was made free by Roman consolidation, and it is safe to say that, thenceforward, such of the highly nourished races as were constrained to sustain this competition, were doomed to perish. It is even extremely doubtful whether the distributions of grain by the government materially accelerated the march of the decay. Spain should have been far enough removed from the centre of exchanges to have had a certain local market of her own, and yet Martial, writing about 100 A.D., described the Spanish husbandman eating and drinking the produce he could not sell, and receiving but four sesterces the bushel for his wheat, which was the price paid by paupers in the time of Cicero.[28]

Thus by economic necessity great estates were formed in the hands of the economically strong. As the value of cereals fell, arable land passed into vineyards or pasture, and, the provinces being unable to sustain their old population, eviction went on with gigantic strides. Had the Romans possessed the versatility to enable them to turn to industry, factories might have afforded a temporary shelter to this surplus labour, but manufactures were

[27] *Deipnosophists*, v. 37.

[28] Martial, *Ep.*, xii. 76.

monopolized by the East; therefore the beggared peasantry were either enslaved for debt, or wandered as penniless paupers to the cities, where gradually their numbers so increased as to enable them to extort a gratuitous dole. Indeed, during the third century, their condition fell so low that they were unable even to cook the food freely given them, and Aurelian had their bread baked at public ovens.[29]

As centralization advanced with the acceleration of human movement, force expressed itself more and more exclusively through money, and the channel in which money chose to flow was in investments in land. The social system fostered the growth of large estates. The Romans always had an inordinate respect for the landed magnate, and a contempt for the tradesman. Industry was reputed a servile occupation, and, under the Republic, the citizen who performed manual labour was almost deprived of political rights. Even commerce was thought so unworthy of the aristocracy that it was forbidden to senators. "The soil was always, in this Roman society, the principal source and, above all, the only measure of wealth."

A law of Tiberius obliged capitalists to invest two-thirds of their property in land. Trajan not only exacted of aspirants to office that they should be rich, but that they should place at least one-third of their fortune in Italian real estate; and, down to the end of the Empire, the senatorial class "was at the same time the

[29] Vopiscus, *Aurelianus*, 35.

class of great landed proprietors."[30]

The more property consolidated, the more resistless the momentum of capital became. Under the Empire small properties grew steadily rarer, and the fewer they were, the greater the disadvantage at which their owners stood. The small farmer could hardly sustain himself in competition with the great landlord. The grand domain of the capitalist was not only provided with a full complement of labourers, vine-dressers, and shepherds, but with the necessary artisans. The poor farmer depended on his rich neighbour even for his tools. "He was what a workman would be to-day who, amidst great factories, worked alone."[31] He bought dearer and sold cheaper, his margin of profit steadily shrunk; at last he was reduced to a bare subsistence in good years, and the first bad harvest left him bankrupt.

The Roman husbandman and soldier was doomed, for nature had turned against him; the task of history is but to ascertain his fate, and trace the fortunes of his country after he had gone.

Of the evicted, many certainly drifted to the cities and lived upon charity, forming the proletariat, a class alike despised and lost to self-respect: some were sold into slavery, others starved; but when all deductions have been made, a surplus is left to be accounted for, and there is reason to suppose that these stayed on their farms as tenants to the purchasers.

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[30] *L'Invasion Germanique*, Fustel de Coulanges, 190.

[31] *Le Colonat Romain: Recherches sur quelques Problèmes d'Histoire*, Fustel de Coulanges, 143.

In the first century such tenancies were common. The lessee remained a freeman, under no subjection to his landlord, provided he paid his rent; but in case of default the law was rigorous. Everything upon the land was liable as a pledge, and the tenant himself was held in pawn unless he could give security for what he owed. In case, therefore, of prolonged agricultural depression, all that was left of the ancient rural population could hardly fail to pass into the condition of serfs, bound to the land by debts beyond the possibility of payment.

That such a depression actually occurred, and that it extended through several centuries, is certain. Nor is it possible that its only cause was Egyptian competition, for had it been so, an equilibrium would have been reached when the African exchanges had been adjusted, whereas a continuous decline of prices went on until long after the fall of the Western Empire. The only other possible explanation of the phenomenon is that a contraction of the currency began soon after the death of Augustus, and continued without much interruption down to Charlemagne. Between the fall of Carthage and the birth of Christ, the Romans plundered the richest portions of the world west of the Indus; in the second century, North Africa, Macedon, Spain, and parts of Greece and Asia Minor; in the first, Athens, Cappadocia, Syria, Gaul, and Egypt. These countries yielded an enormous mass of treasure, which was brought to Rome as spoil of war, but which was not fixed there by commercial exchanges, and which continually tended to flow back to the natural centres

of trade. Therefore, when conquests ceased, the sources of new bullion dried up, and the quantity held in Italy diminished as the balance of trade grew more and more unfavourable.

Under Augustus the precious metals were plenty and cheap, and the prices of commodities were correspondingly high; but a full generation had hardly passed before a dearth began to be felt, which manifested itself in a debasement of the coinage, the surest sign of an appreciation of the currency.

Speaking generally, the manufactures and the more costly products of antiquity came from countries to the east of the Adriatic, while the West was mainly agricultural; and nothing is better established than that luxuries were dear under the Empire, and food cheap.[32] Therefore exchanges were unfavourable to the capital from the outset; the exports did not cover the imports, and each year a deficit had to be made good in specie.

The Romans perfectly understood the situation, and this adverse balance caused them much uneasiness. Tiberius dwelt upon it in a letter to the Senate as early as 22 A.D. In that year the ædiles brought forward proposals for certain sumptuary reforms, and the Senate, probably to rid itself of a delicate question, referred the matter to the executive. Most of the emperor's reply is interesting, but there is one particularly noteworthy paragraph. "If a reform is in truth intended, where must it begin? and how am I to restore the simplicity of ancient times?.. How shall we reform the taste for dress?.. How are we to deal with the peculiar

[32] *Organisation Financière chez les Romains*, Marquardt, 65 *et seq.*

articles of female vanity, and, in particular, with that rage for jewels and precious trinkets, which drains the Empire of its wealth, and sends, in exchange for bawbles, the money of the Commonwealth to foreign nations, and even to the enemies of Rome?"[33] Half a century later matters were, apparently, worse, for Pliny more than once returned to the subject. In the twelfth book of his Natural History, after enumerating the many well-known spices, perfumes, drugs, and gems, which have always made the Eastern trade of such surpassing value, he estimated that at the most moderate computation 100,000,000 sesterces, or about $4,000,000 in coin, were annually exported to Arabia and India alone; and at a time when silk was worth its weight in gold, the estimate certainly does not seem excessive. He added, "So dear do pleasures and women cost us."[34]

The drain to Egypt and the Asiatic provinces could hardly have been much less serious. Adrian almost seems to have been jealous of the former, for in his letter to Servianus, after having criticised the people, he remarked that it was also a rich and productive country "in which no one was idle," and in which glass, paper and linen were manufactured.[35] The Syrians were both industrial and commercial. Tyre, for example, worked the raw silk of China, dyed and exported it. The glass of Tyre and Sidon was famous; the local aristocracy were merchants and

[33] Tacitus, *Ann.*, Murphy's trans., iii. 53.

[34] *Nat. Hist.*, xii. 18.

[35] Vopiscus, *Saturninus*, 8.

manufacturers, "and, as later the riches acquired in the East flowed to Genoa and Venice, so then the commercial gains of the West flowed back to Tyre and Apamea."[36]

Within about sixty years from the final consolidation of the Empire under Augustus, this continuous efflux of the precious metals began to cause the currency to contract, and prices to fall; and the first effect of shrinking values appears to have been a financial crisis in 33 A.D. Probably the diminution in the worth of commodities relatively to money, had already made it difficult for debtors to meet their liabilities, for Tacitus has prefaced his story by pointing out that usury had always been a scourge of Rome, and that just previous to the panic an agitation against the money-lenders had begun with a view to enforcing the law regarding interest. As most of the senators were deep in usury they applied for protection to Tiberius, who granted what amounted to a stay of proceedings, and then, as soon as the capitalists felt themselves safe, they proceeded to take their revenge. Loans were called, accommodation refused, and mortgagors were ruthlessly sold out. "There was great scarcity of money … and, on account of sales on execution, coin accumulated in the imperial, or the public treasury. Upon this the Senate ordered that every one should invest two-thirds of his capital on loan, in Italian real estate; but the creditors called in the whole, nor did public opinion allow debtors to compromise." Meanwhile there was great excitement but no relief, "as the

[36] *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Mommsen, ii. 140.

usurers hoarded for the purpose of buying low. The quantity of sales broke the market, and the more liabilities were extended, the harder liquidation became. Many were ruined, and the loss of property endangered social station and reputation."[37] The panic finally subsided, but contraction went on and next showed itself, twenty-five years later, in adulterated coinage. From the time of the Punic Wars, about two centuries and a half before Christ, the silver denarius, worth nearly seventeen cents, had been the standard of the Roman currency, and it kept its weight and purity unimpaired until Nero, when it diminished from 1⁄84 to 1⁄96 of a pound of silver, the pure metal being mixed with 1⁄10 of copper.[38] Under Trajan, toward 100 A.D., the alloy reached twenty per cent; under Septimius Severus a hundred years later it had mounted to fifty or sixty per cent, and by the time of Elagabalus, 220 A.D., the coin had degenerated into a token of base metal, and was repudiated by the government.

Something similar happened to the gold. The aureus, though it kept its fineness, lost in weight down to Constantine. In the reign of Augustus it equalled one-fortieth of a Roman pound of gold, in that of Nero one forty-fifth, in that of Caracalla but one-fiftieth, in that of Diocletian one-sixtieth, and in that of Constantine one seventy-second, when the coin ceased passing by tale and was taken only by weight.[39]

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[37] *Ann.*, vi. 16, 17.

[38] See *Geschichte des Römischen Münzwesens*, Mommsen, 756.

[39] *Monnaies Byzantines*, Sabatier, i. 51, 52.

The repudiation of the denarius was an act of bankruptcy; nor did the financial position improve while the administration remained at Rome. Therefore the inference is that, toward the middle of the third century, Italy had lost the treasure she had won in war, which had gradually gravitated to the centre of exchanges. This inference is confirmed by history. The movements of Diocletian seem to demonstrate that after 250 A.D. Rome ceased to be either the political or commercial capital of the world.

Unquestionably Diocletian must have lived a life of intense activity at the focus of affairs, to have raised himself from slavery to the purple at thirty-nine; and yet Gibbon thought he did not even visit Rome until he went thither to celebrate his triumph, after he had been twenty years upon the throne. He never seemed anxious about the temper of the city. When proclaimed emperor he ignored Italy and established himself at Nicomedia on the Propontis, where he lived until he abdicated in 305. His personal preferences evidently did not influence him, since his successors imitated his policy; and everything points to the conclusion that he, and those who followed him, only yielded to the same resistless force which fixed the economic capital of the world upon the Bosphorus. In the case of Constantine the operation of this force was conspicuous, for it was not only powerful enough to overcome the habit of a lifetime, but to cause him to undertake the gigantic task of building Constantinople.

Constantine was proclaimed in Britain in 306, when only

thirty-two. Six years later he defeated Maxentius, and then governed the West alone until his war with Licinius, whom he captured in 323 and afterward put to death. Thus, at fifty, he returned to the East, after an absence of nearly twenty years, and his first act was to choose Byzantium as his capital, a city nearly opposite Nicomedia.

The sequence of events seems plain. Very soon after the insolvency of the government at Rome, the administration quitted the city and moved toward the boundary between Europe and Asia; there, after some forty years of vacillation, it settled permanently at the true seat of exchanges, for Constantinople remained the economic centre of the earth for more than eight centuries.

Similar conclusions may be drawn from the fluctuations of the currency. At Rome the coin could not be maintained at the standard, because of adverse exchanges; but when the political and economic centres had come to coincide, at a point upon the Bosphorus, depreciation ceased, and the aureus fell no further.

This migration of capital, which caused the rise of Constantinople, was the true opening of the Middle Ages, for it occasioned the gradual decline of the rural population, and thus brought about the disintegration of the West. Victory carried wealth to Rome, and wealth manifested its power in a permanent police; as the attack in war gained upon the defence, and individual resistance became impossible, transportation grew cheap and safe, and human movement was accelerated. Then

economic competition began, and intensified as centralization advanced, telling always in favour of the acutest intellect and the cheapest labour. Soon, exchanges became permanently unfavourable, a steady drain of bullion set in to the East, and, as the outflow depleted the treasure amassed at Rome by plunder, contraction began, and with contraction came that fall of prices which first ruined, then enslaved, and finally exterminated, the native rural population of Italy.

In the time of Diocletian, the ancient silver currency had long been repudiated, and, in his well-known edict, he spoke of prices as having risen ninefold, when reckoned in the denarii of base metal; the purchasing power of pure gold and silver had, however, risen very considerably in all the western provinces. Nor was this all. It appears to be a natural law that when social development has reached a certain stage, and capital has accumulated sufficiently, the class which has had the capacity to absorb it shall try to enhance the value of their property by legislation. This is done most easily by reducing the quantity of the currency, which is a legal tender for the payment of debts. A currency obviously gains in power as it shrinks in volume, and the usurers of Constantinople intuitively condensed to the utmost that of the Empire. After the insolvency under Elagabalus, payments were exacted in gold by weight, and as it grew scarcer its value rose. Aurelian issued an edict limiting its use in the arts; and while there are abundant reasons for inferring that silver also gained in purchasing power, gold far outstripped it. Although

no statistics remain by which to establish, with any exactness, the movement of silver in comparison with commodities, the ratio between the precious metals at different epochs is known, and gold appears to have doubled between Cæsar and Romulus Augustulus.

47 B.C.	gold	stood to	silver as	1 : 8.9
1 A.D. under Augustus,	"	"	"	1 : 9.3
100–200, Trajan to Severus,	"	"	"	1 : 9–10
310, Constantine,	"	"	"	1 : 12.5
450, Theodosius II.,	"	"	"	1 : 18

As gold had become the sole legal tender, this change of ratio represents a diminution, during the existence of the Western Empire, of at least fifty per cent in the value of property in relation to debt, leaving altogether out of view the appreciation of silver itself, which was so considerable that the government was unable to maintain the denarius.[40]

Resistance to the force of centralized wealth was vain. Aurelian's attempt to reform the mints is said to have caused a rebellion, which cost him the lives of seven thousand of his soldiers; and though his policy was continued by Probus, and Diocletian coined both metals again at a ratio, expansion was so antagonistic to the interests of the monied class that, by 360, silver was definitely discarded, and gold was made by law the

[40] *Monnaies Byzantines*, Sabatier, i. 50.

only legal tender for the payment of debts.[41] Furthermore, the usurers protected themselves against any possible tampering with the mints by providing that the solidus should pass by weight and not by tale; that is to say, they reserved to themselves the right to reject any golden son which contained less than one seventy-second of a pound of standard metal, the weight fixed by Constantine.[42]

Thus, at a time when the exhaustion of the mines caused a failure in the annual supply of bullion, the old composite currency was split in two, and the half retained made to pass by weight alone, so as to throw the loss by clipping and abrasion upon the debtor. So strong a contraction engendered a steady fall of prices, a fall which tended rather to increase than diminish as time went on. But in prolonged periods of decline in the market value of agricultural products, farmers can with difficulty meet a money rent, because the sale of their crops leaves a greater deficit each year, and finally a time comes when insolvency can no longer be postponed.

In his opening chapter Gibbon described the Empire under the Antonines as enjoying "a happy period of more than fourscore years" of peace and prosperity; and yet nothing is more certain than that this halcyon age was in reality an interval of agricultural ruin. On this point Pliny was explicit, and Pliny was a large land-owner.

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[41] *Geschichte des Römischen Münzwesens*, Mommsen, 837.

[42] *Monnaies Byzantines*, Sabatier, i. 51, 52.

He wrote one day to Calvisius about an investment, and went at length into the condition of the property. A large estate adjoining his own was for sale, and he was tempted to buy, "for the land was fertile, rich, and well watered," the fields produced vines and wood which promised a fair return, and yet this natural fruitfulness was marred by the misery of the husbandmen. He found that the former owner "had often seized the 'pignora,' or pledges [that is, all the property the tenants possessed]; and though, by so doing, he had temporarily reduced their arrears, he had left them" without the means of tilling the soil. These tenants were freemen, who had been unable to meet their rent because of falling prices, and who, when they had lost their tools, cattle, and household effects, were left paupers on the farms they could neither cultivate nor abandon. Consequently the property had suffered, the rent had declined, and for these reasons and "the general hardness of the times," its value had fallen from five million to three million sesterces.[43]

In another letter he explained that he was detained at home making new arrangements with his tenants, who were apparently insolvent, for "in the last five years, in spite of great concessions, the arrears have increased. For this reason most [tenants] take no trouble to diminish their debt, which they despair of paying. Indeed, they plunder and consume what there is upon the land, since they think they cannot save for themselves." The remedy he proposed was to make no more money leases, but to farm on

[43] Pliny's *Letters*, iii. 19.

shares.[44]

The tone of these letters shows that there was nothing unusual in all this. Pliny nowhere intimated that the tenants were to blame, or that better men were to be had. On the contrary, he said emphatically that in such hard times money could not be collected, and therefore the interest of the landlord was to cultivate his estates on shares, taking the single precaution to place slaves over the tenants as overseers and receivers of the crops.

In the same way the digest referred to such arrears as habitual.[45] In still another letter to Trajan, Pliny observed, "Continuæ sterilitates cogunt me de remissionibus cogitare."[46] Certainly these insolvent farmers could have held no better position when working on shares than before their disasters, for as bankrupts they were wholly in their creditors' power, and could be hunted like slaves, and brought back in fetters if they fled. They were tied to the property by a debt which never could be paid, and they and their descendants were doomed to stay for ever as *coloni* or serfs, chattels to be devised or sold as part of the realty. In the words of the law, "they were considered slaves of the land."[47] The ancient martial husbandman had thus "fallen

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[44] *Ibid.*, ix. 37.

[45] *Digest*, xix. 2, 15, and xxxiii. 7, 20.

[46] *Letters*, x. 24. On this whole subject see *Le Colonat Romain: Recherches sur quelques Problèmes d'Histoire*, Fustel de Coulanges, ch. i.

[47] *Code of Justinian*, xi. 51, 1.

from point to point, from debt to debt, into an almost perpetual subjection."[48] Deliverance was impossible, for payment was out of the question. He was bound to the soil for his life, and his children after him inherited his servitude with his debt.

The customs, according to which the *coloni* held, were infinitely varied; they differed not only between estates, but between the hands on the same estate. On the whole, however, the life must have been hard, for the serfs of the Empire did not multiply, and the scarcity of rural labour became a chronic disease.

Yet, relatively, the position of the *colonus* was good, for his wife and children were his own; slavery was the ulcer which ate into the flesh, and the Roman fiscal system, coupled as it was with usury, was calculated to enslave all but the oligarchy who made the laws.

The taxes of the provinces were assessed by the censors and then sold for cash to the publicans, who undertook the collection. Italy was at first exempted, but after her bankruptcy she shared the common fate. Companies were formed to handle these ventures. The knights usually subscribed the capital and divided the profits, which corresponded with the severity of their administration; and, as the Roman conquests extended, these companies grew too powerful to be controlled. The only officials in a position to act were the provincial governors, who were afraid to interfere, and preferred to share in the gains of the traffic,

[48] *Le Colonat Romain*, Fustel de Coulanges, 21.

rather than to run the risk of exciting the wrath of so dangerous an enemy.[49]

According to Pliny the collection of a rent in money had become impossible in the reign of Trajan. The reason was that with a contracting currency prices of produce fell, and each year's crop netted less than that of the year before; therefore a rent moderate in one decade was extortionate in the next. But taxes did not fall with the fall in values; on the contrary, the tendency of centralization is always toward a more costly administration. Under Augustus, one emperor with a moderate household sufficed; but in the third century Diocletian found it necessary to reorganize the government under four Cæsars, and everything became specialized in the same proportion.

In this way the people were caught between the upper and the nether millstone. The actual quantity of bullion taken from them was greater, the lower prices of their property fell, and arrears of taxes accumulated precisely as Pliny described the accumulation of arrears of rent. These arrears were carried over from reign to reign, and even from century to century; and Petronius, the father-in-law of Valens, is said to have precipitated the rebellion of Procopius, by exacting the tribute unpaid since the death of Aurelian a hundred years before.

The processes employed in the collection of the revenue were

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[49] *Organisation Financière chez les Romains*, Marquardt, 240; *Les Manieurs d'Argent à Rome*, Deloume, 377.

severe. Torture was freely used,[50] and slavery was the fate of defaulters. Armed with such power, the publicans held debtors at their mercy. Though usury was forbidden, the most lucrative part of the trade was opening accounts with the treasury, assuming debts, and charging interest sometimes as high as fifty per cent. Though, as prices fell, the pressure grew severer, the abuses of the administration were never perhaps worse than toward the end of the Republic. In his oration against Verres, Cicero said the condition of the people had become intolerable: "All the provinces are in mourning, all the nations that are free are complaining; every kingdom is expostulating with us about our covetousness and injustice."[51]

The well-known transactions of Brutus are typical of what went on wherever the Romans marched. Brutus lent the Senate of Salaminia at forty-eight per cent a year. As the contract was illegal, he obtained two decrees of the Senate at Rome for his protection, and then to enforce payment of his interest, Scaptius, his man of business, borrowed from the governor of Cilicia a detachment of troops. With this he blockaded the Senate so closely that several members starved to death. The Salaminians, wanting at all costs to free themselves from such a load, offered to pay off both interest and capital at once; but to this Brutus would not consent, and to impose his own terms upon the province he

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[50] See *Decline and Fall*, ch. xvii.

[51] In *C. Verrem*, IV. lxxxix.

demanded from Cicero more troops, "only fifty horse."[52]

When at last, by such proceedings, the debtors were so exhausted that no torment could wring more from them, they were sold as slaves; Nicodemus, king of Bithynia, on being reproached for not furnishing his contingent of auxiliaries, replied that all his able-bodied subjects had been taken by the farmers of the revenue.[53] Nor, though the administration doubtless was better regulated under the Empire than under the Republic, did the oppression of the provinces cease. Juvenal, who wrote about 100, implored the young noble taking possession of his government to put some curb upon his avarice, "to pity the poverty of the allies. You see the bones of kings sucked of their very marrow."[54] And though the testimony of Juvenal may be rejected as savouring too much of poetical licence, Pliny must always be treated with respect. When Maximus was sent to Achaia, Pliny thought it well to write him a long letter of advice, in which he not only declared that to wrest from the Greeks the shadow of liberty left them would be "durum, ferum, barbarumque;" but adjured him to try to remember what each city had been, and not to despise it for what it was.[55]

Most impressive, perhaps, of all, is the statement of Dio Cassius that the revolt led by Boadicea in Britain in 61 A.D.,

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[52] *Cicero's Letters*, Ad Att. vi. 2; also Ad Att. v. 21, and vi. 1.

[53] Diod. xxxvi. 3. See also *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, Wallon, ii. 42, 44.

[54] *Satire*, viii. 89, 90.

[55] *Letters*, viii. 24.

which cost the Romans seventy thousand lives, was provoked by the rapacity of Seneca, who, having forced a loan of ten million drachmas ($1,670,000) on the people at usurious interest, suddenly withdrew his money, thereby inflicting intense suffering.[56] As Pliny said with bitterness and truth, "The arts of avarice were those most cultivated at Rome."[57]

The stronger type exterminated the weaker; the money-lender killed out the husbandman; the race of soldiers vanished, and the farms, whereon they had once flourished, were left desolate. To quote the words of Gibbon: "The fertile and happy province of Campania … extended between the sea and the Apennines from the Tiber to the Silarus. Within sixty years after the death of Constantine, and on the evidence of an actual survey, an exemption was granted in favour of three hundred and thirty thousand English acres of desert and uncultivated land; which amounted to one-eighth of the whole surface of the province."[58]

It is true that Gibbon, in this paragraph, described Italy as she was in the fourth century, just before the barbarian invasions, but a similar fate had overtaken the provinces under the Cæsars. In the reign of Domitian, according to Plutarch, Greece had been almost depopulated.

> "She can with much difficulty raise three thousand men, which number the single city of Megara sent heretofore to

[56] *Dio Cassius*, lxii. 2.

[57] *Nat. Hist.*, xiv., *Proœmium*.

[58] *Decline and Fall*, ch. xvii.

> the battle of Platæa… For of what use would the oracle be now, which was heretofore at Tegyra or at Ptous? For scarcely shall you meet, in a whole day's time, with so much as a herdsman or shepherd in those parts."[59]

Wallon has observed that Rome, "in the early times of the Republic, was chiefly preoccupied with having a numerous and strong population of freemen. Under the Empire she had but one anxiety – taxes."[60]

To speak with more precision, force changed the channel through which it operated. Native farmers and native soldiers were needless when such material could be bought cheaper in the North or East. With money the cohorts could be filled with Germans; with money, slaves and serfs could be settled upon the Italian fields; and for the last century, before the great inroads began, one chief problem of the imperial administration was the regulation of the inflow of new blood from without, lacking which the social system must have collapsed.

The later campaigns on the Rhine and the Danube were really slave-hunts on a gigantic scale. Probus brought back sixteen thousand men from Germany, "the bravest and most robust of their youth," and distributed them in knots of fifty or sixty among the legions. "Their aid was now become necessary… The infrequency of marriage, and the ruin of agriculture, affected the principles of population; and not only destroyed the strength of

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[59] *Morals, Trans. of* 1718, 4, 11.

[60] *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, iii. 268.

the present, but intercepted the hope of future generations."[61]

His importations of agricultural labour were much more considerable. In a single settlement in Thrace, Probus established one hundred thousand Bastarnæ; Constantius Chlorus is said to have made Gaul flourish by the herds of slaves he distributed among the landlords; in 370, large numbers of Alemanni were planted in the valley of the Po, and on the vast spaces of the public domain there were barbarian villages where the native language and customs were preserved.

Probably none of these Germans came as freemen. Many, of course, were captives sold as slaves, but perhaps the majority were serfs. Frequently a tribe, hard pressed by enemies, asked leave to pass the frontier, and settle as tributaries, that is to say as *coloni*. On one such occasion Constantius II. was nearly murdered. A body of Limigantes, who had made a raid, surrendered, and petitioned to be given lands at any distance, provided they might have protection. The emperor was delighted at the prospect of such a harvest of labourers, to say nothing of recruits, and went among them to receive their submission. Seeing him alone, the barbarians attacked him, and he escaped with difficulty. His troops slaughtered the Germans to the last man.

This unceasing emigration gradually changed the character of the rural population, and a similar alteration took place in the army. As early as the time of Cæsar, Italy was exhausted; his

[61] *Decline and Fall*, ch. xii.

legions were mainly raised in Gaul, and as the native farmers sank into serfdom or slavery, and then at last vanished, recruits were drawn more and more from beyond the limits of the Empire. At first they were taken singly, afterwards in tribes and nations, so that, when Aëtius defeated Attila at Châlons, the battle was fought by the Visigoths under Theodoric, and the equipment of the Romans and Huns was so similar that when drawn up the lines "presented the image of civil war."

This military metamorphosis indicated the extinction of the martial type, and it extended throughout society. Rome not only failed to breed the common soldier, she also failed to produce generals. After the first century, the change was marked. Trajan was a Spaniard, Septimius Severus an African, Aurelian an Illyrian peasant, Diocletian a Dalmatian slave, Constantius Chlorus a Dardanian noble, and the son of Constantius, by a Dacian woman, was the great Constantine.

All these men were a peculiar species of military adventurer, for they combined qualities which made them, not only effective chiefs of police, but acceptable as heads of the civil bureaucracy, which represented capital. Severus was the type, and Severus has never been better described than by Machiavelli, who said he united the ferocity of the lion to the cunning of the fox. This bureaucracy was the core of the consolidated mass called the Empire; it was the embodiment of money, the ultimate expression of force, and it recognized and advanced men who were adapted to its needs. When such men were to be found,

the administration was thought good; but when no one precisely adapted for the purple appeared, and an ordinary officer had to be hired to keep the peace, friction was apt to follow, and the soldier, even though of the highest ability, was often removed. Both Stilicho and Aëtius were murdered.

The monied oligarchy which formed this bureaucracy was a growth as characteristic of the high centralization of the age, as a sacred caste is characteristic of decentralization. Perhaps the capitalistic class of the later Empire has been better understood and appreciated by Fustel de Coulanges than by any other historian.

> "All the documents which show the spirit of the epoch show that this noblesse was as much honoured by the government as respected by the people… It was from it that the imperial government chose ordinarily its high functionaries."

These functionaries were not sought among the lower classes. The high offices were not given as a reward of long and faithful service; they belonged by prescriptive right to the great families. The Empire made the wealthy, senators, prætors, consuls, and governors; all dignities, except only the military, were practically hereditary in the opulent class.

> "This class is rich and the government is poor. This class is mistress of the larger part of the soil; it is in possession of the local dignities, of the administrative and judicial functions. The government has only the appearance

of power, and an armed force which is continually diminishing…

"The aristocracy had the land, the wealth, the distinction, the education, ordinarily the morality of existence; it did not know how to fight and to command. It withdrew itself from military service; more than that, it despised it. It was one of the characteristic signs of this society to have always placed the civil functions not on a level with, but much above, the grades of the army. It esteemed much the profession of the doctor, of the professor, of the advocate; it did not esteem that of the officer and the soldier, and left it to men of low estate."[62]

This supremacy of the economic instinct transformed all the relations of life, the domestic as well as the military. The family ceased to be a unit, the members of which cohered from the necessity of self-defence, and became a business association. Marriage took the form of a contract, dissoluble at the will of either party, and, as it was somewhat costly, it grew rare. As with the drain of their bullion to the East, which crushed their farmers, the Romans were conscious, as Augustus said, that sterility must finally deliver their city into the hand of the barbarians.[63] They knew this and they strove to avert their fate, and there is little in history more impressive than the impotence of the ancient civilization in its conflict with nature. About the opening of the Christian era the State addressed itself to the task. Probably in

[62] *L'Invasion Germanique*, 200, 204, 223.

[63] *Dio Cassius*, lvi. 7.

the year 4 A.D., the emperor succeeded in obtaining the first legislation favouring marriage, and this enactment not proving effective, it was supplemented by the famous Leges Julia and Papia Poppæa of the year 9. In the spring, at the games, the knights demanded the repeal of these laws, and then Augustus, having called them to the Forum, made them the well-known speech, whose violence now seems incredible. Those who were single were the worst of criminals, they were murderers, they were impious, they were destroyers of their race, they resembled brigands or wild beasts. He asked the *equites* if they expected men to start from the ground to replace them, as in the fable; and declared in bitterness that while the government liberated slaves for the sole purpose of keeping up the number of citizens, the children of the Marcii, of the Fabii, of the Valerii, and the Julii, let their names perish from the earth.[64]

In vain celibacy was made almost criminal. In vain celibates were declared incapable of inheriting, while fathers were offered every bribe, were preferred in appointments to office, were even given the choice seats at games; in the words of Tacitus, "not for that did marriage and children increase, for the advantages of childlessness prevailed."[65] All that was done was to breed a race of informers, and to stimulate the lawyers to fresh chicane.[66]

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[64] *Dio Cassius*, lvi. 5–8.

[65] *Ann.*, iii. 25.

[66] *Ibid.*, xxviii. Latin literature is full of references to these famous laws. Tacitus, Pliny, Juvenal, and Martial constantly speak of them. There were also many

When wealth became force, the female might be as strong as the male; therefore she was emancipated. Through easy divorce she came to stand on an equality with the man in the marriage contract. She controlled her own property, because she could defend it; and as she had power, she exercised political privileges. In the third century Julia Domna, Julia Mamæa, Soæmias, and others, sat in the Senate, or conducted the administration.

The evolution of this centralized society was as logical as every other work of nature. When force reached the stage where it expressed itself exclusively through money, the governing class ceased to be chosen because they were valiant or eloquent, artistic, learned, or devout, and were selected solely because they had the faculty of acquiring and keeping wealth. As long as the weak retained enough vitality to produce something which could be absorbed, this oligarchy was invincible; and for very many years after the native peasantry of Gaul and Italy had perished under the load, new blood injected from more tenacious races kept the dying civilization alive.

The weakness of the monied class lay in their very power, for they not only killed the producer, but in the strength of their acquisitiveness they failed to propagate themselves. The State feigned to regard marriage as a debt, and yet the opulent families died out. In the reign of Augustus all but fifty of the patrician houses had become extinct, and subsequently the emperor seemed destined to remain the universal heir through

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commentaries on them by Roman jurists.

bequests of the childless.

With the peasantry the case was worse. By the second century barbarian labour had to be imported to till the fields, and even the barbarians lacked the tenacity of life necessary to endure the strain. They ceased to breed, and the population dwindled. Then, somewhat suddenly, the collapse came. With shrinking numbers, the sources of wealth ran dry, the revenue failed to pay the police, and on the efficiency of the police the life of this unwarlike civilization hung.

In early ages every Roman had been a land-owner, and every land-owner had been a soldier, serving without pay. To fight had been as essential a part of life as to plough. But by the fourth century military service had become commercial; the legions were as purely an expression of money as the bureaucracy itself.

From the time of the Servian constitution downward, the change in the army had kept pace with the acceleration of movement which caused the economic competition that centralized the State. Rome owed her triumphs over Hannibal and Pyrrhus to the valour of her infantry, rather than to the genius of her generals; but from Marius the census ceased to be the basis of recruitment, and the rich refused to serve in the ranks.

This was equivalent in itself to a social revolution; for, from the moment when the wealthy succeeded in withdrawing themselves from service, and the poor saw in it a trade, the citizen ceased to be a soldier, and the soldier became a mercenary. From that time the army could be used for "all purposes, provided that

they could count on their pay and their booty."[67]

The administration of Augustus organized the permanent police, which replaced the mercenaries of the civil wars, and this machine was the greatest triumph and the crowning glory of capital. Dio Cassius has described how the last vestige of an Italian army passed away. Up to the time of Severus it had been customary to recruit the Prætorians either from Italy itself, from Spain, Macedonia, or other neighbouring countries, whose population had some affinity with that of Latium. Severus, after the treachery of the guard to Pertinax, disbanded it, and reorganized a corps selected from the bravest soldiers of the legions. These men were a horde of barbarians, repulsive to Italians in their habits, and terrible to look upon.[68] Thus a body of wage-earners, drawn from the ends of the earth, was made cohesive by money. For more than four hundred years this corps of hirelings crushed revolt within the Empire, and regulated the injection of fresh blood from without, with perfect promptitude and precision; nor did it fail in its functions while the money which vitalized it lasted.

But a time came when the suction of the usurers so wasted the life of the community that the stream of bullion ceased to flow from the capital to the frontiers; then, as the sustaining force failed, the line of troops along the Danube and the Rhine was drawn out until it broke, and the barbarians poured in unchecked.

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[67] *L'Organisation Militaire chez les Romains*, Marquardt, 143.

[68] *Dio Cassius*, lxxiv. 2.

The so-called invasions were not conquests, for they were not necessarily hostile; they were only the logical conclusion of a process which had been going on since Trajan. When the power to control the German emigration decayed, it flowed freely into the provinces.

By the year 400 disintegration was far advanced; the Empire was crumbling, not because it was corrupt or degenerate, but because the most martial and energetic race the world had ever seen had been so thoroughly exterminated by men of the economic type of mind, that petty bands of sorry adventurers might rove whither they would, on what had once been Roman soil, without meeting an enemy capable of facing them, save other adventurers like themselves. Goths, not Romans, defeated Attila at Châlons.

The Vandals, who, in the course of twenty years, wandered from the Elbe to the Atlas, were not a nation, not an army, not even a tribe, but a motley horde of northern barbarians, ruined provincials, and escaped slaves – a rabble whom Cæsar's legions would have scattered like chaff, had they been as many as the sands of the shore; and yet when Genseric routed Boniface and sacked Carthage, in 439, he led barely fifty thousand fighting men.

CHAPTER II
THE MIDDLE AGE

Probably the appreciation of the Roman monetary standard culminated during the invasion of the Huns toward the middle of the fifth century. In the reign of Valentinian III. gold sold for eighteen times its weight of silver, and Valentinian's final catastrophe was the murder of Aëtius in 454, with whose life the last spark of vitality at the heart of Roman centralization died. The rise of Ricimer and the accession of Odoacer, mark the successive steps by which Italy receded into barbarism, and, in the time of Theoderic the Ostrogoth, she had become a primitive, decentralized community, whose poverty and sluggishness protected her from African and Asiatic competition. The Ostrogoths subdued Italy in 493, and by that date the barbarians had overrun the whole civilized world west of the Adriatic, causing the demand for money to sustain a consolidated society to cease, the volume of trade to shrink, the market for eastern wares to contract, and gold to accumulate at the centre of exchanges. As gold accumulated, its value fell, and during the first years of the sixth century it stood at a ratio to silver of less than fifteen to one, a decline of eighteen per cent.[69] As prices correspondingly rose, the pressure on the

[69] *Monnaies Byzantines*, Sabatier, i. 50.

peasantry relaxed, prosperity at Constantinople returned, and the collapse of the Western Empire may have prolonged the life of the European population of the Eastern for above one hundred and fifty years. The city which Constantine planted in 324 on the shore of the Bosphorus, was in reality a horde of Roman capitalists washed to the confines of Asia by the current of foreign exchanges; and these emigrants carried with them, to a land of mixed Greek and barbarian blood, their language and their customs. For many years these monied potentates ruled their new country absolutely. All that legislation could do for them was done. They even annexed rations to their estates, to be supplied at the public cost, to help their children maintain their palaces. As long as prices fell, nothing availed; the aristocracy grew poorer day by day. Their property lay generally in land, and the same stringency which wasted Italy and Gaul operated, though perhaps less acutely, upon the Danubian peasantry also. By the middle of the fifth century the country was exhausted and at the mercy of the Huns.

Wealth is the weapon of a monied society; for, though itself lacking the martial instinct, it can, with money, hire soldiers to defend it. But to raise a revenue from the people, they must retain a certain surplus of income after providing for subsistence, otherwise the government must trench on the supply of daily food, and exhaustion must supervene. Finlay has explained that chronic exhaustion was the normal condition of Byzantium under the Romans.

"The whole surplus profits of society were annually drawn into the coffers of the State, leaving the inhabitants only a bare sufficiency for perpetuating the race of tax-payers. History, indeed, shows that the agricultural classes, from the labourer to the landlord, were unable to retain possession of the savings required to replace that depreciation which time is constantly producing in all vested capital, and that their numbers gradually diminished."[70]

Under Theodosius II., when gold reached its maximum, complete prostration prevailed. The Huns marched whither they would, and one swarm "of barbarians followed another, as long as anything was left to plunder." The government could no longer keep armies in the field. A single example will show how low the community had fallen. In 446, Attila demanded of Theodosius six thousand pounds of gold as a condition of peace, and certainly six thousand pounds of gold, equalling perhaps $1,370,000, was a small sum, even when measured by the standard of private wealth. The end of the third century was not a prosperous period in Italy, and yet before his election as emperor in 275, the fortune of Tacitus reached 280,000,000 sesterces, or upwards of $11,000,000.[71] Nevertheless Theodosius was unable to wring this inconsiderable indemnity from the people, and he had to levy a private assessment on the senators, who were themselves so poor that to pay they sold at auction the jewels of their wives and

[70] *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Finlay, 9.

[71] Vopiscus, *Tacitus*, 10.

the furniture of their houses.

Almost immediately after the collapse of the Western Empire the tide turned. With the fall in the price of gold the peasantry revived and the Greek provinces flourished. In the reign of Justinian, Belisarius and Narses marched from end to end of Africa and Europe, and Anastasius rolled in wealth.

Anastasius, the contemporary of Theoderic, acceded to the throne in 491. He not only built the famous long wall from the Propontis to the Euxine, and left behind him a treasure of three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of gold, but he remitted to his subjects the most oppressive of their taxes, and the reign of Justinian, who succeeded him at an interval of only ten years, must always rank as the prime of the Byzantine civilization. The observation is not new, it has been made by all students of Byzantine history.

"The increased prosperity … infused into society soon displayed its effects; and the brilliant exploits of the reign of Justinian must be traced back to the reinvigoration of the body politic of the Roman Empire by Anastasius."[72]

Justinian inherited the throne from his uncle Justin, a Dardanian peasant, who could neither read nor write. But the barbarian shepherd was a thorough soldier, and the army he left behind him was probably not inferior to the legions of Titus or Trajan. At all events, had Justinian's funds sufficed, there seems reason to suppose he might have restored the boundaries of the

[72] *Greece under the Romans*, George Finlay, 214.

Empire. His difficulty lay not in lack of physical force, but in dearth of opulent enemies; in the sixth century conquest had ceased to be profitable. The territory open to invasion had been harried for generations, and hardly a country was to be found rich enough to repay the cost of a campaign by mercenaries. Therefore, the more the emperor extended his dominions, the more they languished; and finally to provide for wars, barbarian subsidies, and building, Justinian had to resort to over-taxation. With renewed want came renewed decay, and perhaps the completion of Saint Sophia, in 558, may be taken as the point whence the race which conceived this masterpiece hastened to its extinction.

In the seventh century Asiatic competition devoured the Europeans in the Levant, as three hundred years before it had devoured the husbandmen of Italy; and this was a disease which isolation alone could cure. But isolation of the centre of exchanges was impossible, for the vital principle of an economic age is competition, and, when the relief afforded by the collapse of Rome had been exhausted, competition did its work with relentless rapidity. Under Heraclius (610–640) the population sank fast, and by 717 the western blood had run so low that an Asiatic dynasty reigned supreme. Everywhere Greeks and Romans vanished before Armenians and Slavs, and for years previous to the accession of Leo the Isaurian the great waste tracts where they once lived were systematically repeopled by a more enduring race. The colonists of Justinian

II. furnished him an auxiliary army. At Justinian's death in 711 the revolution had been completed; the population had been renovated, and Constantinople had become an Asiatic city.[73] The new aristocracy was Armenian, as strong an economic type as ever existed in western Asia; while the Slavic peasantry which underlay them were among the most enduring of mankind. There competition ended, for it could go no further; and, apparently, from the accession of Leo in 717, to the rise of Florence and Venice, three hundred and fifty years later, Byzantine society, in fixity, almost resembled the Chinese. Such movement as occurred, like Iconoclasm, came from the friction of the migrating races with the old population. As Texier has observed of architecture: "From the time of Justinian until the end of the Empire we cannot remark a single change in the modes of construction."[74]

Only long after, when the money which sustained it was diverted toward Italy during the crusades, did the social fabric crumble; and Gibbon has declared that the third quarter of the tenth century "forms the most splendid period of the Byzantine annals."[75]

The later Byzantine was an economic civilization, without aspiration or imagination, and perhaps the most vivid description which has survived of that ostentatious, sordid, cowardly, and

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[73] *Byzantine Empire*, Finlay, 256.

[74] *Byzantine Architecture*, Texier, 24.

[75] *Decline and Fall*, ch. lii.

stagnant race, is the little sketch of the Jew, Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled to the Levant in 1173.

Benjamin called the inhabitants of Constantinople Greeks, because of their language, and he described the city as a vast commercial metropolis, "common to all the world, without distinction of country or religion." Merchants from the East and West flocked thither – from Babylon, Mesopotamia, Media, and Persia, as well as from Egypt, Hungary, Russia, Lombardy, and Spain. The rabbi thought the people well educated and social, liking to eat and drink, "every man under his vine and under his fig tree." They loved gold and jewels, pompous display, and gorgeous ceremonial; and the Jew has dwelt with delight on the palace, with its columns of gold and silver, and the wonderful crown so studded with gems that it lighted the night without a lamp. The Greeks also roused his enthusiasm for the splendour of their clothes and of their horses' trappings, for when they went abroad they resembled princes; but on the other hand, he remarked with a certain scorn, that they were utterly cowardly, and, like women, had to hire men to protect them.

> "The Greeks who inhabit the country are extremely rich and possess great wealth of gold and precious stones. They dress in garments of silk, ornamented by gold and other valuable materials… Nothing upon earth equals their wealth."
>
> "The Greeks hire soldiers of all nations whom they call barbarians, for the purpose of carrying on … wars with … the Turks." "They have no martial spirit themselves and like

women are unfit for war."[76]

The movement of races in the Eastern Empire proceeded with automatic regularity. The cheaper organism exterminated the more costly, because energy operated through money strongly enough to cause free economic competition; nor is the evidence upon which this conclusion rests to be drawn from books alone. Coinage and architecture, sculpture and painting, tell the tale with equal precision.

When, in the fourth century, wealth, ebbing on the Tiber, floated to the Bosphorus the core of the Latin aristocracy, it carried with it also the Latin coinage. For several generations this coinage underwent little apparent alteration, but after the final division of the Empire, in 395, between the sons of Theodosius, a subtle change began in the composition of the ruling class; a change reflected from generation to generation in the issues of their mints. Sabatier has described the transformation wrought in eight hundred years with the minuteness of an antiquary.

If a set of Byzantine coins are arranged in chronological order, those of Anastasius, about 500, show at a glance an influence which is not Latin. Strange devices have appeared on the reverse, together with Greek letters. A century later, when the great decline was in progress under Heraclius, the type had become barbarous, and the prevalence of Greek inscriptions proves the steady exhaustion of the Roman blood. Another fifty years, and by 690, under Justinian II., the permanent and conventional

[76] *Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. from the Hebrew by Asher, 54.

phase had been developed. Religious emblems were used; the head of Christ was struck on the golden son, and fixity of form presaged the Asiatic domination. The official costumes, the portraits of the emperors, certain consecrated inscriptions, all were changeless; and in 717, an Armenian dynasty ascended the throne in the person of Leo the Isaurian.[77] This motionless period lasted for full three hundred and fifty years, as long as the exchanges of the world centred at Byzantium, and the monied race who dwelt there sucked copious nutriment from the pool of wealth in which it lay. But even before the crusades the tide of trade began to flow to the south, and quitting Constantinople passed directly from Bagdad to the cities of Italy. Then the sustenance of the money-changers gradually failed. From the reign of Michael VI. effigies of the saints were engraved upon the coin, and after the revolution led by Alexius Comnenus, in 1081, the execution degenerated and debasement began. This revolution marked the beginning of the end. Immediately preceding the crusades, and attended by sharp distress, it was probably engendered by an alteration in the drift of foreign exchanges. Certainly the currency contracted sharply, and the gold money soon became so bad that Alexius had to stipulate to pay his debts in the byzants of his predecessor Michael.[78] For the next hundred years, as the Italian cities rose, the Empire languished, and with the thirteenth century, when

[77] *Monnaies Byzantines*, i. 26.

[78] See treaty with Bohemund. Anna Comnena, xiii. 7.

Venice established its permanent silver standard by coining the "grosso," Constantinople crumbled into ruin.

In architecture the same phenomena appear, only differently clothed. Though the Germans, who swarmed across the Danube, often surged against the walls of Constantinople, they never became the ruling class of the community, because they were of the imaginative type. Money retained its supremacy, and while it did so energy expressed itself through the economic mind. Though Justinian was of barbarian blood, the nephew of a barbarian shepherd, the aristocracy about him, which formed the core of society, was neither imaginative nor devotional. Hardly Christian, it tended toward paganism or scepticism. The artists were of the subject caste, and they earned their living by gratifying the tastes of the nobles; but the nobles loved magnificence and gorgeous functions; hence all Byzantine architecture favoured display, and nowhere more so than in Saint Sophia. "Art delighted in representing Christ in all the splendour of power… To glorify him the more all the magnificence of the imperial court was introduced into heaven… Christ no longer appeared under the benevolent aspect of the good shepherd, but in the superb guise of an oriental monarch: he is seated on a throne glittering with gold and precious stones."[79] Here then lay the impassable gulf between Byzantium and Paris; while Byzantium remained economic and materialistic, Paris passed into the glory of an imaginative age.

[79] *L'Art Byzantin*, Bayet, 16, 17.

The Germans who overran the Roman territory were of the same race as the Greeks, the Latins, or the Gauls, but in a different stage of development. They tilled farms and built villages and perhaps fortresses, but they were not consolidated, and had neither nations nor federations. They were substantially in the condition in which the common family had been, when it divided many centuries before, and their minds differed radically from the minds of the inhabitants of the countries beyond the Danube and the Rhine. They were infinitely more imaginative, and, as the flood of emigration poured down from the north, the imagination came more and more to prevail.

Although the lowest of existing savages are relatively advanced, they suggest that the strongest passion of primeval man must have been fear; and fear, not so much of living things, as of nature, which seemed to him resolutely hostile. Against wild beasts, or savages like himself, he might prevail by cunning or by strength; but against drought and famine, pestilence and earthquake, he was helpless, and he regarded these scourges as malevolent beings, made like himself, only more formidable. His first and most pressing task was to mollify them, and above the warrior class rose the sacred caste, whose function was to mediate between the visible and the invisible world.

Originally these intercessors appear to have been sorcerers, rather than priests, for spirits were believed to be hostile to man; and perhaps the first conception of a god may have been reached through the victory of a clan of sorcerers in fight. As Statius said

eighteen hundred years ago, "Primus in orbe deos fecit timor."[80] Probably the early wizards won their power by the discovery of natural secrets, which, though they could be transmitted to their descendants, might also be discovered by strangers. The later discoverers would become rival medicine men, and battle would be the only test by which the orthodoxy of the competitors could be determined. The victors would almost certainly stigmatize the beings the vanquished served, as devils who tormented men. There is an example of this process in the eighteenth chapter of 1 Kings: —

"And Elijah … said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

Then Elijah proposed that each side should dress a bullock, and lay it on wood, and call upon their spirit; and the one who sent down fire should be God. And all the people answered that it was well spoken. And Jezebel's prophets took their bullock and dressed it, and called on "Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us!" But nothing came of it.

Then Elijah mocked them, "and said, Cry aloud: … either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves with knives till "blood gushed out upon them. And … there was neither voice, nor any to answer." Then Elijah built his altar, and cut up his

[80] *Theb.*, iii. 661.

bullock and laid him on wood, and poured twelve barrels of water over the whole, and filled a trench with water.

And "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God.

"And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

The Germans of the fourth century were a very simple race, who comprehended little of natural laws, and who therefore referred phenomena they did not understand to supernatural intervention. This intervention could only be controlled by priests, and thus the invasions caused a rapid rise in the influence of the sacred class. The power of every ecclesiastical organization has always rested on the miracle, and the clergy have always proved their divine commission as did Elijah. This was eminently the case with the mediæval Church. At the outset Christianity was socialistic, and its spread among the poor was apparently caused by the pressure of competition; for the sect only became of enough importance to be persecuted under Nero, contemporaneously with the first signs of distress which appeared through the debasement of the denarius. But socialism was only a passing phase, and disappeared as the money value of the miracle rose, and brought wealth to the Church. Under

the Emperor Decius, about 250, the magistrates thought the Christians opulent enough to use gold and silver vessels in their service, and, by the fourth century, the supernatural so possessed the popular mind, that Constantine not only allowed himself to be converted by a miracle, but used enchantment as an engine of war.

In one of his marches, he encouraged the belief that he saw a luminous cross in the sky, with the words "By this conquer." The next night Christ appeared to him, and directed him to construct a standard bearing the same design, and, armed with this, to advance with confidence against Maxentius.

The legend, preserved by Eusebius, grew up after the event; but, for that very reason, it reflects the feeling of the age. The imagination of his men had grown so vivid that, whether he believed or not, Constantine found it expedient to use the Labarum as a charm to ensure victory. The standard supported a cross and a mystic monogram; the army believed its guards to be invulnerable, and in his last and most critical campaign against Licinius, the sight of the talisman not only excited his own troops to enthusiasm, but spread dismay through the enemy.

The action of the Milvian Bridge, fought in 312, by which Constantine established himself at Rome, was probably the point whence nature began to discriminate decisively against the monied type in Western Europe. Capital had already abandoned Italy; Christianity was soon after officially recognized, and during the next century the priest began to rank with the soldier

as a force in war.

Meanwhile, as the population sank into exhaustion, it yielded less and less revenue, the police deteriorated, and the guards became unable to protect the frontier. In 376, the Goths, hard pressed by the Huns, came to the Danube and implored to be taken as subjects by the emperor. After mature deliberation, the Council of Valens granted the prayer, and some five hundred thousand Germans were cantoned in Mœsia. The intention of the government was to scatter this multitude through the provinces as coloni, or to draft them into the legions; but the detachment detailed to handle them was too feeble, the Goths mutinied, cut the guard to pieces, and having ravaged Thrace for two years, defeated and killed Valens at Hadrianople. In another generation the disorganization of the Roman army had become complete, and Alaric gave it its deathblow in his campaign of 410.

Alaric was not a Gothic king, but a barbarian deserter, who, in 392, was in the service of Theodosius. Subsequently, he sometimes held imperial commands, and sometimes led bands of marauders on his own account, but was always in difficulty about his pay. Finally, in the revolution in which Stilicho was murdered, a corps of auxiliaries mutinied and chose him their general. Alleging that his arrears were unpaid, Alaric accepted the command, and with this army sacked Rome.

During the campaign the attitude of the Christians was more interesting than the strategy of the soldiers. Alaric was a robber, leading mutineers, and yet the orthodox historians

did not condemn him. They did not condemn him because the sacred class instinctively loved the barbarians whom they could overawe, whereas they could make little impression on the materialistic intellect of the old centralized society. Under the Empire the priests, like all other individuals, had to obey the power which paid the police; and as long as a revenue could be drawn from the provinces, the Christian hierarchy were subordinate to the monied bureaucracy who had the means to coerce them.

> "It was long since established, as a fundamental maxim of the Roman constitution, that every rank of citizens were alike subject to the laws, and that the care of religion was the right as well as duty of the civil magistrate."[81]

Their conversion made little change in the attitude of the emperors, and Constantine and his successors continued to exercise a supreme jurisdiction over the hierarchy. The sixteenth book of the Theodosian Code sufficiently sets forth the plenitude of their authority. In theory, bishops were elected by the clergy and the people, but in practice the emperor could control the patronage if it were valuable; and whether bishops were elected or appointed, as long as they were created and paid by laymen, they were dependent. The priesthood could only become autocratic when fear of the miracle exempted them from arrest; and toward the middle of the fifth century this point was approaching, as appears by the effect of the embassy of Leo the

[81] *Decline and Fall*, ch. xx.

Great to Attila.

In 452 the Huns had crossed the Alps and had sacked Aquileia. The Roman army was demoralized; Aëtius could not make head against the barbarians in the field; while Valentinian was so panic-stricken that he abandoned Ravenna, which was thought impregnable, and retreated to the capital, which was indefensible. At Rome, finding himself helpless in an open city, the emperor conceived the idea of invoking the power of the supernatural. He proposed to Leo to visit Attila and persuade him to spare the town. The pope consented without hesitation, and with perfect intrepidity caused himself to be carried to the Hun's tent, where he met with respect not unalloyed by fear. The legend probably reflects pretty accurately the feeling of the time. As the bishop stood before the king, Peter and Paul appeared on either side, menacing Attila with flaming swords; and though this particular form of apparition may be doubted, Attila seems beyond question to have been oppressed by a belief that he would not long survive the capture of Rome. He therefore readily agreed to accept a ransom and evacuate Italy.

From the scientific standpoint the saint and the sorcerer are akin; for though the saint uses the supernatural for man's benefit, and the sorcerer for his hurt, both deal in magic. The mediæval saint was a powerful necromancer. He healed the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, foretold the future, put out fires, found stolen property, brought rain, saved from shipwreck, routed the enemy, cured headache, was sovereign in child-birth,

and, indeed, could do almost anything that was asked of him, whether he were alive or dead. This power was believed to lie in some occult property of the flesh, which passed by contact. The woman in the Bible said, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." Moreover, this fluid was a substance whose passage could be felt, for "Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?"[82]

Anything which came in contact with the saint was likely to have been impregnated with this magical quality, and thus became a charm, or relic, whose value depended primarily on the power of the man himself, and secondly, on the thoroughness with which the material had been charged.

The tomb, which held the whole body, naturally stood highest; then parts of the body, according to their importance – a head, an arm, a leg, down to hairs of the beard. Then came hats, boots, girdles, cups, anything indeed which had been used. The very ground on which a great miracle-worker had stood might have high value.

The Holy Grail, which had held Christ's blood, would cure wounds, raise the dead, and fill itself with choice food, at the command of the owner. The eucharist, though not properly a relic, and which only became God through an incantation, would, in expert hands, stop fires, cure disease, cast out devils, expound philosophy, and detect perjury by choking the liar.

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[82] Mark v. 28, 30.

Every prize in life was to be obtained by this kind of magic. When the kings of France made war, they carried with them the enchanted banner of Saint Denis, and Froissart has told how even in the reign of Charles VI. it decided the battle of Roosebeke.[83]

Disease was treated altogether by miracle, and the Church found the business so profitable that she anathematized experimental practitioners. In the thirteenth century Saint Thomas of Canterbury and Saint James of Compostello were among the most renowned of healers, and their shrines blazed with the gifts of the greatest and richest persons of Europe. When Philip Augustus lay very ill, Louis the Pious obtained leave to visit the tomb of Saint Thomas, then in the height of the fashion, and left as part of his fee the famous regal of France, a jewel so magnificent that three centuries and a half later Henry VIII. seized it and set it in a thumb ring. Beside this wonderful gem, at the pillage of the Reformation, "the king's receiver confessed that the gold and silver and precious stones and sacred vestments taken away … filled six-and-twenty carts."[84] The old books of travel are filled with accounts of this marvellous shrine.

> "But the magnificence of the tomb of Saint Thomas the Martyr, Archbishop of Canterbury, is that which surpasses all belief. This, notwithstanding its great size, is entirely covered with plates of pure gold; but the gold is scarcely visible from the variety of precious stones with which it is

[83] *Chronicles*, ii. 124.

[84] *Anglican Schism*, Sander, trans. by Lewis, 143.

> studded, such as sapphires, diamonds, rubies, balas-rubies, and emeralds … and agates, jaspers and cornelians set in relievo, some of the cameos being of such a size, that I do not dare to mention it; but everything is left far behind by a ruby, not larger than a man's thumb-nail, which is set to the right of the altar… They say that it was the gift of a king of France."[85]

But beside these shrines of world-wide reputation, no hamlet was too remote to possess its local fetish, which worked at cheap rates for the peasantry. A curious list of these was sent to the Government by two of Cromwell's visitors in the reign of Henry VIII.

The nuns of Saint Mary, at Derby, had part of the shirt of Saint Thomas, reverenced by pregnant women; so was the girdle of Saint Francis at Grace Dieu. At Repton, a pilgrimage was made to Saint Guthlac and his bell, which was put on the head for headache. The wimple of Saint Audrede was used for sore breasts, and the rod of Aaron for children with worms. At Bury Saint Edmund's, the shrine of Saint Botulph was carried in procession when rain was needed, "and Kentish men … carry thence … wax candles, which they light at the end of the field while the wheat is sown, and hope from this that neither tares nor other weeds will grow in the wheat that year."[86] Most curious of

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[85] *A Relation, or rather a True Account of the Island of England*, Camden Soc. 30.

[86] *Cal.* x. No. 364. References to the calendar of State papers edited by Messrs. Brewer and Gairdner will be made by this word only.

all, perhaps, at Pontefract, Thomas, Duke of Lancaster's belt and hat were venerated. They were believed to aid women in child-birth, and also to cure headache.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a great venerator of the eucharist, used it to help him in his lectures. When treating of the dogma of the Supper at the University of Paris, many questions were asked him which he never answered without meditating at the foot of the altar. One day, when preparing an answer to a very difficult question, he placed it on the altar, and cried, "Lord, who really and veritably dwells in the Holy Sacrament, hear my prayer. If what I have written upon your divine eucharist be true, let it be given me to teach and demonstrate it. If I am deceived, stop me from proposing doctrines contrary to the truth of your divine Sacrament." Forthwith the Lord appeared upon the altar, and said to him, "You have written well upon the Sacrament of My body, and you have answered the question which has been proposed to you as well as human intelligence can fathom these mysteries."[87]

Primitive people argue directly from themselves to their divinities, and throughout the Middle Ages men believed that envy, jealousy, and vanity were as rampant in heaven as on earth, and behaved accordingly. The root of the monastic movement was the hope of obtaining advantages by adulation.

"A certain clerk, who had more confidence in the

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[87] *Histoire du Sacrament de l'Eucharistie*, Corblet, i. 474. See also on this subject *Cæsarii Dialogus Miraculorum; De Corpore Christi.*

> Mother than the Son, continually repeated the Ave Maria as his only prayer. One day, while so engaged, Christ appeared to him and said, 'My mother thanks you very much for your salutations, … *tamen et me salutare memento*.'"[88]

To insure perpetual intercession it was necessary that the song of praise and the smoke of incense should be perpetual, and therefore monks and nuns worked day and night at their calling. As a twelfth-century bishop of Metz observed, when wakened one freezing morning by the bell of Saint Peter of Bouillon tolling for matins: "Neither the drowsiness of the night nor the bitterness of a glacial winter [kept them] from praising the Creator of the world."[89]

Bequests to convents were in the nature of policies of insurance in favour of the grantor and his heirs, not only against punishment in the next world, but against accident in this. On this point doubt is impossible, for the belief of the donor is set forth in numberless charters. Cedric de Guillac, in a deed to la Grande-Sauve, said that he gave because "as water extinguishes fire, so gifts extinguish sin."[90] And an anecdote preserved by Dugdale, shows how valuable an investment against accident a convent was thought to be as late as the thirteenth century.

When Ralph, Earl of Chester, the founder of the monastery of Dieulacres, was returning by sea from the Holy Land, he was

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[88] *Hist. Lit. de la France*, xxii. 119.

[89] *Les Moines d'Occident*, Montalembert, vi. 34.

[90] *Histoire de la Grande-Sauve*, ii. 13.

overtaken one night by a sudden tempest. “How long is it till midnight?” he asked of the sailors. They answered, “About two hours.” He said to them, “Work on till midnight, and I trust in God that you may have help, and that the storm will cease.” When it was near midnight the captain said to the earl, “My lord, commend yourself to God, for the tempest increases; we are worn out, and are in mortal peril.” Then Earl Ralph came out of his cabin, and began to help with the ropes, and the rest of the ship’s tackle; nor was it long before the storm subsided.

The next day, as they were sailing over a tranquil sea, the captain said to the earl, “My lord, tell us, if you please, why you wished us to work till the middle of the night, and then you worked harder than all the rest.” To which he replied, “Because at midnight my monks, and others, whom my ancestors and I have endowed in divers places, rise and sing divine service, and then I have faith in their prayers, and I believe that God, because of their prayers and intercessions, gave me more fortitude than I had before, and made the storm cease as I predicted.”[91]

Philip Augustus, when caught in a gale in the Straits of Messina, showed equal confidence in the matins of Clairvaux, and was also rewarded for his faith by good weather towards morning.

The power of the imagination, when stimulated by the mystery which, in an age of decentralization, shrouds the operations of nature, can be measured by its effect in creating an autocratic

[91] *Monasticon*, v. 628, Ed. 1846.

class of miracle-workers. Between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries, about one-third of the soil of Europe passed into the hands of religious corporations, while the bulk of the highest talent of the age sought its outlet through monastic life.

The force operated on all; for, beside religious ecstasy, ambition and fear were at work, and led to results inconceivable when centralization has begot materialism. Saint Bernard's position was more conspicuous and splendid than that of any monarch of his generation, and the agony of terror which assailed the warriors was usually proportionate to the freedom with which they had violated ecclesiastical commands. They fled to the cloister for protection from the fiend, and took their wealth with them.

Gérard le Blanc was even more noted for his cruelty than for his courage. He was returning to his castle one day, after having committed a murder, when he saw the demon whom he served appear to claim him. Seized with horror, he galloped to where six penitents had just founded the convent of Afflighem, and supplicated them to receive him. The news spread, and the whole province gave thanks to God that a monster of cruelty should have been so converted.

A few days after, his example was followed by another knight, equally a murderer, who had visited the recluses, and, touched by their piety and austerity, resolved to renounce his patrimony and live a penitent.[92]

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[92] *Les Moines d'Occident*, Montalembert, vi. 101.

Had the German migrations been wars of extermination, as they have sometimes been described, the imagination, among the new barbaric population, might have been so stimulated that a pure theocracy would have been developed between the time of Saint Benedict and Saint Bernard. But the barbarians were not animated by hate; on the contrary, they readily amalgamated with the old population, amongst whom the materialism of Rome lay like a rock in a rising tide, sometimes submerged, but never obliterated.

The obstacle which the true emotionalists never overcame was the inheritance of a secular clergy, who, down to the eleventh century, were generally married, and in the higher grades were rather barons than prelates. In France the Archbishop of Rheims, the Bishops of Beauvais, Noyon, Langres, and others, were counts; while in Germany the Archbishops of Mayence, of Treves, and of Cologne were princes and electors, standing on the same footing as the Dukes of Saxony and Bavaria.

As feudal nobles these ecclesiastics were retainers of the king, owed feudal service, led their vassals in war, and some of the fiercest soldiers of the Middle Ages were clerks. Milo of Treves was a famous eighth-century bishop. Charles Martel gave the archbishopric of Rheims to a warrior named Milo, who managed also to obtain the see of Treves. This Milo was the son of Basinus, the last incumbent of the preferment. He was a fierce and irreligious soldier, and was finally killed hunting; but during the forty years in which he held his offices, Boniface, with all

the aid of the crown and the pope, was unable to prevail against him, and in 752 Pope Zachary wrote advising that he should be left to the divine vengeance.[93]

Such a system was incompatible with the supremacy of a theocracy. The essence of a theocracy is freedom from secular control, and this craving for freedom was the dominant instinct of monasticism. Saint Anselm, perhaps the most perfect specimen of a monk, felt it in the marrow of his bones; it was the master passion of his life, and he insisted upon it with all the fire of his nature: "Nihil magis diligit Deus in hoc mundo quam libertatem ecclesiæ suæ… Liberam vult esse Deus sponsam suam, non ancillam."

Yet only very slowly, as the Empire disintegrated, did the theocratic idea take shape. As late as the ninth century the pope prostrated himself before Charlemagne, and did homage as to a Roman emperor.[94]

Saint Benedict founded Monte Cassino in 529, but centuries elapsed before the Benedictine order rose to power. The early convents were isolated and feeble, and much at the mercy of the laity, who invaded and debauched them. Abbots, like bishops, were often soldiers, who lived within the walls with their wives and children, their hawks, their hounds, and their men-at-arms; and it has been said that, in all France, Corbie and Fleury alone kept always something of their early discipline.

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[93] *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, Lea, 129.

[94] *Annales Laureſſenſes*, Perz, i. 188.

Only in the early years of the most lurid century of the Middle Ages, when decentralization culminated, and the imagination began to gain its fullest intensity, did the period of monastic consolidation open with the foundation of Cluny. In 910 William of Aquitaine drew a charter[95] which, so far as possible, provided for the complete independence of his new corporation. There was no episcopal visitation, and no interference with the election of the abbot. The monks were put directly under the protection of the pope, who was made their sole superior. John XI. confirmed this charter by his bull of 932, and authorized the affiliation of all convents who wished to share in the reform.[96]

The growth of Cluny was marvellous; by the twelfth century two thousand houses obeyed its rule, and its wealth was so great, and its buildings so vast, that in 1245 Innocent IV., the Emperor Baldwin, and Saint Louis were all lodged together within its walls, and with them all the attendant trains of prelates and nobles with their servants.

In the eleventh century no other force of equal energy existed. The monks were the most opulent, the ablest, and the best organized society in Europe, and their effect upon mankind was proportioned to their strength. They intuitively sought autocratic power, and during the centuries when nature favoured them, they passed from triumph to triumph. They first seized upon the

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[95] *Recueil des Chartes de l'Abbaye de Cluny*, Bruel, i. 124.

[96] *Bull. Clun.*, p. 2, col. 1. Also *Manuel des Institutions Françaises*, Luchaire, 93, 95, where the authorities are collected.

papacy and made it self-perpetuating; they then gave battle to the laity for the possession of the secular hierarchy, which had been under temporal control since the very foundation of the Church.

About the year 1000 Rome was in chaos. The Counts of Tusculum, who had often disposed of the tiara, on the death of John XIX., bought it for Benedict IX. Benedict was then a child of ten, but he grew worse as he grew older, and finally he fell so low that he was expelled by the people. He was succeeded by Sylvester; but, a few months after his coronation, Benedict re-entered the city, and crowned John XX. with his own hands. Shortly after, he assaulted the Vatican, and then three popes reigned together in Rome. In this crisis Gregory VI. tried to restore order by buying the papacy for himself; but the transaction only added a fourth pope to the three already consecrated, and two years later he was set aside by the Emperor Henry, who appointed his own chancellor in his place.

It was a last triumph for the laity, but a triumph easier to win than to sustain. When the soldier created the high priest of Christendom, he did indeed inspire such terror that no man in the great assembly dared protest; but in nine months Clement was dead, his successor lived only twenty-four days, poisoned, as it was rumoured, by the perfidious Italians; and when Henry sought a third pope among his prelates, he met with general timidity to accept the post. Then the opportunity of the monks came: they seized it, and with unerring instinct fixed themselves upon the throne from which they have never been expelled. According to

the picturesque legend, Bruno, Bishop of Toul, seduced by the flattery of courtiers and the allurements of ambition, accepted the tiara from the emperor, and set out upon his journey to Italy with a splendid retinue, and with his robe and crown. On his way he turned aside at Cluny, where Hildebrand was prior. Hildebrand, filled with the spirit of God, reproached him with having seized upon the seat of the vicar of Christ by force, and accepted the holy office from the sacrilegious hand of a layman. He exhorted Bruno to cast away his pomp, and to cross the Alps humbly as a pilgrim, assuring him that the priests and people of Rome would recognize him as their bishop, and elect him according to canonical forms. Then he would taste the joys of a pure conscience, having entered the fold of Christ as a shepherd and not as a robber. Inspired by these words, Bruno dismissed his train, and left the convent gate as a pilgrim. He walked barefoot, and when after two months of pious meditations he stood before Saint Peter's, he spoke to the people and told them it was their privilege to elect the pope, and since he had come unwillingly he would return again, were he not their choice.

He was answered with acclamations, and on February 2, 1049, he was enthroned as Leo IX. His first act was to make Hildebrand his minister.

The legend tells of the triumph of Cluny as no historical facts could do. Ten years later, in the reign of Nicholas II., the theocracy made itself self-perpetuating through the assumption of the election of the pope by the college of cardinals, and in

1073 Hildebrand, the incarnation of monasticism, was crowned under the name of Gregory VII.

With Hildebrand's election, war began. The council of Rome, held in 1075, decreed that holy orders should not be recognized where investiture had been granted by a layman, and that princes guilty of conferring investiture should be excommunicated. The council of the next year, which excommunicated the emperor, also enunciated the famous propositions of Baronius – the full expression of the theocratic idea: —

"That the Roman pontiff alone can be called universal.

"That he alone can depose or reconcile bishops.

"That his legate, though of inferior rank, takes precedence of all bishops in council, and can pronounce sentence of deposition against them.

. . . . . .

"That all princes should kiss the pope's feet alone.

. . . . . .

"That he may depose emperors.

. . . . . .

"That his judgments can be overruled by none, and he alone can overrule the judgments of all.

"That he can be judged by no one.

"That the Roman Church never has, and never can err, as the Scriptures testify.

. . . . . .

"That by his precept and permission it is lawful for subjects to accuse their princes.

. . . . . .

"That he is able to absolve from their allegiance the subjects of the wicked."[97]

The monks had won the papacy, but the emperor still held his secular clergy, and, at the diet of Worms, where he undertook to depose Hildebrand, he was sustained by his prelates. Without a moment of hesitation the enchanter cast his spell, and it is interesting to see, in the curse which he launched at the layman, how the head of monasticism had become identified with the spirit which he served. The priest had grown to be a god on earth.

"So strong in this confidence, for the honour and defence of your Church, on behalf of the omnipotent God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by your power and authority, I forbid the government of the German and Italian kingdoms, to King Henry, the son of the Emperor Henry, who, with unheard-of arrogance, has rebelled against your Church. I absolve all Christians from the oaths they have made, or may make to him, and I forbid that any one should obey him as king."[98]

Henry marched on Italy, but in all European history there has been no drama more tremendous than the expiation of his sacrilege. To his soldiers the world was a vast space, peopled by those fantastic beings which are still seen on Gothic towers. These demons obeyed the monk of Rome, and his army, melting

[97] *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Baronius, year 1076.

[98] Migne, cxlviii. 790.

from the emperor under a nameless horror, left him helpless.

Gregory lay like a magician in the fortress of Canossa; but he had no need of carnal weapons, for when the emperor reached the Alps he was almost alone. Then his imagination also took fire, the panic seized him, and he sued for mercy.

For three days long he stood barefoot in the snow at the castle gate; and when at last he was admitted, half-naked and benumbed, he was paralyzed rather by terror than by cold. Then the great miracle was wrought, by which God was made to publicly judge between them.

Hildebrand took the consecrated wafer and broke it, saying to the suppliant, "Man's judgments are fallible, God's are infallible; if I am guilty of the crimes you charge me with, let Him strike me dead as I eat." He ate, and gave what remained to Henry; but though for him more than life was at stake, he dared not taste the bread. From that hour his fate was sealed. He underwent his penance and received absolution; and when he had escaped from the terrible old man, he renewed the war. But the spell was over him, the horror clung to him, even his sons betrayed him, and at last his mind gave way under the strain and he abdicated. In his own words, to save his life he "sent to Mayence the crown, the sceptre, the cross, the sword, the lance."

On August 7, 1106, Henry died at Liège, an outcast and a mendicant, and for five long years his body lay at the church door, an accursed thing which no man dared to bury.

Such was the evolution of the mediæval theocracy, the

result of that social disintegration which stimulates the human imagination, and makes men cower before the unknown. The force which caused the rise of an independent priesthood was the equivalent of magic, and it was the waxing of this force through the dissolution of the Empire of the West which made the schism which split Christendom in two. The Latin Church divided from the Greek because it was the reflection of the imaginative mind. While the West grew emotional, Constantinople stayed the centre of exchanges, the seat of the monied class; and when Cluny captured Rome, the antagonism between these irreconcilable instincts precipitated a rupture. The schism dated from 1054, five years after the coronation of Leo. Nor is the theory new; it was explained by Gibbon long ago.

> "The rising majesty of Rome could no longer brook the insolence of a rebel; and Michael Cerularius was excommunicated in the heart of Constantinople by the pope's legates…
>
> "From this thunderbolt we may date the consummation of the schism. It was enlarged by each ambitious step of the Roman pontiffs; the emperors blushed and trembled at the ignominious fate of their royal brethren of Germany; and the people were scandalized by the temporal power and military life of the Latin clergy."[99]

[99] *Decline and Fall*, ch. lx.

CHAPTER III
THE FIRST CRUSADE

Until the mechanical arts have advanced far enough to cause the attack in war to predominate over the defence, centralization cannot begin; for when a mud wall can stop an army, a police is impossible. The superiority of the attack was the secret of the power of the monied class who controlled Rome, because with money a machine could be maintained which made individual resistance out of the question, and revolt difficult. Titus had hardly more trouble in reducing Jerusalem, and dispersing the Jews, than a modern officer would have under similar circumstances.

As the barbarians overran the Roman provinces, and the arts declined, the conditions of life changed. The defence gained steadily on the attack, and, after some centuries, a town with a good garrison, solid ramparts, and abundant provisions had nothing to fear from the greatest king. Even the small, square Norman tower was practically impregnable. As Viollet-le-Duc has explained, these towers were mere passive defences, formidable to a besieger only because no machinery existed for making a breach in a wall. The beleaguered nobles had only to watch their own men, see to their doors, throw projectiles at the enemy if he approached too near, counter-mine if mined, and

they might defy a great army until their food failed. Famine was the enemy most feared.[100]

By the eleventh century these towers had sprung up all over the West. Even the convents and churches could be defended, and every such stronghold was the seat of a count or baron, an abbot or bishop, who was a sovereign because no one could coerce him, and who therefore exercised all the rights of sovereignty, made war, dispensed justice, and coined money. In France alone there were nearly two hundred mints in the twelfth century.

Down to the close of the Merovingian dynasty the gold standard had been maintained, and contraction had steadily gone on; but, for reasons which are not understood, under the second race, the purchasing power of bullion temporarily declined, and this expansion was probably one chief cause of the prosperity of the reign of Charlemagne. Perhaps the relief was due to the gradual restoration of silver to circulation, for the coinage was then reformed, and the establishment of the silver pound as the measure of value may be considered as the basis of all the monetary systems of modern Europe.

The interval of prosperity was, however, brief; no permanent addition was made to the stock of precious metals, and prices continued to fall, as is demonstrated by the rapid deterioration of the currency. In this second period of relapse disintegration reached its limit.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries the Northmen infested

[100] *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, v. 50.

the coasts of France, and sailed up the rivers burning and ravaging, as far as Rouen and Orléans. Even the convents of Saint Martin of Tours and Saint Germain des Près were sacked. The Mediterranean swarmed with Saracenic corsairs, who took Fraxinetum, near Toulon, seized the passes of the Alps, and levied toll on travel into Italy. The cannibalistic Huns overran the Lower Danube, and closed the road to Constantinople. Western Europe was cut off from the rest of the world. Commerce nearly ceased – the roads were so bad and dangerous, and the sea so full of pirates.

The ancient stock of scientific knowledge was gradually forgotten, and the imagination had full play. Upon philosophy the effect was decisive; Christianity sank to a plane where it appealed more vividly to the minds of the surrounding pagans than their own faiths, and conversion then went on rapidly. In 912 Rollo of Normandy was baptized; the Danes, Norwegians, Poles, and Russians followed; and in 997 Saint Stephen ascended the throne of Hungary and reopened to Latin Christians the way to the Sepulchre.

Perhaps the destiny of modern Europe has hinged upon the fact that the Christian sacred places lay in Asia, and therefore the pilgrimage brought the West into contact with the East. But the pilgrimage was the effect of relic-worship, and relic-worship the vital principle of monasticism. In these centuries of extreme credulity monasticism had its strongest growth. A faculty for scientific study was abnormal, and experimental knowledge was

ascribed to sorcery. The monk Gerbert, who became pope as Sylvester II., was probably the most remarkable man of his generation. Though poor and of humble birth, he attracted so much attention that he was sent to Spain, where he studied in the Moorish schools at Barcelona and Cordova, and where he learned the rudiments of mathematics and geography. His contemporaries were so bewildered by his knowledge that they thought it due to magic, and told how he had been seen flying home from Spain, borne on the back of the demon he served, and loaded with the books he had stolen from the wizard, his master. Sylvester died in 1003, but long afterwards anatomy was still condemned by the Church, and four separate councils anathematized experimental medicine, because it threatened to destroy the value of the shrines. The ascendency of Cluny began with Saint Hugh, who was chosen abbot in 1049, the Year Leo's election. The corporation then obtained control of Rome, and in another twenty-five years was engaged in its desperate struggle with the remains of the old secular police power. But though Hildebrand crushed Henry, the ancient materialism was too deeply imbedded to be eradicated in a single generation, and meanwhile the imagination had been brought to an uncontrollable intensity. A new and fiercer excitement seethed among the people – a vision of the conquest of talismans so powerful as to make their owners sure of heaven and absolute on earth.

The attraction of Palestine had been very early felt, for in

333 a guide-book had been written, called the *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*, which gave the route through the valley of the Danube, together with an excellent account of the Holy Land. In those days, before the barbaric inroads, the journey was safe enough; but afterwards communication nearly ceased, and when Stephen was baptized in 997, the relics of Jerusalem had all the excitement of novelty. Europe glowed with enthusiasm. Sylvester proposed a crusade, and Hildebrand declared he would rather risk his life for the holy places "than rule the universe."

Each year the throngs upon the road increased, convents sprang up along the way to shelter the pilgrims, the whole population succoured and venerated them, and by the time Cluny had seized the triple crown, they left in veritable armies. Ingulf, secretary to William the Conqueror, set out in 1064 with a band seven thousand strong.

In that age of faith no such mighty stimulant could inflame the human brain as a march to Jerusalem. A crusade was no vulgar war for a vulgar prize, but an alliance with the supernatural for the conquest of talismans whose possession was tantamount to omnipotence. Urban's words at Clermont, when he first preached the holy war, have lost their meaning now; but they burned like fire into the hearts of his hearers then, for he promised them glory on earth and felicity in heaven, and he spoke in substance thus: No longer do you attack a castle or a town, but you undertake the conquest of the holy places. If you triumph, the blessings of heaven and the kingdoms of the East will be your

share; if you fall, you will have the glory of dying where Christ died, and God will not forget having seen you in His holy army.[101]

Urban told them "that under their general Jesus Christ … they, the Christian, the invincible army," would march to certain victory. In the eleventh century this language was no metaphor, for the Cluniac monk spoke as the mouthpiece of a god who was there actually among them, offering the cross he brought from the grave, and promising them triumphs: not the common triumphs which may be won by man's unaided strength, but the transcendent glory which belongs to beings of another world.

So the crusaders rode out to fight, the originals of the fairy knights, clad in impenetrable armour, mounted on miraculous horses, armed with resistless swords, and bearing charmed lives.

Whole villages, even whole districts, were left deserted; land lost its value; what could not be sold was abandoned; and the peasant, loaded with his poor possessions, started on foot with his wife and children in quest of the Sepulchre, so ignorant of the way that he mistook each town upon the road for Zion. Whether he would or no, the noble had to lead his vassals or be forsaken, and riding at their head with his hawks and hounds, he journeyed towards that marvellous land of wealth and splendour, where kingdoms waited the coming of the devoted knight of God. Thus men, women, and children, princes and serfs, priests and laymen, in a countless, motley throng, surged toward that mighty cross and tomb whose possessor was raised above the limitations of

[101] *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Baronius, year 1095.

the flesh.

The crusaders had no commissariat and no supply train, no engines of attack, or other weapons than those in their hands, and the holy relics they bore with them. There was no general, no common language, no organization; and so over unknown roads, and through hostile peoples, they wandered from the Rhine to the Bosphorus, and from the Bosphorus to Syria.

These earlier crusades were armed migrations, not military invasions, and had they met with a determined enemy, they must have been annihilated; but it chanced that the Syrians and Egyptians were at war, and the quarrel was so bitter that the caliph actually sought the Christian alliance. Even under such circumstances the waste of life was fabulous, and, had not Antioch been betrayed, the starving rabble must have perished under its walls. At Jerusalem, also, the Franks were reduced to the last extremity before they carried the town; and had it not been for the arrival of a corps of Genoese engineers, who built movable towers, they would have died miserably of hunger and thirst. Nor was the coming of this reinforcement preconcerted. On the contrary, the Italians accidentally lost their ships at Joppa, and, being left without shelter, sought protection in the camp of the besiegers just in time.

So incapable were the crusaders of regular operations, that even when the towers were finished and armed, the leaders did not know how to fill the moat, and Raymond of Saint Gilles had nothing better to propose than to offer a penny for every three

stones thrown into the ditch.

On July 15, 1099, Jerusalem was stormed; almost exactly three years after the march began. Eight days later Godfrey de Bouillon was elected king, and then the invaders spread out over the strip of mountainous country which borders the coast of Palestine and Syria, and the chiefs built castles in the defiles of the hills, and bound themselves together by a loose alliance against the common enemy.

The decentralization of the colony was almost incredible. The core of the kingdom was the barony of Jerusalem, which extended only from the Egyptian desert to a stream just north of Beyrout, and inland to the Jordan and the spurs of the hills beyond the Dead Sea, and yet it was divided into more than eighteen independent fiefs, whose lords had all the rights of sovereignty, made war, administered justice, and coined money.[102]

Beside these petty states, the ports were ceded to the Italian cities whose fleets helped in the conquest. Venice, Genoa, and Pisa held quarters in Ascalon, Joppa, Tyre, Acre, and Beyrout, which were governed by consuls or viscounts, who wrangled with each other and with the central government.

Such was the kingdom over which Godfrey reigned, but there were three others like it which together made up the Frankish monarchy. To the north of the barony of Jerusalem lay the county of Tripoli, and beyond Tripoli, extending to Armenia,

[102] *Les Familles d'Outre-Mer*, ed. Rey, 3.

the principality of Antioch. To the east of Antioch the county of Edessa stretched along the base of the Taurus Mountains and spread out somewhat indefinitely beyond the Euphrates.

Thus on the north Edessa was the outwork of Christendom, while to the south the castle of Karak, which commanded the caravan road between Suez and Damascus, held a corresponding position among the hills to the east of the Dead Sea.

Beyond the mountains the great plain sweeps away into Central Asia, and in this plain the Franks never could maintain their footing. Their failure to do so proved their ruin, for their position lay exposed to attack from Damascus; and it was by operating from Damascus as a base that Saladin succeeded in forcing the pass of Banias, and in cutting the Latin possessions in two at the battle of Tiberias.

A considerable body of Europeans were thus driven in like a wedge between Egypt and the Greek Empire, the two highest civilizations of the Middle Ages, while in front lay the Syrian cities of the plain, with whom the Christians were at permanent war. The contact was the closest, the struggle for existence the sharpest, and the barbaric mind received a stimulus not unlike the impulse Gaul received from Rome; for the interval which separated the East from the West, at the beginning of the twelfth century, was probably not less than that which divided Italy from Gaul at the time of Cæsar.

When Godfrey de Bouillon took the cross, the Byzantine Empire was already sinking. The Eastern trade which, for so

many centuries, had nourished its population, was beginning to flow directly from Asia into Italy, and, as the economic aristocracy of the capital lost its nutriment, it lost its energy. Apparently it fell in 1081, in the revolution which raised Alexius Comuenus to the throne. Because Alexius sacked Constantinople with a following of mongrel Greeks, Slavs, and Bulgarians, he has been called the first Greek emperor, but in reality the pure Greek blood had long since perished. The Byzantine population at the end of the eleventh century was the lees of a multitude of races, – a mixture of Slavs, Armenians, Jews, Thracians, and Greeks; a residuum of the most tenacious organisms, after all that was higher had disappeared. The army was a mixed horde of Huns, Arabs, Italians, Britons, Franks; of all in short who could fight and were for sale, while the Church was servile, the fancy dead, and art and literature were redolent of decaying wealth.

Nevertheless, ever since the fall of Rome, Constantinople had been the reservoir whence the West had drawn all its materialistic knowledge, and therefore, it was during the centuries when the valley of the Danube was closed, that the arts fell to their lowest ebb beyond the Alps and Rhine. After pilgrimages began again in the reign of Stephen, the Bosphorus lay once more in the path of travel, and as the returning palmers spread over the West, a revival followed in their track; a revival in which the spirit of Byzantium may yet be clearly read in the architecture of Italy and France. Saint Mark is a feeble imitation of Saint Sophia, while Viollet-le-Duc has described how long he hesitated before

he could decide whether the carving of Vézelay, Autun, and Moissac was Greek or French; and has dwelt upon the laborious care with which he pored over all the material, before he became convinced that the stones were cut by artists trained at Cluny, who copied Byzantine models.[103]

But the great gulf between the economic and the imaginative development, separated the moribund Greek society from the semi-childhood of the Franks; a chasm in its nature impassable because caused by a difference of mind, and which is, perhaps, seen most strikingly in religious architecture; for religious architecture, though always embodying the highest poetical aspirations of every civilization, yet had in the East and West diametrically opposite points of departure.

Saint Sophia is pregnant with the spirit of the age of Justinian. There was no attempt at mystery, or even solemnity, about the church, for the mind of the architect was evidently fixed upon solving the problem of providing the largest and lightest space possible, in which to display the functions of a plutocratic court. His solution was brilliantly successful. He enlarged the dome and diminished the supports, until, nothing remaining to interrupt the view, it seemed as though the roof had been suspended in the air. For his purpose the exterior had little value, and he sacrificed it.

The conception of the architects of France was the converse of this, for it was highly emotional. The gloom of the lofty vaults, dimly lighted by the subdued splendour of the coloured windows,

[103] *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, viii. 108.

made the interior of the Gothic cathedral the most mysterious and exciting sanctuary for the celebration of the miracle which has ever been conceived by man; while without, the doors and windows, the pinnacles and buttresses, were covered with the terrific shapes of demons and the majestic figures of saints, admonishing the laity of the danger lurking abroad, and warning them to take refuge within.

But if the Greeks and the Franks had little affinity for each other, the case was different with the Saracens, who were then in the full vigour of their intellectual prime, and in the meridian of their material splendour.

In the eleventh century, when Paris was still a cluster of huts cowering for shelter on the islands of the Seine, and the palace of the Duke of Normandy and King of England was the paltry White Tower of London, Cairo was being adorned with those masterpieces which are still the admiration of the world.

Prisse d'Avennes considered that, among the city gates the Bab-el-Nasr stands first in "taste and style," and the famous Bab-el-Zouilyeh is of the same period. He also thought the mosque of Teyloun a "model of elegance and grandeur," and observed, when criticising the mosque of the Sultan Hassan, built in 1356, that though imposing and beautiful, it lacks the unity which is only found in the earlier Arabic monuments, such as Teyloun.[104] Indeed, the signs are but too apparent that, from the twelfth century, the instinct for form began to fail in Egypt, the surest

[104] *L'Art Arabe*, 111 *et seq.*

precursor of artistic decay.

The magnificence of the decoration and furnishing of the Arabic palaces and houses has seldom been surpassed, and a few extracts from an inventory of a sale of the collections of the Caliph Mostanser-Billah, held in 1050, may give some idea of its gorgeousness.

> *Precious Stones.*– A chest containing 7 *Mudds* of emeralds; each of these worth at least 300,000 dynars, which makes in all at the lowest estimation, 36,000,000 francs.
>
> A necklace of precious stones worth about 80,000 dynars.
>
> Seven *Waïbah* of magnificent pearls sent by the Emir of Mecca.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Glass.*– Several chests, containing a large number of vases … of the purest crystal, chased and plain.
>
> Other chests filled with precious vases of different materials.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Table Utensils.*– A large number of gold dishes, enamelled or plain, in which were incrusted all sorts of colours, forming most varied designs.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> One hundred cups and other shapes, of bezoar-stone, on most of which was engraved the name of the Caliph Haroun-el-Raschid.
>
> Another cup which was 3 1⁄2 hands wide and one deep.

Different Articles.– Chests containing inkstands of different shapes, round or square, small or large, of gold or silver, sandal wood, aloe, ebony, ivory, and all kinds of woods, enriched with stones, gold and silver, or remarkable for beauty and elegance of workmanship.

. . . . . .

Twenty-eight enamel dishes inlaid with gold, which the Caliph Aziz had received as a present from the Greek emperor and each of which was valued at 3000 dynars.

Chests filled with an enormous quantity of steel, china, and glass mirrors, ornamented with gold and silver filagree; some were bordered with stones, and had cornelian handles, and others precious stones. One of them had quite a long and thick handle of emeralds. These mirrors were enclosed in cases made of velvet or silk or most beautiful wood; their locks were of gold or silver.

. . . . . .

Four hundred large cases, ornamented with gold and filled with all sorts of jewels.

Various silver household goods, and six thousand gold vases, in which were put narcissus or violets.

Thirty-six thousand pieces of crystal, among them a box ornamented with figures in relief, weighing 17 roks.

A large number of knives which, at the lowest price, were sold for 36,000 dynars.

. . . . . .

A turban enriched with precious stones, one of the most curious and valuable articles in the palace: it was said to be worth 130,000 dynars. The stones which covered it, and

whose weight was 17 roks, were divided between two chiefs, who both claimed it. One had in his share a ruby weighing 23 mitqâls, and in the share which fell to the other were 100 pearls each of which weighed 3 mitqâls. When the two generals were obliged to fly from Fostat, all these valuables were given up to pillage.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.