The Sassanians (New Persia) [1]

By George Rawlinson

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4. Accession of Sapor I

Artaxerxes appears to have died in A.D. 240. He was succeeded by his son, Shahpuhri, or Sapor, the first Sassanian prince of that name. According to the Persian historians, the mother of Sapor was a daughter of the last Parthian king, Artabanus, whom Artaxerxes had taken to wife after his conquest of her father. But the facts known of Sapor throw doubt on this story, which has too many parallels in Oriental romance to claim implicit credence. Nothing authentic has come down to us respecting Sapor during his father's lifetime; but from the moment that he mounted the throne, we find him engaged in a series of wars, which show him to have been of a most active and energetic character. Armenia, which Artaxerxes had subjected, attempted (it would seem) to regain its independence at the commencement of the new reign; but Sapor easily crushed the nascent insurrection, and the Armenians made no further effort to free themselves till several years after his death. Contemporaneously with this revolt in the mountain region of the north, a danger showed itself in the plain country of the south, where Manizen, king of Hatra, or El Hadhr, not only declared himself independent, but assumed dominion over the entire tract between the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Jezireh of the Arabian geographers. The strength of Hatra was great, as had been proved by Trajan and Severus; its thick walls and valiant inhabitants would probably have defied every attempt of the Persian prince to make himself master of it by force. He therefore condescended to stratagem. Manizen had a daughter who cherished ambitious views. On obtaining a promise from Sapor that if she gave Hatra into his power he would make her his queen, this unnatural child turned against her father, betrayed him into Sapor's hands, and thus brought the war to an end. Sapor recovered his lost territory; but he did not fulfil his bargain. Instead of marrying the traitress, he handed her over to an executioner, to receive the death that she had deserved, though scarcely at his hands. Encouraged by his success in these two lesser contests, Sapor resolved (apparently in A.D. 241) to resume the bold projects of his father, and engage in a great war with Rome. The confusion and troubles which afflicted the Roman Empire at this time were such as might well give him hopes of obtaining a decided advantage. Alexander, his father's adversary, had been murdered in A.D. 235 by Maximin, who from the condition of a Thracian peasant had risen into the higher ranks of the army. The upstart had ruled like the savage that he was; and, after three years of misery, the whole Roman world had risen against him. Two emperors had been proclaimed in Africa; on their fall, two others had been elected by the Senate; a

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third, a mere boy, had been added at the demand of the Roman populace. All the pretenders except the last had met with violent deaths; and, after the shocks of a year unparalleled since A.D. 69, the administration of the greatest kingdom in the world was in the hands of a youth of fifteen. Sapor, no doubt, thought he saw in this condition of things an opportunity that he ought not to miss, and rapidly matured his plans lest the favorable moment should pass away.

Crossing the middle Tigris into Mesopotamia, the bands of Sapor first attacked the important city of Nisibis. Nisibis, at this time a Roman colony, was strongly situated on the outskirts of the mountain range which traverses Northern Mesopotamia between the 37th and 38th parallels. The place was well fortified and well defended; it offered a prolonged resistance; but at last the Avails were breached, and it was forced to yield itself. The advance was then made along the southern flank of the mountains, by Carrhae (Harran) and Edessa to the Euphrates, which was probably reached in the neighborhood of Birehjik, The hordes then poured into Syria, and, spreading themselves over that fertile region, surprised and took the metropolis of the Roman East, the rich and luxurious city of Antioch. But meantime the Romans had shown a spirit which had not been expected from them. Gordian, young as he was, had quitted Rome and marched through Mossia and Thrace into Asia, accompanied by a formidable army, and by at least one good general. Timesitheus, whose daughter Gordian had recently married, though his life had hitherto been that of a civilian, exhibited, on his elevation to the dignity of Praetorian prefect, considerable military ability. The army, nominally commanded by Gordian, really acted under his orders. With it Timesitheus attacked and beat the bands of Sapor in a number of engagements, recovered Antioch, crossed the Euphrates, retook Carrhae, defeated the Persian monarch in a pitched battle near Resaina (Ras-el-Ain), recovered Nisibis, and once more planted the Roman standards on the banks of the Tigris. Sapor hastily evacuated most of his conquests, and retired first across the Euphrates and then across the more eastern river; while the Romans advanced as he retreated, placed garrisons in the various Mesopotamian towns, and even threatened the great city of Ctesiphon. Gordian was confident that his general would gain further triumphs, and wrote to the Senate to that effect; but either disease or the arts of a rival cut short the career of the victor, and from the time of his death the Romans ceased to be successful. The legions had, it would seem, invaded Southern Mesopotamia when the Praetorian prefect who had succeeded Timesitheus brought them intentionally into difficulties by his mismanagement of the commissariat; and at last retreat was determined on. The young emperor was approaching the Khabour, and had almost reached his own frontier, when the discontent of the army, fomented by the prefect, Philip, came to a head. Gordian was murdered at a place called Zaitha, about twenty miles south of Circesium, and was buried where he fell, the soldiers raising a tumulus in his honor. His successor, Philip, was glad to make peace on any tolerable terms with the Persians; he felt himself insecure upon his throne, and was anxious to obtain the Senate's sanction of his usurpation. He therefore quitted the East in A.D. 244, having concluded a treaty with Sapor, by which Armenia seems to have been left to the Persians, while Mesopotamia returned to its old condition of a Roman province.

The peace made between Philip and Sapor was followed by an interval of fourteen years, during which scarcely anything is known of the condition of Persia. We may suspect that troubles in the north-east of his empire occupied Sapor during this period, for at the end of it we find Bactria, which was certainly subject to Persia during the earlier years of the monarchy, occupying an independent position, and even assuming an attitude of hostility towards the Persian monarch.

Bactria had, from a remote antiquity, claims to pre-eminence among the Aryan nations. She was more than once inclined to revolt from the Achaemenidae; and during the later Parthian period she had enjoyed a sort of semi-independence. It would seem that she now succeeded in detaching herself altogether from her southern neighbor, and becoming a distinct and separate power. To strengthen her position she entered into relations with Rome, which gladly welcomed any adhesions to her cause in this remote region.

Sapor's second war with Rome was, like his first, provoked by himself. After concluding his peace with Philip, he had seen the Roman world governed successively by six weak emperors, of whom four had died violent deaths, while at the same time there had been a continued series of attacks upon the northern frontiers of the empire by Alemanni, Goths, and Franks, who had ravaged at their will a number of the finest provinces, and threatened the absolute destruction of the great monarchy of the West. It was natural that the chief kingdom of Western Asia should note these events, and should seek to promote its own interests by taking advantage of the circumstances of the time. Sapor, in A.D. 258, determined on a fresh invasion of the Roman provinces, and, once more entering Mesopotamia, carried all before him, became master of Nisibis, Carrhae, and Edessa, and, crossing the Euphrates, surprised Antioch, which was wrapped in the enjoyment of theatrical and other representations, and only knew its fate on the exclamation of a couple of actors "that the Persians were in possession of the town." The aged emperor, Valerian, hastened to the protection of his more eastern territories, and at first gained some successes, retaking Antioch, and making that city his headquarters during his stay in the East. But, after this, the tide turned. Valerian entrusted the whole conduct of the war to Macrianus, his Praetorian prefect, whose talents he admired, and of whose fidelity he did not entertain a suspicion. Macrianus, however, aspired to the empire, and intentionally brought Valerian into difficulties, in the hope of disgracing or removing him. His tactics were successful. The Roman army in Mesopotamia was betrayed into a situation whence escape was impossible, and where its capitulation was only a question of time. A bold attempt' made to force a way through the enemy's lines failed utterly, after which famine and pestilence began to do their work. In vain did the aged emperor send envoys to propose a peace, and offer to purchase escape by the payment of an immense sum in gold. Sapor, confident of victory, refused the overture, and, waiting patiently till his adversary was at the last gasp, invited him to a conference, and then treacherously seized his person. The army surrendered or dispersed. Macrianus, the Praetorian prefect, shortly assumed the title of emperor, and marched against Gallienus, the son and colleague of Valerian, who had been left to direct affairs in the West. But another rival started up in the East. Sapor conceived the idea of complicating the Roman affairs by himself putting forward a pretender; and an obscure citizen of Antioch, a certain Miriades or Cyriades, a refugee in his camp, was invested with the purple, and assumed the title of Caesar.

The blow struck at Edessa laid the whole of Roman Asia open to attack, and the Persian monarch was not slow to seize the occasion. His troops crossed the Euphrates in force, and, marching on Antioch, once more captured that unfortunate town, from which the more prudent citizens had withdrawn, but where the bulk of the people, not displeased at the turn of affairs, remained and welcomed the conqueror. Miriades was installed in power, while Sapor himself, at the head of his irresistible squadrons, pressed forward, bursting "like a mountain torrent" into Cilicia and thence into Cappadocia. Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul, at once a famous seat of learning and a great emporium of commerce, fell; Cilicia Campestris was

overrun; and the passes of Taurus, deserted or weakly defended by the Romans, came into Sapor's hands. Penetrating through them and entering the champaign country beyond, his bands soon formed the siege of Caesarea Mazaca, the greatest city of these parts, estimated, at this time to have contained a population of four hundred thousand souls. Demosthenes, the governor of Caesarea, defended it bravely, and, had force only been used against him, might have prevailed; but Sapor found friends within the walls, and by their help made himself master of the place, while its bold defender was obliged to content himself with escaping by cutting his way through the victorious host. All Asia Minor now seemed open to the conqueror; and it is difficult to understand why he did not at any rate attempt a permanent occupation of the territory which he had so easily overrun. But it seems certain that he entertained no such idea. Devastation and plunder, revenge and gain, not permanent conquest, were his objects; and hence his course was everywhere marked by ruin and carnage, by smoking towns, ravaged fields, and heaps of slain. His cruelties have no doubt been exaggerated; but when we hear that he filled the ravines and valleys of Cappadocia with dead bodies, and so led his cavalry across them; that he depopulated Antioch, killing or carrying off into slavery almost the whole population; that he suffered his prisoners in many cases to perish of hunger, and that he drove them to water once a day like beasts, we may be sure that the guise in which he showed himself to the Romans was that of a merciless scourge--an avenger bent on spreading the terror of his name--not of one who really sought to enlarge the limits of his empire.

During the whole course of this plundering expedition, until the retreat began, we hear but of one check that the bands of Sapor received. It had been determined to attack Emesa (now Hems), one of the most important of the Syrian towns, where the temple of Venus was known to contain a vast treasure. The invaders approached, scarcely expecting to be resisted; but the high priest of the temple, having collected a large body of peasants, appeared, in his sacerdotal robes, at the head of a fanatic multitude armed with slings, and succeeded in beating off the assailants. Emesa, its temple, and its treasure, escaped the rapacity of the Persians; and an example of resistance was set, which was not perhaps without important consequences.

For it seems certain that the return of Sapor across the Euphrates was not effected without considerable loss and difficulty. On his advance into Syria he had received an embassy from a certain Odenathus, a Syrian or Arab chief, who occupied a position of semi-independence at Palmyra, which, through the advantages of its situation, had lately become a flourishing commercial town. Odenathus sent a long train of camels laden with gifts, consisting in part of rare and precious merchandise, to the Persian monarch, begging him to accept them, and claiming his favorable regard on the ground that he had hitherto refrained from all acts of hostility against the Persians. It appears that Sapor took offence at the tone of the communication, which was not sufficiently humble to please him. Tearing the letter to fragments and trampling it beneath his feet, he exclaimed--"Who is this Odenathus, and of what country, that he ventures thus to address his lord? Let him now, if he would lighten his punishment, come here and fall prostrate before me with his hands tied behind his back. Should he refuse, let him be well assured that I will destroy himself, his race, and his land." At the same time he ordered his servants to cast the costly presents of the Palmyrene prince into the Euphrates.

This arrogant and offensive behavior naturally turned the willing friend into an enemy. Odenathus, finding himself forced into a hostile position, took arms and watched his opportunity. So long as Sapor continued to advance, he kept aloof. As soon, however, as

the retreat commenced, and the Persian army, encumbered with its spoil and captives, proceeded to make its way back slowly and painfully to the Euphrates, Odenathus, who had collected a large force, in part from the Syrian villages, in part from the wild tribes of Arabia, made his appearance in the field. His light and agile horsemen hovered about the Persian host, cut off their stragglers, made prize of much of their spoil, and even captured a portion of the seraglio of the Great King. The harassed troops were glad when they had placed the Euphrates between themselves and their pursuer, and congratulated each other on their escape. So much had they suffered, and so little did they feel equal to further conflicts, that on their march through Mesopotamia they consented to purchase the neutrality of the people of Edessa by making over to them all the coined money that they had carried off in their Syrian raid. After this it would seem that the retreat was unmolested, and Sapor succeeded in conveying the greater part of his army, together with his illustrious prisoner, to his own country.

With regard to the treatment that Valerian received at the hands of his conqueror, it is difficult to form a decided opinion. The writers nearest to the time speak vaguely and moderately, merely telling us that he grew old in his captivity, and was kept in the condition of a slave. It is reserved for authors of the next generation to inform us that he was exposed to the constant gaze of the multitude, fettered, but clad in the imperial purple; and that Sapor, whenever he mounted on horseback, placed his foot upon his prisoner's neck. Some add that, when the unhappy captive died, about the year A.D. 265 or 266, his body was flayed, and the skin inflated and hung up to view in one of the most frequented temples of Persia, where it was seen by Roman envoys on their visits to the Great King's court.

It is impossible to deny that Oriental barbarism may conceivably have gone to these lengths; and it is in favor of the truth of the details that Roman vanity would naturally have been opposed to their invention. But, on the other hand, we have to remember that in the East the person of a king is generally regarded as sacred, and that self-interest restrains the conquering monarch from dishonoring one of his own class. We have also to give due weight to the fact that the earlier authorities are silent with respect to any such atrocities and that they are first related half a century after the time when they are said to have occurred. Under these circumstances the scepticism of Gibbon with respect to them is perhaps more worthy of commendation than the ready faith of a recent French writer.

It may be added that Oriental monarchs, when they are cruel, do not show themselves ashamed of their cruelties, but usually relate them openly in their inscriptions, or represent them in their bas-reliefs. The remains ascribed on good grounds to Sapor do not, however, contain anything confirmatory of the stories which we are considering. Valerian is represented on them in a humble attitude, but not fettered, and never in the posture of extreme degradation commonly associated with his name. He bends his knee, as no doubt he would be required to do, on being brought into the Great King's presence; but otherwise he does not appear to be subjected to any indignity. It seems thus to be on the whole most probable that the Roman emperor was not more severely treated than the generalty of captive princes, and that Sapor has been unjustly taxed with abusing the rights of conquest.

The hostile feeling of Odenathus against Sapor did not cease with the retreat of the latter across the Euphrates. The Palmyrene prince was bent on taking advantage of the general confusion of the times to carve out for himself a considerable kingdom, of which Palmyra should be the capital. Syria and Palestine on the one hand, Mesopotamia on the other, were the provinces that lay most

conveniently near to him, and that he especially coveted. But Mesopotamia had remained in the possession of the Persians as the prize of their victory over Valerian, and could only be obtained by wresting it from the hands into which it had fallen. Odenathus did not shrink from this contest. It had been with some reason conjectured that Sapor must have been at this time occupied with troubles which had broken out on the eastern side of his empire. At any rate, it appears that Odenathus, after a short contest with Macriarius and his son, Quietus, turned his arms once more, about A.D. 263, against the Persians, crossed the Euphrates into Mesopotamia, took Oarrhee and Nisibis, defeated Sapor and some of his sons in a battle, and drove the entire Persian host in confusion to the gates of Ctesiphon. He even ventured to form the siege of that city; but it was not long before effectual relief arrived; from all the provinces flocked in contingents for the defence of the Western capital; several engagements were fought, in some of which Odenathus was defeated; and at last he found himself involved in difficulties through his ignorance of the localities, and so thought it best to retire. Apparently his retreat was undisturbed; he succeeded in carrying off his booty and his prisoners, among whom were several satraps, and he retained possession of Mesopotamia, which continued to form a part of the Palmyrene kingdom until the capture of Zenobia by Aurelian (A.D. 273).

The successes of Odenathus in A.D. 263 were followed by a period of comparative tranquillity. That ambitious prince seems to have been content with ruling from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, and with the titles of "Augustus," which he received from the Roman emperor, Gallienus, and "king of kings," which he assumed upon his coins. He did not press further upon Sapor; nor did the Roman emperor make any serious attempt to recover his father's person or revenge his defeat upon the Persians. An expedition which he sent out to the East, professedly with this object, in the year A.D. 267, failed utterly, its commander, Heraclianus, being completely defeated by Zenobia, the widow and successor of Odenathus. Odenathus himself was murdered by a kinsman three or four years after his great successes; and, though Zenobia ruled his kingdom almost with a man's vigor, the removal of his powerful adversary must have been felt as a relief by the Persian monarch. It is evident, too, that from the time of the accession of Zenobia, the relations between Rome and Palmyra had become unfriendly; the old empire grew jealous of the new kingdom which had sprung up upon its borders; and the effect of this jealousy, while it lasted, was to secure Persia from any attack on the part of either.

It appears that Sapor, relieved from any further necessity of defending his empire in arms, employed the remaining years of his life in the construction of great works, and especially in the erection and ornamentation of a new capital. The ruins of Shahpur, which still exist near Kazerun, in the province of Fars, commemorate the name, and afford some indication of the grandeur, of the second Persian monarch. Besides remains of buildings, they comprise a number of bas-reliefs and rock inscriptions, some of which were beyond a doubt set up by Sapor I. In one of the most remarkable the Persian monarch is represented on horseback, wearing the crown usual upon his coins, and holding by the hand a tunicked figure, probably Miriades, whom he is presenting to the captured Romans as their sovereign. Foremost to do him homage is the kneeling figure of a chieftain, probably Valerian, behind whom are arranged in a double line seventeen persons, representing apparently the different corps of the Roman army. All these persons are on foot, while in contrast with them are arranged behind Sapor ten guards on horseback, who represent his irresistible cavalry. Another bas-relief at the same place gives us a general view of the triumph of Sapor on his return to Persia with his illustrious prisoner. Here fifty-seven guards

are ranged behind him, while in front are thirty-three tribute-bearers, having with them an elephant and a chariot. In the centre is a group of seven figures, comprising Sapor, who is on horseback in his usual costume; Valerian, who is under the horse's feet; Miriades, who stands by Sapor's side; three principal tribute-bearers in front of the main figure; and a Victory which floats in the sky.

Another important work, assigned by tradition to Sapor I., is the great dyke at Shuster. This is a dam across the river Karun, formed of cut stones, cemented by lime, and fastened together by clamps of iron; it is twenty feet broad, and no less than twelve hundred feet in length. The whole is a solid mass excepting in the centre, where two small arches have been constructed for the purpose of allowing a part of the stream to flow in its natural bed. The greater portion of the water is directed eastward into a canal cut for it; and the town of Shuster is thus defended on both sides by a water barrier, whereby the position becomes one of great strength. Tradition says that Sapor used his power over Valerian to obtain Roman engineers for this work; and the great dam is still known as the Bund-i-Kaisar, or "dam of Caesar," to the inhabitants of the neighboring country.

Besides his works at Shahpur and Shuster, Sapor set up memorials of himself at Haji-abad, Nakhsh-i-Rajab, and Nakhsh-i-Rustam, near Persepolis, at Darabgerd in South-eastern Persia, and elsewhere; most of which still exist and have been described by various travellers. At Nakhsh-i-Rustam Valerian is seen making his submission in one tablet, while another exhibits the glories of Sapor's court. The sculptures are in some instances accompanied by inscriptions. One of these is, like those of Artaxerxes, bilingual, Greek and Persian. The Greek inscription runs as follows:

In the main, Sapor, it will be seen, follows the phrases of his father Artaxerxes; but he claims a wider dominion. Artaxerxes is content to rule over Ariana (or Iran) only; his son calls himself lord both of the Arians and the non-Arians, or of Iran and Turan. We may conclude from this as probable that he held some Scythic tribes under his sway, probably in Segestan, or Seistan, the country south and east of the Hamoon, or lake in which the Helmend is swallowed up. Scythians had been settled in these parts, and in portions of Afghanistan and India, since the great invasion of the Yue-chi, about B.C. 200; and it is not unlikely that some of them may have passed under the Persian rule during the reign of Sapor, but we have no particulars of these conquests.

Sapor's coins resemble those of Artaxerxes in general type, but may be distinguished from them, first, by the head-dress, which is either a cap terminating in the head of an eagle, or else a mural crown surmounted by an inflated ball; and, secondly, by the emblem on the reverse, which is almost always a fire-altar between two supporters The ordinary legend on the coins is "Mazdisn bag Shahpuhri, malkan malka Airan, minuchitri minyazdan," on the obverse; and on the reverse "Shahpuhri nuvazi."

It appears from these legends, and from the inscription above given, that Sapor was, like his father, a zealous Zoroastrian. His faith was exposed to considerable trial. Never was there a time of greater religious ferment in the East, or a crisis which more shook men's belief in ancestral creeds. The absurd idolatry which had generally prevailed through Western Asia for two thousand years--a nature-worship which gave the sanction of religion to the gratification of men's lowest propensities--was shaken to its foundation; and everywhere men were striving after something higher, nobler, and truer than had satisfied previous generations for twenty centuries. The sudden revivification of Zoroastrianism, after it had been depressed and almost forgotten for five hundred years, was one result of this stir of men's minds. Another result was the rapid progress of

Christianity, which in the course of the third century overspread large portions of the East, rooting itself with great firmness in Armenia, and obtaining a hold to some extent on Babylonia, Bactria, and perhaps even on India. Judaism, also, which had long had a footing in Mesopotamia, and which after the time of Hadrian may be regarded as having its headquarters at Babylon--Judaism itself, usually so immovable, at this time showed signs of life and change, taking something like a new form in the schools wherein was compiled the vast and strange work known as "the Babylonian Talmud."

Amid the strife and jar of so many conflicting systems, each having a root in the past, and each able to appeal with more or less of force to noble examples of virtue and constancy among its professors in the present, we cannot be surprised that in some minds the idea grew up that, while all the systems possessed some truth, no one of them was perfect or indeed much superior to its fellows. Eclectic or syncretic views are always congenial to some intellects; and in times when religious thought is deeply stirred, and antagonistic creeds are brought into direct collision, the amiable feeling of a desire for peace comes in to strengthen the inclination for reconciling opponents by means of a fusion, and producing harmony by a happy combination of discords. It was in Persia, and in the reign of Sapor, that one of the most remarkable of these well-meaning attempts at fusion and reconciliation that the whole of history can show was made, and with results which ought to be a lasting warning to the apostles of comprehension. A certain Mani (or Manes, as the ecclesiastical writers call him), born in Persia about A.D. 240, grew to manhood under Sapor, exposed to the various religious influences of which we have spoken. With a mind free from prejudice and open to conviction, he studied the various systems of belief which he found established in Western Asia--the Cabalism of the Babylonian Jews, the Dualism of the Magi, the mysterious doctrines of the Christians, and even the Buddhism of India. At first he inclined to Christianity, and is said to have been admitted to priest's orders and to have ministered to a congregation; but after a time he thought that he saw his way to the formation of a new creed, which should combine all that was best in the religious systems which he was acquainted with, and omit what was superfluous or objectionable. He adopted the Dualism of the Zoroastrians, the metempsychosis of India, the angelism and demonism of the Talmud, and the Trinitarianism of the Gospel of Christ. Christ himself he identified with Mithra, and gave Him his dwelling in the sun. He assumed to be the Paraclete promised by Christ, who should guide men into all truth, and claimed that his "Ertang," a sacred book illustrated by pictures of his own painting, should supersede the New Testament. Such pretensions were not likely to be tolerated by the Christian community; and Manes had not put them forward very long when he was expelled from the church and forced to carry his teaching elsewhere. Under these circumstances he is said to have addressed himself to Sapor, who was at first inclined to show him some favor; but when he found out what the doctrines of the new teacher actually were, his feelings underwent a change, and Manes, proscribed, or at any rate threatened with penalties, had to retire into a foreign country.

The Zoroastrian faith was thus maintained in its purity by the Persian monarch, who did not allow himself to be imposed upon by the specious eloquence of the new teacher, but ultimately rejected the strange amalgamation that was offered to his acceptance. It is scarcely to be regretted that he so determined. Though the morality of the Manichees was pure, and though their religion is regarded by some as a sort of Christianity, there were but few points in which it was an improvement on Zoroastrianism. Its Dualism was pronounced and decided; its Trinitarianism was questionable; its teaching with respect to Christ destroyed the doctrines of the

incarnation and atonement; its "Ertang " was a poor substitute for Holy Scripture. Even its morality, being deeply penetrated with asceticism, was of a wrong type and inferior to that preached by Zoroaster. Had the creed of Manes been accepted by the Persian monarch, the progress of real Christianity in the East would, it is probable, have been impeded rather than forwarded--the general currency of the debased amalgam would have checked the introduction of the pure metal.

It must have been shortly after his rejection of the teaching of Manes that Sapor died, having reigned thirty-one years, from A.D. 240 to A.D. 271. He was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable princes of the Sassanian series. In military talent, indeed, he may not have equalled his father; for though he defeated Valerian, he had to confess himself inferior to Odenathus. But in general governmental ability he is among the foremost of the Neo-Persian monarchs, and may compare favorably with almost any prince of the series. He baffled Odenathus, when he was not able to defeat him, by placing himself behind walls, and by bringing into play those advantages which naturally belonged to the position of a monarch attacked in his own country. He maintained, if he did not permanently advance, the power of Persia in the west; while in the east it is probable that he considerably extended the bounds of his dominion. In the internal administration of his empire he united works of usefulness with the construction of memorial which had only a sentimental and aesthetic value. He was a liberal patron of art, and is thought not to have confined his patronage to the encouragement of native talent. On the subject of religion he did not suffer himself to be permanently led away by the enthusiasm of a young and bold freethinker. He decided to maintain the religious system that had descended to him from his ancestors, and turned a deaf ear to persuasions that would have led him to revolutionize the religious opinion of the East without placing it upon a satisfactory footing. The Orientals add to these commendable features of character, that he was a man of remarkable beauty, of great personal courage, and of a noble and princely liberality. According to them, "he only desired wealth that he might use it for good and great purposes."

5. Hormisdas I; Varahran II; Varahran III

The first and second kings of the Neo-Persian Empire were men of mark and renown. Their successors for several generations were, comparatively speaking, feeble and insignificant. The first burst of vigor and freshness which commonly attends the advent to power of a new race in the East, or the recovery of its former position by an old one, had passed away, and was succeeded, as so often happens, by reaction and exhaustion, the monarchs becoming luxurious and inert, while the people willingly acquiesced in a policy of which the principle was "Rest and be thankful." It helped to keep matters in this quiescent state, that the kings who ruled during this period had, in almost every instance, short reigns, four monarchs coming to the throne and dying within the space of a little more than twenty-one years. The first of these four was Hormisdates, Hormisdas, or Hormuz, the son of Sapor, who succeeded his father in A.D. 271. His reign lasted no more than a year and ten days, and was distinguished by only a single event of any importance. Mani, who had fled from Sapor, ventured to return to Persia on the accession of his son, and was received with respect and favor. Whether Hormisdas was inclined to accept his religious teaching or no, we are not told; but at any rate he treated him kindly, allowed him to propagate his doctrines, and even assigned him as his residence a castle named Arabion. From this place Mani proceeded to spread his views among the Christians of Mesopotamia, and in a short time succeeded in founding the sect which, under the name of Manichaeans or Manichaes, gave so much trouble to the Church for several centuries. Hormisdas, who,

according to some founded the city of Ram-Hormuz in Eastern Persia, died in A.D.272, and was succeeded by his son or brother, Vararanes or Varahran. He left no inscriptions, and it is doubted whether we possess any of his coins.

Varahran I., whose reign lasted three years only, from A.D. 272 to 275, is declared by the native historians to have been a mild and amiable prince; but the little that is positively known of him does not bear out this testimony. It seems certain that he put Mani to death, and probable that he enticed him to leave the shelter of his castle by artifice, thus showing himself not only harsh but treacherous towards the unfortunate heresiarch. If it be true that he caused him to be flayed alive, we can scarcely exonerate him from the charge of actual cruelty, unless indeed we regard the punishment as an ordinary mode of execution in Persia. Perhaps, however, in this case, as in other similar ones, there is no sufficient evidence that the process of flaying took place until the culprit was dead, the real object of the excoriation being, not the infliction of pain, but the preservation of a memorial which could be used as a warning and a terror to others. The skin of Mani, stuffed with straw, was no doubt suspended for some time after his execution over one of the gates of the great city of Shahpur; and it is possible that this fact may have been the sole ground of the belief (which, it is to be remembered, was not universal) that he actually suffered death by flaying.

The death of the leader was followed by the persecution of his disciples. Mani had organized a hierarchy, consisting of twelve apostles, seventy-two bishops, and a numerous priesthood; and his sect was widely established at the time of his execution. Varahran handed over these unfortunates, or at any rate such of them as he was able to seize, to the tender mercies of the Magians, who put to death great numbers of Manichseans. Many Christians at the same time perished, either because they were confounded with the followers of Mani, or because the spirit of persecution, once let loose, could not be restrained, but passed on from victims of one class to those of another, the Magian priesthood seizing the opportunity of devoting all heretics to a common destruction.

Thus unhappy in his domestic administration, Varahran was not much more fortunate in his wars. Zenobia, the queen of the East, held for some time to the policy of her illustrious husband, maintaining a position inimical alike to Rome and Persia from the death of Odenathus in A.D. 267 to Aurelian's expedition against her in A.D. 272. When, however, in this year, Aurelian marched to attack her with the full forces of the empire, she recognized the necessity of calling to her aid other troops besides her own. It was at this time that she made overtures to the Persians, which were favorably received; and, in the year A.D. 273, Persian troops are mentioned among those with whom Aurelian contended in the vicinity of Palmyra. But the succors sent were inconsiderable, and were easily overpowered by the arts or arms of the emperor. The young king had not the courage to throw himself boldly into the war. He allowed Zenobia to be defeated and reduced to extremities without making anything like an earnest or determined effort to save her. He continued her ally, indeed, to the end, and probably offered her an asylum at his court, if she were compelled to quit her capital; but even this poor boon he was prevented from conferring by the capture of the unfortunate princess just as she reached the banks of the Euphrates.

In the aid which he lent Zenobia, Varahran, while he had done too little to affect in any degree the issue of the struggle, had done quite enough to provoke Rome and draw down upon him the vengeance of the Empire, It seems that he quite realized the position in which circumstances had placed him. Feeling that he had thrown out a challenge to Rome,

and yet shrinking from the impending conflict, he sent an embassy to the conqueror, deprecating his anger and seeking to propitiate him by rare and costly gifts. Among these were a purple robe from Cashmere, or some other remote province of India, of so brilliant a hue that the ordinary purple of the imperial robes could not compare with it, and a chariot like to those in which the Persian monarch was himself wont to be carried. Aurelian accepted these gifts; and it would seem to follow that he condoned Varahran's conduct, and granted him terms of peace. Hence, in the triumph which Aurelian celebrated at Rome in the year A.D. 274, no Persian captives appeared in the procession, but Persian envoys were exhibited instead, who bore with them the presents wherewith their master had appeased the anger of the emperor.

A full year, however, had not elapsed from the time of the triumph when the master of the Roman world thought fit to change his policy, and, suddenly declaring war against the Persians, commenced his march towards the East. We are not told that he discovered, or even sought to discover, any fresh ground of complaint. His talents were best suited for employment in the field, and he regarded it as expedient to "exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign war." Thus it was desirable to find or make an enemy; and the Persians presented themselves as the foe which could be attacked most conveniently. There was no doubt a general desire to efface the memory of Valerian's disaster by some considerable success; and war with Persia was therefore likely to be popular at once with the Senate, with the army, and with the mixed multitude which was dignified with the title of "the Roman people."

Aurelian, therefore, set out for Persia at the head of a numerous, but still a manageable, force. He proceeded through Illyricum and Macedonia towards Byzantium, and had almost reached the straits, when a conspiracy, fomented by one of his secretaries, cut short his career, and saved the Persian empire from invasion. Aurelian was murdered in the spring of A.D. 275, at Coenophrurium, a small station between Heraclea (Perinthus) and Byzantium. The adversary with whom he had hoped to contend, Varahran, cannot have survived him long, since he died (of disease as it would seem) in the course of the year, leaving his crown to a young son who bore the same name with himself, and is known in history as Varahran the Second.

Varahran II. is said to have ruled at first tyrannically, and to have greatly disgusted all his principal nobles, who went so far as to form a conspiracy against him, and intended to put him to death. The chief of the Magians, however, interposed, and, having effectually alarmed the king, brought him to acknowledge himself wrong and to promise an entire change of conduct. The nobles upon this returned to their allegiance; and Varahran, during the remainder of his reign, is said to have been distinguished for wisdom and moderation, and to have rendered himself popular with every class of his subjects.

It appears that this prince was not without military ambition. He engaged in a war with the Segestani (or Sacastani), the inhabitants of Segestan or Seistan, a people of Scythic origin, and after a time reduced them to subjection . He then became involved in a quarrel with some of the natives of Afghanistan, who were at this time regarded as "Indians." A long and desultory contest followed without definite result, which was not concluded by the year A.D. 283, when he found himself suddenly engaged in hostilities on the opposite side of the empire.

Rome, in the latter part of the third century, had experienced one of those reactions which mark her later history, and which alone enabled her to complete her predestined term of twelve centuries. Between the years A.D. 274 and 282, under Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, and Carus, she showed herself once

more very decidedly the first military power in the world, drove back the barbarians on all sides, and even ventured to indulge in an aggressive policy. Aurelian, as we have seen, was on the point of invading Persia when a domestic conspiracy brought his reign and life to an end. Tacitus, his successor, scarcely obtained such a firm hold upon the throne as to feel that he could with any prudence provoke a war. But Probus, the next emperor, revived the project of a Persian expedition, and would probably have led the Roman armies into Mesopotamia, had not his career been cut short by the revolt of the legions in Illyria (A.D. 282). Carus, who had been his praetorian prefect, and who became emperor at his death, adhered steadily to his policy. It was the first act of his reign to march the forces of the empire to the extreme east, and to commence in earnest the war which had so long been threatened. Led by the Emperor in person, the legions once more crossed the Euphrates.

Mesopotamia was rapidly overrun, since the Persians (we are told) were at variance among themselves, and a civil war was raging. The bulk of their forces, moreover, were engaged on the opposite side of the empire in a struggle with the Indians, probably those of Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, no effectual resistance was possible; and, if we may believe the Roman writers, not only was the Roman province of Mesopotamia recovered, but the entire tract between the rivers as far south as the latitude of Bagdad was ravaged, and even the two great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon were taken without the slightest difficulty. Persia Proper seemed to lie open to the invader, and Carus was preparing to penetrate still further to the east, when again an opportune death checked the progress of the Roman arms, and perhaps saved the Persian monarchy from destruction. Carus had announced his intention of continuing his march; some discontent had shown itself; and an oracle had been quoted which declared that a Roman emperor would never proceed victoriously beyond Ctesiphon, Carus was not convinced, but he fell sick, and his projects were delayed; he was still in his camp near Ctesiphon, when a terrible thunderstorm broke over the ground occupied by the Roman army. A weird darkness was spread around, amid which flash followed flash at brief intervals, and peal upon peal terrified the superstitious soldiery. Suddenly, after the most violent clap of all, the cry arose that the Emperor was dead. Some said that his tent had been struck by lightning, and that his death was owing to this cause; others believed that he had simply happened to succumb to his malady at the exact moment of the last thunder-clap; a third theory was that his attendants had taken advantage of the general confusion to assassinate him, and that he merely added another to the long list of Roman emperors murdered by those who hoped to profit by their removal. It is not likely that the problem of what really caused the death of Carus will ever be solved. That he died very late in A.D. 283, or within the first fortnight of A.D. 284, is certain; and it is no less certain that his death was most fortunate for Persia, since it brought the war to an end when it had reached a point at which any further reverses would have been disastrous, and gave the Persians a breathing-space during which they might, at least partially, recover from their prostration.

Upon the death of Carus, the Romans at once determined on retreat. It was generally believed that the imperial tent had been struck by lightning; and it was concluded that the decision of the gods against the further advance of the invading army had been thereby unmistakably declared. The army considered that it had done enough, and was anxious to return home; the feeble successor of Carus, his son Numerian, if he possessed the will, was at any rate without the power to resist the wishes of the troops; and the result was that the legions quitted the East without further fighting, and without securing, by the conclusion of formal terms of peace, any permanent advantage from their victories.

A pause of two years now occurred, during which Varahran had the opportunity of strengthening his position while Rome was occupied by civil wars and distracted between the claims of pretenders. No great use seems, however, to have been made of this interval. When, in A.D. 286, the celebrated Diocletian determined to resume the war with Persia, and, embracing the cause of Tiridates, son of Chosroes, directed his efforts to the establishment of that prince, as a Roman feudatory, on his father's throne. Varahran found himself once more overmatched, and could offer no effectual resistance. Armenia had now been a province of Persia for the space of twenty-six (or perhaps forty-six) years; but it had in no degree been conciliated or united with the rest of the empire. The people had been distrusted and oppressed; the nobles had been deprived of employment; a heavy tribute had been laid on the land; and a religious revolution had been violently effected. It is not surprising that when Tiridates, supported by a Roman _corps d'armee_, appeared upon the frontiers, the whole population received him with transports of loyalty and joy. All the nobles flocked to his standard, and at once acknowledged him for their king. The people everywhere welcomed him with acclamations. A native prince of the Arsacid dynasty united the suffrages of all; and the nation threw itself with enthusiastic zeal into a struggle which was viewed as a war of independence. It was forgotten that Tiridates was in fact only a puppet in the hand of the Roman emperor, and that, whatever the result of the contest, Armenia would remain at its close, as she had been at its commencement, a dependant upon a foreign power.

The success of Tiridates at the first was such as might have been expected from the forces arrayed in his favor. He defeated two Persian armies in the open field, drove out the garrisons which held the more important of the fortified towns, and became undisputed master of Armenia. He even crossed the border which separated Armenia from Persia, and gained signal victories on admitted Persian ground. According to the native writers, his personal exploits were extraordinary; he defeated singly a corps of giants, and routed on foot a large detachment mounted on elephants! The narrative is here, no doubt, tinged with exaggeration; but the general result is correctly stated. Tiridates, within a year of his invasion, was complete master of the entire Armenian highland, and was in a position to carry his arms beyond his own frontiers.

Such seems to have been the position of things, when Varahran II. suddenly died, after a reign of seventeen years,52 A.D. 292. He is generally said to have left behind him two sons, Varahran and Narsehi, or Narses, of whom the elder, Varahran, was proclaimed king. This prince was of an amiable temper, but apparently of a weakly constitution. He was with difficulty persuaded to accept the throne, and anticipated from the first an early demise. No events are assigned to his short reign, which (according to the best authorities) did not exceed the length of four months. It is evident that he must have been powerless to offer any effectual opposition to Tiridates, whose forces continued to ravage, year after year, the north-western provinces of the Persian empire. Had Tiridates been a prince of real military talent, it could scarcely have been difficult for him to obtain still greater advantages. But he was content with annual raids, which left the substantial power of Persia untouched. He allowed the occasion of the throne's being occupied by a weak and invalid prince to slip by. The consequences of this negligence will appear in the next chapter. Persia, permitted to escape serious attack in her time of weakness, was able shortly to take the offensive and to make the Armenian prince regret his indolence or want of ambition. The son of Chosroes became a second time a fugitive; and once more the Romans were called in to settle the affairs of the East. We have now to trace the

circumstances of this struggle, and to show how Rome under able leaders succeeded in revenging the defeat and captivity of Valerian, and in inflicting, in her turn, a grievous humiliation upon her adversary.

6. Civil War and Peace

It appears that on the death of Varahran III., probably without issue, there was a contention for the crown between two brothers, Narses and Hormisdas. We are not informed which of them was the elder, nor on what grounds they respectively rested their claims; but it seems that Narses was from the first preferred by the Persians, and that his rival relied mainly for success on the arms of foreign barbarians. Worsted in encounters wherein none but Persians fought on either side, Hormisdas summoned to his aid the hordes of the north--Gelli from the shores of the Caspian, Scyths from the Oxus or the regions beyond, and Russians, now first mentioned by a classical writer. But the perilous attempt to settle a domestic struggle by the swords of foreigners was not destined on this occasion to prosper. Hormisdas failed in his endeavor to obtain the throne; and, as we hear no more of him, we may regard it as probable that he was defeated and slain. At any rate Narses was, within a year or two of his accession, so firmly settled in his kingdom that he was able to turn his thoughts to the external affairs of the empire, and to engage in a great war. All danger from internal disorder must have been pretty certainly removed before Narses could venture to affront, as he did, the strongest of existing military powers.

Narses ascended the throne in A.D. 292 or 293. It was at least as early as A.D. 296 that he challenged Rome to an encounter by attacking in force the vassal monarch whom her arms had established in Armenia. Tiridates had, it is evident, done much to provoke the attack by his constant raids into Persian territory, which were sometimes carried even to the south of Ctesiphon. He was probably surprised by the sudden march and vigorous assault of an enemy whom he had learned to despise; and, feeling himself unable to organize an effectual resistance, he had recourse to flight, gave up Armenia to the Persians, and for a second time placed himself under the protection of the Roman emperor. The monarch who held this proud position was still Diocletian, the greatest emperor that had occupied the Roman throne since Trajan, and the prince to whom Tiridates was indebted for his restoration to his kingdom. It was impossible that Diocletian should submit to the affront put upon him without an earnest effort to avenge it. His own power rested, in a great measure, on his military prestige; and the unpunished insolence of a foreign king would have seriously endangered an authority not very firmly established. The position of Diocletian compelled him to declare war against Narses in the year A.D. 296, and to address himself to a struggle of which he is not likely to have misconceived the importance. It might have been expected that he would have undertaken the conduct of the war in person; but the internal condition of the empire was far from satisfactory, and the chief of the State seems to have felt that he could not conveniently quit his dominions to engage in war beyond his borders. He therefore committed the task of reinstating Tiridates and punishing Narses to his favorite and son-in-law, Galerius, while he himself took up a position within the limits of the empire, which at once enabled him to overawe his domestic adversaries and to support and countenance his lieutenant.

The first attempts of Galerius were unfortunate. Summoned suddenly from the Danube to the Euphrates, and placed at the head of an army composed chiefly of the levies of Asia, ill-disciplined, and unacquainted with their commander, he had to meet an adversary of whom he knew little or nothing, in a region the character of which was adverse to his own troops and favorable to those of the enemy. Narses had invaded the Roman province of Mesopotamia, had

penetrated to the Khabour, and was threatening to cross the Euphrates into Syria. Galerius had no choice but to encounter him on the ground which he had chosen. Now, though Western Mesopotamia is ill-described as a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, without a tree, and without a spring of fresh water, it is undoubtedly an open country, possessing numerous plains, where, in a battle, the advantage of numbers is likely to be felt, and where there is abundant room for the evolutions of cavalry. The Persians, like their predecessors the Parthians, were especially strong in horse; and the host which Narses had brought into the field greatly outnumbered the troops which Diocletian had placed at the disposal of Galerius. Yet Galerius took the offensive. Fighting under the eye of a somewhat stern master, he was scarcely free to choose his plan of campaign. Diocletian expected him to drive the Persians from Mesopotamia, and he was therefore bound to make the attempt. He accordingly sought out his adversary in this region, and engaged him in three great battles. The first and second appear to have been indecisive; but in the third the Roman general suffered a complete defeat. The catastrophe of Crassus was repeated almost upon the same battle-field, and probably almost by the same means. But, personally, Galerius was more fortunate than his predecessor. He escaped from the carnage, and, recrossing the Euphrates, rejoined his father-in-law in Syria. A conjecture, not altogether destitute of probability, makes Tiridates share both the calamity and the good fortune of the Roman Caesar. Like Galerius, he escaped from the battle-field, and reached the banks of the Euphrates. But his horse, which had received a wound, could not be trusted to pass the river. In this emergency the Armenian prince dismounted, and, armed as he was, plunged into the stream. The river was both wide and deep; the current was rapid; but the hardy adventurer, inured to danger and accustomed to every athletic exercise, swam across and reached the opposite bank in safety.

Thus, while the rank and file perished ignominiously, the two personages of most importance on the Roman side were saved. Galerius hastened towards Antioch, to rejoin his colleague and sovereign. The latter came out to meet him, but, instead of congratulating him on his escape, assumed the air of an offended master, and, declining to speak to him or to stop his chariot, forced the Caesar to follow him on foot for nearly a mile before he would condescend to receive his explanations and apologies for defeat. The disgrace was keenly felt, and was ultimately revenged upon the prince who had contrived it. But, at the time, its main effect doubtless was to awake in the young Caesar the strongest desire of retrieving his honor, and wiping out the memory of his great reverse by a yet more signal victory. Galerius did not cease through the winter of A.D. 297 to importune his father-in-law for an opportunity of redeeming the past and recovering his lost laurels.

The emperor, having sufficiently indulged his resentment, acceded to the wishes of his favorite. Galerius was continued in his command. A new army was collected during the winter, to replace that which had been lost; and the greatest care was taken that its material should be of good quality, and that it should be employed where it had the best chance of success. The veterans of Illyria and Moesia constituted the flower of the force now enrolled; and it was further strengthened by the addition of a body of Gothic auxiliaries. It was determined, moreover, that the attack should this time be made on the side of Armenia, where it was felt that the Romans would have the double advantage of a friendly country, and of one far more favorable for the movements of infantry than for those of an army whose strength lay in its horse. The number of the troops employed was still small. Galerius entered Armenia at the head of only 25,000 men; but

they were a picked force, and they might be augmented, almost to any extent, by the national militia of the Armenians. He was now, moreover, as cautious as he had previously been rash; he advanced slowly, feeling his way; he even personally made reconnaissances, accompanied by only one or two horsemen, and, under the shelter of a flag of truce, explored the position of his adversary. Narses found himself overmatched alike in art and in force. He allowed himself to be surprised in his camp by his active enemy, and suffered a defeat by which he more than lost all the fruits of his former victory. Most of his army was destroyed; he himself received a wound, and with difficulty escaped by a hasty flight. Galerius pursued, and, though he did not succeed in taking the monarch himself, made prize of his wives, his sisters, and a number of his children, besides capturing his military chest. He also took many of the most illustrious Persians prisoners. How far he followed his flying adversary is uncertain; but it is scarcely probable that he proceeded much southward of the Armenian frontier. He had to reinstate Tiridates in his dominions, to recover Eastern Mesopotamia, and to lay his laurels at the feet of his colleague and master. It seems probable that having driven Narses from Armenia, and left Tiridates there to administer the government, he hastened to rejoin Diocletian before attempting any further conquests.

The Persian monarch, on his side, having recovered from his wound, which could have been but slight, set himself to collect another army, but at the same time sent an ambassador to to the camp of Galerius, requesting to know the terms on which Rome would consent to make peace. A writer of good authority has left us an account of the interview which followed between the envoy of the Persian monarch and the victorious Roman. Apharban (so was the envoy named) opened the negotiations with the following speech:

"The whole human race knows," he said, "that the Roman and Persian kingdoms resemble two great luminaries, and that, like a man's two eyes, they ought mutually to adorn and illustrate each other, and not in the extremity of their wrath to seek rather each other's destruction. So to act is not to act manfully, but is indicative rather of levity and weakness; for it is to suppose that our inferiors can never be of any service to us, and that therefore we had bettor get rid of them. Narses, moreover, ought not to be accounted a weaker prince than other Persian kings; thou hast indeed conquered him, but then thou surpassest all other monarchs; and thus Narses has of course been worsted by thee, though he is no whit inferior in merit to the best of his ancestors. The orders which my master has given me are to entrust all the rights of Persia to the clemency of Rome; and I therefore do not even bring with me any conditions of peace, since it is for the emperor to determine everything. I have only to pray, on my master's behalf, for the restoration of his wives and male children; if he receives them at your hands, he will be forever beholden to you, and will be better pleased than if he recovered them by force of arms. Even now my master cannot sufficiently thank you for the kind treatment which he hears you have vouchsafed them, in that you have offered them no insult, but have behaved towards them as though on the point of giving them back to their kith and kin. He sees herein that you bear in mind the changes of fortune and the instability of all human affairs."

At this point Galerius, who had listened with impatience to the long harangue, burst in with a movement of anger that shook his whole frame--"What? Do the Persians dare to remind us of the vicissitudes of fortune, as though we could forget how they behave when victory inclines to them? Is it not their wont to push their advantage to the uttermost and press as heavily as may be on the unfortunate? How charmingly they showed the moderation that becomes a victor

in Valerian's time! They vanquished him by fraud; they kept him a prisoner to advanced old age; they let him die in dishonor; and then when he was dead they stripped off his skin, and with diabolical ingenuity made of a perishable human body an imperishable monument of our shame. Verily, if we follow this envoy's advice, and look to the changes of human affairs, we shall not be moved to clemency, but to anger, when we consider the past conduct of the Persians. If pity be shown them, if their requests be granted, it will not be for what they have urged, but because it is a principle of action with us--a principle handed down to us from our ancestors--to spare the humble and chastise the proud." Apharban, therefore, was dismissed with no definite answer to his question, what terms of peace Rome would require; but he was told to assure his master that Rome's clemency equalled her valor, and that it would not be long before he would receive a Roman envoy authorized to signify the Imperial pleasure, and to conclude a treaty with him.

Having held this interview with Apharban, Galerius hastened to meet and consult his colleague. Diocletian had remained in Syria, at the head of an army of observation, while Galerius penetrated into Armenia and engaged the forces of Persia. When he heard of his son-in-law's great victory he crossed the Euphrates, and advancing through Western Mesopotamia, from which the Persians probably retired, took up his residence at Nisibis, now the chief town of these parts. It is perhaps true that his object was "to moderate, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galarius." That prince was bold to rashness, and nourished an excessive ambition. He is said to have at this time entertained a design of grasping at the conquest of the East, and to have even proposed to himself to reduce the Persian Empire into the form of a Roman province. But the views of Diocletian were humbler and more prudent. He held to the opinion of Augustus and Hadrian, that Rome did not need any enlargement of her territory, and that the absorption of the East was especially undesirable. When he and his son-in-law met and interchanged ideas at Nisibis, the views of the elder ruler naturally prevailed; and it was resolved to offer to the Persians tolerable terms of peace. A civilian of importance, Sicorius Probus, was selected for the delicate office of envoy, and was sent, with a train of attendants, into Media, where Narses had fixed his headquarters. We are told that the Persian monarch received him with all honor, but, under pretence of allowing him to rest and refresh himself after his long journey, deferred his audience from day to day; while he employed the time thus gained in collecting from various quarters such a number of detachments and garrisons as might constitute a respectable army. He had no intention of renewing the war, but he knew the weight which military preparation ever lends to the representations of diplomacy. Accordingly it was not until he had brought under the notice of Sicorius a force of no inconsiderable size that he at last admitted him to an interview. The Roman ambassador was introduced into an inner chamber of the royal palace in Media, where he found only the king and three others--Apharban, the envoy sent to Galerius, Archapetes, the captain of the guard, and Barsaborsus, the governor of a province on the Armenian frontier. He was asked to unfold the particulars of his message, and say what were the terms on which Rome would make peace. Sicorius complied. The emperors, he said, required five things:--(i.) The cession to Rome of five provinces beyond the river Tigris, which are given by one writer as Intilene, Sophene, Arzanene, Carduene, and Zabdicene; by another as Arzanene, Moxoene, Zabdicene, Rehimene, and Corduene; (ii.) the recognition of the Tigris, as the general boundary between the two empires; (iii.) the extension of Armenia to the fortress of Zintha, in Media; (iv.) the relinquishment by Persia to Rome of her protectorate over Iberia, including the right of giving investiture to the Iberian kings; and (v.) the recognition of

Nisibis as the place at which alone commercial dealings could take place between the two nations.

It would seem that the Persians were surprised at the moderation of these demands. Their exact value and force will require some discussion; but at any rate it is clear that, under the circumstances, they were not felt to be excessive. Narses did not dispute any of them except the last: and it seems to have been rather because he did not wish it to be said that he had yielded everything, than because the condition was really very onerous, that he made objection in this instance. Sicorius was fortunately at liberty to yield the point. He at once withdrew the fifth article of the treaty, and, the other four being accepted, a formal peace was concluded between the two nations.

To understand the real character of the peace now made, and to appreciate properly the relations thereby established between Rome and Persia, it will be necessary to examine at some length the several conditions of the treaty, and to see exactly what was imported by each of them. There is scarcely one out of the whole number that carries its meaning plainly upon its face; and on the more important very various interpretations have been put, so that a discussion and settlement of some rather intricate points is here necessary.

(i.) There is a considerable difference of opinion as to the five provinces ceded to Rome by the first article of the treaty, as to their position and extent, and consequently as to their importance. By some they are put on the right, by others on the left, bank of the Tigris; while of those who assign them this latter position some place them in a cluster about the sources of the river, while others extend them very much further to the southward. Of the five provinces three only can be certainly named, since the authorities differ as to the two others. These three are Arzanene, Cordyene, and Zabdicene, which occur in that order in Patricius. If we can determine the position of these three, that of the others will follow, at least within certain limits.

Now Arzanene was certainly on the left bank of the Tigris. It adjoined Armenia, and is reasonably identified with the modern district of Kherzan, which lies between Lake Van and the Tigris, to the west of the Bitlis river. All the notices of Arzanene suit this locality; and the name "Kherzan" may be regarded as representing the ancient appellation.

Zabdicene was a little south and a little east of this position. It was the tract about a town known as Bezabda (perhaps a corruption of Beit-Zabda), which had been anciently called Phoenica. This town is almost certainly represented by the modern Fynyk, on the left bank of the Tigris, a little above Jezireh. The province whereof it was the capital may perhaps have adjoined Arzanene, reaching as far north as the Bitlis river.

If these two tracts are rightly placed, Cordyene must also be sought on the left bank of the Tigris. The word is no doubt the ancient representative of the modern Kurdistan, and means a country in which Kurds dwelt. Now Kurds seem to have been at one time the chief inhabitants of the Mons Masius, the modern Jebel Kara j ah Dagh and Jebel Tur, which was thence called Oordyene, Gordyene, or the Gordisean mountain chain. But there was another and a more important Cordyene on the opposite side of the river. The tract to this day known as Kurdistan, the high mountain region south and south-east of Lake Van between Persia and Mesopotamia, was in the possession of Kurds from before the time of Xenophon, and was known as the country of the Carduchi, as Cardyene, and as Cordyene. This tract, which was contiguous to Arzanene and Zabdicene, if we have rightly placed those regions, must almost certainly have been the Cordyene of the treaty, which, if it corresponded at all nearly in extent with the modern Kurdistan, must have been by far

the largest and most important of the five provinces.

The two remaining tracts, whatever their names, must undoubtedly have lain on the same side of the Tigris with these three. As they are otherwise unknown to us (for Sophene, which had long been Roman, cannot have been one of them), it is impossible that they should have been of much importance. No doubt they helped to round off the Roman dominion in this quarter; but the great value of the entire cession lay in the acquisition of the large and fruitful province of Cordyene, inhabited by a brave and hardy population, and afterwards the seat of fifteen fortresses which brought the Roman dominion to the very edge of Adiabene, made them masters of the passes into Media, and laid the whole of Southern Mesopotamia open to their incursions. It is probable that the hold of Persia on the territory had never been strong; and in relinquishing it she may have imagined that she gave up no very great advantage; but in the hands of Rome Kurdistan became a standing menace to the Persian power, and we shall find that on the first opportunity the false step now taken was retrieved, Cordyene with its adjoining districts was pertinaciously demanded of the Romans, was grudgingly surrendered, and was then firmly re-attached to the Sassanian dominions.

(ii.) The Tigris is said by Patricius and Festus to have been made the boundary of the two empires. Gibbon here boldly substitutes the Western Khabour and maintains that "the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris." He appears not to be able to understand how the Tigris could be the frontier, when five provinces across the Tigris were Roman. But the intention of the article probably was, first, to mark the complete cession to Rome of Eastern as well as Western Mesopotamia, and, secondly, to establish the Tigris as the line separating the empires below the point down to which the Romans held both banks. Cordyene may not have touch the Tigris at all, or may have touched it only about the 37th parallel. From this point southwards, as far as Mosul, or Nimrud, or possibly Kileh Sherghat, the Tigris was probably now recognized as the dividing line between the empires. By the letter of the treaty the whole Euphrates valley might indeed have been claimed by Rome; but practically she did not push her occupation of Mesopotamia below Circeshim. The real frontier from this point was the Mesopotamian desert, which extends from Kerkesiyeh to Nimrud, a distance of 150 miles. Above this it was the Tigris, as far probably as Feshapoor; after which it followed the line, whatever it was, which divided Oordyene from Assyria and Media.

(iii.) The extension of Armenia to the fortress of Zintha, in Media, seems to have imported much more than would at first sight appear from the words. Gibbon interprets it as implying the cession of all Media Atropatene, which certainly appears a little later to be in the possession of the Armenian monarch, Tiridates. A large addition to the Armenian territory out of the Median is doubtless intended; but it is quite impossible to determine definitely the extent or exact character of the cession.

(iv.) The fourth article of the treaty is sufficiently intelligible. So long as Armenia had been a fief of the Persian empire, it naturally belonged to Persia to exercise influence over the neighboring Iberia, which corresponded closely to the modern Georgia, intervening between Armenia and the Caucasus. Now, when Armenia had become a dependency of Rome, the protectorate hitherto exercised by the Sassanian princes passed naturally to the Caesars; and with the protectorate was bound up the right of granting investiture to the kingdom, whereby the protecting power was secured against the establishment on the throne of an unfriendly person. Iberia was not herself a state of much strength; but her power of opening or shutting the passes of the Caucasus gave her considerable importance, since by the

admission of the Tatar hordes, which were always ready to pour in from the plains of the North, she could suddenly change the whole face of affairs in North-Western Asia, and inflict a terrible revenge on any enemy that had provoked her. It is true that she might also bring suffering on her friends, or even on herself, for the hordes, once admitted, were apt to make little distinction between friend and foe; but prudential considerations did not always prevail over the promptings of passion, and there had been occasions when, in spite of them, the gates had been thrown open and the barbarians invited to enter. It was well for Rome to have it in her power to check this peril. Her own strength and the tranquillity of her eastern provinces were confirmed and secured by the right which she (practically) obtained of nominating the Iberian monarchs.

(v.) The fifth article of the treaty, having been rejected by Narses and then withdrawn by Sicorius, need not detain us long. By limiting the commercial intercourse of the two nations to a single city, and that a city within their own dominions, the Romans would have obtained enormous commercial advantages. While their own merchants remained quietly at home, the foreign merchants would have had the trouble and expense of bringing their commodities to market a distance of sixty miles from the Persian frontier and of above a hundred from any considerable town; they would of course have been liable to market dues, which would have fallen wholly into Roman hands; and they would further have been chargeable with any duty, protective or even prohibitive, which Rome chose to impose. It is not surprising that Narses here made a stand, and insisted on commerce being left to flow in the broader channels which it had formed for itself in the course of ages.

Rome thus terminated her first period of struggle with the newly revived monarchy of Persia by a great victory and a great diplomatic success. If Narses regarded the terms--and by his conduct he would seem to have done so--as moderate under the circumstances, our conclusion must be that the disaster which he had suffered was extreme, and that he knew the strength of Persia to be, for the time, exhausted. Forced to relinquish his suzerainty over Armenia and Iberia, he saw those countries not merely wrested from himself, but placed under the protectorate, and so made to minister to the strength, of his rival. Nor was this all. Rome had gradually been advancing across Mesopotamia and working her way from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Narses had to acknowledge, in so many words, that the Tigris, and not the Euphrates, was to be regarded as her true boundary, and that nothing consequently was to be considered as Persian beyond the more eastern of the two rivers. Even this concession was not the last or the worst. Narses had finally to submit to see his empire dismembered, a portion of Media attached to Armenia, and five provinces, never hitherto in dispute, torn from Persia and added to the dominion of Rome. He had to allow Rome to establish herself in force on the left bank of the Tigris, and so to lay open to her assaults a great portion of his northern besides all his western frontier. He had to see her brought to the very edge of the Iranic plateau, and within a fortnight's march of Persia Proper. The ambition to rival his ancestor Sapor, if really entertained, was severely punished; and the defeated prince must have felt that he had been most ill-advised in making the venture.

Narses did not long continue on the throne after the conclusion of this disgraceful, though, it may be, necessary, treaty. It was made in A.D. 297. He abdicated in A.D. 301. It may have been disgust at his ill-success, it may have been mere weariness of absolute power, which caused him to descend from his high position and retire into private life. He was so fortunate as to have a son of full age in whose favor he could resign, so that there was no difficulty about the succession. His ministers seem to have thought it necessary

to offer some opposition to his project; but their resistance was feeble, perhaps because they hoped that a young prince would be more entirely guided by their counsels. Narses was allowed to complete his act of self-renunciation, and, after crowning his son Hormisdas with his own hand, to spend the remainder of his days in retirement. According to the native writers, his main object was to contemplate death and prepare himself for it. In his youth he had evinced some levity of character, and had been noted for his devotion to games and to the chase; in his middle age he laid aside these pursuits, and, applying himself actively to business, was a good administrator, as well as a brave soldier. But at last it seemed to him that the only life worth living was the contemplative, and that the happiness of the hunter and the statesman must yield to that of the philosopher. It is doubtful how long he survived his resignation of the throne, but tolerably certain that he did not outlive his son and successor, who reigned less than eight years.