fecting the interest of the emperor, were discussed in the assembly of the decurions. For all important affairs, such as those affecting the welfare of the whole district, the de curions of the principal city of a province could call a *ge­neral* assembly, *concilium,* to which the other towns sent plenipotentiaries. Long after the comitia had ceased to exist in Rome, the province enjoyed the privilege of calling together such meetings ; and they served at the same time as a means of making known their wants to the emperor.

Of all the provinces incorporated with the Roman em pire, there was not one productive of so much gain, not one in which such inexhaustible sources of wealth were discovered, as the Pyrenean Peninsula. Mines, rich in the pre cious metals,@@1 satisfied the thirst of the Romans for gold ; and a soil nowhere surpassed in productiveness filled their granaries with corn. During the republic the Peninsula was laid under the obligation of supplying the capital of the empire with the twentieth part of its corn harvests. The price paid for the grain was fixed by the Roman se nate itself, a convenient way of obtaining cheap provisions.

While Spain continued to be ravaged by war, the Ro mans did not in general bind themselves to a regular sys tem of taxation, but only drew as much from the Peninsula as it was convenient for it to pay at the time ; but when the conquest of the country was completed, a fixed rate of taxation was introduced. Consequently, after Augustus hail divided Spain in the manner which we have described, the senate sent quæstors into the provinces to collect the taxes. In those provinces placed under the immediate control of the emperor, there were procurators em ployed ; and functionaries of this class were also appointed to look after the monies received by the officers of the senate, the application of the whole being under the entire management of the emperor. These procurators were likewise extremely useful in preventing the subordinates from defrauding the emperor. By degrees their number increased, so that ultimately there came to be procurators, not only for the collective income of a province, but for separate branches of the taxes.

In Spain, as well as throughout the whole Roman em­pire, the taxes consisted of a capitation and a land tax ; but by degrees, more from the extravagance of the empe rors than from the necessities of the state, the people came to be burdened with a multitude of other imposts. The towns had their own particular estates and incomes, inde pendent of those of the government, and which were managed by the civic authorities themselves. These served to defray the expenses of erecting public establishments, building fortresses, and instituting games. The contribution to the state taxes paid by the towns was levied by the magistrates from the inhabitants, in exact proportion to their wealth ; hence the taxes, although they continued to rise, did not press with unequal and crushing weight upon individuals and classes. Never was Spain so wealthy, so populous, and so industrious, as during the first centuries of the empire. Aqueducts, bridges, amphitheatres, and other magnificent structures, even the ruins of some of which posterity surveys with wonder, still bear testimony to the flourishing condition of the country during that period.

When Constantine the Great assumed the purple, im portant changes were introduced into the empire. From the province of Tarraco he separated the governments of Carthagena and Galicia, thus making five provinces in the Peninsula, viz. Tarraco, Carthagena, Galicia, Lusitania, and Bætica. Theodosius the Great erected the Bale aric Isles into a province, and the African district of Tin gitania was also reckoned another, so that there were seven in all. The principal cities of these provinces were as follow:

of Bætica, Hispalis ; of Lusitania, Emerita ; of Galicia, Bracara ; of Tarraco, Cæsar Augusta ; of Carthagena, New Carthage ; of the Balearic Isles, Palma ; and of Tingitania, Tingis. The first three were placed under consuls, and the others under presidents *(præsides).* Spain was subject to the prefecture of Gaul, and over these local governors was placed a *vicar (vicarius),* whose administration was chiefly confined to civil affairs, and the count *(comes),* whose functions were of a military nature. Sometimes, however, both the civil and military departments fell to the vicar. We have yet to mention one important event con nected with the Roman conquest of Spain, namely, the in troduction of Christianity into the Peninsula. This took place so early that the unanimous voice of tradition has ascribed it to St James the elder ; and from the same autho rity we also learn that St Paul preached “ Christ crucified” to the idolaters of Spain. Of course little or no reliance is to be placed on such statements ; but whether the apostles or their successors propagated the gospel in these regions, certain it is that Spain can adduce her martyrs as early as the second century. There is abundant evidence to prove the antiquity of the persecutions sustained by the Christians of Spain, but our limits prevent us from entering into details.

The prosperity of the Peninsula began to decline after the death of Constantine, a. D. 337. A species of tax in troduced by Diocletian, which was made to fall with paralysing weight on the middle or industrious classes, proved so pernicious in its operation, that in a short time the coun try presented the melancholy picture of deserted towns, fields lying waste, fruittrees uprooted from the soil, that the possessors of the ground might lessen the value of their property, and thus escape the taxes ; trade and manufactures at a stand ; in short, nothing but desolation, poverty, and misery, everywhere presented themselves. It only required a strong impulse from without to overwhelm the whole country in ruins. The last day of the year 406 marks the passage of the Vandals, Alans, Suevi, and other Germanic tribes, across the Rhine. From this river to the Pyrenees, terror and dismay announced their ap proach, death and destruction marked their progress. For *a* time this great barrier of nature and of nations restrained the roving bands, and the mountainpasses were at first well guarded. But the prolific fields and wealthy mines of Spain were too rich a prey not to be reached at all hazards. Finding an opportunity, when negligence had weakened the line of defence (409), they burst like a torrent through the Pyrenean chain, and poured the tide of destruction from its base to the Pillars of Hercules. Native historians of the Peninsula describe the ravages committed by these barbarians as dreadful and revolting almost beyond parallel. The very wild beasts quitted their lairs to prey upon the human species, too emaciated by famine and pestilence to drive them back. In a word, the country was turned into a de sert ; and, satiated with carnage and rapine, the barbarians sat down amidst its ruins and divided it by lot. Bætica fell to the Vandals, Lusitania to the Alans, and Galicia, with a great portion of Leon and Castille, to the Suevi. Tarraco alone seems still to have been retained by the Romans.

But a fourth people, more formidable than all the rest combined, came to disturb the new settlers in their pos sessions. These were the Goths under Ataulphus, to whom Honorius, the Roman emperor, had ceded the fertile provinces of Southern Gaul and the Peninsula. The Gothic monarch espoused Placidia, the emperor’s sister, in 414, and immediately proceeded to Barcelona, where, however, he was shortly afterwards assassinated. His successor, Sigeric, a detestable monster, shared the same fate ; and the elec tion of the Goths now fell upon Wallia, a chief every way

@@@, Gibbon very justly observes, “ Spain, by a very singular fatality, was the Peru and Mexico of the old world. The discovery of the rich western continent by the Phoenicians, and the oppression of the simple natives, who were compelled to labour in their mines for the benefit of strangers, form an exact type of the more recent history of Spanish America.” Cbap. vi.