

Octavius came and proclaimed himself as the head of the Roman government, promising ease and plenty to his subjects in return for their homage to him, they accepted these conditions only too gladly, and sold him their birthright for a mess of pottage.

The imperial power thus established continued for several centuries, during which time some of the most cruel and gloomy tyrants that have ever disgraced the pages of history came to the throne of Rome. The crown was bought and sold for money or for blood. One emperor after another was put to death, or caused the assassination of his rival, and the judgments of God could not long delay. They came, and terrible was their coming.

God sometimes uses strange instruments in working out His purposes, and such was the nature of those chosen to humble Rome and lay her in the dust. Her power had already disappeared; her greatest men had prostituted themselves and their talents for money and for popular favor; the fictions of her citizens had already, by their strife, undermined the structure of Roman grandeur. It required but the influx of a foe—and it mattered not who that foe was—to batter down the weakened structure and raze it to the ground.

That enemy now appeared. Three barbarian hordes, the Goths, the Huns and the Vandals, led respectively by Alaric, Attila and Genseric attacked Rome in turn, and each performed a certain part leading to her overthrow. At last the great fabric of civilization, which had held together for so many centuries and withstood so many vicissitudes, crumbled away, and Rome had fallen. Nearly all the proud monuments of fame erected during the period of Rome's greatness were ruthlessly annihilated by the Vandals, and in horror and dismay at beholding this wanton destruction of their beautiful statues and buildings, the Romans ever afterward designated it as "vandalism."

But the greatest satire on the power of Rome was enacted when one of the barbaric Goths, imbued with the spirit of pride, seated himself upon the throne made vacant by the deposition of the former emperor, and remained in undisputed possession of it.

A darkness as of midnight now spread over Europe. It was the autumn and winter of history. On every hand was seen nothing but ignorance and superstition. The

Gauls, the Cimbric, the Teutons, all of whom had deeply drunk of the cup of savagery, quarreled or broke out into open hostility among themselves. They overran the region formerly occupied by the refined but effeminate Romans. They introduced their customs of barbarism and ignorance where had previously been known only the arts and sciences of the Latins. Verily the "Dark Ages" had come.

But the snow of prejudice and ignorance had but spread itself over the land, as the snows of winter hide the surface of the earth; and as the snow covers the delicate seeds and the tender plants, protecting them by its gracious mantle from the biting frosts and sweeping winds, so did the snows of barbarism and superstition in the middle ages shield from injury the tender plants and precious seeds of civilization planted in the fall of Roman pride.

Did God forget those seeds? No; in His providence and mercy the glad "new year" arrived. Men began to realize that this sorrowful planting was a necessary step to the production of the modern advancement and refinement. Roman civilization had reached its highest development and brought forth its fruit. Within that fruit was the seed of a new growth. This had been planted in the fall of Rome's pride, as the acorn falls and is buried beside the oak. Hidden by the snows of barbarism, nourished by the blood of martyrs and sages, and watched by the jealous eye of an Omniscient Creator, those seeds awaited only the New Year of hope. It came at last; and, as in the glad New Year man looks forward with bright anticipation to his labors, so did men at that time begin to see the glorious future that awaited their race.

Spring-time came at last; men of nobility, chosen by God for their work, nourished and trained the tender plants; the dews of inspiration and of reason distilled upon their leaves; they budded, they blossomed, they bore fruit—such fruit as the world had never known before—the fruit of which we partake so thankfully today.

Then blessed forever be that glad new year of history! Long may it be borne in memory by those who share its fruits! When the seeds of our autumn are planted; when we, in turn, are called upon to sacrifice our growth to the necessity of a better one, may we hail with greater and more perfect joy the next new year of history, the great millennial dawn!

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## WASHINGTON LETTER.

The more we are thrown into the company of those who have become officially great, the more do we realize that the greatest of men are human. There is an old and true saying, "No man is great to his own valet." For this reason, "a prophet has no honor in his own country and among his own kin;" the mortal side of his nature is always visible to those associated with him; his weakness is apparent to everybody acquainted with his private life. When we read the speeches of great orators, the communications which flow from the pen of a gifted correspondent, or the glowing accounts of grand receptions by official dignitaries, we are apt to imagine them in the light of perfection. We do not impute to them the weakness we realize in ourselves, and the prefix of "Honorable" or "His Excellency" is an arched doorway, before whose awful presence humanity bows itself. But when we have once entered through the sacred portal of such prefix, sat in the same room, shaken the hand, and heard the conversation of the official whose dignity we have contemplated from afar, the fact dawns upon us that we are in the presence of a mortal existence—a human being clothed with that covering of clan which has inherited the love of this world and yields to most of its temptations. The more we converse, and the more familiar we become, the stronger is our conclusion that, in some general particulars at least, "all men were created equal;" and those are indeed great who, notwithstanding our familiarity with their weakness and the unveiling to us of their humanity, can impress us with their goodness and genius, or even with their social qualities of heart, and retain our respect, affection and regard.

These ideas were suggested to my mind on hearing the remarks of a newspaper reporter at the Capitol the other day, during the commemorative services supplemental to the inaugural ceremonies of President Washington. Looking around from the Press gallery upon the splendor of the occasion, graced as it was by all the dignitaries of the land, and representatives from foreign countries crowded into the House of Representatives, the reporter said, "It takes quiet a large man not to feel small in the presence of such an assembly." I do not desire to depreciate, in the estimation of the public, those whom the people have selected as their choice to occupy official positions, because, go where you will, you find imperfection is the lot of humanity. But when I heard the foregoing remark I could not help reflecting upon those things which pervade all alike, in a greater or less degree, and make men so different from the perfect model which our imagination would mark out for them. In the assemblage alluded to were the President of the United States and all his cabinet, among them Secretary Blaine, whom many