

they attacked the Roman forces and, on the 9th August, 378, coming unexpectedly upon the isolated bodyguard and baggage train of the Emperor Valens, they attacked and overthrew its defenders, killing the Emperor.

Simultaneously, the Huns themselves, indirect authors of the Roman disaster, became pre-occupied with internal dissensions which lasted until the turn of the Vth Century. By 440, King Attila, having assassinated his brother, ruled the whole area from the Ukraine to the Baltic, the Gepids and Ostrogoths acknowledging his leadership. He set out in 441 to ravage the Eastern Roman Empire from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, and so unskilful was the defence that the legions who could have held the narrow passes in Macedonia and Thrace were wasted in small actions on the confines of the empire.

The Western Empire could offer no assistance as it was fully occupied with the Vandals in Sicily: the Eastern Empire was compelled to yield to an ignominious treaty ceding all territory north of the Danube and paying an indemnity of 96,000 ounces of gold and an annual tribute of a further 33,600 ounces.

Between the frontiers and the walls of Constantinople no fewer than 70 cities were sacked and erased by the Huns, only such women as were desired in the camps being spared. Attila established a large camp on the Danube, near modern Belgrade, and for some months conducted negotiations with the emperor through the intermediary of a series of embassies, whose double-dealing and treachery are a model of their kind.

Luckily for the Eastern Emperor Theodosius, who had plotted the death of Attila, the Huns decided upon an invasion of the west. Attila himself, delighting in the title if indeed it was used in those days of «The Scourge of God,» moved rapidly across the Rhine and the Seine. When 800 miles from his base he besieged Orleans, only to be interrupted when on the point of entering the city by the approach of a large Roman

army under Aëtius, who had cunningly persuaded the Visigoths to assist him against their hereditary foes.

Attila retreated rapidly towards the good cavalry country in the Marne Plains, near Chalons. In the battle which followed the Visigothic king was killed and the Huns retired within their laager, 160,000 dead being left on both sides and the Roman army of Aëtius in possession of the field. The plausible Aëtius persuaded the Goths to retire and Attila to decide upon a retreat across the Rhine, only to return in the following year to northern Italy, where he erased the city of Aquileia, whose inhabitants, together with those of Parvia and Milan, sought refuge in the lagoons at the mouth of the Po, thus founding the city of Venice.

In 453, to the delight of the Romans, Attila on the night of the last of his many marriages died suddenly of a ruptured aneurism and the many children of his numerous wives successfully occupied the Huns in internal dissension for many years.

Reading the old authorities and allowing for the exaggerations of both state and church, one is compelled to accept the view that the Vandals and the Huns accom-



plished as much with fire and pick as the modern Hun with explosives and the Luftwaffe.

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In relating this brief outline of the Vandals and the Huns, much of the story of the Goths has been told. One branch, the Ostrogoths, were for a long time submerged by the Hun.