At this time Valens was disturbed by a twofold anxiety, having learned that the people of Lintz had been defeated, and also because Sebastian, in the letters which he sent from time to time, exaggerated what had taken place by his pompous language. Therefore he advanced from Melanthias, being eager by some glorious exploit to equal his youthful nephew, by whose virtue he was greatly excited. He was at the head of a numerous force, neither unwarlike nor contemptible, and had united with them many veteran bands, among whom were several officers of high rank, especially Trajan, who a little while before had been commander of the forces. And as by means of spies and observation it was ascertained that the enemy were intending to blockade the different roads by which the necessary supplies must come, with strong divisions, he sent a sufficient force to prevent this, despatching a body of the archers of the infantry and a squadron of cavalry, with all speed, to occupy the narrow passes in the neighborhood.

Three days afterwards, when the barbarians [the Visigoths], who were advancing slowly, because they feared an attack in the unfavorable ground which they were traversing, arrived within fifteen miles from the station of Nike, which was the aim of their march, the emperor, with wanton impetuosity, resolved on attacking them instantly, because those who had been sent forward to reconnoiter—what led to such a mistake is unknown—affirmed that their entire body did not exceed ten thousand men. Marching on with his army in battle array, Valens came near the suburb of Hadrianopolis, where he pitched his camp, strengthening it with a rampart of palisades, and then impatiently waited for [the emperor] Gratian. While here, Ricimer, Comes of the Domestici, arrived, who had been sent on by that emperor with letters announcing his immediate approach. And imploring Valens to wait a little while for him that he might share his danger, and not rashly face the danger before him single-handed, he took counsel with his officers as to what was best to be done.

Some, following the advice of Sebastian, recommended with urgency that he should at once go forth to battle; while Victor, master-general of the cavalry, a Sarmatian by birth, but a man of slow and cautious temper, recommended him to wait for his imperial colleague, and this advice was supported by several other officers, who suggested that the reinforcement of the Gallic army would be likely to awe the fiery arrogance of the barbarians. However, the fatal obstinacy of the emperor prevailed, fortified by the flattery of some of the princes, who advised him to hasten with all speed, so that Gratian might have no share in a victory which, as they fancied, was already almost gained. And, while all necessary preparations were being made for the battle, a presbyter of the Christian religion (as he called himself), having been sent by Fritigern [King of the Visigoths] as his ambassador, came, with some colleagues of low rank, to the emperor’s camp; and having been received with courtesy, he presented a letter from that chieftain, openly requesting that the emperor would grant to him and to his followers, who were now exiles from their native homes, from which they had been driven by the rapid invasions of savage nations, Thrace, with all its flocks and all its crops, for a habitation. And if Valens would consent to this, Fritigern would agree to a perpetual truce. In addition to this same message, the same Christian, as one acquainted with his commander’s secrets, and well-trusted, produced other secret letters from his chieftain who, being full of craft and every resource of deceit, informed Valens, as one who was hereafter to be his friend and ally, that he had no other means to appease the ferocity of his countrymen, or to induce them to accept conditions advantageous to the Roman state, unless from time to time he showed them an army under arms close at hand, and by frightening them with the name of the emperor, recalled them from their mischievous eagerness for fighting. The ambassadors retired unsuccessful, having been looked on as suspicious characters by the emperor.
When the day broke which the annals mark as the fifth of the Ides of August, the Roman standards were advanced with haste, the baggage having been placed close to the walls of Hadrianopolis, under a sufficient guard of soldiers of the legions; the treasures and the chief insignia of the emperor’s ranks were within the walls, with the prefect and the principal members of the council. Then, having traversed the broken ground which divided the two armies, as the burning day was progressing towards noon, at last, after marching eight miles, our men came in sight of the wagons of the enemy, which had been stated by the scouts to be all arranged in a circle. According to their custom, the barbarian host raised a fierce and hideous yell, while the Roman generals marshaled their line of battle. The right wing of the cavalry was placed in front; the chief portion of the infantry was kept in reserve. But the left wing of the cavalry, of which a considerable number were still straggling on the road, were advancing with speed, though with great difficulty; and while this wing was deploying, not as yet meeting with any obstacle, the barbarians being alarmed at the terrible clang of their arms and the threatening crash of their shields (since a large portion of their own army was still at a distance, under Alatheus and Saphrax, and, though sent for, had not yet arrived), again sent ambassadors to ask for peace.

The emperor was offended at the lowness of their rank, and replied, that if they wished to make a lasting treaty, they must send him nobles of sufficient dignity. They designedly delayed, in order by the fallacious truce which subsisted during the negotiation to give time for their cavalry to return, whom they looked upon as close at hand; and for our soldiers, already suffering from the summer heat, to become parched and exhausted by the conflagration of the vast plain; as the enemy had, with this object, set fire to the crops by means of burning faggots and fuel. To this evil another was added, that both men and cattle were suffering from extreme hunger.

In the meantime Fritigern, being skilful in divining the future, and fearing a doubtful struggle, of his own head sent one of his men as a herald, requesting that some nobles and picked men should at once be sent to him as hostages for his safety, when he himself would fearlessly bring us both military aid and supplies. The proposition of this formidable chief was received with praise and approbation, and the tribune Equitius, a relation of Valens, who was at that time high steward of the palace, was appointed, with general consent, to go with all speed to the barbarians as a hostage. But he refused, because he had once been taken prisoner by the enemy, and had escaped from Dibaltum, so that he feared their vengeful anger; upon this Ricimer voluntarily offered himself, and willingly undertook to go, thinking it a bold action, and one becoming a brave man; and so he set out, bearing vouchers of his rank and high birth.

And as he was on his way towards the enemy's camp, the accompanying archers and Scutarii, who on that occasion were under the command of Bacurius, a native of Iberia, and of Cassio, yielded, while on their march, to an indiscreet impetuosity, and on approaching the enemy, first attacked them rashly, and then by a cowardly flight disgraced the beginning of the campaign. This ill-timed attack frustrated the willing services of Ricimer, as he was not permitted to proceed; in the meantime the cavalry of the Goths had returned with Alatheus and Saphrax, and with them a battalion of Alans; these descending from the mountains like a thunderbolt, spread confusion and slaughter among all whom in their rapid charge they came across.

And while arms and missiles of all kinds were meeting in fierce conflict, and Bellona, blowing her mournful trumpet, was raging more fiercely than usual, to inflict disaster on the Romans, our men began to retreat; but presently, roused by the reproaches of their officers, they made a fresh stand, and the battle increased like a conflagration, terrifying our soldiers, numbers of whom were pierced
by strokes from the javelins hurled at them, and from arrows. Then the two lines of battle dashed against each other, like the beaks of ships, and thrusting with all their might, were tossed to and fro, like the waves of the sea. Our left wing had advanced actually up to the wagons, with the intent to push on still further if they were properly supported; but they were deserted by the rest of the cavalry, and so pressed upon by the superior numbers of the enemy, that they were overwhelmed and beaten down, like the ruin of a vast rampart. Presently our infantry also was left unsupported, while the different companies became so huddled together that a soldier could hardly draw his sword, or withdraw his hand after he had once stretched it out. And by this time such clouds of dust arose that it was scarcely possible to see the sky, which resounded with horrible cries; and in consequence, the darts, which were bearing death on every side, reached their mark, and fell with deadly effect, because no one could see them beforehand so as to guard against them.

But when the barbarians, rushing on with their enormous host, beat down our horses and men, and left no spot to which our ranks could fall back to deploy, while they were so closely packed that it was impossible to escape by forcing a way through them, our men at last began to despise death, and again took to their swords and slew all they encountered, while with mutual blows of battle-axes, helmets and breastplates were dashed in pieces. Then you might see the barbarian towering in his fierceness, hissing or shouting, fall with his legs pierced through, or his right hand cut off, sword and all, or his side transfixed, and still, in the last gasp of life, casting round him defiant glances. The plain was covered with carcasses, strewing the mutual ruin of the combatants; while the groans of the dying, or of men fearfully wounded, were intense, and caused great dismay all around.

Amidst all this great tumult and confusion our infantry were exhausted by toil and danger, until at last they had neither strength left to fight, nor spirits to plan anything; their spears were broken by the frequent collisions, so that they were forced to content themselves with their drawn swords, which they thrust into the dense battalions of the enemy, disregarding their own safety, and seeing that every possibility of escape was cut off from them. The ground, covered with streams of blood, made their feet slip, so that all they endeavored to do was to sell their lives as dearly as possible; and with such vehemence did they resist their enemies who pressed on them, that some were even killed by their own weapons. At last one black pool of blood disfigured everything, and wherever the eye turned, it could see nothing but piled up heaps of dead, and lifeless corpses trampled on without mercy.

The sun being now high in the heavens, having traversed the sign of Leo, and reached the abode of the heavenly Virgo, scorched the Romans, who were emaciated by hunger, worn out with toil, and scarcely able to support even the weight of their armor. At last our columns were entirely beaten back by the overpowering weight of the barbarians, and so they took to disorderly flight, which is the only resource in extremity, each man trying to save himself as well as he could. While they were all flying and scattering themselves over roads with which they were unacquainted, the emperor, bewildered with terrible fear, made his way over heaps of dead, and fled to the battalions of the Lancarrii and the Mattiarii, who, until the superior numbers of the enemy became wholly irresistible, stood firm and immovable. As soon as he saw him, Trajan exclaimed that all hope was lost, unless the emperor, thus deserted by his guards, could be protected by the aid of his foreign allies.

When this exclamation was heard, a comes names Victor hastened to bring up with all speed the Batavians, who were placed in the reserve, and who ought to have been near at hand, to the
emperor's assistance; but as none of them could be found, he too retreated, and in a similar manner Ricimer and Saturninus saved themselves from danger. So now, with rage flashing in their eyes, the barbarians pursued our men, who were in a state of torpor, the warmth of their veins having deserted them. Many were slain without knowing who smote them; some were overwhelmed by the mere weight of the crowd which pressed upon them; and some were slain by wounds inflicted by their own comrades. The barbarians spared neither those who yielded nor those who resisted. Besides these, many half-slain lay blocking up the roads, unable to endure the torture of their wounds; and heaps of dead horses were piled up and filled the plain with their carcasses. At last a dark moonless night put an end to the irremediable disaster which cost the Roman state so dear.

Just when it first became dark, the emperor being among a crowd of common soldiers, as it was believed—for no one said either that he had seen him, or been near him—was mortally wounded with an arrow, and, very shortly after, died, though his body was never found. For as some of the enemy loitered for a long time about the field in order to plunder the dead, none of the defeated army or of the inhabitants ventured to go to them. A similar fate befell the Caesar Decius, when fighting vigorously against the barbarians; for he was thrown by his horse falling, which he had been unable to hold, and was plunged into a swamp, out of which he could never emerge, nor could his body be found. Others report that Valens did not die immediately, but that he was borne by a small body of picked soldiers and eunuchs to a cabin in the neighborhood, which was strongly built, with two stories; and that while these unskilful hands were tending his wounds, the cottage was surrounded by the enemy, though they did not know who was in it; still, however, he was saved from the disgrace of being made a prisoner.

For when his pursuers, while vainly attempting to force the barred doors, were assailed with arrows from the roof, they, not to lose by so inconvenient a delay the opportunity of collecting plunder, gathered some faggots and stubble, and setting fire to them, burnt down the building, with those who were in it. But one of the prisoners dropped from the windows, and, being taken prisoner by the barbarians, revealed to them what had taken place, which caused them great concern, because they looked upon themselves as defrauded of great glory in not having taken the ruler of the Roman state alive. This same young man afterwards secretly returned to our people, and gave this account of the affair. When Spain had been recovered after a similar disaster, we are told that one of the Scipios was lost in a fire, the tower in which he had taken refuge having been burnt. At all events it is certain that neither Scipio nor Valens enjoyed that last honor of the dead—a regular funeral.

Many illustrious men fell in this disastrous defeat, and among them one of the most remarkable was Trajan, and another was Sebastian; there perished also thirty-five tribunes who had no particular command, many captains of battalions, and Valerianus and Equitianus, one of whom was Master of the Horse and the other High Steward. Potentius, too, tribune of the promoted officers, fell in the flower of his age, a man respected by all persons of virtue, and recommended by the merits of his father, Ursicinus, who had formerly been commander of the forces, as well as by his own. Scarcely one-third of the whole army escaped. Nor, except the battle of Cannae, is so destructive a slaughter recorded in our annals; though, even in the times of their prosperity, the Romans have more than once had to deplore the uncertainty of war, and have for a time succumbed to evil Fortune; while the well-known dirges of the Greeks have bewailed many disastrous battles.

Such was the death of Valens, when he was about fifty years old, and had reigned rather less than fourteen years. We will now describe his virtues, which were known to many, and his vices. He was a faithful and steady friend—a severe chastiser of ambition—a rigid upholder of both military and
civil discipline---always careful that no one should assume importance on account of any relationship to himself; slow both in conferring office, and in taking it away; a very just ruler of the provinces, all of which he was protected from injury, as if each had been his own house; devoting singular care to the lessening the burdens of the state, but a vehement and implacable foe to all thieves, and to everyone convicted of peculations; nor in affairs of this kind was the East, by its own confession, ever better treated under any other emperor. Besides all this, he was liberal with due regard to moderation, of which quality there are many example, one of which it will be sufficient to mention here: As in palaces there are always some persons covetous of the possessions of others, if anyone petitioned for lapsed property, or anything else which it was usual to apply for, he made a proper distinction between just and unjust claims, and when he gave it to the petitioner, while reserving full liberty to anyone to raise objections, he often associated the successful candidate with three or four partners, in order that those covetous suitors might conduct themselves with more moderation, when they saw the profits for which they were so eager diminished by this device. Of the edifices, which in the different cities and towns he either repaired or built from their foundations, I will say nothing (to avoid prolixity), allowing those things to speak for themselves. These qualities, in my opinion, deserve the imitation of all good men. Now let us enumerate his vices. He was an immoderate covetor of great wealth; impatient of labor, he affected an extreme severity, and was too much inclined to cruelty; his behavior was rude and rough; and he was little imbued with skill either in war or in the liberal arts. He willingly sought profit and advantage in the miseries of others, and was more than ever intolerable in straining ordinary offences into sedition or treason; he cruelly encompassed the death or ruin of many nobles. This also was unendurable, that while he wished to have it appear that all actions and suits were decided according to the law, and while the investigation of such affairs was delegated to judges especially selected as the most proper to decide them, he still would not allow any decision to be given which was contrary to his own pleasure. He was also insulting, passionate, and always willing to listen to all informers, without the least distinction as to whether the charges they advanced were true or false. And this vice is one very much to be dreaded, even in private affairs of everyday occurrence.

He was dilatory and sluggish; of a swarthy complexion; had a cast in one eye, a blemish, however, which was not visible at a distance; his limbs were well set; his figure was neither tall nor short; he was knock-kneed, and rather pot-bellied. This is enough to say about Valens: and the recollection of his contemporaries will fully testify that this account is a true one. But we must not omit to mention that when he had learnt that the oracle of the tripod [Delphi], which we related to have been moved by Patricius and Hilanus, contained those three prophetic lines, the last of which is "Repelling murd'rous war in Mimas' plain;" -- he, being void of accomplishments and illiterate, despised them at first; but as his calamities increased, he became filled with abject fear, and, from a recollection of this same prophecy, began to dread the very name of Asia, where he had been informed by learned men that both Homer and Cicero had spoken of the Mountain of Mimas over the town of Erythrae. Lastly, after his death, and the departure of the enemy, it is said that a monument was found near the spot where he is believed to have died, with a stone fixed into it inscribed with Greek characters, indicating that some ancient noble of the name of Mimas was buried there.

After this disastrous battle, when night had veiled the earth in darkness, those who survived fled, some to the right, some to the left, or wherever fear guided them, each man seeking refuge among his relations, as no one could think of anything but himself, while all fancied the lances of the enemy sticking in their backs. And far off were heard the miserable wailing of those who were left behind--the sobs of the dying, and the agonizing groans of the wounded. But when daylight returned, the conquerors, like wild beasts rendered still more savage by the blood they had tasted, and allured by
the temptations of groundless hope, marched in a dense column upon Hadrianopolis, resolved to run any risk in order to take it, having been informed by traitors and deserters that the principal officers of state, the insignia of the imperial authority, and the treasures of Valens had all been placed there for safety, as in an impregnable fortress. And to prevent the ardor of the soldiers from being cooled by delay, the whole city was blockaded by the fourth hour; and the siege from that time was carried on with great vigor, the besiegers, from their innate ferocity, pressing in to complete its destruction, while, on the other hand, the garrison was stimulated to great exertions by their natural courage. . . .