Introduction

Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430–490)

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INTRODUCTION

(CAIUS) SOLLIUS APOLLINARIS (MODESTUS) SIDONIUS was born at Lyons, about the year 431, and died at Clermont perhaps in A.D. 489, at the age of nearly sixty years. The exceptional interest of the period covered by his life is apparent from these dates; he saw the last sickness and the death of the Roman Empire in the West, and is our principal authority for some of the events which attended its extinction. He was a younger contemporary of Attila and Gaiseric. The campaigns of Aëtius took place in his boyhood; he was a youth of about twenty when the Huns were defeated on the Catalaunian plains, and for the first time in history the Roman and the Teuton fought side by side against a common enemy. He was about twenty-four when the house of Theodosius became extinct with Valentinian III, and the Vandals plundered the city of the Caesars (A.D. 455). He was still alive when Romulus Augustulus laid down his diadem at the bidding of Odovakar. More than once his path crossed that of the last emperors who ruled in Italy; as the son-in-law of Avitus, and a high officer of state under Anthemius, he saw Rome in the final phases of her imperial existence. In his own country he met or corresponded with every person of importance. He had dined with Majorian, he had played backgammon with the Visigoth Theodoric II; he lived to become first the prisoner and then the subject of that monarch's fierce successor, Euric. He exchanged letters with Lupus, Remigius, Faustus, and all the leaders of the Church in Gaul. There was hardly a single distinguished name with which in some way or another his own was not associated. Like Cassiodorus, he enjoyed an outlook over two worlds, the old Roman civilization in its decay, and mediaeval society in its beginnings. To paraphrase a sentence of Sir Thomas Browne, he stands like Janus in the field of history.

Sidonius came of a senatorial family long settled in Gallia Lugdunensis, a family to which, as he himself says, the holding of high office seemed almost a hereditary right: both his father and his grandfather had been prefects in Gaul. His mother belonged to the gens of the Aviti, which was connected with other noble provincial families, the Ferreoli, the Ommatii, and the Agroecii; when therefore he married Papianilla, daughter of the Avitus who became emperor, he may only have added a new tie to an old alliance. He had a brother, who may not have lived to mature age, as no letter is addressed to him; he had aunts or sisters and a mother-in-law, mentioned as taking care of one of his children (V. xvi. 5). A nephew Secundus (III. xii), and a cousin Apollinaris complete the list of his own relations,

with the possible addition of Simplicius, who is so often mentioned with Apollinaris that he may have been his brother. He had two brothers-in-law, Ecdicius and Agricola, of the latter of whom we hear little, of the former, much. For Ecdicius was the hero of his native country of Auvergne. He distinguished himself by great gallantry in the last struggle for independence (III. iii), and seems to have had in him much of the spirit of mediaeval chivalry. Nor was he deficient in other gifts; he must have possessed some talent for diplomacy, since he was instrumental in rallying the Burgundians to the cause of Auvergne at a very critical moment.

Sidonius and Papianilla had one son, Apollinaris, and three daughters, Alcima, Roscia, and Severiana. The boy, whose early promise is mentioned in one of the most pleasing passages of the Letters (IV. xii. 1), was destined to disappoint his parents, first in his failure to maintain the intellectual promise of his youth, and later by more serious deficiencies, recorded by other hands than those of his own father. Of the girls, only Roscia and Severiana are mentioned in the Letters, and both in an incidental manner; for Sidonius was not communicative on his family affairs. The name of Alcima does not occur at all: we learn more of her from other sources than Sidonius himself tells us of her sisters. She became noted for her devotion to the saints, and for her munificence to the Church, and is said to have joined her sister-in-law Placidina in a successful effort to obtain the see of Clermont for her brother some years after her father's death (see below, p. li, note 2).

Sidonius was educated in his native city, where the schools, if less famous than those of Bordeaux, were yet of high repute. He passed through the regular course of academic training, the essential parts of which consisted of grammar and rhetoric; and in both Letters and Poems preserves kindly memories of his teachers and fellow students. As might be expected from the fortunate circumstances of his birth, and his father's rank as prefect, his youth was probably a happy one, passed alternately between the city and the country estate, where he enjoyed games and all the pleasures of the chase. His love of eloquence began early; he refers to the delight with which, as a youth of eighteen, he listened to the speech of Nicetius when Astyrius assumed the consulship at Aries in 449 (VIII. vi. 5). After his marriage, which must have been an early one, he probably divided his time between Lyons and Auvergne; in the latter region was situated his father-in-law's estate of Avitacum, which was ultimately to come to him through Papianilla, and of which he has left a description (II. ii; Carm. xviii). It was probably during the first years of his married life that he frequented the Visigothic Court at Toulouse, from which he wrote home the very interesting letter descriptive of Theodoric II to his brother-in-law Agricola (I. ii). Avitus, to whose exertions the coalition of Roman and Visigoth against Attila had been largely due, had long favoured an understanding between the two peoples.

He had been a familiar figure at the Court of Theodoric I, whose sons he had endeavoured to imbue with Roman civilization; it was therefore natural that he should encourage the visits of his son-in-law to the more important of these pupils. He may not have clearly foreseen the part which he was destined personally to play in the near future; but it must have appeared

a possible contingency that the Goths and their Gallo-Roman neighbours might once more be called upon to take decisive action together. With Tonantius Ferreolus and many others, he may well have shared the belief that the Roman understanding with the most civilized of the barbaric peoples might save an Empire which Italy was too enfeebled to lead. He had seen the Visigoths and the Burgundians in their homes, and learned to appreciate the rude virtues and the manly strength which redeemed the coarser elements in their nature. He dreamed perhaps of a Teutonic aristocracy more and more refined by Latin influences, which should impart to the Romans the qualities of a less sophisticated race and to their own countrymen a wider acceptance of Italian culture. He knew that for more than a century Gaul had been the most vigorous and enlightened portion of the Empire in the West, and as Italy became year by year more helpless, he may well have believed that the leadership of the decaying state might pass into the control of his own country. But throughout he probably gave Theodoric II credit for a greater disinterestedness than he possessed;

for in all likelihood the Visigothic king intended to exploit the Roman connexion in the interest of himself and his own people. Be that as it may, when, in 455, the line of Theodosius became extinct with Valentinian III, the murderer of Aëtius, Avitus was sent as magister milltum to secure the recognition of Petronius Maximus in Gaul. But while he was at Toulouse, news came of that emperor's murder, whereupon Theodoric urged him to assume the diadem himself.After a meeting either of representative magnates or of the Council of the Seven Provinces at Ugernum (Beaucaire), Avitus, then some sixty years of age, was formally invested with the purple.

The event was the first turning-point in the career of Sidonius: it opened before him the brightest prospects of advancement, and awakened in him that ardent desire of political distinction which was for many years to exert so strong an influence on his life. He accompanied his father-in-law to Rome, and there, following the precedent of a Claudian or an Ausonius, delivered the Panegyric of Avitus which earned him the honour of a statue in the. Forum of Trajan. But the hopes which the young aspirant might legitimately base upon his relationship to the head of the state were soon dashed to the ground: Avitus did not fulfil the expectations of his friends. His personal courage availed him little in Rome. On the other hand, his character revealed unsuspected weakness, and his position as a provincial nobleman among the critical aristocracy of the capital became each day more difficult. His every action was watched with unfriendly eyes; his bodyguard of Visigoths aroused resentment; and when, to provide their payment, he was reduced to melting statues and stripping the bronze tiles from temple roofs, it needed but a pretext to ensure his speedy ruin. The immediate cause of his downfall lay in the hostility of Ricimer, now only at the beginning of his career as king-maker. The formidable Suëve had achieved a notable triumph over the Vandal fleet near Corsica (456), and, flushed with victory, determined to remove an emperor over whose election he had exerted no control.

The unfortunate Avitus, who found his position in Rome untenable, fled to Gaul with the object of obtaining military support, but returning with an insufficient force, was defeated

by Ricimer at Placentia.The conqueror, establishing a precedent destined to be followed more than once in the immediate future, compelled him to exchange the diadem for the mitre, but the transformation did not long preserve the victim's life. Apprehensive that his fate was only postponed, Avitus seems to have sought safety in renewed flight; it is certain that he met his death within a few months of his deposition.

The fall of Avitus was a crushing blow to Sidonius. He returned home, where he found many spirits troubled like his own, and a party among the nobility still indisposed to acquiesce in the rule of Ricimer, or to see Gaul robbed of the leadership which she had fairly assumed. Feeling ran so high that a regular conspiracy was formed with both Visigothic and Burgundian support, in the hope of placing upon the throne a second emperor approved by Gaul. The candidate is conjectured to have been the gallant Marcellinus; but it seems unlikely that such a scheme can have had the consent of the person principally involved, for Marcellinus, actually commander in Dalmatia, had been the comrade of Majorian, now raised by Ricimer to the principate (April 457), and during the new reign played a part of conspicuous loyalty. Majorian had almost all the gifts which make a ruler----courage, prudence, tact, love of justice, and magnanimity. A puppet-emperor might have been defied, but not a man like this. As soon as events permitted, he entered Gaul, and in 458 and 459 reduced the rebels to submission, The focus of the rising was Lyons, which had actually received a Burgundian garrison. Whether these barbaric auxiliaries remained in the city, or whether they were persuaded to withdraw by Petrus, Majorian's Secretary of State, there could only be one end to the adventure; the city, after suffering great hardships, was compelled to unconditional surrender. The emperor felt it necessary to exercise severity;

in addition to the ruin of its walls and buildings, Lyons was punished by severe taxation. In this rising and its consequent disasters Sidonius took a prominent part; he seems to imply that he and his friend Catullinus actually bore arms, and he was certainly one of those who had to smart under the lash of a 'tribute' described in one of his poems as triple-headed, like the monster Geryon.After the capture of Lyons, the movement collapsed: perhaps by the secret activity among the rebels of men like Paeonius, the upstart, who during the interregnum had usurped positions to which he had no claim, and who now sowed dissension in the hope of securing favour at the victor's hands. Theodoric, who had attacked Aries, abandoned open hostility, and renewed his previous relations to the empire; the Burgundians, returning to their old position as loyal foederati, were confirmed in possession of all Lugdunensis Prima except the capital itself.

From the embarrassment into which his active participation in rebellion had thrown him, Sidonius extricated himself, perhaps with the assistance of the literary Petrus, by the exercise of his poetic talents. His short appeal against the triple impost was successful; he made a further bid for the emperor's favour by writing a pane-eyrie. It is difficult to exonerate our author from the charge of a certain moral pliancy in this matter. Not twenty months had elapsed since he had sung the praises of Avitus before the Senate at Rome, and now he stood forth in the town of his birth to laud the nominee of Avitus' murderer. This

second panegyric is in some ways superior to the first; if the heart of the writer was less glad, his pen was no less ready; and the poem contains passages of no small brilliance and great descriptive power. Majorian loved letters, and had a generous nature; he accepted the tribute, and admitted the panegyrist to the circle of his friends. Sidonius received the title of count, and became a persona grata at the court; the extent of his influence became apparent during the second visit of Majorian to Gaul in the year 461. At that time there appeared an anonymous satire which created a great stir at Arles; the writer severely lashed some of the personages most prominent under the new régime, among others the parvenu Paeonius, who was naturally consumed with the desire to unmask the hidden assailant.

He thought he had succeeded in tracing the lampoon to Sidonius, whom he would have gladly humiliated. Instead of this, he was himself subjected to new and conspicuous discomfiture in the presence of the emperor, who at a banquet endorsed the conduct of his new friend by publicly resenting an unproved insinuation (X. xi).Once more the star of Sidonius seemed in the ascendant; for the second time it was eclipsed. Majorian's career, which promised so much for the empire, was suddenly arrested, and the last real emperor of Rome fell a victim to the jealousy of Ricimer (461). The king-maker availed himself of the disappointment caused by the failure of a new naval expedition against the Vandals to remove too popular a rival. During the next four years he kept upon the throne Severus, a feeble personage on whose nullity he could rely. Severus died in 465, whereupon Ricimer for two years controlled the destinies of Italy alone. In 467, however, a rapprochement with the court of Constantinople, alienated by the murder of Majorian, became the interest of Italy, and the Senate requested Leo I to nominate an emperor in the West. He complied, naming Anthemius, a great Byzantine noble, son-in-law of Marcian, and a soldier of high repute. Soon after the new ruler had landed in Italy, he endeavoured to conciliate Ricimer by giving him his daughter Alypia in marriage. For the first time since Majorian's death Italy indulged new hopes.

Under a soldier supported by Byzantine influence she might make head against the barbarian without, while the union of Ricimer with the imperial princess promised internal peace.

When his prospects were for the second time overclouded by the untimely fate of Majorian, Sidonius passed six years of retirement at Lyons and upon his favourite estate of Avitacum. The quietness of his life was relieved by more than one round of visits to friends at Bordeaux and Narbonne; a number of the letters, and these among the most entertaining, were probably written during the leisure which he now enjoyed. But for the ambitions awakened by experience of two courts and only latent during these years, this would perhaps have been the happiest period of his career. Reading or composing in his library, or instructing his young son; wandering in his grounds by the lake, and amusing himself upon occasion with games and with the chase, he found the hours pass not unpleasantly at home; abroad, the society of the cultured friends and relatives who vied with one another in their desire to show him hospitality, afforded him the most agreeable of distractions. But he had tasted

publicity and imperial favour; he had fallen under the glamour of Rome; and amid all the ease and calm of his existence the thought of the prizes which had just slipped from his grasp was a source of secret discontent. He was still well under forty; he could not yet resign himself to the undistinguished life of a provincial noble. While Ricimer remained sole arbiter of Rome's destinies, Ricimer who had caused the death of both his patrons, there seemed no place for him on the greater stage of the world. On all sides the road was barred against him; he must accept the fate of the disappointed man.

Into these shadows the election of Anthemius and the improved position of affairs in Italy brought a sudden light; hopes almost abandoned rose once more. Sidonius began to consider whether he might not attain at the new court the position which fortune had twice placed almost within his reach and twice withdrawn. The course now taken by events was exceptionally favourable to the attempt. Anthemius fully grasped the importance of strengthening his new dominions, and his attention was naturally directed to Gaul as the bulwark of empire in the West. The provincials on their side were anxious to explain their needs, and to enlist the sympathies of the new prince; they probably had grievances for redress, and schemes for a strong policy against barbaric encroachment. A deputation was appointed to visit Rome, and after offering congratulations to Anthemius, to lay before him the hopes and the necessities of the country. What more natural than that the eloquent son-in-law of Avitus, one used to courts and no stranger in the capital, should be selected to act as leader? Doubtless to his great satisfaction, Sidonius found himself once more preparing to cross the Alps, furnished with an Imperial letter which placed all public means of transport at his disposal. After a favourable journey down the Ticino and the Po to Ravenna, he learned that the emperor was at Rome, and followed him thither by the Flaminian Way, arriving on the eve of the nuptials of Ricimer and Alypia.

The first step was taken; Sidonius had now to see that on this, his third endeavour to rise, he reached an altitude commensurate with his persistent effort and with the dignity of his family. It is probable that Anthemius met him more than half-way, and that the comedy of advancement in which Sidonius now engaged was in reality directed by the imperial advisers. It was very important for the emperor to conciliate Gaul. He was now perfecting a defensive scheme against the aggression of Euric, which involved the sanction of all Burgundian appropriations, and possibly a further cession, in order to secure the more willing cooperation of Gundioc. It was a matter of moment to win for his policy a man of such influence in Lyons and Auvergne as Sidonius, and it may therefore be fairly surmised that the way of ascent was made smooth for the aspirant's feet. The leader of the deputation took up his quarters with a cultured Roman noble, Paulus, by whose assistance he prepared to combine the prosecution of his mission with a legitimate advancement of his private fortunes. The two selected the most efficacious patron in the Senate, Basilius, who had the reputation of obtaining promotions for all his clients and not for his relatives alone. It was arranged that the emperor should be favourably impressed by a panegyric delivered on his assumption of the consulship for the second term on New Year's Day, 468 A.D. The story which must be read in Sidonius' own words (I.

ix), recalls some episode from court-life in the eighteenth century; as Baret has said, the scene might almost be an entresol at Versailles. The panegyric was graciously received---- had not Basilius guaranteed as much? And the poet was magnificently rewarded with the office of Prefect of Rome, carrying with it the presidency of the Senate. It can hardly be supposed that the appointment was nothing more than a distinction offered to Letters, like the consulship of Ausonius, or those nominations with which ministers of the eighteenth century recompensed their literary partisans. As already hinted, it is more probable that in part at least the affair was prearranged, and that the panegyric provided an ostensible motive for an act really dictated by considerations of imperial policy.

Sidonius now rode, as he would have said, at a safe anchor of glory, he had attained the highest grade but two in the imperial system of honours. There remained only the titles of Patrician and Consul; could he win these, he would have achieved the feat which he repeatedly declared to be every man's proper ambition; he would have risen to a higher rank than any of his ancestors. In the moment of his elation, he doubtless indulged golden dreams; but the unselfishness of his nature is shown by his evident desire that his friends in their turn should set their feet upon the official ladder, and by his promises to do all that he can to further their advancement. Yet he soon found that office has its troubles; almost from the first, the path of greatness was rough to his feet. Among his duties as prefect was the superintendence of the Corn Supply, the Praefectus Annonae being his subordinate officer.On one occasion supplies ran dangerously short, and he grew somewhat alarmed, fearing outbreaks in the amphitheatre on the part of the spoiled Roman populace; fortunately the arrival of ships at Ostia preserved him from the unpopularity which he dreaded (I. x. 2). A more serious event was the impeachment of Arvandus, Prefect of Gaul, and a personal acquaintance of his own, before a committee of the Senate on charges of peculation and high treason. Sidonius was now placed in a most embarrassing position.

On the one hand, he could not but sympathize with this effort of his native province to end by a signal example the insolence and corruption which were leading Roman provincial government to disaster; moreover, the principal accuser, Tonantius Ferreolus, was his connexion and intimate friend. On the other hand, to leave Arvandus to his fate without lifting a finger, appeared a dishonourable and cowardly course. He decided to do what he could for the impeached man who proved an intractable client, committing every possible blunder in the defence, and rendering the severest sentence unavoidable. The action of Sidonius has been commended by historians, among whom Gibbon is numbered. He necessarily incurred much odium (I. vii. i); for never had representative of law and order a more compromising client. The praise which thus falls to his lot is doubtless deserved, for it may well have been that Sidonius was unaware of Arvandus' treasonable correspondence with Euric, a matter which the prosecution may have kept as the trump-card to be played at Rome, and perhaps deliberately concealed from all friends of the accused, however nearly connected with themselves. Even when the treasonable letter was produced, Sidonius may have hoped against hope that it was not a genuine document, but had been supplied to the accusers by more unscrupulous enemies of the fallen prefect. But though we may approve this loyalty to a

fallen friend, we cannot but feel some astonishment that a man of Sidonius' high character should have permitted himself an intimacy with an unscrupulous and violent personage like Arvandus:

he was wont to choose his intimates among men of a very different stamp, and to be fastidious in selection. The conceit and obstinacy of the ex-prefect frustrated all efforts to establish a plausible defence, and Sidonius absented himself from Rome before sentence was pronounced, probably to avoid the pain of witnessing a condemnation which he had been unable to avert. But he and those who acted with him did not relax their efforts on behalf of the condemned man; in all likelihood the commutation of the death-sentence to banishment with confiscation of property may be ascribed to their active intervention.

Events of such a nature must have rendered the term of his office an anxious time for the Prefect of Rome. There was another and yet graver cause of anxiety, less immediately conspicuous, but big with coming trouble. This was the increasing tension between Anthemius and his new son-in-law. To any one gifted with political foresight, an ultimate rupture became day by day more certain; and it may be that the retirement of Sidonius was hastened by his desire to leave Rome before fresh disasters broke on the ill-fated empire. This explanation of his final departure is perhaps as likely as that which would attribute his second return from Italy to something in the nature of honourable dismissal. It is possible, however, that, like Mr. Secretary Addison in 1717, this earlier literary statesman proved unequal to the routine of administration, and that the title of Patrician which he now received, was intended to cover any mortification at the premature close of his career; but the capacity for affairs manifested in the stage of his life on which he was now to enter, is rather against the supposition of actual failure. Whatever the causes of his retirement, Sidonius now bade farewell to secular ambitions; restored to the peace of Avitacum, he may well have reflected upon their vanity, and tasted the last bitterness of disillusion.

It is a probable conjecture that such reflections gave a more serious turn to a mind never irreligious, and that the evident change of his outlook on the world conditioned the event which was now to transform his life. On the death of the Bishop of Clermont, Sidonius was invited by general consent to occupy the vacant throne, and he accepted the invitation. Assuming him to have been born between 431 and 433, he was now about forty years of age. The Letters contain no allusion to the circumstances immediately preceding this, the crucial event of our author's life. Nowhere does Sidonius allude to the invitation itself, of the persons who made it or to the arguments which they employed, though more than once he describes his new profession as having in a sense been forced upon him, as indeed it had been forced upon many other men of birth and wealth alike in Italy, and in his own country, among whom St. Ambrose himself is numbered. It is not difficult to supply the information which he omits to furnish. In those troubled times, the Church had special need of leaders familiar with the traditions of high office, trained to public life, and possessed of ample fortune (see below, p. lxxiii). Such men were better able than any others to stand between their flocks and the imperious barbarian princes who, with every year, closed in

a narrowing circle round the dwindling territory of Rome. The careers of a Patiens and a Perpetuus proved the wisdom of those who elected them:

the career of Sidonius was destined to justify it in an equal degree. He probably accepted the office not only from the changed view of life which led him to despise worldly ambition, but also because he believed that it opened to him a prospect of useful action for the benefit of his fellow countrymen. He well knew the anxieties and labours which it would involve; long before his own ordination, he had been acquainted with some of the best among the Gallic bishops, and the arduous manner of their life. There can be no question of vanity or ambition in his acceptance. As far as worldly honour went, the ex-Prefect and Patrician had nothing to gain by occupying a bishop's throne; and Clermont was not even a metropolitan see. Several letters written by Sidonius to other prelates soon after his election show that he was sincerely oppressed by the sense of his own unworthiness, and aware how little his previous life had prepared him for his new career; at the same time his health seems to have suffered, and a dangerous fever brought him almost to death's door (V. iii. 3). But he was cheered by the receipt of encouraging and kindly replies from several bishops of the Province; that of Lupus of Troyes, which is preserved, must have caused him peculiar pleasure, for Lupus was the most venerable figure in Gaul, and regarded with respect in every diocese.

Events were now moving to a crisis which was to put the character of Sidonius to the severest test, alike as patriot and as ecclesiastic. The hold of the empire upon Gaul continually relaxed. It had rewarded the friendship of the Burgundians by permitting great annexations of territory; its enemies were never satisfied. Riothamus the 'King' of the Bretons, who had been entrusted with the defence of Berry with some twelve thousand men, had already been defeated by the Goths, whose ambition was an ever-present menace.Count Paul, for a while the Roman commander, had checked with Frankish support their advance north of the Loire, but they now added to their dominion the northern part of Aquitanica Prima, with the cities of Bourses and Tours. While Euric's lieutenant Victorius made steady conquests in Aquitanica Prima he himself overran the country beyond the Rhône, which he was unable to retain on account of Burgundian jealousy.

The fulfilment of his ambitions involved the absorption of Auvergne, the most loyal district which remained to the empire, inhabited by a war-like race claiming Trojan descent, a people which had fought with Hannibal, and, in the person of Vercingetorix, sent against Julius Caesar a captain worthy of his military genius. Their principality had been the most formidable in Gaul, and they had long enjoyed the reputation of freemen and warriors. Such men, whose leaders still desired Roman rule, even with the traitorous Arvandus and Seronatus as the official representatives of the empire, were not likely to accept Visigothic domination without a struggle. Their country was apparently exposed for several years to a series of raids and invasions culminating in sieges of the city of Clermont, whose people offered a most stubborn resistance, with Sidonius at their head. The bishop was no longer animated by the sentiments towards the Gothic monarchy which had inspired his eulogy of

Theodoric II. Euric was a very different man from his murdered brother, more violent, less refined, less amenable to reason. He made no pretence of recognizing Roman supremacy; moreover his Arianism was of an aggressive type, and with Sidonius, whose Catholicism was orthodox and sincere, this was a factor which now weighed more than any other. The Arvernians, though at first they had conceived new hope from the accession of Nepos, now began to fear that they looked in vain towards the Rome for which they prepared to make the utmost sacrifices.

As the year 474 advanced it was seen that without imperial support their position was hopeless. Sidonius had attempted to postpone the evil day by diplomatic means; Avitus, whose family name was so well known to the Goths, had been sent to intercede with Euric; Ecdicius seems to have been dispatched to solicit aid from the Burgundians. But neither was able to prevent the horrors of continued siege. The defenders fought with tenacity; and though their walls were damaged, though fires destroyed whole quarters and they were reduced to extremities by hunger, they succeeded in holding the city. Their spirits were at one time raised by a heroic exploit of Ecdicius, 'the Hector of this Troy,' who with a little band of eighteen troopers broke through the enemy's lines, inflicting heavy loss upon seasoned warriors, perhaps overcome by a momentary panic. The privations of the city had been so severe, that a party was apparently formed in favour of accepting Gothic rule, a party perhaps recruited by Gothic agents, who no doubt reminded the suffering citizens that the exactions of Visigothic counts were not likely to exceed those of Seronatus. This was a move of which Sidonius perceived the peril. The tension of war was followed each winter by inevitable reaction. The Goths had burned the crops; and though the generosity of Patiens and Ecdicius, now and later, did much to relieve distress, men stood among ruined homes and saw their families still suffering the pangs of hunger.

The advocates of surrender had here a promising material to work upon, and Sidonius strained every nerve to counteract their efforts. He induced his friend Constantius of Lyons, a venerable priest whose name was held in honour in Auvergne, to visit Clermont. The appeal was not in vain; though the winter weather was severe, the old man braved every inconvenience of the way, and by his cheerful presence and calm advice composed the differences and animated the courage of the people.The bishop also instituted the solemn processional prayers or Rogations already used in time of peril by Mamertus, bishop of Vienne. These also had a tranquillizing effect. But there was still a prospect that the siege might be again renewed, and all eyes were turned to Italy. Julius Nepos was alive to the danger that Euric might cross the Rhône; but weak as his resources were, he could only hope to secure peace by negotiation. The quaestor Licinianus, who had been sent into Gaul to investigate the condition of affairs upon the spot, had done little more than confer upon Ecdicius the title of Patrician, an honour which even at this anxious time highly gratified Sidonius, and filled Papianilla with delight; he had now returned, and it was soon only too clear that hopes based on his intervention were not likely to be fulfilled. Rumours of negotiations were in the air. We find Sidonius writing for information to those presumably in a position to receive early intelligence.

To this last period of suspense, if not earlier, may belong the visit to the Burgundian kingdom, when he was able to frustrate the machinations of the informers threatening Apollinaris. He began to fear that something was going on behind his back, and that the real danger to Auvergne came no longer from determined enemies but from pusillanimous friends.

His suspicions were only too well founded. On receipt of the quaestor's report, a Council was held to determine the policy of the empire towards the Visigothic king. Four Gaulish bishops were empowered to enter into negotiations----Leontius of Arles, Graecus of Marseilles, Faustus of Riez, and Basilius of Aix. It is not easy to say whether they failed because they refused to surrender Auvergne; nor can we precisely define the relation of their mission to that undertaken on behalf of the emperor by the venerated bishop of Pavia. Schmidt considers that the embassy of Epiphanius took place when the negotiations of the four bishops had broken down, and that the treaty of 475 was ratified by him. The empire did not feel strong enough to support Auvergne, and it was decided to cede the whole territory to Euric, apparently without condition, unless, indeed, the Visigoth undertook that Catholics should receive fairer treatment, and that the disabilities from which they had suffered should cease.If so, the contingent religious advantages of the treaty might ultimately have soothed Sidonius the Churchman, as the shame of surrender at first incensed Sidonius the patriot. But when the news of the decision reached him he gave way to an outburst of righteous indignation, and wrote to Graecus, his intimate friend, a letter in which the bitterness of reproach is no less remarkable than the exalted tone of patriotism. Sidonius loved Auvergne; among all the Gallo-Roman nobles none was more devoted to the imperial connexion than he; none attached more weight to the maintenance of Latin letters and Roman civilization. He was cut to the heart. All the valour of Auvergne had been thrown away: the treaty seemed an impossible, an incomprehensible betrayal; the thought of it filled him with mingled shame and sorrow. The year 475, in which he ceased to be a Roman citizen, was the darkest year of his life.

In the organization of his new territory, which he seems to have annexed without further opposition, Euric showed the qualities of a statesman. He appointed Victorius, a Catholic and Gallo-Roman, as Count of Clermont, a man whose piety Sidonius praises, but whose character is painted in a different light by Gregory of Tours. He probably intended to act as fairly by his new Catholic subjects as violent prejudice would allow. But the conduct of Sidonius in encouraging so protracted a resistance at Clermont had incurred his sharp resentment. The bishop was imprisoned in the fortress of Livia, situated between Narbonne and Carcassonne. There may have been some pretence of entrusting him with a special duty, but probably the principal object of the victor was to keep him away from his people until the new government was fairly established. Sidonius seems to have remained for some time within the walls of Livia, but to have undergone no great physical hardships, since his chief complaint is that he suffered from the chattering of two repulsive Gothic hags outside his window (VIII. iii. 2). He had a powerful friend at court in the person of Leo, Euric's Secretary of State, who only waited a propitious time to intercede for his unfortunate countryman, and meanwhile recommended him to occupy his mind by literary

work. It must have been due to the solicitations of Leo (VIII. iii) that the prisoner was at last removed, apparently on parole, to Bordeaux, where Euric was now holding his court;

and here, among a crowd including members of numerous barbaric tribes, he was forced to wait the king's good pleasure. Sidonius was ill at ease about his property, perhaps his loved estate of Avitacum, all, or part, of which had been seized during the recent disturbances. He found it difficult to obtain justice; and in a letter to his friend Lampridius (VIII. ix), whose case was very different from his own, bewails the hardness of his lot; but the verses which accompany the letter are practically a panegyric of the Visigothic ruler, whose power they exalt to the skies. As Lampridius was now a favoured personage in the king's entourage, the writer doubtless hoped that they would be brought to the royal notice, as indeed they probably were; the subsequent permission to return home, soon afterwards accorded to Sidonius, may well have been hastened by this timely resort to the arts of the court poet. Euric was perhaps of opinion that his prisoner had now suffered enough, and would cause him no further trouble.

The bishop returned to Clermont in a despondent mood. The Patrician and ex-Prefect was brought low; the idol of his patriotism was shattered. He saw himself abandoned by the government for which he had willingly risked his life; he was the subject of a barbarian whose manners he despised and whose heresy he detested. There remained to him only his faith and his pastoral duty; and in time these were sufficient for him, leading him to those paths of sanctity which were to result in his canonization. But at first the new life was hard; Auvergne enslaved was no longer Auvergne to one whose youth was full of such memories as his. He threw himself with a high sense of duty into his episcopal work; several of his letters refer to events and meetings which occurred in the course of his diocesan visitations; those which were written to aid clerks, deacons, readers, and others in need of his assistance prove that he did not spare himself when an opportunity came to help his neighbours or dependants. But in spite of all these activities, there must have been long and melancholy hours, especially in winter; and his friends feared their effect on his mind. They therefore encouraged him to write; and to this encouragement we probably owe the nine books of the Letters. The first book was issued in response to a request from the aged priest Constantius who had rendered him such noble aid after the siege of Clermont. It probably appeared in 478. It was followed by Books II-VII, dedicated to the same venerable friend. Books VIII and IX were supplemental, the first added to gratify Petronius,though still dedicated to Constantius; the second by desire of another friend, Firminus.

There can be no two opinions as to the wisdom of his friends. It is clear from more than one passage that Sidonius enjoyed rummaging among his papers for any letters suited for publication, and that to transcribe, correct and polish the pages written at various periods of his life provided just the distraction which he required. To the gradual process of publication may in part be ascribed the lack of chronological order in the Letters, which makes them appear inconsequent to the modern reader, though it is not the sole reason (cf. below, p. cliv). But Sidonius was not only asked for collections of his letters. His talent as a poet

was still in request. If a new church was erected, a metrical inscription for the walls must come from his hand; if a notable person died, he must provide an elegy. High ecclesiastic though he was, he was still expected by privileged persons to furnish occasional verses; and though he sometimes declined a request which he felt inappropriate, at others he could not find it in him to refuse. He was also urged to write the history of periods falling within his own remembrance, a task which he was unwilling to perform. But he occupied himself with Commentaries on the Scriptures, and composed, among other religious works, certain Contestatiunculae, which appear to have been prefaces to the Mass. The loss of his religious writings makes it impossible to estimate his position among the doctors; Gennadius placed him without hesitation among their number.His activities were not confined to composition; he also revised manuscripts. Thus we find him sending to Ruricius a Heptateuch collated by his own hand.

Amid these manifold occupations, pastoral, literary, and scholastic, the later life of Sidonius wore away. In the words of his epitaph (see p. Hi), he lived tranquil amid the swelling seas of the world (mundi inter tumidas quietus undas). He continued to write to his friends and to receive letters from them; it is thought some examples may date from 484, or even later. This was an important year, for it marked the death of Euric, and the succession of a weaker ruler in the person of Alaric II. The disappearance of the great Arian may have relaxed in some measure the tension between the Catholic Gallo-Romans and their unorthodox rulers; but it prepared the way for the final subjection of Gaul under a single barbaric nation. The Franks soon afterwards commenced the advance which was only to end on the shores of the Mediterranean; in 486 Clovis ended the shadowy rule of Syagrius between the Loire and Somme, and prepared the way for a descent upon the Visigothic and Burgundian kingdoms;Sidonius may even have lived to hear of this event.The last years of his life are said to have been embittered by the persecution of two priests of Clermont, Honorius and Hermanchius, possibly representatives of the Arian heresy. The story runs that they proposed on a certain day to drive Sidonius from his church, but a horrible fate overcame one conspirator, and the other for the moment desisted from aggression. Thus Sidonius, when his time came, was suffered to die in peace.

He is said to have fallen sick of a fever, and to have been carried into the church of St. Mary, where he took an affecting farewell of his flock, and indicated his desire that Aprunculus should succeed to his office. Little more is heard of his family after his death. His son Apollinaris is said to have been one of his successors in the see of Clermont. The year of Papianilla's death is unrecorded; of her daughters, we know only the meagre facts with regard to Alcima related by Gregory of Tours. By the end of the sixth century the house which had played so great a part in Gaul was no longer known to history. Sidonius was buried in the chapel of St. Saturninus at Clermont, and an epitaph of eighteen hendecasyllables, composed not very long after his decease, is quoted by Savaron from an early manuscript formerly belonging to the Abbey of Cluny, but now at Madrid. At some time after the tenth century, the chapel having fallen into ruin, his remains were translated to the church of St. Genesius in the centre of the town, where they lay in a reliquary on the right-hand side of

the principal altar. In 1794 the church was destroyed; it is not known whether the bones were actually burned within the Place de Jaude, or whether the reliquary was buried under the ruins of the demolished walls.

Such were the principal events in the career of Sidonius, Gallo-Roman noble, Prefect and Patrician, Visigothic subject, bishop and saint. His letters have been compared to a literary Herculaneum, preserving under the accumulated centuries the most varied evidences of late Roman provincial life. We may gather from them a multitude of facts bearing upon the society, civil and ecclesiastical, of the time; and though the value of Sidonius as a chronicler is seriously affected by an upbringing which set more store on literature than on observation, the harvest is plentiful enough. He experienced life under such various aspects, and knew so many people, that he could not fail to present a picture of provincial society of the highest interest and importance. It was inevitable that he should see things in the light of his own times, and remain under the influence of his own environment. He does not say as much about common things and ordinary events as a modern historian would like to know; he is reticent, after the Roman manner, about his family. It was not an age which cared to talk much of private life, or to describe the usual scenes of city, farm and country-side; nor was it the age of confessions, confidences and apologies. Sidonius does not depict his inmost nature like Montaigne, though in many little touches, applied almost at random, he allows us to trace for ourselves a portrait which he would not himself elaborate.

We must not therefore go to him either for the sociology of the fifth century, or for the more intimate aspects of life; his mind was absorbed in other things. But when all deductions are made, we shall still find in his pages much invaluable material even on the subjects which he disregards; while those on which he cared to be explicit receive from him more illumination than from any contemporary writer. This is especially true of the lives of the members of his own class, of the literary activities of fifth-century Gaul, and of ecclesiastical affairs. His hundred and forty-nine letters are addressed to a hundred and nine correspondents, including ex-prefects and patricians, a minister and an 'admiral' of the Visigothic king, a Breton commander, and no less than twenty-eight bishops; while among the recipients of letters who did not hold ecclesiastical or secular office are to be found the student, the poet, the young noble, the country gentleman, the schoolmaster and the rhetor. So varied a list proves that the writer was a man whose wide acquaintance gives him a right to be heard as a representative of his time and country.

Many allusions in the Letters will be more intelligible if a few words are said in the present place on the general conditions obtaining in Gaul when Sidonius wrote, with especial reference to the classes from which his correspondents were drawn. And firstly in relation to his own class, the provincial nobles of senatorial houses.

Perhaps the point which first strikes us is that life on the great estates in the last half of the fifth century, at the very end of Roman power in Gaul, is just as Roman, and in some ways almost as secure, as in the times of Hadrian or Trajan. The noble has his town house and his country villa, the latter with its large establishment of slaves, its elaborate baths, and all

the amenities of country existence as understood by Roman civilization. In his well-stocked library he reads his favourite authors, writes himself in verse and prose, or maintains a continual correspondence with friends of equal wealth and leisure. For diversion, he hunts and fishes, or rides abroad to visit his neighbours; if interested in the development of his land, he goes round the estate, watches the work in progress, and is present at the harvest or the vintage. It is the life of the cultured landed proprietor in a country at profound peace, where soldiers seem to be neither seen nor thought of, and the only sense of insecurity arises from the presence of robbers on the lonelier roads; but for the apparent predominance of literary over sporting interests, we might be reading of the English shires in the days of the Georges, when the carriages of nobles were stopped by highwaymen on Bagshot Heath. Yet the Visigoths had been established half a century in Aquitaine; the Burgundians were on the Rhône;

the Franks were pressing upon such territory in northern Gaul as still retained a shadow of Roman authority. The barbarians encompassed the diminished imperial possessions upon three sides; even before the time of Anthemius and Euric, the empire must have been aware that they were bent on a further advance. When we think of the apprehension caused in modern times by the threatened invasion of one nationality by another, of the military preparations and the manifold precautions on every hand, it all seems at first sight very strange. The explanation is to be sought in the fact that, for the majority of the population, the possibility of change had no exceeding terrors. The small landowners and townsmen had suffered to such an extent from maladministration in the past, that they regarded the future with indifference; their own lot was no whit better than that of their fellows who had already passed under Teutonic sway. The Visigoths and the Burgundians had the best reputation among the barbarian peoples; they kept order with a strong hand; they endeavoured to assimilate what was good in Roman law and practice. Even the great landowner had only to fear a partial confiscation of his estates; but in most cases the acreage was large enough to leave him still in comfort, and in difficulties he would probably still have an appeal to some administrator of Roman extraction, like Leo or Victorius. Under these circumstances the Gallo-Roman noble might view the change in his allegiance without despair;

though his income and his acreage would be diminished, he would still have his villa, and cultivators to work on his land; he would still live his leisured life. Only in Auvergne, perhaps, did loyalty to a tottering empire go the length of resolute resistance; even there, it is probable that a part of the population was lukewarm, and that ardour had to be assiduously fanned by enthusiastic loyalists like Sidonius and Ecdicius. Thus the change from Roman to Visi-gothic citizenship implied, for the noble, a comparative loss, and for the lower classes a possibility of actual gain: a Euric was less likely than a remote and helpless emperor to tolerate a Seronatus in his service. The Letters afford interesting confirmation of a certain tacit confidence in barbaric rule. One year Sidonius paid a round of visits to Roman friends living near Bordeaux and Narbonne; these friends are displayed to us reading and writing in their comfortable libraries, maintaining their luxurious kitchens, entertaining each other, and living a large life at their ease. Yet at the time every one of them had ceased to

have any political concern with the empire; every one of them was a Visigothic subject. The fact speaks for itself, and it makes the point from which we started less strange than it at first appeared. If life continued almost in the old fashion, even across the barbaric frontier, why should there be panic on the Roman side, or terror as to what would happen when the line was finally abolished?

Existence would be much the same for most men after the great change was made. The higher nobility would lose the honours of imperial office, for there would be no more prefectorian or patrician rank; the rude barbarians would be unwelcome neighbours; but there were ways of avoiding them, and after all, they were a small minority. The Gallo-Roman nobles would continue to pay each other visits and write each other elaborate letters; they would hold closely together, and neither Visigoth nor Burgundian would care to intrude on their society. The prestige of Roman culture would remain; things would go on as before. Their day would begin at its usual early hour, opening in religious families with a service in the chapel attached to the house, followed by visits to particular friends. After nine o'clock, there would be outdoor and indoor games; if sport was pursued, the hawks or hounds would be taken out. The company would perhaps adjourn to the baths, after which would come the prandium or midday meal, about 11 a.m. The hour of the siesta would be succeeded by a ride or other light exercise, and by the afternoon bath, preparatory to the coena, or supper, which would be enlivened by songs and music, or seasoned by cultured conversation. The barbarian might rule the land, but the laws of polite society would be administered as before.

The Letters enable us to follow in some detail the career of the Gallo-Roman noble from childhood to mature age. During his tender years he and his sisters were left to the care of the ladies of the family; at this period of their lives they remained in a seclusion almost resembling that of the Eastern gynaeceum. From this seclusion the girl never really issued into the full light; she learned, as she grew up, to superintend and share the work of the textrinum (II.ii. 9); if she was skilful, like Araneola, she executed ambitious pieces of embroidery with figure-subjects (Carm. xv. 147 ff.); in the library, her place was where the religious books were kept (II. ix. 4), and sometimes, like Frontina, she attained at home a reputation of piety superior to that of nuns (IV. xxi. 4). The boy was permitted far more freedom; he played ball-games, and was initiated into the various forms of outdoor sport. As soon as he was old enough he attended the schools of his provincial capital, and learned to deliver 'declamations' before the rhetor, perhaps a man of distinction like Eusebius of Lyons, at whose feet Sidonius sat (IV. i). In his holidays, or on special occasions, the high official position held by his relatives might secure for him a good position at any spectacle or ceremony; we see the young Sidonius, when his father was prefect, pushing into the near neighbourhood of the consul Astyrius on the day of his inauguration (VIII. vi. 5).

Released from the schools, he continued his sports, adding games of chance with dice, evidently very popular on all hands (II. ix. 4; V. xvii. 6, &c.). If a young man was rich and clever, or his family had influence, he went to Rome and entered the Palatine service, with

the hope of rising to the high offices of the State. But his public life was usually over before middle age, and he retired to enjoy the honorary rank conferred by his late office. If he had no taste for further publicity he remained at home, read and wrote, followed his hounds, or acquired a taste for rural economics; kept up his classics and his ball-games; perhaps built additions to his villa. He might even grow too absorbed in rural interests to visit town even in the winter, like the Eutropius whom Sidonius rebuked, or the Maurusius whose company he so highly valued. Or he might advance a stage further, and think of nothing else, till he was lost to all ambition beyond crops and stock, and sank into rusticity. There were many such in Gaul, and in more than one letter Sidonius alludes to them with regret or indignation. But the more intellectual among the country gentlemen did not lightly forget the culture of their younger years. Literature probably occupied the class as a whole more than it has ever done in modern Europe. The Gallo-Roman noble was always a potential author, and valued himself as a critic.

Verses and epigrams were circulated from house to house, and the writers of these expected from every reader a letter of acknowledgement, which could be nothing less, under the circumstances, than eulogistic. The more earnest students would edit a classic, and keep copyists at work transcribing manuscripts for their shelves. In their houses the library was a very important room, and the scrolls and books were carefully arranged.We receive the impression that the proportion of well-to-do people really fond of literature was high in the second half of the fifth century; and though the devotion to the classics in many ways recalls that of the Chinese literate to whom the past is everything, the precedence given to literature over sport is a feature which commands our respect.

For all this, the more strenuous noble must often have found time hang heavy on his hands. He had few outlets for his energy; local politics were of the slightest interest to him; they were the affair of smaller men, and he had, as a rule, little notion of what we now call social service (see below, p. lxx). But his duties as father of a family were conscientiously performed; he sometimes himself took a part in his children's education. Then there was the regular and voluminous correspondence with his friends, comparable, in the care lavished on style and diction, to the leisurely exchange of letters by persons of culture in the eighteenth century. Visits to friends living at a distance were also serious undertakings; we find Sidonius making 'rounds' which range from Auvergne to Provence, from Bordeaux to Lyons. On long expeditions he took his servants, bedding, and all impedimenta; where there was no friend's house to offer hospitality, he camped (IV. viii), or, if driven to it, used an inn (II. ix. 7; VIII. xi. 3). Friends' houses stood open to each other, and liberal hospitality reigned. But though good cooking was evidently as general as in modern France, excess at table was rather the exception than the rule. Hospitality, however, was sometimes insistent, then as now; and in one place Sidonius confesses that after the opulent suppers of Ferreolus and Apollinaris a week's thin living will do him good (II. ix. 10).

If the noble was a Christian, as was now very generally the case, public religious duties played some part in his life. When a church was consecrated, or the feast of the patron

saint came round, he made a point of attending the services, which sometimes began even before daybreak: at such festivals all classes came together, though they did not mingle, and the intervals between the services were occupied with games and conversation (V. xvii). Or he would prepare to set out with all his family on a pilgrimage to some important shrine, even when the state of the roads was dangerous (IV. vi). With these tranquil occupations his years passed by. But if he bore a high character and was popular with his neighbours, the quiet tenor of his life might be suddenly interrupted: he might wake one day to find himself elected bishop, and the most earnest nolo episcopari was not accepted as an excuse. If, on the other hand, the Church made no such claim upon him, he declined into a serene old age, and might have to listen in his own bed to those contradictory verdicts of the doctors whose quarrels in previous years disturbed his patience. He died; but though veneration for the dead was a conspicuous virtue of his age, his family might forget for two generations to erect his monument, and when reminded by some accident of their duty, excuse each other by citing the irrelevant cases of an Achilles and an Alexander.

Both in town and country, the nobles seem to have led a large and sumptuous existence, in no way inferior to that of their own class in Italy. The proud name of 'the lesser Rome of Gaul' which Ausonius applied to Arles, is justified by the letters alluding to the sojourn of Majorian in that town. In one an imperial banquet is described; in another a private feast, given by an acquaintance of Sidonius. In both cases the luxury is redeemed by an intellectual atmosphere, but the luxury is there, with all the genialis apparatus which contemporary extravagance required. There are the hangings of rich purple, the napery 'white as snow', the table-decoration of vine-tendrils and ivy; there are flowers in profusion. The guests recline, with balsam-perfumed hair, while frankincense smokes to the roof, and the very lamps are scented. The slaves bow beneath the burden of chased silver plate; choice wines flow in cups crowned with rose-wreaths. There is dancing, and music made on cithara and flute by Corinthian girls and other professional musicians. It all suggests an evening with Lucullus rather than a dinner-party in a provincial capital. These were special occasions; but the general standard of life was clearly high. There is a picture of one Trygetius, so comfortable at Bazas amid the selected delicacies of his storeroom that even the prospect of a gourmet's paradise at Bordeaux cannot drag him from home.

A snail would outstrip this lazy personage, whom a comfortable boat awaits on the Garonne, with 'mounds of cushions', a grating to keep the feet dry, an awning to ward off the evening damp, dice and backgammon to pass the idle hours while, in frequent chants, the oarsmen sing his praise. Even the delicata pigritia of Trygetius, thinks Sidonius, must be tempted by this care for his comfort, all leading to a veritable tournament of epicures at the end. Who would imagine that when this invitation was sent, the homes of these Gallic Sybarites were in Visigothic territory, and that Theodoric was master of Bordeaux? Sidonius himself was comfortable enough at Avitacum, with his winter and summer dining-rooms, his elaborate baths, and his ball-ground down by the lake (see below, p. xcv); while the lordly villa of Consentius, the Octaviana, was probably more extensive still, with its porticoes and baths,

its well-stocked library, its vineyards and olive-groves, where the visitor hardly knew which to praise most, the cultivation of the estate or that of the master's mind (VIII. iv).

It is in many respects a singularly refined life, free, as a rule, from coarse vice and brutality. But no one who reads either the letters of Sidonius, or any other work descriptive of the fourth and fifth centuries, can fail to be struck by a certain lack of broad aims or ardent interests. These men are less primitive than the barons of the Middle Ages, but in idealism and fervour the mediaeval knights leave them far behind. It has already been hinted that to find a parallel for some of these lives, absorbed in solemn literary trifling, we should have to look to the Far East, rather than to any European state. These members of the senatorial class were possessed of enormous wealth, but they seem to have had little encouragement to expend any part of it for the benefit of their country. They escaped the municipal taxation which they could well afford; their chief use for surplus money was to lend it at twelve per cent, and if possessed of business instinct, to foreclose their mortgages. Thus they had come to possess nearly the whole superficial area of a country which they were not even supposed to defend. If they wished to commit illegal acts, they could often set themselves above the law. Provincial governors were amenable to hospitality and open to social influence; a Seronatus could be persuaded to sanction courses which the distant emperor would not have tolerated. Judges were even more exposed to improper influence;

the powerful noble had probably little difficulty in wresting a judgement, if he had the mind to do so. The base arts to which some members of the senatorial class descended to evade their share of taxation, or fill their pockets at the expense of a defrauded state, disclose a code of ethics for which too often public duty was a phrase without a meaning. The honourable men among them----a Tonantius Ferreolus, a Thaumastus----might discountenance such ignoble practices, and lead the province in an attempt to obtain the punishment of a bad governor. But they were in a minority, and the evil grew despite their efforts. It is difficult to understand how the nobles spent the princely incomes which, by fair or unfair means, were always increasing. In modern times, with continual demands upon his purse for all kinds of public objects, with the competition for expensive works of art, with a thousand and one objects of use or luxury daily forced upon his notice, it may be supposed that the magnate can keep expenditure within range of income. But the Roman millionaire, at any rate in the provinces, had no great and steady drain on his resources unless he was a devout man and prepared to erect or restore churches as a practice. He might spend considerable sums on his houses and baths; but as labour was cheap, if not unpaid, and as there is a limit to construction, even building on a large scale would not seriously diminish an income equivalent to £50,000 a year.

A few, like Magnus or Consentius, might buy pictures or other works of art, but the sums paid for them can hardly have been comparable with those given for old masters to-day, nor do we gather from the Letters that the love of art was really intense, or widely disseminated in Gaul. The chief intellectual interest was literary, and however enthusiastic it may have been, it can hardly have depleted a senatorial purse. There were manuscripts to buy, but,

it may be conjectured, not at the prices of the modern sale-room; and the rarer illuminated books were not yet collected by the competitive methods of our day. If then there were no hospitals to endow, no large yachts to maintain, no subscription lists to head, on what did the provincial millionaire spend his money? He could only entertain on a very lavish scale when resident in a town like Arles. He gambled, but not, as far as we know, on the heroic scale. He patronized the chase, but hunting was then a cheap pursuit. The milliners' and jewellers' bills which he had to pay can hardly have caused him much embarrassment; the weaving, and probably the making, of his wife's clothes was done by the maids of the house; and it may be doubted whether, in an age when diamonds were practically unknown, the most expensive jewellers could send him an inconvenient account. His estate was self-supporting; those who tilled it largely worked for nothing or were recompensed in kind;

all the food and all the fuel required for his household came from his own fields and woods. 'Clients' cannot have been ruinously expensive where food was cheap. He had only to feed and clothe his domestic servants, not to pay them wages. The answer to the question probably is that the rich provincial noble did not and could not spend his income; year by year he became richer and ever more uselessly rich.

That he did so was but one count in the indictment against the Roman system of provincial government, which threw such burdens on the middle class and the lower class of freemen, that the vigour of both was sapped, and the spirit of enterprise crushed out of existence. It is unnecessary in the present place to dwell upon the notorious evils of the Curial system,which gave the decurion all duties and no rights, and the senatorial class all rights and no duties. We need not linger over the folly which encouraged useless wealth and useless lives in a class which, reasonably handled, might have become a bulwark of the State. The noble had no useful work to do. His tenure of quaestorship, vicariate or prefecture once over, he had no further career. He could not serve in the army; he was not supposed to found an industry. There was no scope for active brains except in literature, and literature was now of such a kind that its propagation was of doubtful advantage to the world. We can hardly wonder if men unmanned, as it were, by statute failed the empire in its need, or if the great proprietor made his estate his world, and cared little for events beyond his boundaries. He had become a fly upon the wheel of government, brilliant perhaps, but an insect still, and adding no momentum. Sidonius belonged to the best of his order; he and his relations loved their country, and were prepared to sacrifice everything for it. But custom held them bound; they had no chance to prove themselves until it was too late.

The Roman empire opened its own veins. But there was now within it an organism which drew to itself new blood, and amid the general enfeeblement of old institutions, grew daily in vitality. The Church succeeded to the neglected opportunities of the State. While the secular arm relaxed, the Church enlarged her power, and drew the people to the one rallying-point that remained to them amid the increasing disruption of society. 'In the civil world', said Guizot, many years ago, speaking of the fifth century, 'we find no real government; the imperial administration is fallen, the senatorial aristocracy fallen, the municipal aristoc-

racy fallen as well. It is a tale of dissolution everywhere. Authority and freedom alike are attacked by the same sterility. In the religious world, on the other hand, we see an active government, an animated and interested people. Excuses for anarchy and tyranny may be numerous; but the liberty is real, and so is the power. On all sides are the germs of an energetic popular activity and of a strong executive. This, in a word, is a society marching towards a future, a stormy future fraught with evil as well as good, but full of power and fecundity.' Here is the root of the matter: the Church had a future and a present; the State had only a past.

While the imperial officials were too often regarded as instruments of tyranny, whose only relation to the mass of the people was external and oppressive, the leaders of the Church were in constant touch with national and individual life. Their homes were in the towns; their houses were open to all in trouble. Instead of being the common enemy, the bishop was every one's friend,he stood in a regular relation to the municipal body, and exercised certain judicial rights of his own. Moreover, he controlled the Church lands in his diocese, and had thus a power of the purse which necessarily increased his consideration at a time of general impoverishment. It is not astonishing that under such circumstances the prestige of the bishop steadily rose. In the time of Sidonius, the episcopate was already moving towards the emancipation attained in the sixth century; but as yet the occupants of the Gallic sees were men of such high character that there was little abuse of their expanding authority. The Letters bring no such charges of violent and unseemly conduct as those which are scattered through the pages of Gregory of Tours. The bishops of the expiring fifth century were powers in the land and powers for good, mitigating the hardships of a dangerous epoch, and standing forth in the public eyes as the true representatives of national life. They were indeed almost the only conspicuous figures who were visibly doing national work, and the fact was widely recognized.

Good men of wealth and standing, condemned to inaction by the absence of any secular career, must have cast envious eyes upon this episcopal office which enabled its holders to serve their country so well; the hierarchy and the people, equally alive to the importance of strengthening the Church by the admission of such valuable recruits, did not discourage their aspirations. The Church was not so ill-advised as to imitate the State in debarring from a share in her activities the very men who could render the greatest service; she gave the nobles a ready welcome, not merely because they were rich, though riches were desirable, but because they were likely to possess, in a more eminent degree than others, the high culture and the great manner which the long habit of receiving deference conferred. The Church had room, as historians have observed, for two types of bishop. She needed, on the one hand, the learned pupil of the monasteries, the theologian, preacher, and disciplinarian. She needed, on the other, the man born to great place, imposing respect by personal distinction, and a commanding figure in any company. She appreciated a Faustus, pursuing as bishop the austerities which he had practised as a monk; she welcomed Remigius and Principius, sons of a count, and the wealthy Patiens, who could combine simplicity in his

own life with a lordly openness of hand and the most gracious arts of hospitality (cf. VI. xii. 3).

The aristocratic bishop could serve her best not only in her relations with imperial officials, whose day was almost gone, but also with the barbarian princes, whose favour grew more important with every year. As the empire was ever further dismembered, and the Church provided the one bond of union between the subjects of isolated kingdoms, the diplomatic bishop continually proved his worth. The Visigoth and the Burgundian were impressed by his culture and his experience of the world; moreover, they were by tradition disposed to favour high birth. There was thus a general tendency to elect a certain number of aristocratic personages to vacant sees, and a corresponding readiness, on the part of the worthier noble, to look with favour on such election, seeing, as he could not fail to do, that the one way to be of use was to become a bishop. It was therefore no unprecedented event when upon the death of the Bishop of Clermont, Sidonius found himself called to succeed by the voice of his fellow countrymen in Auvergne. The call came perhaps too suddenly; it appeared rather a summons than an invitation; but the recipient of it was more ready for the change than he supposed himself to be. And in spite of the misgivings which crowded upon his mind, he must have seen ground for hope in more than one direction.

In leaving the aimless existence of the provincial magnate for the living work of the Church, he joined an organization which now assumed a commanding influence over the whole moral and intellectual field; to throw himself with ardour into its work was to aid the one force in the land which made for regeneration. The Church appealed also to the scholar and man of letters. The only original philosophical speculation of the day was carried on by theologians like Faustus and Claudianus Mamertus, who had persuaded Philosophy into the service of Religion (IX. ix. 12). To rhetoric the Church offered the one chance of effective action; the orator in the pulpit could feel that he was not delivering a class-room declamation, but reaching the hearts of men. The preacher could treat the great subjects of life, not as themes for academic display, but with a purpose of practical reform; the eloquence of a Remigius carried away great congregations; the pulpit had succeeded the rostra, it alone spoke to an assembly of the people. Even the education of the young was beginning to pass into the control of the Church: in the monastery of Lerins a school was established by Faustus, at which a brother of Sidonius was trained (Carm. xvi. 1. 70). The old education was doomed to pass with the passing of the empire; it was a survival, unfitted for the coming age. The people at large had no interest in the exercises of rhetors and grammarians; they turned from them to other teachers.

And among these the former pupil of Hoënius and Eusebius now took an honoured place.

We may briefly notice a few allusions in the Letters to those ecclesiastical matters with which the second part of Sidonius' life was so largely concerned. Great as the influence of the bishops had become, it is clear that it was still in some measure controlled both by the general voice of the laymen, and by that of the priesthood, now a body apart, and more definitely severed from the community than in early Christian times. We mark the

survival of these two factors, the popular and the priestly, in the interesting accounts of the episcopal elections at Bourges and Châlon (VII. ix; IV. xxv). We there find the popular vote still regarded as an integral part of the proceedings, while some of the diocesan priests give vent to strong opinions of their own, not always coincident with the episcopal point of view. But in both cases the bishops, though recognizing the traditional popular claim, succeed in carrying their point. They hold a private meeting at which they agree upon their candidate and it is this candidate who is elected. The consecration of a new bishop at Châlon is carried out by Patiens and Euphronius in a masterful manner; at Bourges, Sidonius delivers a formal address calling upon the people to accept Simplicius. At Bourges, indeed, the electors seem to have recognized the necessary confusion where 'two benchfuls' of unscrupulous men were all urging their claims to a single throne (VII. ix. 2).

When one aspirant based his hopes on his kitchen and his dinners, and another on a promise to divide Church property among his supporters, the evils of popular election became apparent to all responsible laymen: they abrogated their claims in favour of the bishops, whose selection they agreed to accept. Such cases probably illustrate as well as any examples could, the evil tendencies which necessitated a change of system.And the people were not alone in the responsibility for undesirable episodes on these occasions. At Bourges the priests openly favoured promotion by seniority rather than by merit, and Sidonius was obliged to administer a sharp rebuke. It is plain that in the late fifth century a tightening of the bonds of discipline was inevitable, and this could only be effected by the bishops. The intense and factious excitement aroused on the occasion of an episcopal vacancy affords yet another proof of the importance attaching to the bishop's position. A see was worth fighting for; so much so, that the prize attracted candidates whose motives were sometimes entirely base. Perhaps in the years preceding the disasters of A.D. 474 there had been a certain laxity in the religious life of Gaul. Sidonius alludes to public devotions in which the prayers were too much interrupted by refreshments (V. xiv. 2); the dicing and other amusements interspersed between the services at the festival of St.. Just seem in rather too close an alternation with the devotions of the day (V. xvii).

There may have been in many places an excessive preoccupation with the material side of life, which affected even those whose office it was to inspire thoughts of the opposite kind. An Agrippinus in holy orders harassing his sister-in-law on money matters is not a pleasant figure (VI. ii). Nor can we approve the apparent toleration of money-lending in the case of priests (IV. xxiv). But against such examples may be set others of a very different kind, which show that there was a strong leaven of piety and devotion both among clerics and among laymen. In the monasteries there was severe self-discipline, and many of the distinguished monks or abbots who were taken from Lerins to fill the sees of Gaul, carried into their new spheres of activity all the monastic rigour to which they had been accustomed. The Syrian monk Abraham, who after being driven from his native country by Sassanian persecution, had finally settled down at Clermont (see below, pp. lxxxiii, civ), afforded another example of renunciation, which produced its effect even upon Victorius, Euric's Count of Auvergne (VII. xvii. 1). Vectius, the noble who maintained his place in

the world while secretly practising a devout life, is, as Dill has observed, a character which might be taken from Law's Serious Call (IV. ix). The ex-quaestor Domnulus, a friend of Sidonius, goes into retreat in the monasteries of the Jura (IV. xxv). Simplicius, while a young man, straitens his resources by building a church, Elaphius builds a baptistery in Rouergue (IV. xv).

It is natural that we should learn more from Sidonius of the contemporary bishops than of the lower ranks in the Church, since it was with them that he had chiefly to correspond. Many attractive figures pass before us, some already familiar, as having their recognized place in the history of their age. There is the aged Lupus of Troyes (S. Loup), the doyen of Gaulish bishops, who in spite of advanced years and many anxieties, received the news of Sidonius' election with fatherly satisfaction, and, for all his saintliness, was human enough to take umbrage at a supposed breach of literary etiquette (IX. xi). There is Remigius (S. Remi), the apostle of the Franks, to whose glowing eloquence Sidonius bears his testimony (IX. vii). There is Faustus, the daring theologian of the day, and leader of a semi-Pelagian school in the south of Gaul, whose work on Free Grace was condemned by Pope Gelasius, and whose anonymous treatise on the Materiality of the Soul elicited the De Statu Animae of Claudianus Mamertus. There is the learned Graecus of Marseilles, whose part in ratifying the treaty of surrender drew from Sidonius the bitter reproach of outraged patriotism, but did not ultimately affect the friendly relations between them. There are St. Euphronius of Autun, Leontius of Arles, Perpetuus of Tours, Basilius of Aix, and many others less known to posterity.

Finally there is Patiens, for whom Sidonius is the sole authority, the saintly and generous bishop who relieved the distress even of those living far beyond the limits of his own diocese, and rebuilt on a magnificent scale the old church of the Maccabees at Lyons: for him, as bishop of his native town, Sidonius may well have felt an almost filial affection. Of the 'second order' in the Church, the priests, we hear comparatively little. The most distinguished among them is the above-mentioned Claudianus Mamertus, the religious philosopher of Gaul, who combined high speculation with orthodox belief, while at the same time aiding his brother Mamertus, Bishop of Vienne, in almost all the practical work of the diocese, from the receipt of the revenues to the training of the choir (IV. xi). Most other priests whose names are mentioned in these pages are names and nothing more; it is a matter for regret that there is no portrait of the parish priest and his activities, such as the most literary bishop of Gaul could so well have drawn for us on his return from one of his extended visitations. Of the inferior orders, one or two deacons ('Levites') are briefly introduced. Proculus, a pupil of Euphronius, is praised as reflecting in his manner something of the urbanity of his master Principius (IX. ii);

a more unfortunate Lévite, who, driven from home by the barbarian incursion, has sown a crop on church-lands in the diocese of Auxerre, finds a ready advocate in Sidonius, who begs of Bishop Censorius the remission of the payments due (VI. vii). Two Readers (lectures) also find mention in these pages, one, the impudent Amantius, several times, and once at great

length; the other, an unnamed person engaged in commerce, whom the influence of Graecus is to convert from a small trader into a 'splendid merchant' (splendidus mercator (VI. viii). Of the monks in Gaul Sidonius gives but scanty information. An Abbot Chariobaudus receives a gift of a cowl for winter use (VII. xvi); but though allusions are made to the great houses of Lerins and Grigny, and to the smaller houses of Condat and Lauconne in the Jura, the Letters give us no details of monastic life. We only learn that on the death of the monk Abraham, the founder of St. Cirgues at Clermont, his successor had not the qualities which maintain order, and Sidonius asks his friend Volusianus to act as a kind of Superior without the walls (VII. xvii); perhaps in the founder's time these monks followed an oriental custom, and Volusianus was now to introduce the stricter rules of Lerins or Grigny. It was at St. Cirgues that some ill-conditioned person removed Sidonius' book when he was conducting a service, with the vain idea of causing him embarrassment (Gregory, Hist. Franc. II.

xxii), a rather curious little episode, which, if really founded on fact, throws an interesting side-light on the maintenance of monastic discipline. The house ultimately became a priory and lasted till the close of the eighteenth century.

Though as a young man Sidonius was familiar with the court of Theodoric II at Toulouse (I. ii), no small part of his experience among the barbarians was gained when he had become a bishop. We have seen that after his imprisonment in the fortress of Livia, he seems to have been compelled to wait the king's pleasure at Bordeaux; and in the course of his efforts to recover his lost property, he must have been brought into contact with various members of the Visigothic administration. It was at Bordeaux that he saw those representatives of the different barbarian tribes whose personal characteristics he has described, some of them captives like himself, others rendering voluntary service to a dreaded master. At both periods of his life he must have been familiar with the Burgundians, whose territory even in his youth was at no great distance from his native town. But in their case also, the acquaintance which was so distasteful to his fastidious mind was renewed at a later time after they had entered on the possession of Lyons. His female relations continued to reside in that city; and he went there after his entry into the Church, to see not only his family, but also the Burgundian king who stood with Rome against the aggression of Euric.

It must have been painful in the extreme for one to whom Roman culture meant so much, to hear the guttural voices of the barbarians in the streets where in his young days he had passed to and fro with his Latin classics; to see 'skin-clad' guards at the gate of the praetorium where Rome had displayed the symbols of her power, and, penetrating to the halls built for an imperial magistrate, to be welcomed by the gross good-humoured chieftain whom Patiens conciliated by excellent dinners (VI. xii. 3). Sidonius paid his court, as duty to his people compelled him to do; he took the opportunity of interceding for his kinsman Apollinaris, threatened by the malevolence of the informers who now infested the barbarian capitals; but, all the time, the iron must have entered into his soul. Like his brother-in-law Ecdicius, who in like manner had frequented these same halls, he must have suffered from a keen sense of humiliation. There was but one consolation, that however unrefined the

Visigoth and the Burgundian might appear by comparison with the Roman standard, they were humane and civil compared with the pagan Frank and the fierce piratical Saxon of the north.

It was indeed the peculiar good fortune of central and southern Gaul that the two peoples which here succeeded to the Roman inheritance were the best of all the conquering Teutons. The Visigoths belonged to a tribe which had now been in contact with imperial civilization for generations and had adopted much from Roman law and custom; the Burgundians, though outwardly less civilized, were the most genial and good-natured of all the German nations. The great drawback to both lay in their common profession of the Arian heresy, but for which the Gallo-Romans might have acquiesced far more readily in their dominion, and the ultimate triumph of the Frank would hardly have been so rapid. Religious fanaticism apart, and this only flamed fiercely in the ten years of Euric's reign, the relations between provincial and barbarian were those of mutual tolerance. Neither Visigoth nor Burgundian was animated by any inveterate hostility to Rome. They had been confirmed in possession of their present territory by imperial sanction; it had been their earlier ambition to rank as foederati; the Burgundian king was even now proud to hold rank under the empire. It was impossible even for the most exclusive Roman citizen to forget that the fabric of the empire had been preserved by barbarian arms, and that the great Stilicho was a Vandal. Nor could personal charm be denied to those Teutonic leaders who had learned the arts of Roman life. In Italy itself there had been conspicuous examples; and though the portrait of Theodoric II in I.

ii is perhaps overdrawn for a temporary political purpose, his manner of life was tolerably civilized. The Goths and Burgundians were prepared to treat the Gallo-Romans without violence; but they were determined ultimately to dominate the whole of central and southern Gaul. Before the time came for the full satisfaction of that ambition, they were as a rule inclined to live peaceably with their neighbours; meanwhile they were subjected to a continual process of Romanization, their new relation to the land and their inferior knowledge of agriculture alone making them to a great extent dependent on Roman law.

On their side, the Gallo-Romans were used to the presence of the northerner in their midst. The individual Teutonic peasant or slave had been a familiar figure in their households or on their farms since the days when the military emperors had distributed thousands of prisoners over the land. It was recognized, not by the fiery Salvian alone, but by the average inhabitant, that the barbarians had their good qualities, and that in blunt honesty and the sense of justice the Teutonic chief might excel the Roman official. When the imperial system degenerated beyond redemption, when a Seronatus succeeded an Arvandus, and the extortions of the tax-gatherers were hardly to be borne, the perception became general that life might be more tolerable in Septimania, or under Chilperic than under the jurisdiction of Rome. Except in Auvergne, where among a section of the inhabitants loyalty to Rome was a passion, the country was being gradually prepared for the inevitable transference of sovereignty. The poor man often longed for the change; the rich man resigned himself

to unavoidable fate. The one felt that his lot could not be worse; the other saw that the civilized life of ease might be led almost as agreeably at Toulouse or Bordeaux, which had been Visigothic for half a century, as in the cities remaining to the empire (cf. above, p. lxv). It may be added that even as fighting men the barbarians did not inspire universal terror.

The intruders were in a numerical inferiority which increased with each fresh annexation, and the Gallo-Roman could remember more than one occasion on which, man for man, Roman warriors had proved their equals. Moreover the barbarian tribes were not united against Rome. The Burgundian was jealous of the Visigoth, and even lent troops to Auvergne to assist in opposing his advance. Perhaps the worst feature in the situation was the general suspense; the uncertainty when the blow would fall paralysed such public life as remained. The administration continued to deteriorate; the officials were openly dishonest. The roads were insecure. Fugitives from unjust usage established themselves in fastnesses and seized on all property which could be carried off. They were joined by bankrupts, runaway agents or cultivators from the great estates, in short by every one to whom the lawless life appealed. Rome was ceasing to maintain order; she had to make way for a power which could.

Perhaps when the blow did fall, it proved, for a time at least, more serious than the sanguine had expected. Euric was an intolerant Arian; the passive or active resistance of the Catholic clergy provoked him to harsh treatment of individuals, while he prevented new appointments to sees left vacant by death or deprivation. Churches fell in ruin; bereft of their pastors, flocks were scattered. He was further incensed by the obstinate resistance of Auvergne; his troops burned the crops and devastated the country, thus causing the most widespread distress. But as soon as the treaty was concluded and Berry and Auvergne were his own, he in some measure justified the hope that the Goths would establish a reputable government. He already had at his right hand, as prime-minister, the Catholic Gallo-Roman Leo; he now set over the conquered Auvergne another Gallo-Roman, Victorius; and we may perhaps assume that the episcopal negotiators of the treaty had secured from him better conditions for the Catholic population under his rule (see above, p. xlii). As a whole, the newly acquired territory settled down under Visigothic laws, in which, as we have seen, much Roman law was now incorporated. A sensible loss to the senatorial families was that of the 'consular', 'prefectorian', and other titles derived from their passage through the cursus honorum. As Sidonius says, the only distinction now was culture, so that the jealous maintenance of Roman literature and the purity of Latin speech became more than ever important.

A few nobles followed the example of Leo and Victorius, and took high office under the new régime, as they did in like manner at the Burgundian courts. Evodius, for whose presentation-cup to Ragnahild Sidonius wrote his verses (IV. viii), may have succeeded in pushing his fortunes in this manner. Other conspicuous Gallo-Romans were perhaps content to ingratiate themselves with their prince by the arts of flattery: such was Lampridius, the orator and poet of Bordeaux (VIII. ix).The baser sort found their advantage in becoming

informers, and trading in the properties and lives of their fellow countrymen. Their machinations were in one case thwarted by the interventions of Chilperic's queen, whose support was of such worth to Patiens. The respect which the Teutonic princes and peoples showed to their women was a virtue which did much to make them respected by their Gallo-Roman subjects.

Probably Sidonius came into close personal relations with no barbarians other than the Visigoths and Bur-gundians; of the rest he had a glimpse during his sojourn at Euric's court (see below, p. cix), or only knew by hearsay. His experience was gained in the most favourable field; but it is clear that though in younger days he had followed his father-in-law's pro-Gothic policy, and though as a Visigothic subject he schooled himself to civility, the intensity of his Roman sympathies never suffered him to like even the best of the barbarians. In a confidential letter he makes the confession that he does not care for barbarians even when they are good (VII. xiv. 10). He despised them as lacking in the refinements of the one culture in which he believed. The personal habits of the Burgundians revolt him, he indulges in a subdued sneer at the culture of the Visigothic court: the quality of the silver of Ragnahild's cup, not that of the verses engraved on it, will alone be esteemed 'in such an Athenaeum' (cf. above, p. xlvi). The barbarians are always the skin-clad savages (pelliti), as compared with . the Romans in their civilized dress.2 In a time of strained relations, the Visigoths become the perfidious people (foedifraga gens), in whom no reliance can be placed (cf. p. lxxxvii, note). This ingrained dislike on the part of Sidonius is an unfortunate circumstance for the historian of the barbaric nations.

He was in a position which offered him priceless opportunities to observe not only the outward appearance of a few ypes casually seen at Bordeaux or Lyons, but the daily life of the community. He might have learned to converse with them, given us examples of their speech, told us their proverbial wisdom, their legends and their history. He did none of these things. The apostle of Latin idiom would not soil his lips with the detested German tongue. An Athenian, forced to learn Persian under a victorious Xerxes, would not have suffered more than this Patrician, if Visigothic had been made a compulsory language in vanquished Gaul. It is clear that he only half admires the cleverness of a Syagrius who became so proficient in the Burgundian dialect that old men were afraid of being detected by him in solecism (V. v. 3).

It is a great opportunity lost. But though he falls lamentably short of what he might so easily have accomplished, Sidonius has left several sketches of barbarian types which are not without their value to the student of history and ethnology, or even to the literary man. It was probably at Lyons that he saw the young Frankish (? prince Sigismer in his rich apparel, walking amongst his guards to the house of his prospective father-in-law, the Burgundian Chilperic (IV. xx). The description is full of interest, and has attracted the attention of every historian of the fifth century; so circumstantial is it that though the nationality of Sigismer is not stated, it may be fairly inferred from his equipment and his arms. But, as already noted, it was during his enforced stay at Bordeaux that the Bishop of Clermont had

occasion to observe the various representatives of the northern tribes who pressed upon one another at the court of the powerful Euric (VIII. ix). There he saw the swift Herulian with his glaucous countenance; the blue-eyed Saxon 'arch-pirate', terror of the coasts; the grey-eyed Frank with his shaven face, yellow hair, and close-fitting tunic; the Sigambrian, shorn of his treasured back-hair. His knowledge of Mongolians probably dates from an earlier time, and is not displayed in the Letters; it may chiefly have been derived from Avitus, who knew the Asiatic nomads well from the days of Attila, Aëtius, and Litorius.

What Sido-nius has to say of them is to be found in his Panegyric of Anthemius, where he praises the horsemanship of troopers who seem rather centaurs than men separable from their mounts. From hearsay also may have come the extremely interesting description of the Saxons, 'who regarded shipwreck as only so much practice.' Their maritime skill and enterprise are told in a few vigorous phrases, while their custom of offering a human sacrifice before setting sail on the homeward voyage is recorded as a fact of common knowledge. Taken as a whole, these contributions to our knowledge of the Teutonic tribes are well worth having, though, for the reasons given above, they at the same time disappoint us, knowing as we do the unique nature of his opportunities. After all, great allowance must be made for a writer who had championed a lost cause against these very peoples of the north. The representative of a high civilization who fears that all refinement is going down before the flood of barbarism cannot be expected to regard the barbarian with the same sympathetic interest as the conqueror or pioneer who carries the banner of the higher culture into the wilderness in the confident assurance of its triumph. Had Sidonius accompanied a victorious Roman army to the shores of the Baltic, he might have looked upon the Teuton with other eyes, and developed some of the observant qualities of a Tacitus or a Lafitau.

And yet, when we remember his silence on his own countrymen of the lower classes, we may perhaps doubt whether, even under stimulating conditions, he would have made a good scientific observer. The whole education and training of the Roman school were such as to make the scientific attitude almost impossible to the finished product of the system.

Before turning to consider that system and its effect upon the literary talent of Sidonius, we may pause briefly to consider the information which he supplies on several external aspects of Gallo-Roman civilization in the last years of the imperial connexion.

We may take, in the first place, his description of his villa Avitacum, evidently modelled upon Pliny's accounts of his own favourite country seats. In some parts this description is hard to follow, and the relative position of the principal chambers not quite easy to understand. We imagine, however, an extensive structure designed with all the Roman regard for aspect; with a winter dining-room provided with an open hearth, and summer dining-room, half out of doors; with colonnade and loggia, weaving-room, women's quarters, and very extensive baths. The baths were clearly a great feature of Avitacum. The house almost abutted upon an eminence, from which a stream flowed down, while the same hill provided timber for heating in such convenient fashion that the cut logs rolled down the steep slope, and almost delivered themselves at the furnace-door. The different chambers used by the

bathers, some of which were adorned with frescoes, are described in some detail; one had a pyramidal roof; another a basin filled from pipeheads cast to resemble lion-masks, through which the water comes in such a tumult that the master of the house and his fellow bathers have to converse at the top of their voices to be heard. Sidonius clearly prided himself on his baths, saying that they need fear no comparison with public establishments. The house of Avitacum must have been a charming place, situated on rising ground with a wide prospect over a lake, perhaps the Lake of Aydat (see note, 36. 2, p. 222);

it is not wonderful that the owner should describe it with enthusiasm. But there are curious omissions in the description of its amenities. It is remarkable that so bookish a man should say nothing of his own books, though he could certainly have quoted Cicero's words about his library (Ep. VI. viii), and in another letter dwells at some length on that of a friend. Again, while there must have been extensive gardens round such a residence, not a word is said of them, though, here again, the gardens of a friend are praised in another place. How different Pliny, who dwells with delight upon his fountains and trim walks, his cypresses and roses! We are tempted to doubt whether Sidonius really loved flowers. Nothing, again, is said of stables; nor is there a word of domestic pets: we doubt Sidonius as a lover of animals. Yet, for its freshness and solitude, Avitacum was evidently near to his heart; there he enjoyed the tunicata quies, which to the Roman was the equivalent of the ease in 'flannels' so delightful to the city dweller of to-day. We gather that the villa of Avitacum was as undefended as Roman country-houses usually were. But it is a sign of this unsettled period that some seats were already fortified, rather, perhaps, to resist sudden attack by brigands than assault by barbarian invaders. We learn nothing precise from the Letters of the architectural features of town dwellings.

It would have been interesting to know the disposition of the houses in such a place as Lyons, and how those of the chief citizens resembled the larger residences in Italy on the one side and Britain on the other.

Of the interior furnishing of the house, little is said; apart from the description of baths, what details we have concern almost exclusively the dining-room. Here were the stibadium (horseshoe couch) and 'gleaming sideboard' (nitens abacus); here couches for the diners, decked perhaps, like those of Theodoric, with linen coverings on ordinary days, and silk on great occasions (I. ii). The best accounts of dining-room arrangements are given where Sidonius describes the banquets at Arles already mentioned (p. lxiv). In I. xi the arrangement of the company on the stibadium. in strict order of precedence is clearly noted, the host being at one 'horn', his principal guest at the other, followed by the remaining guests in order of their official rank, so that the junior (in this case, Sidonius himself) reclined next to the host. The poem of IX. xiii enters with some detail into the luxurious accessories of a Roman banquet in the capital of the province. The couches are draped with hangings of purple silk, or with figured silk textiles bearing representations of mounted huntsmen in Sassanian style, which proves the importation of oriental stuffs into the West as early as the mid-fifth century (see note, 203. I, pp. 251-2). There are flowers on the sideboards and

even on the couches. Burning frankincense rolls its perfume to the roof; the lamps, knowing nothing of common oil (oleum nescientes), are fed with scented opobalsamum. When the feast begins the servants appear, bowed under the weight of the chased silver plate.

Wine gleams in rose-wreathed cups and bowls of various form, and is spiced with nard. When the meal is done, some of the guests are stimulated to the imitation of Bacchantes, and dance among garlands that hang from the unguent-vases. But the chief entertainment comes with the introduction of Corinthian girls, who sing to the accompaniment of the cithara, and of other flute-players and singers. It is a scene of lavish extravagance. The midday meal of a senatorial family in every-day life is described as consisting of dishes few in number but varied in contents; the evening meals seem to have been more elaborate (II. ix. 6, 10). A high standard of comfort and a good cuisine were evidently the rule. Introducing to Simplicius a person unused to the manners of society (IV. vii), Sidonius pictures the man's astonishment when invited, as the acquaintance of so old a friend as himself, to sit at the family table: 'it will abash this rustic to be entertained with an elegance which will make him think himself among the delicate guests of Apicius, and served by the "rhythmic carvers of Byzantium".' The one indispensable article of furniture, not necessarily placed in the dining-room, which receives special mention is the water-clock or clepsydra;even here, however, it is in one case brought in as having announced to the chef the hour for lunch. Of bedrooms nothing is said: one passage rather leads us to suppose that sleeping accommodation was less extensive than we should have expected (II. ix. 7).

Such artistic references as occur seem to show that Sidonius, though fond of all refinement, was not a connoisseur. It may perhaps be surmised that provincial art in Gaul in the second and third quarters of the fifth century resembled the literature of the same period, and that its work was uninspired and imitative, coldly reproducing at second-hand traditional classical models. It probably did not share the great prestige accorded to literature; though Sidonius mentions a score of contemporary orators and poets, artists are to seek in his pages. The wealthy Gallo-Romans may have chiefly concentrated their enthusiasm upon Letters, and have regarded art as a secondary matter. Such comparative indifference could only have hastened the downfall of the academic Roman style before the invading oriental motives which now entered Gaul in increasing numbers, and were naturally more congenial to barbaric taste. Of sculpture we learn even less than painting. The author gives no description of his own statue erected at Rome after the delivery of his Panegyric of Avitus, nor does he allude to the sculptor. His mention of stereotyped attitudes when enumerating the principal philosophers of antiquity (IX. ix. 14) suggests that he had well-known sculptural types in his mind, but he does not himself assert it. On the subject of architecture Sidonius does not seem to write with understanding. The account of the villa of Avitacum is not that of an expert; and his descriptions of two churches, that erected by Patiens at Lyons (II. x) and that by Perpetuus at Tours (IV.

xviii. 4) are rather slight: we do, however, gather that the first was an orientated basilica, preceded by an atrium, and with a coffered ceiling in the interior, though there is no clear

statement as to the number of aisles or the form of the bema. The second, which replaced the older building erected by St. Brice over the shrine of St. Martin, seems to have presented most exceptional features; it may have introduced into Gaul a type of choir which was destined to influence the whole course of Romanesque and even Gothic building (see note, 33. 1, p. 231). Yet nothing that Sidonius says would lead us to infer that the church of Perpetuus was an epoch-making structure; we infer it only from the later description by Gregory of Tours. In connexion with the churches mentioned by Sidonius, we must not forget the metrical inscriptions which he and his rival poets composed at the bishop's request to be engraved upon the walls. These are of such a length that they were probably cut in rather small characters upon panels or executed in mosaic. In the case of Patiens' church, the verses of Constantius and Secundinus were to be placed to right and left of the altar, those of Sidonius himself perhaps opposite on the west wall, though the words he uses are not clear (in extimis). Monastic buildings are not described by our author.

Yet, as we have already seen, he had a personal knowledge of Lerins, and any details of its architectural features, plan, and internal arrangements would have been of the highest interest. He could have described to us, too, the process by which the simple cell of the Syrian monk Abraham near Clermont developed into the monastery of St. Cirgues, for at the time of Abraham's death the community was evidently of some size (VII. xvii. 3, 4). Altogether, we could wish that Sidonius shared the architectural interest of one of his friends, who was fond of reading Vitruvius (VIII. vi. 10). Perhaps, however, he would only have reiterated his preference for the traditional in all things, and, like the accepted oracles of the eighteenth century, to whom Gothic architecture was all contemptible, have regarded all divergences from Vitruvian precept as wholly beneath his notice. His indifference to the really important features of Perpetuus' church lends some colour to the supposition. In relation to the art of music, our author again reveals no personal enthusiasm. His references to secular music usually concern the performances enlivening banquets, which then, as now, were intended rather to distract than to inspire. But we are told that Theodoric II only cared for serious strains at table, and that he dispensed alike with the hydraulic organs and with vocalists---- the negative statement here suggesting that in other houses neither was disdained (cf. above, p. lxiv). Perhaps at no period of his life was Sidonius a patron of musicians.

Church music receives just enough attention to tantalize the reader. Among the merits of the accomplished priest-philosopher Claudianus Mamertus, Sidonius records his zeal in training the choir for his brother the Bishop of Vienne; again, in connexion with the celebration of the festival of St. Just at Lyons, we hear of antiphonal singing (V. xvii. 3). There is no definite allusion to the use of musical instruments in churches.

In the matter of costume, we learn more of barbarian than of Roman dress, and more of the garb of laymen than of clerics. It may be taken for granted that the tunic remained the usual garment for the house among the Gallo-Romans; sometimes the girdle or belt which held it round the waist offered scope for ornament of a particular fashion (IV. ix.

2). Over the tunic were probably worn the mantles most commonly in use in late-Roman times----the pallium, of Greek origin, and the paenula (a kind of poncho) for bad weather. The toga was now a ceremonial garment, of which the most sumptuous form was the toga palmata, or embroidered robe worn by the Consul. Sandals or boots are only mentioned in relation to a symbolic figure of a Muse; the description of the method of lacing is not easy of comprehension (VIII. xi., 11. 12 ff. of the poem). It is just possible that there is an allusion to a professional dress in the letter which Sidonius sends to Domitius, the grammarian of Ameria, inviting him to the cool retreat of Avitacum in a very hot summer. Domitius is depicted as expounding Terence to his pupils wrapped in a thick cloak, while others were perspiring in thin linen or silk; it may be, however, that Domitius was extremely sensitive to draughts, for even under the thick cloak he is said to be swathed round and round, a fashion which would be no necessary accompaniment of a master's gown.

Armour is mentioned in the letter which recounts the prowess of Ecdicius in breaking through the Gothic lines round Clermont. The hero is described as wearing greaves, a cuirass, and a helmet with cheek-pieces (III. iii. 5), the whole equipment following the Roman model. The most careful description of barbarian costume concerns not the Visigoths or Burgundians, with whom Sidonius was in frequent contact, but in all likelihood the Franks, with whom he had had probably no regular relations. It has been already noticed (p. xciii) that the weapons borne by the guards of the young Sigismer, whom Sidonius saw at Lyons, are characteristic of that nation (note, 35. 1, p. 233). The prince himself wears a flame-red mantle over a white silk tunic, and a wealth of gold ornaments. His companions wear high, close-fitting, short-sleeved, parti-coloured (? tunics scarcely reaching to their bare knees, and low boots of hide with the hair adhering; their legs are left uncovered. Each has a green cloak (sagum) with a purple border, and apparently a skin mantle over all, brooched on the right shoulder to leave the sword-arm free. The sword is worn on a baldric; the other weapons are barbed lances and missile axes (lancet uncati, secures missiles). Circular shields enriched on the field with silver, and on the umbo with gold, complete the equipment of the brilliant train. In general it recalls the Frankish warrior as he is depicted in Carolingian illuminated manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries;

though at this later date the legs are commonly protected by tight bandages. The skin garment is the great characteristic of the barbarian in the Roman's eyes; the adjective pellitus is used almost as a synonym for barbarian.

Especial importance was attached by the different tribes to the manner in which the hair was cut. Theo-doric's hair is withdrawn from the forehead and long over the ears (I. ii. 2). The Saxons have the whole fore-part of the skull shorn, a fashion which at a distance seems to increase the length of the face and reduce that of the head (VIII. ix, 11. 23-7 of the poem). The Sigambrian normally wears his hair long at the back; the old warrior of this tribe, whom Sidonius sees at Bordeaux, has had his long locks cut off, and will not feel a true man until they have grown again (ibid. 1. 28). Of clerical vestments, unfortunately, nothing is said; at this early period, differentiation between clerical and lay garb may not have gone very

far; but it had begun, and even a few words would have had their importance. Monks are described as wearing the palliolum, which would seem to indicate that the monastic dress at first resembled that of the philosopher (IV. ix. 3). The cowl was apparently at this time an independent covering for the head, as Sidonius sends a thick one as a present to the abbot Chariobaudus (nocturnalem cucullum, VII. xvi. 2). The tonsure is described by the usual word corona, which is ultimately transferred to the tonsured: corona tua is used very much as we should say 'your reverence'.

The allusions to sport and games are fairly numerous. In the chase the bow is the principal weapon (I. ii), but for encountering the boar and other beasts the spear comes into play, the game being driven into nets (VIII. vi. 12). Namatius is bantered on the over-merciful temperament of the hounds with which he pursues the hares of Oleron (ibid.). The hawk is more than once mentioned as an essential possession of the young country gentleman with sporting tastes (III. iii. 2). In one place we hear of a fishing expedition to which Agricola, his brother-in-law, invites Sidonius (II. xii. i). Racing in small boats took place in former times on the lake below Avitacum, in recollection of Aeneas' regatta at Drepanum, the people of Auvergne claiming a Trojan descent (II. ii. 19). Large comfortable river-boats manned by rowers ply on the Garonne (VIII. xii. 5).

References to games are of much interest, but unfortunately they are seldom precise, and where they seem to give detail, only confuse by uncoordinated facts. A board-game of some kind resembling backgammon, possibly that known as duodecim scripta, is indicated in the difficult passage in I. ii, where Theodoric is described at play. Dice-boxes are frequently mentioned, and one would assume that games of hazard were a little too popular with the aristocracy of Gaul. Outdoor games with balls were evidently pursued with ardour, and Sidonius, similar in this to Augustine, admits himself a devotee (V. xvii. 6). But here again it is difficult to form an idea of the rules. There is no mention of any apparatus beyond the ball itself, so that to translate by 'tennis' is misleading to a modern reader: the players seem simply to have required an open space in a courtyard or on the grass, with perhaps lines marked upon the ground. Sometimes two players were enough, as when Sidonius and Ecdicius play in the meadow by the lake (II. ii. 15); at others there are opposing pairs (II. ix. 4); in one place we read of whole 'sides', when at the festival at Lyons the elderly Filimatius is knocked down (V. xvii. 7). The reference to collisions shows that the game was fast. The great games of the Circus were still held in Gaul in the second half of the fifth century, but possibly not after Majorian's time.

Turning to the apparatus of more serious pursuits, we find various references to writing materials. Letters and manuscripts were written upon parchment or paper; the words membrana, papyrus, and charta are all employed, the two latter being synonymous. But tablets (codicilli, pugillares) and a stylus were used for the first notes or rough drafts (e. g. IV. xii. 4, and cf. Cicero, Ad fam. IX. xxvi). Literary people were sometimes accompanied by a secretary, who kept the tablets always ready for their use, or himself wrote from their dictation, as did the secretary of Filimatius on the famous occasion when Sidonius composed

his epigram upon the towel (V. xvii. x). From IX. xvi it would appear that ink was allowed to dry, and that the process was not accelerated by the use of sand, or by any other substitute for blotting-paper. In the same passage there is a reference to ink freezing on the pens in very cold weather.

A few miscellaneous facts may be noted which bear upon contemporary custom and observance. From I. v. 10 we gather that the old Thalassio still held its own in 468, the year of the wedding of Ricimer and Alypia, and that the crown was still worn by the bridegroom at the ceremony. For all that is said to the contrary, it might have been a pagan marriage of Catullus' day, whereas both the contracting parties were Christians. An interesting point is raised with regard to the disposal of the dead. The spade of the excavator seems to show that in the Roman provinces cremation went out of fashion about the year A. D. 250. We should infer the opposite from those passages in Sidonius, where the machinery of cremation is mentioned as if it were still in use, or had been so within living memory (III. iii. 13; III. xiii; Carm. xvi. 123). Perhaps we may hazard the conjecture that a few aristocratic families preserved an old custom after it had been abandoned by the mass of the people, just as, in more ancient times, they had maintained burial when incineration was first introduced. The evidence of Sidonius with regard to epitaphs also deserves notice. Those which he himself composed are of inordinate length, and imply monuments with abundance of plane surface.That they are not merely literary exercises, but really meant to be used, is shown by his desire that the work of the monumental mason who was to cut the epitaph on the tomb of the prefect Apollinaris should be carefully checked, for fear that any error committed might be imputed to the writer and not to the artisan. Altogether, the epitaphs are of most formidable length, eclipsing in this respect those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or the longer effusions of our country churchyards.

The imperial road system was still apparently maintained on a satisfactory footing in the year 467, when Sidonius travelled from Lyons to Rome, and, as bearer of an imperial summons, was entitled to the free use of post-horses. The mansiones, or rest-houses, and the veredarii, or mounted letter-carriers, are mentioned in different Letters (III. ii. 3; V. vii. 3). In more than one place Sidonius alludes to inns which were patronized by nobles when no better accommodation was to be had, but they seem to have been of indifferent quality. The above are but examples of a much larger number of points which the archaeologist may discover in the Letters. But even these will suffice to show that the study of Sidonius is not altogether unprofitable to archaeological research. The preceding pages have sketched in outline the life of Sidonius and the surroundings in which it was passed. But the conditions under which he grew to manhood will be imperfectly understood unless something is said of the system under which the young Gallo-Roman was prepared for his career. For the education which the boy Sidonius received, the typical education of his class and time, exerted a lasting influence upon the man. It coloured his whole outlook upon the world, not always to his advantage, since his very loyalty to academic ideals obscured those natural powers of observation which he certainly possessed. It controlled his literary prospects, determined his interests, and created the astonishing style which seemed to him worth so

many vigils, but to us is like a faded finery, hampering the free movement of his thought. Some idea of the intellectual training which produced such strange results is thus essential to our purpose.

The education of the young Gallo-Roman in the fifth century differed but little from that which his father and grandfather had received. The whole training was rooted in traditions no longer vital; it was essentially bookish, uninterested in facts, almost exclusively absorbed in words. Before all other things it set Grammar and Rhetoric; in many schools these two subjects represented almost the whole curriculum. Law had of course to be learned by candidates for the bar; philosophy was studied perhaps more as an accomplishment and a discipline of the mind, than for the problems with which it was properly concerned; there was some musical instruction, perhaps more of a theoretical than of a practical nature. But for most youths education meant a proficiency in the Latin classics, a knowledge of the structure of the Latin language, and of the art of speaking before an audience upon a given subject. The interest was directed not to the synthesis of life, but the antithesis of clauses. Science, as we understand the term, was practically unknown; the mathematics, the geography, the astronomy of the schools had as much relation to mythology as to fact. The interesting letter on the death of the rhetor Lampridius shows that even on the most brilliant products of the late Roman schools, astrologers could still exert their baneful influence (VIII. xi. 9). Perhaps the decline in the study of Greek prejudicially affected the power and inclination to observe or think naturally. That language was still taught in Gaul;

Sidonius noted the fluency of Lampridius in both Greek and Latin; and at Narbonne there were men of culture who appreciated Greek poetry. But the Theodosian Code shows that the Latin grammarians received higher salaries than the Greek, enjoyed a higher position, and probably instructed larger classes. Their lectures consisted for the most part in commentaries on classical authors, chiefly the Roman poets. Style was analysed; the vocabulary of each writer examined; metaphors and expressions were carefully discussed. Points of etymology and antiquarian knowledge were raised, and pursued along the by-paths of erudition; it was a golden age for commentators. Not all, however, was learned trifling. Some of the criticism upon Virgil and Homer was acute and penetrating, as, for example, the fifth book of the Saturnalia of Macrobius.

The great text-book in the schools of the fourth and fifth century was Virgil. To Sidonius, as to Augustine, he is the prince of poets. Terence was evidently popular in Gaul; the Letters allude to his characters, and in the passage on the home-education of Apollinaris, Sidonius reads the Hecyra with his son, uncertain which delights him most, the fine style of the author, or the youthful grace and ardour of the boy. The influence of Horace is also evident in our author; he is second to Virgil among the poets. The opulent and elaborated style of Statius naturally commended him to such a society as that of fifth-century Gaul; he had been popular with Ausonius; and his influence on Sidonius as poet is undeniable. It is the same with Claudian; the Panegyrics which charmed the ears of an Avitus or an Anthemius owe him much, but the splendour of the original is gone. Among prose-writers, not Cicero,

but the younger Pliny was the favourite. In the introductory Letter of the fifth book, Sidonius acknowledges him as his master; and in a later book again refers to this professed allegiance. Pliny, the agreeable letter-writer, was the inevitable model of a society in which correspondence with friends was a main interest of existence: no less inevitable was the reproduction of his mannerisms rather than his excellences by purely imitative writers. In his introductory epistle to Constantius, Sidonius quotes as a warning the nickname given to Julius Titianus for his sedulous efforts to reproduce the style of Cicero: he was called 'the ape of orators' (pratorum simia). Yet he and his own contemporaries fell into the same error; they were apes of the second great Roman letter-writer, caricaturing their master by accentuating all his faults. Features of Sallust's style were distorted by them in the same manner.

Grammatical criticism of the classics was followed by specialized study of the great orators, with a view to proficiency in public speaking: this was the course of Rhetoric. The rhetor was a more important person in society than the grammarian. But, as noted above, he professed an art which, except in the Church, had little prospect of great or serious audiences; it was divorced from real life; it was the accomplishment of the speech-room. The training was still, no doubt, a good one; rhythm, prosody, voice-production, division of the subject, were all thoroughly taught, and proved their value when there was a worthy occasion for their use. But most opportunities were hardly worth the taking; the speaker eulogized the great dead or the Epigoni of the present; he took part in academic displays or competitions before small circles, in which ancient or unreal issues were treated in the style of the class-room declamation. An unbounded respect for certain models, a good memory with an endless stock of figures, metaphors and mythological examples always at command----these, and not the power to read hearts and sway them to a genuine emotion, were the essentials of oratorical success. These were the qualities which carried Ausonius, the rhetor of Bordeaux, to the highest office in the State. The enthusiasm for letters which such promotion implies is laudable in itself; but in the time of Roman decadence the reward fell to an artifice which sterilized instead of fertilizing the mind, and drove hearts capable of valiant action into channels of sentimental retrospect. The fine flower of all this education was the panegyric, and it was an artificial flower.

It has been already noted that the Church was beginning a new education of her own (p. lxxvi), and that in some cases boys were placed under a religious teacher, as Sidonius' own brother studied under Faustus at Lerins. But as a rule, sacred learning would seem to have been neglected in the schools attended by wealthy pupils. Some of the great families were probably still pagan: others appear to have shown little zeal for the religion which they nominally professed; the old mythology dominated literary culture. Perhaps Sidonius was never really grounded in the study of the Scriptures till after his consecration. Only after that event do his letters show a familiarity with Holy Writ; examples and illustrations derived both from the Old and New Testament then accompany or displace the mythological figures dear to his earlier years. By the side of Triptolemus, we hear of Joseph.Moses, Aaron, and Solomon, Joshua, the Gibeonites, and the people of Nineveh are introduced in

illustration.The Church is the spiritual Sara; Philosophy is the fair woman captured from the enemy and espoused by the captor; the story of Peter and Simon Magus points its obvious moral. St. Luke is quoted as a believer in the advantage of long descent.

In no capacity did this scholastic education so harm Sidonius as in that which it was designed to advance---- his quality as man of letters. He was too good a pupil of his peculiar masters to be anything but a bad writer. The curse of the rhetorical tradition clung to him like a chronic disease; it destroyed the originality of a genius never too spontaneous. In an age when it was improper for a literary man to be himself, he thought too faithfully of the proprieties. His age was just to him: he had the reward of his obedience. The society whose conventions he defended saw in him the mirror of contemporary writers; in his heart, he himself was sure that the vote of posterity was won.Though, soon after his death, a Ruricius might whisper a doubt, it was long before the general verdict turned against him. The Middle Ages approved; and even after Petrarch's misgivings, the voice of admiration continued to be heard. But the Renaissance grew critical, the eighteenth century dared to attack. If the value of Sidonius really lay in his style and diction, as he himself believed, then his credit would indeed be dead beyond resuscitation. Hardly any Latin author has received so short a shrift at the hands of modern criticism as this professed champion of the Roman tongue. When good Latinity was once more understood, our author's pedestal became a pillory; and the works of every writer upon style, from Horace to Boileau, provided missiles wherewith to pelt him.

Gibbon, preferring his prose to his 'insipid verses', pays it a back-handed compliment after his manner. Even those who uphold particular merits are forced to draw upon the arsenal of epithets forged against the affected and the turgid writer. The most recent critics are the most severe of all. Hodgkin says that Sidonius has achieved nothing beyond a fifth-rate position as a post-classical author; Dill sees in him one of the most tasteless writers who ever lived. In the matter of depreciation the last word has been spoken; nothing fresh can now be said. The Latin style of Sidonius is condemned as finally as the French style of Voiture.

But the position of Sidonius no longer depends on his manner; his style is to-day brushed aside as a tiresome veil, obscuring what he has to say. He refused to write history; he survives as the historian malgré lui. Though he missed one of the great opportunities in literature; though he failed to record much that was most worth recording in the world about him, and instead of the new drama of his times preferred to transmit for the hundredth time the vapid and worn-out stories of Greek mythology, he has yet preserved for us facts enough to constitute him a chief authority on the century in which he lived. His literary fate is indeed a paradox; he is one of those men whose parergon alone is valued, and who are esteemed for the very part of their work which they themselves deemed least important. By a careful sifting of the Letters and the Poems, modern writers have extracted much material which, classified and co-ordinated, has thrown useful light on one of the darkest periods of history; on many points, Sidonius is the sole source of information. Nor is his

mannerism always with him. The Letters which yield most with least trouble are precisely those in which an eager personal interest in his subject, or the pressure of a busy life, or some unexpected necessity for haste have forced the writer to abandon his preoccupation with style and tell his business in a natural way. At such times he speaks directly: tam nunc dicit tam nunc debentia dici.

The most efficient cause of plainer writing was probably the stress of episcopal work; to this our debt is large. We are infinitely relieved when amid the familiar affectations we come upon the stilus rusticans or the sermo usualis for which he apologizes as a degradation of his pen. We almost lose sympathy with him in his personal troubles, as soon as it appears that it is misfortune which has simplified his diction. Appreciating to the full the honourable solicitude of Sidonius for the purity of Latin, and his ever-present fear of Celtic or Teutonic encroachments, we are willing to condone any intrusions from the vulgar tongue to be rid for a while of the alliterations, the inversions, the forced antitheses, and to see the meaning quickly in a simple dress. What we want of Sidonius is plain fact, and it is pleasant to admit that occasionally we get it without too much exasperation; sometimes the actor removes the mask and speaks in unaffected tones. Let it therefore be recorded to his credit that he does not always offend, and that not once or twice, but many times, he writes in a manner worthy of Roman literature at an earlier day. Let it also be remembered that his subject-matter is often well presented; when his narrative interests him, he can tell a story brightly and with effect. Nor should we overlook the fact that Sidonius has a gift for portraiture, which frequently lends animation to his pages.

Sometimes a character is sketched in a few sentences, as in the case of Paeonius the parvenu, the malicious old Athenius, the lively veteran Filimatius who plays ball with the younger men (V. xvii), and Himerius the model priest (VII. xiii). At other times the description is at greater length, and details are drawn with a free hand. We have amusing pictures of the young fortune-hunter Amantius (VII. ii), and of Ger-manicus the juvenile sexagenarian (IV. xiii), who dresses in the fashion, who will hear nothing of age except the increased respect it brings, and grows more boyish every day (non iuvenescit solum sed quodammodo repuerascit). We have the interesting sketch of Vectius the country gentleman, whose girdles are of exquisite design, who hunts, hawks, and entertains his friends, but listens to the Psalms at meals, and is more priestly in spirit than many of those who wear priests' garments (IV. ix). We have the memoir of Claudianus Mamertus who does all the hard work for his brother St. Mamertus, to which allusion has been made above (p. lxxxi); we have the reminiscences of Lampridius, the quicktempered rhetor, murdered by his slaves (VIII. xi). In other cases classes of men are portrayed with the same precision; for instance, informers, or popularity-hunting candidates for municipal appointments (XV. xix). A writer possessing such penetration and such graphic powers as these deserves something more than an untempered ridicule.

Yet the counts in the indictment are sufficiently numerous. First and foremost there is the mania for antithesis, and plays on words which degenerate into the most lamentable of puns,

for paronomasia, antonomasia, and all the other obliquities of language which sound like the infirmities which they are. A critical examination of Sidonius' work resembles literary pathology; his language is often diseased language, which could only regain a semblance of health by a free use of the knife. It calls aloud for amputation of the platitudes, pomposities, and verbal conceits which the euphuist himself would renounce as foolish. It is unnecessary to dwell long on a subject which has its pathetic side, yet concrete instances must be adduced in evidence. First, we may take examples of the ruling passion for antithesis. The abuse of this is persistent, and sometimes verbal oppositions are cumulated with almost incredible pertinacity, as, for instance, in the description of Ravenna (I. viii). Sidonius pits against each other the words novus and vetus or antiquus, until the staleness of the trick infuriates. Thus novus clericus, peccator antiquus (IX. ii); novo exemplo amicitiarum vetera iura (VII. vi. l), in famillari vetusto novum ius potestatis (V. xviii). But no glaring contrast of word or sense, however elementary, comes amiss; for instance: pingues caedibus gladii, macri ieiuniis praeliatores (VII. vii. 3); confitetur repulsam qui profitetur offensam (VII. ix); pharetras sagittis vacuare, lacrimis oculos implere (V. xii); Cuius parva tuguria magnus hospes implesti (III. ii); Itinerum longitudinum, brevitatem dierum, &c. (III. ii. 3).

And so on, and so on. The reader who desires more of this misplaced ingenuity will find instances on every other page. Plays upon words are no less common. Inferre calumnias, deferre personas, afferre minas, auferre substantias (V. vii); scientia fortis, fortior conscientia (IX. iv); at non remaneamus terrent quibus terra non remanet (IX. iii); iuste iusta solventes (III. iii. 8); indidit prosecutionibus, edidit tribunalibus, prodidit partibus, addidit titulis, &c. (VIII. vi. 7); seu sic sentiente concordia, seu sic concordante sententia (IV. xxv. 5); inconsulte consultat. (VIII. ix. 13); praedae praedia (IV. xxv. 2); suspicere iudicium, suscipere consilium (IV. xxii. 1). The changes are continually rung upon such words as dicere and ducere, suspicere despicere, orare perorare, ambiendus ambitiosus, providere praevidere, &c. The list of such things is endless, but we are not yet at the worst; we have to endure puns from which a schoolboy would recoil. A proper name like Faustus, Perpetuus, or Rusticus is seldom allowed to escape: let two of them represent the series: Perpetua durent culmina Perpetui (IV. xviii----this to be carved on the wall of a church); rusticans multum quod nihil rusticus (VIII. xi. 6, cf. Rusticus). It is pardonable for a man once in a way, in intimate conversation, to indulge a weakness of this kind, but how can a bishop be forgiven who puns for publication, and in work carefully revised not only by himself but by his friends? From a long list we may cite the following specimens: non tam honorare censor quam censetor onerare (VIII. viii); honoris . . .

oneris (IX. ii); ex more . . . ex amore (IX: iv. 1); classicum in classe cecinisse (VIII. vi. 13); Aptae fuistis, aptissime defuistis (IX. ix)----perhaps the worst of all. It is time to draw the. veil over faults which it is impossible to condone; we may conclude with the following instances of paronomasia and antonomasia. Leges Theodosianas calcans, Theudoricianasque proponens (I. ii. 3); flumen in verbis, fulmen in clausulis (IX. vii); inter perfectos Domini quam inter praefectos Valentiniani (VII. xii. 4).

The reader may be spared illustration of the overloaded interminable sentences;. or of the strings of illustrative instances and persons, sometimes eight or ten where two would have sufficed, till the tail is out of all proportion to the kite; or of the mannerism which declares for silence on things which might be praised, and then enumerates them to the bitter end; or of the labouring of points till they are, so to speak, hammered blunt; or the tautologies recalling the 'which here thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest or seest' of Armado: to insist on these things is to waste time; there is no possible defence. We may pass to other features, not reprehensible in themselves, but made so by immoderate or tasteless use. The metaphors of Sidonius for the most part are familiar, and worn in service. The world is a threshing-floor, spiritual exhortation a harrow. Life is like a river; a literary career is a sea-voyage; the mind of man is a sea, suddenly disturbed by the squall of adverse tidings. Silence is a curb; evil tongues are like barbed hooks. Verse written in sorrow is like the song of swans, or the music of very tense strings (VIII. ix. 4). A king's favour is a flame, which illuminates afar, but in neighbourhood consumes (III. iii. 9). A friendship not maintained is like a sword that rusts if not frequently polished. The schools of Lyons resemble a mint, in which youthful natures are struck on a philosophical die (IV. i. 3).

Where originality is attempted, the result is often either crude or over-intricate. As an example of the latter fault we may take the passage comparing the scion of a clerical family to a rosebush, for if he be not holy he stands amid all the roses armoured in the thorns of his sin (IV. xiii. 4); or that comparing Lupus, the generous discoverer of hidden talent, to the sun, whose searching rays will detect and draw up a moisture hidden deep under ground (IX. xi. 9); again, that which likens an author who is always writing but never publishes, to a dog who only snarls but never barks out (VII. iii. 2). Sometimes we find similitudes extraordinary to our taste, like the mysticus adeps et spiritalis arvina, which recalls the startling similitudes of a Crashaw or a Donne (VI. vi. 2). It is not surprising to find that Sidonius will mix metaphors with any man. Salsi sermonis libra (III. ii. 1); lacrimis habenas anima parturients laxavi (IV. xi. 7); manum linguae porrigis (IV. i. 3); quibus . . .faece petulantiae lingua polluitur infrenis (III. xiii. 2), may suffice to show his quality. There are other defects or affectations, not immediately concerned with words, but equally due to the same imitative contentment with bad rhetorical tradition. There is the tiresome realism which insists upon elaboration of unessential details offensive to the finer sense----what Chaix has called la manie de tout peindre;

there is the parade of erudition which, if less obtrusive than the determined pedantry of Cassiodorus, is yet a weariness to the reader; there are the hyperbole in flattery, the perverse preference of the inappropriate, the joy in 'combinations of confused magnificence'. We cannot more justly stigmatize the work of Sidonius at his worst than by continuing the criticism from which the last phrase was quoted, a criticism directed against certain English poets of the seventeenth century, but equally applicable to our author of the fifth. For his style too is marred 'by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery and hereditary similes'. The thing could not be better said.

The result of all these artifices, applied with an unshrinking hand, is that Sidonius is often hard to construe. Ruricius, his younger contemporary and partial imitator, was the first to complain of his obscurity, Petrarch confessed that he often found him unintelligible; and the most accomplished modern editors of his text admit that he presents some problems which they cannot be sure of having solved. While diffuseness is his besetting sin, some of his phrases are condensed to the point of impenetrability, and his constructions are rendered obscure by the imperfect development of his thought. Petrarch wondered at the audacity of his style; yet, as Baret has remarked, when it is examined, it is found that in prose he has fewer direct irregularities than Tacitus, and, in verse, than Virgil. It is rather a certain strange exotic character, instinctively felt, but not easily defined, which characterizes our author's work, compared not only with that of the golden age, but with that of a late writer like Symmachus. He is 'heteroclite' ; his cadences have an unfamiliar ring; when they are read aloud, they strike us as differing not in degree, but in kind from those of the classical authors. Were it not that an early critic has given blunt utterance to the suspicion, we should hardly dare to hint that some subtle Celtic influence had really affected his manner, and that, unknown to himself, the older Gaul was secretly revenged upon this son of hers who had only ears for an Italian idiom.

Is it merely a fancy that indigenous turns of thought have been unconsciously adopted by this champion of the classics? Do we witness the first movement towards the changes which were to issue in the Romance language in the South of France? Various indications seem to point that way. The synthetic structure of the older Latin tends to pass into analysis: the conjunctions quia or quod replace the complementary infinitive; the abstract replaces the concrete term. Prepositions grow more indispensable to inflected cases; the genitive is used in a manner which is almost French. The reader of the Latin text will discover a number of words or turns of expression used in a mediaeval or modern way. In one place, if not in two, the word familia is employed in the French, in place of the old Latin sense (VI. vii). Vir litterarum is homme de lettres; nebula de pulvere is nuage de poussière. Baret records a number of these peculiarities, and gives a list of the archaisms and neologisms in the text. We may note a few favourite or peculiar words: e. g. tumultuarius, used of rapid or impromptu composition; lenocinari, to coax or flatter; fatigatio, chaff or banter; eventilare, to go over, or search through; humanitas, hospitality; piperatum, 'piquant' or caustic. To some words Sidonius appears to give a new sense; thus it is hard to avoid the conclusion that more than once he employs toreuma where toral is alone appropriate. In his complimentary formulae he is as a rule correct and Roman;

though he is fond of abstract terms like celsitudo or Sanctitas tua as honorific appellations. His superscriptions give the name of his correspondent in the dative, with the addition of suo, if the person is a friend, or of the title domino papae if he is a bishop.Sidonius does not employ the affectionate modes of address adopted by Ruricius, e. g. domino pectoris sui Lupo; domino animae suae Pomerio; domino venerabili, admirabili, et sanctis omnibus aequiparando Sidonio. As a rule, the letter ends with a Vale; but when the correspondent

is a bishop, the formula is: memor nostri esse dignare, domine Papa. In one instance he closes with an ora pro nobis (VII. xii----to Ferreolus).

So much for the more obvious characteristics which mar the style of Sidonius; we have now briefly to estimate his merits as a letter-writer. It need hardly be said that he cannot be placed in the first rank; he is not, as his friends averred, a second Pliny, far less a second Cicero. But he touches so many sides of contemporary life; he lived through such momentous times; he is so exceptional in speaking with two voices, first as man of letters, nobleman and high official, then as a prominent Churchman, that in spite of his deterrent style, he has an interest somewhere for almost every reader. In most things but the cultivation of brevity, he is superior to his predecessor Symmachus, whose letters seldom touch either great or entertaining issues, but are written to discharge the obligations of a punctual correspondent, and are often brief as memoranda, and of an unsurpassed aridity. It will be more easy to understand the level on which Sidonius should be placed if we consider a few of the gifts which make the letter-writer, and then ask whether he possessed them. The master in this art must not be argumentative, or his letters become treatises; he must not always be serious, or they may insensibly change to sermons. He must know, as one of the greatest of the craft has said, how to approach great matters by their small side----prendre les grandes choses par les petits cotes.

If he confines himself chiefly to questions of public concern, he must be doubly careful to be individual, terse, and vivid; above all, he must have the light touch, and the latent gaiety, which never permit the tale to drag. He must be skilled in expression; things must be put, they will not put themselves. But the art must be so concealed that what he writes affects us like the prompt phrases of an unpremeditated conversation. He must be catholic in taste and subject. He must interest most men and not a few; the greatest letter-writers play upon an instrument of many strings. And, in the modern view, at any rate, his letters should be often intimate, revealing the writer's own mind, and telling something of his private life. We thus require of the perfect correspondent much that even the greatest of the ancient letter-writers cannot give. They are mostly Romans; and Roman manners entailed reticence on intimate things; hence a certain preoccupation with intellectual themes and public affairs, which tends to reduce the human interest of their letters. It is not that human interest is absent; there is evidence enough, especially in the case of Cicero, to prove the contrary. But it is often too much in the background, and a correspondence which is too objective is not letter-writing at its very best: it is one-sided; it lacks the perfect balance.

For these reasons, even the first among the ancients will sometimes disappoint a modern reader familiar with the achievement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but approaching the classics for the first time. In many ways Cicero is almost modern; his lively sympathies bring him nearer to natural unreserve than any letter-writer of antiquity; he stands in a class by himself. But if we are conscious of a something wanting when reading Cicero, with all his ardour, his mobility, his colour and conciseness of phrase, it is inevitable that the same deficiency in the less admirable Sidonius should cause a more conspicuous

void. The studied care for form which makes the agreeable Pliny sometimes tire, is exaggerated in his last disciple until all spontaneity is lost. And while the manner is frequently repellent, the matter often wearies in its turn; there is too much laudation of obscure literary efforts, too little talk of home affairs, of country life, of details of travel, of the natural beauties of southern France. Nature is overlooked, or regarded, as it were, with the eyes of a duke or cardinal of the Renaissance, seated at a comfortable point of vantage and with quotations from Virgil nearer to his lips than true feeling to his heart. When Sidonius visited Rome in the time of Anthemius, his route followed the Flaminian Way from Rimini; and the latter part of it was the wonderful hundred and fifty miles beginning at Foligno, the stage which travellers from northern Europe used to cover before the days of railways.

Goethe followed it when he first approached Rome; Shelley came down it in 1818, and felt the charm to the full. But of that charm the Gallo-Roman poet is silent, betraying no interest in these things, and assuming none in his correspondent. He has nothing to say of Spoleto, or the falls of the Velino; we should never guess that he had seen Soracte from Civita Castellana, or looked from Castelnuovo across the valley of the Tiber towards the distant Alban hills. And on his river journey down the Ticino and the Po, though the song of the birds in the bulrushes gives him pleasure, his thoughts are soon diverted to Tityrus and the metamorphosis of Phaethon's sisters. For these and other reasons Sidonius cannot be placed very high among the masters who have expressed themselves through the medium of letters. It is in vain to seek in his pages the unstudied brilliance of Mme de Sévigné, the wit and vivacity of Voltaire, the light irony of Horace Walpole, or the natural gaiety of Cowper. We feel that Sidonius would never christen a path or copse 'La Solitaire' or 'La Sainte Horreur'; or stay alone in the woods all day for sheer love of verdure. His is not the art to throw off a likeness in half a dozen words, or to resume an affair of State in a pair of sentences; nor is it his to make a hearthside event like the escape of a pet hare an absorbing and complete adventure.

In edification, he lacks the winning simplicity, the amiable grace of St. Francis of Sales. He cannot restrain his scholarship like Gray, or expand in confidences like Lamb. His humour often strikes us as forced; he has compliments like those of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but less adroitly turned. In fine, he was the victim of an artificial training; he lived in times not of renaissance but of dissolution; his was an age more eager for epistolary honours than any other, but more obviously debarred by circumstance from their attainment.

Though we are not primarily concerned with Sidonius as poet, the inclusion in the Letters of some dozen epigrams and short pieces compels us to ask whether Gibbon's contemptuous phrase is deserved. Were these verses all that remained to us, there could be but one answer; ' insipid ' is a temperate epithet for some among them. Of the two impromptu epigrams, one on the imputed satire (I. xi. 14), the other on Filimatius' towel (V. xvii. 10) we can only say that, like other couplets written against time, they should not have been exposed to time's revenge. The epitaphs, elegies, and church inscriptions have the mechanical correctness to be expected of one whose mind was continually exercised by questions of metre. But they

are mostly written out of good nature, or out of kindness of heart, motives which in all ages have often left the imagination uninspired. In truth, some of them come near to deserving the title of naenia epltaphistarum which their author almost feared for them himself. The poet's reputation cannot, however, be judged by these secondary efforts; it rests upon the Carmina, the twenty-four poems issued in 468, and chiefly upon the three panegyrics in honour of Avitus, Majorian, and Anthemius.

In these more ambitious works, which challenge, if unsuccessfully, a comparison with Claudian and Statius, we find the same faults so conspicuous in the writer's prose, with others added----the glittering antitheses, the far-fetched metaphors, the forced emphatic utterance, the unquestionable facility, the lack of emotional inspiration, the tiresome parade of knowledge, making whole parts read 'like versified chapters out of Livy'. But though over the greater part hangs the curse of an implacable memory that cannot forget the Schools, though Pegasus is ever reined to the manège, the whole achievement cannot fairly be dismissed as bad because the bad preponderates. It may be that here, as in the stilted periods of the Letters, the ear is arrested by unfamiliar rhythms and strange sonorities; here, too, a breath of barbarism has passed. But where the author feels his conscious power, there is dexterity, opulence and movement, there is a pageantry of changing form and colour to which the name of poetry cannot be denied. There are narrative passages which seize and hold the interest; for example, the description of the Vandals, or of the Roman army crossing the Alps. Parts of the Panegyric of Majorian advance with an ardour worthy their theme, while here and there flash out gnomic phrases after the glittering style of Lucan. The declamatory manner of these hexameters, so far removed from the suave Virgilian grandeur, admits of frequent brilliance in description; the effect is that of historical painting on a large scale by a skilful but uninspired master.

Some of the pieces on less ambitious subjects are not without occasional grace. The verses to Majorian, pleading for remission of the triple tax, strike a light vein with more success than the humour of the Letters would lead us to expect; but the Epithalamia would damage any reputation. Sidonius is at his best in the rhetorical vein; he is the rhetor through and through. In his never-failing fluency, his adroit use of mythology and proverbial wisdom, he is the natural successor of Ausonius, and takes his place after him among the poets of the Roman decadence.

The literary reputation of Sidonius long survived his death. Ruricius of Limoges, in some respects a pupil, refers to him in eulogistic terms, though conscious, as we have seen, of a certain obscurity in his style; so does Avitus of Vienne, another late writer of letters. Gregory of Tours praises his eloquence and power of improvisation. Cassiodorus regards him as a master; Ennodius and Fortunatus are his frank admirers; Jornandes had clearly read his poems. Savaron has illustrated his popularity during the Middle Ages, when John of Salisbury, Abelard, and other scholars were familiar with his works, and mediaeval writers sought to imitate his manner. But in the fourteenth century, the growing familiarity with Classic models reacted unfavourably upon his reputation. We have already noted that Pe-

trarch was critical; and the Renaissance more critical still. Politian was unimpressed by his style; Vives called his prose ridiculous (absurdissima); Casaubon is severe, though Scaliger can still find words of praise.The editions of Savaron and Sirmond revived an interest in his works; but with the eighteenth century he finally lost credit as a writer of Latin, while securing a permanent place as an authority for the history of his times. From Tillemont and Gibbon to Amédée Thierry, Guizot and more recent historians of his age, all have rendered homage to his involuntary merit, while one man of letters at least, Chateaubriand, has borrowed material from his pages (p. xciii above). Despite his chastisement as stylist, Sidonius has not fared ill at the hands of the posterity to which he entrusted his fame. Though his periods will never be recited either for pleasure or instruction, neither his name nor his work is forgotten; and in our greater libraries, while men pursue research, the Letters and the Panegyrics will always hold their undisputed place.

Of Sidonius as a man it is almost unnecessary to speak; the Letters prove his noble qualities, and those written after his entry into the Church reflect the saintliness which won him the honour of canonization. His chief fault, a defect of his ambitious early life, was an overreadiness to flatter where flattery, if given at all, should not have come from him. There were times when he too conveniently forgot the antecedents of the great, or their connexion with men whom honour forbade him to conciliate. Majorian was the comrade and the nominee of that Ricimer who had murdered Avitus; Sidonius forgets the fact too soon. Theodoric II had murdered his own brother; Sidonius, perhaps for a political end, appears oblivious of all save the royal virtues. Such flexibility is unworthy of the man who was to write the stern letter of rebuke to Graecus; nor was it a true part of the nature which trials and disillusions proved to be really his. This is the worst charge which can be brought against him; his other failings are little weaknesses which make him real to us, and which he never seeks to conceal. Thus he sometimes appears too lenient towards unworthy action: for instance, towards the deception of the young adventurer Amantius; but he confesses with a charming frankness that he does not like censorious rigour (VII. iv 3). His literary vanity is now and then accentuated by false modesty (VII. iii, IX. xiii); but as a rule his simple confidence disarms resentment.

When he assured his friend Fortunatus that the appearance of his name on the superscription of one of the Letters would ensure its immortality, he was probably more serious than not; after all, he spoke the truth, for the name of Fortunatus is preserved (VIII. v). He probably had no objection to being called a second Pliny (IX. i), and was quietly convinced that his critics were in the wrong. But no doubt he discounted the eulogy which he received; much of it was complimentary verbiage, belonging to the etiquette of his day; and he himself was so profuse of it to others, that he can have been under no illusion as to its current value. The age allowed a great latitude in exaggeration; but it must be admitted that Sidonius availed himself of it upon occasion to an extent which is revolting to modern sentiment. His letter to Claudianus Mamertus reaches the limit of extravagance, and with all allowance for the influence of an eulogistic time, we cannot read it without continual irritation. When we are told that the subject of his praise can hold his own with the first names in every field,

with Orpheus, Aesculapius, Archimedes, Vitruvius, Thaïes, Euclid, Chrysippus, and all the greatest Fathers of the Church as well, credulity is too obviously taxed, and we wish that Sidonius had remembered more often the gnomic saying which he ascribes to Symmachus: ut vera laus ornat, ita falsa castigat.

Nevertheless it must be remembered that eulogies almost as absurd have been perpetrated in periods very near our own. Thus Prior, in his Carmen Saeculare so grossly flattered William III that, in Johnson's phrase, he exhausted all his powers of celebration. We may dismiss the present subject by once more applying to Sidonius the words of the same critic, and say of him that in these matters he 'retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a writer professedly encomiastic'. Again, Sidonius was quickly moved, and sometimes allowed his temper to impair his dignity. He 'blazes out' when views are expressed which controvert a pet opinion; and when more seriously offended, does not confine himself to words. The apparently innocent disturbers of his grandfather's grave feel the weight of his fists or the lash of his whip (III. xii); he explodes at the carelessness of a slave who lost some letters, and will not speak to him for days (IV. xii. 2).

But these are the small defects of great qualities. The most affected of writers is the most natural of men. Though uncommunicative about his home, he says enough to show that he was a good father of his family, affectionate to his wife, solicitous for the health and welfare of his children. There is real charm in the passage, already noted, in which he describes himself as sitting reading with his son, distracted between delight in the boy's ardour, and in the fine passages of the poets (IV. xii); there is real regret when in later years the enthusiasm of the young Apollinaris waned (V. xii).

He was a loyal friend. Mention has been made of his fidelity to Arvandus in the dangerous hour of disgrace (V. vii). Similar qualities are apparent in the letter on the death of Lampridius, another friend to whose faults he was by no means blind. At a time when his own anxieties were great, he exerts himself to the utmost at the Burgundian court to foil the informers who had brought Apollinaris into danger (V. vii). A large number of the Letters illustrate his anxiety for the health and prosperity of those for whom he felt regard, or his sympathy with them in their misfortunes. When he became bishop, this fellow feeling was extended to a wider circle, and Claudianus Mamertus bears the highest possible testimony to the unselfishness of his life, when he complains that Sidonius is so busy attending to those who have no real claim upon him, that he finds too little time to answer the letters of old associates. He, too, like this venerated friend, 'remembered through good and evil the necessities of the human lot.' He was generous alike in the distribution of gifts and in the sentiment which is always ready to recognize the qualities of others. Gregory of Tours relates, in a passage often quoted, how he gave away his silver plate to relieve distress, and how, when Papianilla insisted on the recovery of the silver, the poor were compensated in other ways.An example of his kindly thought for others is seen in VII. xvi, where he sends the winter cowl to Chariobaudus.

He is ever ready to encourage the literary efforts of younger men (II. x, IX. xi), and even to lend them most precious volumes in his library, a supreme test of human kindness. He was capable of tolerance towards those whose religious views he most detested; the Letters concerning the two Jews Gozolas and Promotus exhibit him in a pleasing light, and his dictum that a man may be a Jew and yet be sound in judgement does credit to his breadth of vision. He was sociable and friendly, possessed of tact and patience, accommodating affairs to men in a manner which would have won the approval of his favourite Horace. Nor was he devoid of humour; though the examples of his wit which have come down to us are sometimes tiresome, he was probably good company when in the mood. Throughout the Letters he appears as the kindly intermediary who endeavours to help others in the practical difficulties of life. As bishop, his benevolence is always active. We see him receiving a truant son and bringing about a reconciliation with the injured father (IV. xxiv); securing the remission of interest on an old debt for the advantage of an orphaned family (IV. xxiv); persuading a delinquent husband to return to his wife (VI. ix). But he never countenanced favouritism. He saw clearly that reward should only follow efficient service, and expressly opposed the plea that promotion should go by seniority (VII. ix; VIII. vii).

He was a man of insight and common sense, upon whom people relied for good advice. Many reflections and maxims in the Letters attest his practical wisdom. He insists that the safeguard of enduring friendship lies in community of likes and dislikes (III. i); he sees that self-depreciation may be pushed to the verge of folly (IX. iii. 7); he knows that the most bitter family quarrels are those which arise over the division of estates (IV. i), and that at a Burgundian court, as at most others, proximity to kings is dangerous (III. ix).

He was a patriot both as Roman and Arvernian. In the earlier part of his career we find him always urging the strenuous life for the credit of the Roman name. We have seen that more than once he rebukes the men of family who allow all interest to centre in their estates or pleasures, while the imagines of trabeated ancestors look down on their degeneracy (I. vi); even philosophy is not accepted as an excuse for inactive contemplation (VI. vi). He did not despair of the empire even in the days of Julius Nepos; he thought that if only patriotism were fairly rewarded, as good men would appear to show it as in the great days of the past (III. viii). When Auvergne was attacked by Euric, his spirit was worthy of Roman tradition at its best. Both during the siege of Clermont and after it, he evinced a courage and a fortitude which proved him worthy of his ancestors. It is unnecessary to dwell upon this crisis of his life; his nature issued from it confirmed in strength and refined as by fire. He possessed to the full the moral strength which enables men to overcome old prejudice in the service of a changed ideal. The exclusive magnate who chose his acquaintances with such care became the friend of all men; the proud noble could beg for the Church (III. i; VIII. iv).

He was consistent in his loyalty to his new profession, and resolutely maintained the dignity of the priesthood even against the high worldly rank which he never ceased to respect (IV. xiv; VIII. vii). He was sincerely humble in his sense of his own unworthiness to be the shepherd of others at a time when he felt the need of guidance for himself: in his Letters to

Lupus and other bishops after his election to the see of Clermont, the language is emphatic but the contrition is sincere (V. iii; VI. i; VII. vi). The devotion which in earlier years had perhaps depended much on formality of observance was now the guiding principle of his life; the reputation for piety which he gained among his contemporaries and immediate successors is sufficient proof of his sincerity. History records no career precisely comparable to this. Conspicuous alike for his rank and literary celebrity, Sidonius was in many ways the first personage in his native land, yet he fulfilled his arduous and unfamiliar duties in a spirit of abnegation equal to that of colleagues trained to the renunciations of monastic life. In the evil days which fell upon his country, he never abandoned his people; when his own fortunes were darkest, he rejoiced that others escaped affliction (IV. ii). If Sidonius failed of greatness as a writer, he surely attained it as a man.

There are extant more than sixty manuscripts containing the whole or the greater part of the works of Sidonius, and some twenty containing a small part of them. Out of this large number, Lütjohann, when editing the text for the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, selected six as of superior importance, some of these having affinities to a few other manuscripts, which for this reason were occasionally employed. The six manuscripts are: 1. Codex Laudianus, (Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. 104) 9th or 10th century. Known as L. Related to this book are Parisinus 1854 of the 10th century, known as N, and Vaticanus 1783, 10th century, known as V. 2. Marcianus. (Marcian Library, Venice, 554.) 10th century. Known as M. 3. Laurentianus. (Laurentian Library, Florence, Plat. XLV. 23.) 11th-12th century. Known as T. 4. Matritensis. (Madrid.) 10th-11th century. Known as C. (Related to this is Vaticanus 3421, 10th century.) 5. Parisinus. (Bibl. Nat., Paris, 9551.) 12th-13th century. Known as F.

6. Parisinus. Bibl. Nat., Paris, 2781.) 10th-11th century. Known as P. Of these, the first is the most valuable, with the two related, manuscripts in Paris and at the Vatican, and with M and T for use where it fails; the other three are of subsidiary importance. It may be noted that certain lacunae are common to all; this would seem to indicate that they had a single archetype, which in these places presented difficulties to the copyist or had perhaps been damaged by fire. Printed editions of Sidonius begin with the last quarter of the fifteenth century, at which period one was issued from Utrecht and another from Milan, the latter being reprinted at Basel in 1542 and 1595. E. Vinet's edition appeared at Lyons in 1552, and Wouweren's in Paris in 1598. The same year saw Savaron's first edition; his second (the first of critical value) followed in 1609. J. Sirmond's valuable edition, with notes from which every one has something to learn, was issued in 1614; Elmenhorst's five years later. Complete translations have hitherto appeared only in French; the first, by R. Breyer, Canon of Troyes, was printed in 1706; that of E. Billarden de Sauvigny in 1787 and 1792; Grégoire and Collombet's version dates from 1836. The last-mentioned work has often been criticized for inaccuracy, but it is not for one who knows by experience the difficulties of their task to join in censure upon this point. Single Letters, or parts of Letters, are summarized or translated by many writers on Sidonius or his age.

The arrangement of the Letters in nine books is, as far as is known, that of Sidonius himself. Seven books were issued at different times at the request of Constantius, the first appearing in 478. The Poems had already seen the light, perhaps as early as 468 (see above, p. cxli). The eighth book was added at the request of Petronius the jurisconsult of Arles (VIII. i), and the ninth at that of Firminius (IX. i), perhaps about the year 484. It soon becomes apparent to any reader familiar with the history of the times, that the order of the Letters is not chronological; most books contain Letters from the earlier and later parts of Sidonius' life; and within the limits of the several books the arrangement often seems capricious, Letters logically and historically connected being separated by others unrelated to them in subject. This confusion is partly due to the fact that, to complete his tale of nine books, Sidonius had to ransack all his drawers and cases at Clermont for drafts of letters written long years before: this explains the inclusion in the two last books of Letters referring to his early manhood. But it is also true that in preparing for publication he was not primarily concerned with chronological sequence; he brought his letters together for other reasons, by associations of idea which to us are often obscure. One of them probably was to ensure to each book a wide variety of subject, that his readers might not accuse him of monotony.

Again, he regarded it as an advantage of the collection of Letters as such that it is essentially discontinuous, and provides reading for odd moments: from this point of view, lack of logical order is not of prime importance. It has before now been suggested that the author's arrangement should be disregarded, and that an edition should be issued with every letter in its proper order. If it were possible to give a precise and certain date to the majority of the letters, the overriding of the order approved by Sidonius might be justified on utilitarian grounds. But although certain Letters date themselves by recounting known events, while the period of others can be inferred from personal or other allusions, there remains a large proportion to which nothing more than conjectural or approximate dates can be given. This being so, it is hardly justifiable to upset the sequence which received the author's sanction, and has been retained for fifteen hundred years. Moreover, the convenience gained in one direction would be lost in another; for the references to Sidonius in historical and critical literature all follow the old system; and, were it changed, the reader, driven to consult a table of concordance at every turn, would soon wish the old order back. It has therefore seemed best to keep the nine books as they stand in the texts, placing at the head of each letter its certain or conjectural date wherever such can be reasonably assigned.

In many cases the year is exactly or approximately indicated by the contents. In others, a particular allusion, or the general tone, may enable us to infer the period: for instance, it is often possible to say with some confidence that a given letter must have been written before or after the entrance of Sidonius into the Church, or the abandonment of Auvergne by the empire. Again, there is a long interval of leisure in the author's career between A.D. 461 and 467, within which many letters descriptive of provincial life seem naturally to fall: a few of these might be transferred to the years between A.D. 456 and 459, though I have not actually suggested this. It will thus be seen that the date of the majority of letters can only be regarded as approximate. [Footnotes have been renumbered and placed at the end]

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.