CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In Book 26 Amm. had stated his motive for reporting contemporaneous events in the eastern and western parts of the Empire separately: ne, dum ex loco subinde saltuatim redire festinamus in locum, omnia confundentes squaliditate maxima rerum ordines implicemus (26.3.15, q.v.). Having devoted the second half of Book 26 to the revolt of Procopius, he now turns to the war against the Alamans, as he had promised: competenti loco singula digeremus nunc partem in oriente gestorum, deinde bella barbarica narraturi.

In the beginning of the year 365 separate divisions of the Alamanni crossed the Rhine and penetrated deep into Gaul. To combat the barbarians Charietto, who is given the unusual title of per utramque Germaniam comes, joined forces with the old general Severianus, commander of the Divitenses and Tungricani. Together they confronted an Alamannic force. Regrettably, Ammianus does not specify the location where the battle took place.

This first military encounter resulted in disaster for the Romans. They took to flight after the death of Severianus. Charietto made a heroic stand, but like his colleague he died on the battlefield. The loss of a standard would have made the humiliation of the Roman army complete, but after prolonged fighting they managed with difficulty to retrieve it. The opening chapter of Book 27 could not have been more ominous.

_Dum per eoum orbem haec, quae narravimus, diversi rerum expedient casus_  For _eous orbis_ as the designation of the eastern provinces see the note ad 25.8.14. The temporal clause as a whole is a variation on 26.3.1 _Dum haec in oriente volubiles fatorum explicat sortes_ (q.v.). In both places the diversity of the events is emphasized, by _volubiles_ and _diversi_ respectively; the verbs _expedire_ and _explicare_ are identical in meaning ('to bring about', TLL V 2.1608.33 and V 2.1730.34); there is, moreover, a striking personification of the course of events.

_post aerumnosas iacturas et vulnera, quae congressi saepe Iuliano Caésari pertulerunt, viribus tandem resumptis licet imparibus pristinis_ Amm. opens
the sentence with the prepositional phrase, in order to focus on the grievous losses inflicted on the Alamans by Julian. The phrase is subordinated to the abl. abs. *viribus tandem resumptis*, so that the reference point is the moment in the past (ca. 364–5) when the Alamans had finally (*tandem*) recovered from the blows which Julian as Caesar in Gaul (355–361) had dealt them. For that reason one would have expected the pluperfect in the relative clause, and that is indeed what we find in E and Gelenius’ edition. It is an instructive example of a ‘Verschlimmbesserung’ introduced by a copyist and an editor who were unaware of the impact of the cursus on Amm.’s language. In the present case it is clear that Amm. chose the perfect *pertulerunt* to obtain a cursus velox. Examples of the reverse, pluperfect instead of perfect, are 24.4.29 *Exin profecto imperatori index nuntiáverat cértus* (q.v.) and 25.8.15 *quod ráro contigerat* (q.v.).

*Iacturae* refers to the losses of men, *vulnera* to the defeats of the Alamanni. The combination of the two nouns seems to be unique. For the adjective *aerumnosus* see the note ad 20.11.32 *aerumnosa perpessus vulnera et atrocia diuque deflenda*. It may be significant that these words apply to Julian’s predecessor Constantius, who suffered terrible losses instead of inflicting them. As Colombo observes ad loc., Amm. uses *congregi* + dative, as in the present sentence, and *congregi cum*, as in 23.5.11 *Maximi- miano antehac Caesar cum Narseo… congressuro*. He aptly quotes Servius ad A. 1.475 “*congregior tibi*” antiqui dicebant, sicut “*pugno tibi*”, “*dimico tibi*”. *Hodie dicimus* “*congregior tecum*”, “*pugno tecum*”.

By presenting the background information in this way, right at the outset of Book 27, Amm. contrasts the rule of Julian favourably with that of his successors, just as he had done several times in Book 26 (see the Introduction to Book 26, p. xi–xii and Sabbah 499). This is underlined by Amm.’s assertion that the Alamans had by no means fully recovered their former strength (*licet imparibus pristinis*). In other words, the Alamans facing Valentinian were weaker than those Julian had had to deal with. Julian’s military encounters and dealings with the Alamanni in the years 356–361 when he was Caesar in Gaul are described in 16.2, 4, 16.11–12.63 (battle of Strasbourg), 17.1–2, 17.8, 10, 18.2 and 21.3–4 (Vadamarius). For recent literature see Lorenz, 1997, 33–71; Drinkwater, 2007, 217–265; for the Alamanni in general Fuchs, 1997.

*ob causam expositam supra* The casus belli Amm. refers to is the humiliation of the Alamannic envoys – among them possibly some important