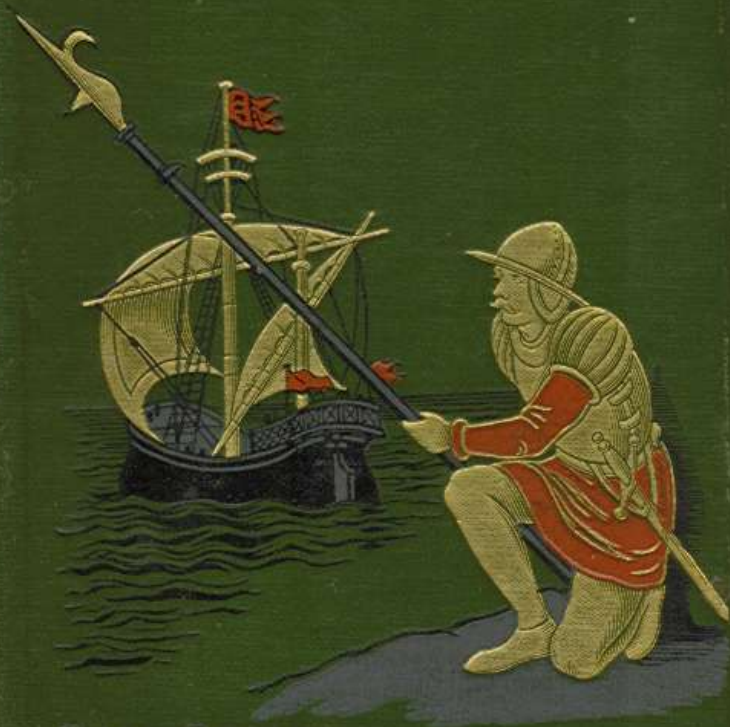


PICTURES FROM  
ROMAN LIFE AND STORY



PROF. CHURCH.

PICTURES

FROM

ROMAN LIFE AND STORY

BY THE

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"PICTURES FROM GREEK LIFE AND STORY," "STORIES FROM HOMER,"

"STORIES FROM VIRGIL," ETC., ETC.

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## CHAPTER I

### A CHILD OF FORTUNE



Augustus

In the spring of 44 B.C., Augustus, or, to give him his proper name, Caius Octavius, was half way through his nineteenth year. His uncle Julius Caesar had sent him to Apollonia, the headquarters of the army of Illyricum, to see something of the routine of military duty, and to make acquaintance with the soldiers, while at the same time he kept up the studies fitted to his age. On March 15th. Caesar was assassinated. The legions at once offered to follow Augustus to Rome, and help him to avenge the great Dictator's death. With that happy mixture of caution and courage which was probably half the secret of his good luck, he declined the offer, but resolved to visit the capital in a private capacity.

Landing in Italy he heard that Caesar by his will had adopted him as his son and made him his heir. The troops at Brundisium, the port of disembarkation, saluted him accordingly by the name of Caesar. Early in May he arrived at Rome.

I shall not follow in detail the events of the next sixteen years. Throughout this period, under circumstances of the greatest delicacy and difficulty, the young statesman conducted himself with unflinching tact, and was rewarded by almost unvarying

success. One after another his rivals made fatal mistakes of which he promptly availed himself. Antony, a great soldier, whose very faults somehow endeared him to the people, alienated their hearts by his mad passion for Cleopatra. To ordinary excesses they were indifferent, but it was intolerable that the master of Roman legions should exhibit himself in public as the bond-slave of a foreign queen. And then at Actium when the crisis of his fate had come, and it was yet possible for him to redeem his fortunes, he threw away his last chance with a folly that seems absolutely imbecile. Probably his excesses had utterly shattered his nerves. Sextus, son of the great Pompey, was another adversary who might have been formidable, if he had been true to himself. So strong was he that at one time Augustus was constrained to give him a share of the Empire; he had, too, a great party at his back, for the adherents of the Republic would have rallied to him; but he gave away his chance by his indolent inaction. All this time Augustus went on steadily improving his position. He let nothing stand in his way. He could be merciful to enemies, when mercy suited his policy; he was relentless when it seemed expedient to be severe. His action was never fettered by conscience; but then he was never hurried by passion into crime.

In B.C. 35 Sextus Pompeius was betrayed by his freedman Menodorus; four years afterwards, Antony was defeated at Actium. In August, B.C. 29, Augustus celebrated a triple triumph at Rome. He had closed the temple of Janus, a token that undisturbed peace reigned through the Roman world. Only twice before this been done, and the people, worried with the incessant bloodshed that had exhausted at least three generations hailed the saviour of Society as nothing less than a God. Augustus, on his part, was careful not to offend their prejudices. His uncle the Dictator had not scrupled to aim at kingly power, and had taken no pains to conceal his designs. The nephew, not less resolved to be absolute master of the Empire, was careful to play the part of a first citizen. All the powers which he assumed were constitutional; only these powers were combined and prolonged in a way that made the constitution a nullity. He was Emperor (Imperator). The title was no new one. It had been often given to a victorious

general on the field of battle by his own troops. Augustus held it, by decree of the Senate, in perpetuity, and was thus the permanent Commander-in-chief of the Roman army. This, of course, was the back-bone of his power.

But he did not neglect the civil side of his position. He was *Princeps Senatus*, Chief of the Senate, permanent proconsul, and consul whenever he thought fit (he actually held the office thirteen times). And he also held permanently an office which made him perpetual leader of the Commons. The plebeians from early times had regarded the Tribunes as the champions of their rights, and Augustus, taking skilful advantage of this feeling, held continuously the power of the tribunate.

This constitutional pretence, as it is no injustice to call it, Augustus was very careful to maintain. The Dictatorship was offered him, but he strenuously refused it, absolutely throwing himself on his knees in the earnestness of his entreaties. The Dictatorship could not, by law, be held for more than six months, and he was above all things anxious not to break, or at least not to seem to break, the law. The title of "dominus", not far removed, it would seem from that of king (*rex*), always so hateful to a Roman ear, he angrily repudiated. On one occasion when a farce was being acted in his presence, the words, "good lord and just" occurred, and the people springing from their seats shouted their applause. Augustus checked the display of feeling, and censured it in the strongest terms in an edict which he published the next day. He would not allow the word to be used even in jest in his private circle. He would not permit the Senators to rise from their seats either when he entered the chamber or when he quitted it. He was accustomed to walk, or to be carried in an open chair through the streets. His salutations were as free and unceremonious as the handshakings of an American President. Petitions from suitors he received with the greatest courtesy. To an applicant who was obviously shy he said, "Why do you give me your paper as if you were giving a coin to an elephant?"

At the annual elections of Magistrates, still kept up with a certain show of freedom, he canvassed in the usual way for the

candidates whom he had nominated, and tendered his own vote when the tribe to which he belonged was called. When he nominated his own grandsons for office he was careful to add, "If they shall be found to deserve it."

His own establishment was on a modest scale. For some years a humble dwelling that could not compare with the splendid dwellings of the great nobles and capitalists of Rome sufficed for him. This was near the house of the orator Hortensius. At a later period he found that something more like an imperial palace had become a necessity. Accordingly he bought some of the adjoining mansions, that of Catiline among them, and built a handsome residence, declaring, however, at the same time that he considered it to be the property of the Roman people. One of the most modest chambers he chose for his own, and occupied it for twenty-eight years. In the third year of our era, it was burnt to the ground. A public subscription was immediately set on foot for the purpose of rebuilding it. A large sum was collected; but Augustus refused to receive more than a single denarius from each subscriber. A new edifice was raised on the same foundations, and, apparently, on the same plan as the old, for Augustus occupied the same or a corresponding chamber for the remaining ten years of his life. Some of the furniture of his town and country residences remained down to the time of his biographer Suetonius, and seemed to the costly tastes of that generation scarcely elegant enough for a private gentleman. No masterpieces of sculpture or painting were to be seen in his Roman palaces or his country residences. If he had any expensive taste it was for gardening. And he amused himself by making collections of what we should call fossils and prehistoric remains, but which in his time were described as "the huge limbs of monstrous creatures, bones of the Giants and arms of the Heroes, as they are called." He seldom used any article of dress that had not been woven by the women of his own family.

But he lavished upon the city the wealth that he would not spend upon himself. "I found it of brick and left it of marble," was his well known boast, and, as a whole, it was little more than the truth. At the same time he did his best to protect it from the

dangers of fire and flood. Against the first he instituted a regular corps of watchmen; the second he at least diminished by enlarging the bed and cleansing the channel of the Tiber.

To the populace of Rome, already largely dependent upon the public or private bounty, he was most generous in his gifts. Besides a monthly distribution of cheap corn he gave frequent presents of money. These ranged from £4 to £2. 10s. of our money, being probably more than equivalent to these sums in purchasing power. All male children participated in them, though it had never before been the custom to reckon any younger than eleven. Still there was a limit to his good-nature. When on one occasion loud complaints were made in his presence of the high price of wine, he pointed to the great aqueduct which Agrippa had constructed, and reminded the dissatisfied that no one had need be thirsty in Rome.

Cheap bread and plenty of amusement were, as has been often said, the two great wants of Rome. Augustus was as careful to provide for the second as for the first. Never before had the public shows been so numerous, so varied, or so splendid. One of the most memorable of these exhibitions was that of a sea-fight, which took place in an excavation made near the Tiber. So popular was this show that the city was almost emptied of its inhabitants, and had to be guarded by soldiers. Any curiosity that might be brought to Rome, he had exhibited in some convenient place. We hear of a serpent of seventy-five feet in length that was thus shown in the Forum.

While he thus indulged his subjects, he tried to bring them back to what he held to be the better and simpler habits of former times. He was earnest to reform the public morals, but probably found the task beyond his powers; nor is it possible to forget that he might have been more successful, if his own private life had been less open to reproach. He passed laws of great severity, but had to relax them, or to allow them to fall into disuse.

The external observances of religion were more easily enforced. The temples were rebuilt, and the ceremonials of worship regularly performed. Another matter on which the

Emperor's heart was set was to bring back the use of the old Roman dress, the toga. "What!" he is said to have exclaimed, seeing a crowd of men wearing cloaks. "Are these 'Romans, the lords of earth, a Nation of the gown'?" He issued an edict that no one should be allowed in the Forum or the Circus except wearing the toga.

If he had won power by crime—and of this he cannot be wholly acquitted—yet he certainly strove to use it well. He was singularly patient of adverse comment, when once he had seated himself firmly on the throne. Nor did he resent the admiration which some still felt for the great men of a regime which he had finally destroyed. We are told that he found one of his grandsons reading a book, which the lad sought to hide in his robe. He took the volume, and found it to be one of the treatises of Cicero. He returned it with the words "He was a good man, and a lover of his country." He must have remembered with regret his own baseness in surrendering the great orator and patriot to the vengeance of Antony.

## CHAPTER II

### MAECENAS AND HIS FRIENDS

For fifteen years at least, that is from before the Battle of Actium down to the year 16 B.C., C. Cilnius Maecenas was the most powerful man in Rome after Augustus. Perhaps we ought to except Agrippa, especially after his marriage with the Emperor's daughter Julia. But even then and indeed up to the time when he lost his master's favour, Maecenas was "the man behind the throne." Indeed he occupied a position that may be said to have been peculiar to the new regime, and that marked the change from liberty (such as it was in the latter days of the Republic) to despotism. For Maecenas held no office. To borrow a word from modern history he was "Vice-Emperor," but the function which he discharged cannot be described by any one word. He was never Consul, Praetor, or even Tribune. Nor was he Prefect of the city, an office that had its beginning in Imperial days. He never even sat in the Senate. At the very height of his honour he firmly refused to be raised out of the Equestrian rank into which he had been born. "Dear Knight Maecenas" his friend Horace calls him. It was his pride, and a very prudent pride it doubtless was, to be content with this dignity. And yet it is difficult to say what was the limit of his power when it was at its highest. Both foreign affairs and domestic came within it. And this position was, as has been said, characteristic of the Imperial regime. The Romans had two words for power, *potestas* and *potentia*. The first means the power of constitutional authority. The magistrates of the Republic exercised it; even when, as in the case of a Dictator, it became absolute and uncontrolled, it still had this character. And, nominally at least, this constitutional power was continued under the Empire. Augustus and his successors ruled under the old names. They were chiefs of the Senate, commanders-in-chief, perpetual tribunes, and whenever they chose to assume the office, Consuls. But underneath this show of legality there grew up an illegal, irregular power, which was described by the word

*potentia*. This was what Maecenas exercised. He had absolutely no position in the country; but he had the Emperor's ear.

We are not, however, primarily concerned in this chapter with the political significance of Maecenas's position. But I may point out how admirably suited it was to the function in which he chiefly interests us, the part of literary patron. The patronage of a dignified official can scarcely fail to be burdensome to those who receive it. It can hardly coexist with the unselfish intimacy of friendship. These difficulties Maecenas, by his judicious refusal of all the paraphernalia of power, contrived to avoid. No one questioned his right to cultivate such intimacies as he chose. He infringed by them no dignity; he compromised no position. But all the revenues of the State were at his disposal. The Emperor actually entrusted him with his private seal, a confidence that is only inadequately represented by giving a blank cheque. He could do as he pleased, and he could do it without responsibility. Such a position, joined to liberality, a frank and generous temper, and cultivated tastes made the very ideal of a literary patron.

A brief description of the man himself and of his ways and life will not be out of place. The qualities of a soldier he probably did not possess, or, only in a moderate degree. Probably, it might be better to say, possibly, he accompanied Augustus on one or more of his campaigns, but he certainly never held an independent command. But as a statesman and a diplomatist he was consummately skilful. More than once he played with supreme tact the part of a mediator between Augustus and Antony, the two masters of the Roman world. His *bonhomie*, his moderation, his even temper made him an unrivalled mediator in such difficult conjunctures. Called in to act in the differences of less important persons, "accustomed" as Horace puts it "to reconcile private friends," he brought to the task of appeasing the jealousies, of soothing the susceptibilities, of the mighty masters of legions an unrivalled aptitude for the office of peace-maker. His work as a statesman we are less able to appreciate, but simply for want of information. Indeed the merits and the demerits of the unrecognized advisers of the powerful must always remain in



great obscurity. But that he was a moderating influence cannot be doubted.

One story remains that is highly to his credit. On one occasion Augustus, carried away, as even prudent rulers will sometimes be, by personal animosities, was passing sentences of death with unusual frequency—being on the whole a clement prince. His minister, unable to approach the judgment seat, or perhaps unwilling to make any parade of interference, tossed into his lap a billet with the words "Surge, Carnifex!" "Rise, butcher!"

The private tastes of Maecenas were those of the highly artificial age in which he lived. He built for himself a great mansion in a central position in Rome. The place which he chose had been a squalid and neglected cemetery for slaves and paupers; hideous, we are told, to look at, and dangerous to health. He covered it to the depth of thirty feet with pure earth, and converted it into a beautiful garden in the midst of which he erected his villa. The most conspicuous feature was a lofty tower, from which he could command a view of the whole city.

Time has spared one room of this magnificent residence. At first it was supposed that this was a chamber set apart for readings and recitations, and it was said that in this very place the patron had listened to a first reading of Horace's lyrics, or Virgil's epic. This theory had to be abandoned. What had been thought to be seats round the walls were found to be stands for plants. The chamber in fact was not a hall but a greenhouse. Beyond a greenhouse indeed Maecenas's love of nature did not go. While Horace was enjoying the mountain air of his Sabine farm, the patron could not tear himself away from the "smoke and roar" of Rome. His personal habits were luxurious. Some of the peculiarities which his contemporaries regarded with disfavour have little significance for us, as that he allowed his tunic to hang about his knees like a woman's petticoat, and that he would cover his head with his cloak, when he sat on the tribunal. These, it would appear, were marks of effeminacy. He had a passion for collecting gems and other jewels, and wore these ornaments in a profusion that seemed undignified to sterner tastes. His love for

costly perfumes was notorious. The Emperor himself condescended to satirize his Minister's "unguent-dropping curls." He was said to have been the first who used a warm swimming bath, and the invention was not put down to his credit. He had a great liking for the ballet and the pantomime, amusements which he recommended to his master as means of reconciling Rome to the loss of its liberty. He was at least for the latter part of his life an invalid with a strong tendency to hypochondria. In his last days he was tormented with sleeplessness, and deserted his favourite city mansion for a villa at Tibur where he could be lulled to repose by the distant sound of the falls of the Anio. His sufferings did not prevent him from clinging even passionately to life. One of the few fragments which survive of his writings—for he was a voluminous author—expresses this feeling with an undignified frankness:

"Cripple hand and foot, and make  
Back to swell, and teeth to shake:  
All that happens I can bear,  
If my life alone you spare.  
Not the cross itself can give  
Pain past bearing, if I live."

Of Maecenas in his domestic relations there is little to be said that is to his credit. He had a wife of remarkable beauty, and passed his married life in perpetual quarrels and reconciliations. "He had one wife, but married her a thousand times," is Seneca's sarcastic account of his relation to Terentia. If there had been nothing worse in him than this foolish fondness, he might have been excused; but he was not constant; a bad example which his wife followed. It was through her indeed that he lost his position at court.

Of his relation to literature and literary men, we can speak with unmixed praise. His patronage was generous, and it was distributed with taste. The Emperor indeed ridiculed the crowd of guests that he gathered round his table; and doubtless there were some among them who had no genuine literary claims to his favour; but his friendship he reserved for men of real genius. In the inner circle of authors who shared his intimacy there was not

one unworthy name, and not a few that were conspicuously great. Virgil probably owed his rescue from want, which threatened him when his patrimony had been handed over to one of the victorious soldiers of Augustus, to some other benefactor than Maecenas. It was Pollio who gave him back his farm, and Gallus, who probably interfered on his behalf when it had been again seized. But the *Georgics* are dedicated to Maecenas. He is credited with having suggested the subject. The position of this poem is probably to be placed between the years 36 B.C. and 26 B.C. Some time before this we find the poet on terms of intimacy with his patron, accompanying him on a journey which he was taking on state business. We know little of the after relations of the two, but there is every reason to suppose that they continued perfectly friendly up to the time of Virgil's death in 19 B.C.

The poet had his town house on the Aquiline, and so was the near neighbour of his patron. We may guess that it was Maecenas who introduced him to the Palace where he recited before the Emperor and his sister Octavia his splendid elegy on Marcellus, in whom the Emperor had lost a successor and Octavia an only son.

Another member of the circle tells us much more about it. Horace, the son of a poor man, but educated with a care out of proportion to his humble birth, had caught the republican enthusiasm whilst a student at Athens, and had fought, or at least appeared in armour, on the fatal field of Philippi. He came back to Rome, and contrived to purchase a clerkship, in the quaestor's office, an establishment that had something to do with the public revenue. He began to write verses—probably some of the *Epodes* are to be attributed to this period—and the verses got into hands that were capable of judging of their merit. Virgil mentioned the young poet's name to Maecenas, and Varius, another poet whose work, highly esteemed by his contemporaries, has almost wholly perished, seconded the recommendation. The great man sent for him. He presented himself, and managed to stammer out an account of himself and his circumstances. Maecenas made a brief reply.

Months passed without any further communication; then came an invitation. Horace passed at once into the circle of the Minister's intimate friends. Thus began an affectionate intimacy, which was never interrupted. Horace invites his august friend to his Sabine farm, itself a present from his patron, but tells him that if he wants a rare vintage and costly perfumes he must bring them himself. He gently satirizes his partiality for the artificial life of the city. He rallies him on the uncertain temper of his wife. He even remonstrates with him on his valetudinarian complaints and fears. Nor is any of the poems addressed to him more affectionate than the birthday congratulations, written when the patron had ceased to be powerful, and so had nothing more to give; and the end of this friendship was in pathetic harmony with its course. Years before Horace had sung:

"Fate keeps for both one fatal day;  
I keep a loyal oath, nor stay  
When thou shalt go, prepared to tread  
With thee the pathway of the dead."

Early in B.C. 8 Maecenas died, saying to the Emperor with almost his latest breath "Remember Horace as you remember me." Augustus gave the promise but was never called on to fulfil it. Six months afterwards the poet followed his patron to the grave.

A third poet has also contributed something to the fame of Maecenas. This was Sextus Propertius, a native of Assisium in Umbria, a town that, under its modern name of Assisi, is celebrated as the birthplace of St. Francis. He too had suffered from the confiscation which had followed the civil wars, had come to Rome to follow the profession of the law, and had found verse-writing more attractive than the courts. Of his introduction to Maecenas, we know nothing. The great man's name is prefixed to the first elegy in the second book, the poem is a defence of the author's devotion to love-poetry, and of his refusal to engage on more serious themes. The date of this poem is probably about 28 B.C. Another piece with the same dedication is, it may be conjectured, about five years later. Neither of them says much of the relations between the writer and his patron, though the tone seems to indicate a certain amount of intimacy.



Propertius, like Virgil, had a house in the Aquiline. That he was well acquainted with the author of the *Æneid*, and had had a private sight or hearing of the great poem, we can guess from a reference to it in one of his elegies; "Something greater than the *Iliad* is in process of writing," he says. We are sorry to think that with Horace his relations were not so friendly. Propertius has no compliments for his lyric brother; Horace, there can be little doubt, satirizes the style and the pretensions of the elegist.

Some of Maecenas's literary friends are little more than names to us, Varius and Tucca for instance, Virgil's literary executors, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of the *Aeneid*, which its author directed to be destroyed, nor has any record been preserved of the life which they shared. What would we not give for a single volume of "Reminiscences" such as are now showered upon us in almost overwhelming profusion from the press! We must be content with knowing that the liberality, the good taste, and the tact of Maecenas made his name proverbial as the model of the patrons of literature; and the patron, we must remember, was a necessity till the public came into existence. Even now, when the production of monumental works for which no remunerative sale can be expected is concerned, his function is not altogether suspended. This chapter may be fitly concluded with lines from Martial:

"You ask me why, though Rome has grown  
Nobler beneath a nobler sway,  
Though glories of the older day  
Pale by the lustre of our own;

You ask me why no voice inspired  
Still sings as Virgil sang of yore  
Why wars that touch earth's furthest shore  
No bard to fitting praise have fired:

My Flacius, hear a bard's reply:  
A new Maecenas must be found;  
Give us but this, and barren ground  
A crop of Virgils will supply."

## CHAPTER III

### A DAY WITH HORACE

From Theotimus of Athens, to Meton, the Philosopher, at his house, in the Garden of Academus.

Written from Rome, in the third year of the one hundred and eighty third Olympiad.

Many thanks, most venerable and dear Meton, for the letters of commendation, especially for that which bore the superscription of Quintus Horatius Flaccus. I chanced to find him at home, and though he was busy (I saw a parchment, on which a slave had been writing from his dictation), he welcomed me most warmly, and constrained me to take up my abode in his house.

That first day, we talked of men and things in Athens, till the third watch of the night was nearly spent. Never was any one more simple, more candid, more gay. You will remember, that you warned me not to speak of his doings as a soldier, yet by some inconceivable awkwardness—for which, when the word was uttered, I could have bitten off my tongue,—I stumbled upon that very subject. Yet I need not have troubled myself: he certainly was not disturbed.

"Ah" said he, "I should have done well to have listened to the wise Meton. I was a foolish lad of twenty, and they offered me a Tribune's commission—surely they must have been in sore need of officers, if they could not make a better choice.

"Well, I went to our dear friend. 'What madness!' he cried, 'You have, for your years, a fair smattering of philosophy and a very pretty talent for writing verses, but as for being a leader of soldiers—'tis the veriest folly. And are you sure,' he went on, 'that you are on the right side? I take it, that your friends did a bad day's work when they killed your Caesar. Depend upon it, you will go farther and fare worse, if your friend Brutus, who really thinks of nothing but himself, and Cassius who is a pedant, not a

statesman, get the upper hand. But, if you will go, go as a private soldier, and risk no life but your own.'

"Well, I did what other people do, who ask for advice; I took my own way, and into a pretty slough it led me. As for soldiering, I knew no more about it than a babe. Happily I had two dry nurses, in the shape of two veteran centurions, and I had no chance of making any bad blunder. Indeed the whole business lasted only a few months and my first battle was my last.

"Did I run away? you are too polite to ask me, but you would like to know. Well, I did, and I did not. I stopped where I was, till it was practically all over, and when my betters ran, I followed them. As for my shield—well, your own Alcaeus lost his shield, and he was as good a fighting man, according to all accounts, as he was a poet.

"But to tell the truth, I had a motive in talking as I did about my share in the battle. You see, I had to make friends with the conqueror, and what was the good of making out that I had fought desperately to the last? *That* would have been no recommendation. So I rather laughed at myself, and if other people laugh at me, well. I can shrug my shoulders and bear it. I shall not be unhappy if they think I am a poor soldier, if they will allow that I am something of a poet."

But certainly, if I try to write down even a tenth of what this most delightful of talkers said to me, I shall more than fill my letter, and you asked me to describe one of my days at Rome. To that therefore let me turn without further delay.

Five days after my arrival, my host said to me, "You can rise early, is it not so?" and when I assented, he went on. "We will go to-morrow, and salute my dear friend Maecenas. At sunrise then, we will start." I suppose that I looked somewhat surprised, for he said, "We set about our business betimes at Rome, and as for Maecenas, we cannot be too early; he sleeps so ill, that he cannot rise too soon, and he likes his callers to do the same."

At the appointed hour we went. It was a house of the most magnificent proportions, with the very highest tower in all Rome

surmounting it, and within, it was furnished with a splendour to which, there is, I am told, nothing equal. As for the Emperor, he lives very simply. The great man himself, I must own, did not impress me very favourably. To speak plainly, he was too much of a fop; the scent of the unguents with which he was, so to speak, drenched, almost overpowered me, and I could barely see his fingers, for the rings with which they were covered. His face was pale; his eyes sunken and weary, yet it was good to note how he lighted up at the sight of the poet.

"You have brought something for me, I hope," he said, and when my host shook his head. "Nay, but this is intolerable. There are, at least, twenty poets there," and he pointed to the crowd of callers, who half filled the hall, "and every one has his pocket full of bad verses, and you, who really can write, are as idle as a sea-calf."

Then he greeted me most politely, and beckoned to us, to sit beside him.

But how shall I describe what I saw and heard that morning? Maecenas, you know, has the ear of the emperor, and every one who wants anything, a clerkship, a commission in the army, a pension, a word to one of the judges, a lease of land, a free pass for travelling abroad, comes to him, to make his request. He had too a number of visitors of his own.

His liberality to men of letters, is beyond belief. Instead of twenty, he might have said fifty poets. One man brought an Epic. It was as much as he could hold in his hand. "It is twice as long as the Iliad," said the great man, without changing a muscle on his face, and the silly creature thought he was serious.

"He pays them all," whispered my host to me, "and of course they go on writing. He has positively raised the price of parchment in Rome, but 'tis a fault on the right side, and I who have profited by it, should be the last to blame." And as he said this, I saw the tears in his eyes. Horace has the tenderest and most grateful heart in the world.

Well the stream went on for two hours, and might have been going on now, if the door had not been shut.

Maecenas would have us stop, and share his morning meal. "Share" I say, but as a matter of fact, the great man took nothing, but a draught of wine cooled with snow, and my host but a little salad and some water. (You must understand, that he praises wine, but for the most part drinks water.) As for myself, I relished an omelette and some broiled fish, for I cannot bring my stomach to their Roman fashion of fasting till mid-day.

The meal over, we went to the Senate-House, where a great cause was being tried.

"Ah!" said the great man as we bade him farewell. "Every day, I thank the Gods that I am but a simple knight. If I had to go to the Senate, and hear the trial of Fabius, life would not be worth having."

To me, indeed, as a stranger, the thing was interesting enough. Fabius had been governor of a province, and was on his trial for extortion. We heard the peroration of the prosecutor and the examination of three or four witnesses. What a story it was that they told! If only a quarter were true, Fabius must have been the most scandalous thief since Sisyphus. One old man, a temple-servant, told the Senate how the governor scraped the gold from off the gates, in fact laid his hands on every thing that had the least value. He described how the priest had hidden a gold shield, an offering they said, by Alexander of Macedon, and how Fabius had heard of it. "He tortured me to make me tell him the secret" said the man, and held up his hands, which were twisted out of all shape.

The judges, who had seemed very careless till then, were visibly moved: and the Emperor, who, I should have said, was presiding, a singularly handsome man of about forty, flushed with anger.

Fabius himself sat as haughty and indifferent as though he had no concern in the matter. "It will go hard with him," said my host, as we came out. "Fabius seems to have thought he was living

under the Republic, when these things were winked at, but the Emperor has different ways. He is not going to sacrifice his provinces that the nobles may dine off gold plate. Yes, it will want all, and more than all Pollio's eloquence, to get off his client."

From the Senate-house we went home, to the mid-day meal. Horatius ate nothing but vegetables, drinking a little wine, very much diluted, but his cook had procured a piece of roast kid for me.

After the meal came a short siesta, and then we went to what seems a common entertainment at Rome, a literary reading. A young author was to recite some of his poems to a circle of friends. Horatius was one of those invited, he does not like these things, but he went nevertheless, for he is good nature itself. It was but a poor business. The audience was not large at the beginning, and it grew smaller and smaller, till at last there were but a score left.

"Poor fellow," said my host, "I am afraid this will cost him more than he will get. You see the room was lent, but he had to pay for the benches and other matters, and I suspect had to hire the very fine rings which he wore on his fingers. It is the etiquette for a reader to make himself very fine; why I know not, for the race are notoriously poor."

After the reading, a stroll to the Field of Mars, the Roman playground, was welcome. The sports were very clumsy; nothing could be more barbarous than the bits which the riders use, great jagged things which must tear the horse's mouth to pieces. The Romans are not particularly fleet of foot, nor agile jumpers, but their swimming is marvellously good. I saw young lads cross the Tiber which was running high, and pass, three or four times without resting.

It was a gay and brilliant scene. You must know that the ladies who are allowed, or take, a liberty which would seem strange to us, come to the Field, and look on.

After the sports came dinner, a gorgeous entertainment, to which with my whetted appetite, I did justice.

Earth and sea were ransacked to furnish the feast. There were turbot, fresh from the Black Sea, mullets caught in Charybdis itself, oysters from Britain, an outlandish isle in the frozen sea, I am told, rare birds from Africa, a wild boar from Gaul, hares and coneys and I know not what besides; one thing I remember, a peacock, very splendid to look at, but as tough and tasteless a meat as I ever ate.

Our host was a "nouveau riche," who wearied us by telling us the cost of every dish, and every flagon of wine. Of all tiresome entertainments, this was the worst, and I was heartily glad, when, somewhere about midnight, (our host and half his guests being no longer masters of themselves) to find myself in the open air again.

I like our quiet Athens tenfold better than this splendid Rome. Farewell.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DEATH OF AUGUSTUS

"He died a natural death," says Tacitus of some great noble in the days of Tiberius, and adds, "a very rare occurrence in so exalted a rank." There is no reason for doubting that this piece of good fortune fell to the lot of Augustus, of him, indeed, alone among the Julian Caesars. Of course rumour was busy with stories of his end. There was talk, for instance, of a basket of poisoned figs which Livia, his wife, had put in his way; but Livia had lived with him for forty years, and having secured all her objects, had no motive for the crime. All the circumstances point the other way. Augustus was in his seventy-eighth year. He was travelling at an unhealthy time of the year (August). He had exposed himself imprudently to the night-air, and had contracted a dysentery. And all the other particulars quite contradict the poison theory. He had been ailing for some time, but did not take to his bed till he came to Nola. Tiberius, who was on his way to the east coast of the Adriatic (Augustus had left Rome to accompany him) was recalled in haste. The dying man had a long conversation with his successor, and then dismissed all the cares of life, though he asked again and again in the course of his last day, whether there were any signs of disturbance (we shall see the significance of this hereafter). Reassured on this point, he prepared for his end. He had his hair arranged, and his "cheeks that were falling in set right" (perplexing words which no one has been able to interpret). Then he turned to his friends, "Have I played my part decently well in this farce of life?" he asked, adding in a low voice two Greek verses which may be thus Englished:—

"All has gone well, you say. Then clap your hands,  
Nor grudge the player what his skill demands."

The room was then cleared, only Livia remaining. She raised the dying man in her arms, and with the words, "Remember

how we have lived together in love. Farewell!" he passed away. This is a peaceful scene enough, but there was a tragedy behind it.

I have spoken in my first chapter of Augustus as "a child of fortune," and this, the last scene of his life, is apparently keeping up this character to the end. But there was a dark side to the brilliant picture.

In the first place, the Roman arms were not uniformly prosperous during his reign. In B.C. 16 Marcus Lollius, who was in command of a *corps d'armée* on the frontier of Gaul encountered a body of Germans, who had crossed the Rhine. Victorious in the first engagement, he met with a severe defeat in the second, losing the eagle of one of his legions. The news of this disaster caused such alarm in Rome that the Emperor hurried to the spot. The invaders did not stop to meet him, but recrossed the river. That there had been more disgrace than damage was the judgment passed on the incident when the first panic had subsided, and subsequent successes of the Imperial armies in the same and neighbouring regions more than compensated for what had been lost. Still there had been a check to the uniformly prosperous course of the great Emperor's government.

Twenty-five years afterwards a much more serious disaster occurred. The policy of Augustus had not been, on the whole, a policy of conquest, nor was he ambitious to advance the border of the Empire. But now he made an exception. Drusus, the younger of the two stepsons of the Emperor, had some time before conquered the region between the Rhine and the Weser, and it seemed expedient to convert this into a regular Roman province. He appointed as its first governor one Quintilius Varus.

The choice was not a happy one. Varus's experience of administration had been gained in Syria, and he committed the mistake of supposing that the methods successful with a people subdued by centuries of slavery would be suitable to a brave and spirited race which had only just lost its independence. A revolt was organised by some of the German chiefs, their leader being a certain Arminius, whose military experience had been acquired by

service with the Roman armies. Varus had marched as far as the banks of the Weser, and had there constructed a permanent camp.

All apparently was peaceful. The chiefs were friendly, the people submissive. The Roman Governor was thus put off his guard. He had a powerful army, three legions with their usual complement of auxiliaries, and a strong body of cavalry.

Altogether the force must have amounted to nearly forty thousand. But he had weakened it by sending off detachments in various directions. Tidings reached him that a remote tribe had risen in rebellion, and he set off to reduce them to submission. As he was passing through a wooded valley, probably between Osnabruck and Paderborn, he was attacked by the Germans in overwhelming numbers. The army, encumbered with baggage and non-combatants, had great difficulty in advancing. Still it contrived to make its way to an open spot without much loss. For two more days it marched and fought incessantly. By the evening of the second day it had ceased to exist. A few scattered fugitives escaped, but the mass of the army was either slaughtered or captured. Varus killed himself.

The effect of this blow on the aged Augustus—he was now seventy-five—was crushing. For six months he let his hair and beard grow, a sign in a Roman of the very prostration of grief. In his agony he dashed his head against the wall, crying in piteous accents, "Varus, give me back my legions." He could not bear any longer to have about him the German body-guards who had hitherto surrounded his person. It is not too much to say that his last years were continually clouded by the recollection of this disaster.

But he had long had in his own family a yet more painful trouble. For years a fierce struggle had been going on for the succession to the throne. Livia had brought two sons by her first husband into the Imperial house; to Augustus she had borne no child. She set her heart on securing the crown for Tiberius, the elder of the two. He was not unworthy, an able statesman and soldier, and as yet unstained by the vices of his later years. For a time all went well. Then came a crisis, and it seemed as if his

hopes were crushed. He retired from Court into something like exile. Then his fortunes rose again. Julia, the daughter of Augustus, was disgraced. Her first and second sons (children by her first husband, Agrippa) died in rapid succession. Her daughter, another Julia, brought a new shame upon her family, wringing from her unhappy grandfather, the bitter cry, "Would I had perished childless and unwed!" One son still remained, Agrippa Postumus by name. But he was uncouth and savage, with nothing princely about him,—no trace even of gentle blood in person or bearing. He could learn nothing, not even martial exercises. Fishing, a sport which he pursued in sullen solitude, was his only taste. Furious at the sight of so degenerate a scion of his race, the Emperor procured from the Senate a decree of perpetual exile against the unhappy youth, and he was removed to Planasia, a barren islet near Elba. The succession of Tiberius seemed secure.

Then, in the last year of his life, the old man seems to have turned again to his own flesh and blood. He would see whether this grandson was quite hopeless. Livia and Tiberius had their enemies, and these built their hopes on the succession of the banished Agrippa. One of them was the representative of perhaps the noblest house in Rome, the Fabii. Augustus visited Planasia in his company. This part of the story may seem doubtful. Could the aged and infirm Augustus have taken such a journey, for Planasia is forty miles from the mainland? Could he have come without the privity of Livia? But he may have sent Fabius and charged him to bring back a report.

Nothing is known of what passed, but the result was bitterly disappointing. And then, by the indiscretion of Fabius's wife, the story came to the ears of Livia. She turned the wrath of the Emperor, furious at having his newly-awakened affection thus thrown back on himself, against the counsellor who had advised the journey. Fabius went to pay his customary homage to his master, and was met with the salutation, not of greeting but of farewell. It was a hint that the Emperor wished to see him no more. That hint meant death. He left the imperial presence, and killed himself.

Not many weeks after, Augustus died, and Tiberius reigned in his stead. The unhappy Agrippa did not long survive the accession of his rival. A centurion was sent to assassinate him, and he was slain, but, though taken by surprise and unarmed, not till after a desperate resistance. The responsibility for this crime was bandied about in a not unusual fashion. The centurion reported himself to Tiberius. The Emperor denied that he had given any orders. The orders doubtless had been given by Livia, but it is difficult to believe that Tiberius had no knowledge of them. No one believed Livia's pretence that Augustus had left directions that the deed should be done. The old Emperor had never hardened his heart, under the extremest provocation, to execute any of his kindred.

A curious sequel to the story of Agrippa remains to be told. One Clemens, who had been among his attendants, on hearing of the death of Augustus, conceived the idea of carrying the youth off to the German army, and proclaiming him Emperor. He made his way to Planasia, but the merchant-ship on which he had taken his passage sailed slowly, and he came too late. Clemens then resolved to personate the dead man, to whom he bore a remarkable resemblance. He stole the ashes—why it is difficult to see—went into retirement till his hair and beard were grown long, and then proclaimed himself to be the grandson of Augustus.

He was careful never to show himself in broad daylight, or stop in the same place for long. Still he found many to believe in him, and Tiberius was not a little perplexed. Should he take any notice of the pretender or no? Finally he had him kidnapped and brought to Rome. "How did you make yourself Agrippa?" he asked the man. "In just the same way as you made yourself Emperor," was the reply. The pretender was secretly put to death, but Tiberius found it convenient to make no enquiries as to who had supported his claims. Among them were many officers of his own establishment, and not a few members of the Senate and of the great capitalists of Rome. What would have happened if Clemens's merchantman had sailed a little faster? Agrippa had evidently a powerful party behind him.



## CHAPTER V

### A MUTINY



Tiberius

The accession of Tiberius seems to have been received, if not with enthusiasm, yet without protest throughout the Empire. But it gave the occasion to a dangerous movement among the armies of the frontier provinces of Europe. Pannonia was one of these. It reached along the course of the Danube from Vienna to Belgrade, and extended southward and westward to no great distance from the Adriatic. Its governor was always an officer of consular rank, and he had three legions under his control. These three (the eighth, the ninth, and fifteenth) were at this time quartered together in a summer camp, the general in command being Junius Blaesus.

Blaesus, on hearing of the accession of a new emperor, had relaxed the customary discipline, excusing some of the duties which formed the daily routine of the soldiers' life. Though idleness is notoriously the parent of mischief, this brief holiday could hardly have done much harm, had not some elements of disturbance been already at work. The army had already begun to feel its strength, and to know that the throne really rested upon its arms. The Pannonian mutiny may be described as the first

mutterings of a storm which, in after years, was to break out again and again. The time was coming when every army would think itself entitled to set up a candidate for the Empire; and the movement which I am about to relate was the first sign of its approach.

A spokesman of the general discontent was found in a certain Percennius. Before enlisting he had been the chief of a gang of *claqueurs*, whose business it was to lead the applause, or it might be, the hissing at the theatres of Rome. He was a fluent and reckless man, and had caught in his theatrical experience the trick of exciting a crowd.

There was some natural anxiety in the minds of the troops as to what would be the conditions of service under the new Emperor, and there were undoubted grievances of which they had to complain. On these Percennius enlarged, at the same time reminding his hearers, that the time for demanding redress was come. If they lost the opportunity afforded by a ruler not yet firmly established on his throne, they would be wholly to blame. "Already," he cried, "we have borne too much. They make us serve thirty, nay forty campaigns, and that though we have been maimed with wounds. Even when we are discharged, as they call it, we are not free; we are kept with the standard, and have to perform, under another name, the same services. If by any chance a man survives all the dangers of a soldier's life, what is his reward? What they call an allotment of land, some swamp, some intractable hill. Do they tell us we can save out of our pay? Soldiering is a service as unprofitable as it is hard. Our souls and bodies are valued at half a denarius a day! Out of this we have to find our clothing, our arms, our tents, and to purchase any indulgence which the severity of our officers may allow. We must demand nothing less than this—fixed conditions of service, a full denarius a day, discharge at the end of the sixteenth year, no further service with the standard, and our discharge-money paid us in coin and on the spot. Is the service of the Praetorians, who receive two *denarii* a day, and who can retire after sixteen years, more perilous than ours? We do not disparage sentinel's duty in

Rome; but it is we who have to live among barbarians, with the enemy in sight of our tents."

This speech was received with a roar of applause. The soldiers pointed in confirmation of his words to their backs scarred by the lash, to their gray hairs, to their ragged clothing. A proposal to amalgamate the three legions, a deadly offence against military discipline, was only defeated by the jealousy of the three *corps*.

But the eagles and standards were actually massed in one place, and the soldiers set about building a hustings of turf. Blaesus entreated them to desist, imploring them to vent their rage on him rather than rebel against the Emperor. He begged them to remember that this was not the way to convey their requests to the Emperor, requests for privileges which had never before been asked for, either in Republican times, or in the days of Augustus. It was scarcely the time, he said, to approach their sovereign, distracted as he must be by the cares of a new reign. Still if they were inclined to do so, let them do it in regular form, appointing delegates to express their wishes. The soldiers assented, demanding that Blaesus himself should undertake this duty. He was to ask for discharge after sixteen years' service. This granted, they would put their other demands into shape.

A brief interval of quiet followed, though the troops were demoralized by the discovery that they were more likely to obtain their demands by violence than by good behaviour. But the disorder was renewed on the return of a detachment which had been employed in the making of roads and bridges in the neighbourhood of Nauportus. On hearing of what had been going on in the camp, they mutinied, plundered Nauportus, which was a flourishing place, and maltreated their officers. Against the quarter-master Rufus they had a special spite. He had risen from the ranks and was inexorable in his discipline; all the more pitiless in his exactions, says Tacitus, because he had himself gone through all that he demanded from others. They loaded him with a heavy burden, and asked him, as they drove him along in front of

the line of march, how he liked carrying such a weight for so many miles.

Blaesus now felt that he must act, for the soldiers were plundering the country. He could still count on the officers and the well disposed portion of the troops, and he ordered that some of the most conspicuous offenders should be arrested, flogged, and thrown into prison. The men thus singled out implored their comrades to rescue them, "You see" they cried, "what will be your fate. What they are doing to us to-day, you will have to put up with to-morrow."

The appeal was not made in vain. The men were rescued. More than this, the prison was broken into, and the criminals confined in it released.

And now came forward one of those "historical liars" as they may be called, who from time to time have made such a sensation in the world by the audacity of their fictions. The General was standing on the hustings, and the mutineers were eagerly watching for his next move. The release of the prisoners was a direct defiance of his authority. How would he meet it? Vibulenus—this was the man's name—was lifted on to the shoulders of his neighbours and thus addressed the crowd:

"You have given back light and liberty to these innocent sufferers; but who will give back life to my brother, or my brother to me? The army of Germany sent him to take counsel with you about our common interests, and last night this man, by the hand of his gladiators, the creatures whom he keeps to destroy you, murdered him. Tell me, Blaesus," he went on, turning to the general, "tell me where you have taken his corpse? Even our enemies do not grudge us burial. Tell me, and then, when I have satisfied my grief with kisses and tears, hand me also over to your murderers—only let my comrades bury your victims, slain for no other crime but taking counsel for the common good."

The crowd was excited by this story to the highest pitch. The gladiators were seized, and with them the general's other slaves; a search party was told off to look for the body. Blaesus's

life was in danger, and might have been sacrificed but for the opportune discovery that the whole of this pathetic story was a lie. No corpse could be found, the slaves, when tortured, stoutly denied that any such person had been killed; very soon it came out that Vibulenus had never had a brother! Still the wrath of the soldiers demanded a victim. The general had escaped; but a centurion of the name of Lucilius was killed. The man had earned the nickname of "give me t'other," because after breaking one vine stick, the common implement of punishment on a soldier's back, he would call for another and another. Other unpopular officers contrived to hide themselves; the tribune and the quarter-master were drive out of the camp. Over one centurion the eighth and the fifteenth legions nearly came to blows; the men of the eighth were for killing him; their comrades of the fifteenth protected him. The quarrel was composed by the energetic interposition of the ninth legion.

News of these troubles reached Rome, and compelled Tiberius, so serious did they seem, to open and speedy action. He sent his son Drusus with an open commission to deal with the situation as he thought best. Drusus was accompanied by some of the most distinguished people in Rome, and had a strong escort, consisting of two of the nine Praetorian cohorts, raised above their usual complements by an addition of picked men from the other cohorts, the Praetorian cavalry, and the Emperor's bodyguard. Aelius Sejanus, of whom we shall hear again, was in military command, and had the young Prince in his special charge.

The Legions went out to meet the Emperor's representative, not in the full accoutrements which would be commonly worn on such an occasion, but with a studied appearance of squalor. Drusus entered the camp with them; but his escort was barred out. He mounted the hustings and stood for a while, beckoning in vain for silence. At last he contrived, in an interval of quiet, to read a letter from his father. The Emperor was profoundly interested—so ran this document—in the welfare of his brave legions, sharers with him of so many arduous campaigns. When his grief would allow him, he would bring their demands before the Senate. Meanwhile he had sent his son, who

would make such immediate concessions as were possible. The rest must depend upon the decision of the Senate which could not be deprived of the power to give or to refuse.

The soldiers put forth a centurion, Clemens by name, as their spokesman. He stated their demands—discharge at the end of sixteen years, prompt payment in money of the sum then due, pay at the rate of a full denarius, and no detention of full-time soldiers with the standards. Drusus declared that these were points on which the Emperor and the Senate must decide. An angry shout interrupted him. "Why come," said the men, "when you can give us no relief, and bestow no bounty? Tiberius used to mock our demands by referring them to Augustus, you are repeating the same device. As for the decision of the Senate it is a novelty. Does the Emperor intend to consult it on all matters that concern us or only when we are asking for our rights?"

A formidable tumult followed. One of the most distinguished of the visitors from Rome had a narrow escape of his life. Aware of his danger he endeavoured to leave the camp, and was attempting to do so under the protection of the Prince's presence, when the soldiers discovered his intention. They loudly proclaimed their belief that he was on his way to misrepresent their cause before the Senate or the Emperor and made a furious attack upon him. He had been felled to the earth by a blow from a stone, and would have soon perished, but for the interference of the escort.

Things had now a very threatening aspect. It was doubtful whether the Prince emissary himself would long be safe from the violence of the mutineers. Suddenly all was changed in a very curious manner. The night that followed this day of uproar was marked by a total eclipse of the moon. The soldiers regarded this phenomenon with intense anxiety, taking it, we are told, as an omen of their own fortunes. They were ignorant, as all but the educated at that time were ignorant, of its cause, and had no idea, it would seem, that it was a regularly recurring event. Their fancy suggested the notion that the satellite now lost, now recovered its lustre; and they hoped and feared accordingly for themselves and

their demands. Clashing their arms together, and sounding in concert on trumpets and clarions they sought to help the "labouring-planet" in its conflict with an unknown enemy. When its face was finally hidden from sight by gathering clouds, they gave up all for lost. They could hope for no respite from their toils; they had given inextinguishable offence to the powers of heaven. Drusus and his advisers made prompt use of this change in popular feeling. A few loyal officers who had continued to keep their popularity with the soldiers went round the camp, threatening and promising.

"Who," they asked the mutineers, "are to be your leaders? Percennius and Vibulenus? Are these the names that you are going to substitute for the Neros and the Drusi? "How much wiser," they went on to suggest first to one and then to another, "to secure your own interests by a prompt return to your duty! Benefits that all will share must be difficult of attainment, but you may make certain of a reward for yourself."

Of course these emissaries did not forget to show that the interests of the recruits and the veterans were not identical, and found it easy to sow the seeds of dissension.

The next day Drusus called a general assembly of the troops. He took a more commanding tone. "Threats," he declared, "were useless; but if the men would return to their duty, he would not fail to represent their case to his father."

It was agreed that a deputation should be sent to Rome, charged with the duty of representing the wishes of the troops. But this was little more than a pretence. The movement had failed.

Vibulenus and Percennius were summoned into the Prince's tent, and cut down in his presence. Something like a massacre followed. The ringleaders of the mutiny were slain by their officers or by the Praetorians. Some were given up to justice by own comrades, anxious to secure their own safety.

The eighth legion was the first to return to its duty; the fifteenth soon followed; the ninth was inclined to hold out, but felt

that it could not stand alone. Drusus left for the capital, not considering it necessary to wait for the return of the deputation.

The eclipse of the moon mentioned in the narrative given above is fixed by astronomers for the date, September 26th. Augustus died August 19th. We have thus an interval of thirty-eight days into which these events were crowded. We do not know where the summer camp of the Pannonian legions was situated; but it could hardly have been less than seven hundred miles from Rome. We have to allow for the carrying of the news of the Emperor's death from Nola (some twenty miles to the south of Rome) to the camp, for the taking back of the intelligence of the mutiny, (which did not burst out till after some days), and for the march of the military force that accompanied Drusus. It must also have taken two or three days to mobilize these troops. The march alone, at the rate of twenty-five miles per diem, would have taken nearly a month.

The difficulties in the narrative are great, even if we take for granted the excessive alarm displayed by the soldiers at the appearance of phenomena which, after all, they must have witnessed several times. And yet there can be no serious question of its accuracy. While it makes it certain that communication was rapid in these times between the different provinces of the Empire, it may also be fairly taken to suggest that scepticism as to the genuineness or truth of other narratives of a more important kind should be more cautious than it sometimes seems inclined to be.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EMPRESS-MOTHER

Livia, Empress and Empress-Mother for nearly seventy years, is one of the stateliest figures in Roman history. By birth she belonged to the great Claudian house, a race far more celebrated indeed for the arts of peace than for triumphs in war, but the proudest and most resolute of Roman aristocrats. Adopted by one of the Livian family—hence the name which she bore throughout her life—she married into her own house, though not into her own branch of it.

Her husband was a certain Tiberius Claudius Nero, descended from the famous Nero, whose rapid march northwards in the twelfth year of the Second Punic war had assured, not indeed the safety of Rome, which was no longer doubtful, but the speedy end of a desolating war.

Her husband took the wrong, or, at least, the unsuccessful side in one of the struggles of the Civil War, and had to fly for his life. Livia was with him, and the pair had more than one hair-breadth escape, once very nearly being discovered to their pursuers by the crying of the infant which the young wife was carrying with her, at another being almost burnt alive by a forest fire. But a reconciliation was brought about between Nero and Augustus now acknowledged master of the Western world, and the fugitives returned to Rome. Livia's beauty attracted the notice of the Emperor. Her husband divorced her, gave her away to her new spouse and actually—so the story runs—sat as a guest at the marriage feast. She was then but eighteen, the mother of one child (afterwards the Emperor Tiberius), and about to become the mother of another.

It was not then in a very reputable way, that Livia became the partner of the Imperial throne. But we must not judge these things by modern standards, and whatever we may think of

Augustus, Nero and Livia are not much to blame. Resistance to the supreme ruler of Rome was hardly to be thought of, and no one certainly in those days dreamt of being a martyr for the sanctity of the marriage tie. Once seated on the throne she was a model of all that a wife should be. Not even a breath of slander tarnished her fair fame. She was a matron of the old Roman type, the finest ever seen outside the circle of christian womanhood.

I have spoken of Livia's ambition for her children. Whether she used any sinister means to clear the way to the throne for Tiberius, the elder, is a matter about which we know nothing for certain. That she was suspected is clear, but then any woman in her position and with her opportunities would have been suspected. That when Tiberius gained the object of her ambition she sought to secure him in power by removing the unhappy youth who had the fatal distinction of being the grandson of Augustus, is almost certainly true. Tacitus seems to apportion the guilt of the murder between the mother and the son. He tells us, however, that Tiberius disclaimed all knowledge of the deed, and professed an intention of bringing it under the notice of the Senate, an intention from which he was turned only by a representation that there were secrets of Empire which it would be highly dangerous to reveal, and about which the Senate must not be permitted to judge. The historian has a vehement prejudice against Tiberius, and we may perhaps conclude that the balance of probabilities inclines to the belief that Livia rather than her son had the principal share in the deed.

If Livia sinned for her children, she was grievously punished through them. The younger of the two, Drusus, a brilliant soldier, who carried the arms of Rome into regions never visited by them before or after his time, died at the age of thirty (A. D. 9). This was sad enough, though it may well be that he was happy in being taken away from the evil to come and that his mother lived to feel it. She suffered far more when the elder son, the one for whom she had dared so much and suffered so much, showed jealousy which was not long in growing into something like hatred.

She seemed to him to claim an equal share in the government, and this his sullen temper could not brook. He had grown indeed so used to her counsels that he found it hard to do without them; but he deliberately estranged himself from her more and more completely. It was especially annoying for him to be styled, as he was in the proceedings of the Senate, the son of Augustus and Livia. He refused to allow the title of "Mother of the Country" to be bestowed on her; he limited as far as he could the distinctions which her position seemed to make natural. He went further than this; he told her plainly that she was fond of meddling with affairs too great for her or for any woman. His jealousy descended sometimes to ludicrous meanness. A fire broke out near the Temple of Vesta, the most sacred spot in Rome, and the Empress, who must have been then past her eightieth year, herself came upon the scene, as she had more than once in the lifetime of Augustus, and urged the populace and the soldiers who were putting out the flames to do their very best. Tiberius was most unreasonably angry at her activity. At last the two came to an open feud.

Livia begged her son to bestow some honour on one of her protégés. He refused and she repeated her request. At last he said "Yes, I will do it, if you will allow this entry to be made in the register; This was extorted from me by my mother." Stung to the quick, she produced an old memorandum in the hand-writing of Augustus, complaining of the morose and odious character of his stepson. Tiberius was furious to find that such a document had been kept so carefully and was now brought up against him. This was said to be one of the causes that drove him out of Rome, where, indeed, he never set foot during the last eleven years of his life. His mother lived three years after his departure. During that time he saw her but once only, and that but for a few hours. She must have gone out of the city to meet him. He did not attend her funeral; neglected her last wishes as to the disposition of the body; and did not carry into effect the provisions of her will.

All her friends felt the weight of his displeasure. He bore and showed a grudge even against those whom she had entrusted with the conduct of her funeral rites. Such was the end of all her

guilty scheming. There is no doubt that, up to time of the rupture with her son Livia exercised a moderating influence on his rule. Tacitus distinguishes five periods in his character. There can be little doubt indeed that the historian does him, on the whole, less than justice; still we may accept the statement that "as long as his mother lived he was partly good and partly bad." But the best side of Livia's nature is one of which, but for an accident, we should have known nothing. Among the remains of antiquity which time has spared, is the chamber in which the cinerary urns of Livia's family were deposited. There are stored in almost endless succession the urns of her personal attendants, her robe-women and tire-women, and others who filled posts in an establishment which must have been one of truly imperial dimensions. Generations of such servants passed away during her long life. There must have been some tenderness, some capacity of affection in the woman to whom they rendered faithful service and who preserved the affectionate memorial of them when they were gone.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF GERMANICUS

Tacitus says of one of the Emperors that all men would have thought him equal to Empire, if he had never been Emperor. Perhaps it was well for the fame of Germanicus that his character was never subjected to the test of power. As it is, we know nothing but good of him. No prince of the Julian House, few of any royal race, have been more admired in life and more lamented in death.

One cannot wonder that Tiberius, who, without being the monster that he appears in the pages of Tacitus and Suetonius, was certainly morose and suspicious, was jealous of the brilliant young man. Augustus is said to have hesitated long whether he should not bequeath to him the throne. He decided in favour of his stepson, Tiberius; nor can we believe that, while Livia was alive, any other choice would have been possible to him. But he made it a condition that Tiberius should adopt the prince whose claim was thus postponed to him. Thus Germanicus, from being a nephew, became a son, and a son whose brilliant qualities quite threw into the shade his adopting father's natural heir, the younger Drusus.

Tiberius had not been many days on the throne when he found what a dangerous rival the young man might be, if he were not loyal; and loyalty is a virtue which such character as Tiberius find it hard to believe in. The legions which guarded the Rhine frontier of the empire revolted. Other legions were disturbed, but the German armies were the most determined, partly on account of their strength, partly because they hoped that Germanicus, their general-in-chief, would claim the empire for himself. The young commander brought them back to their allegiance, "I know not," says the historian, "whether with more loyalty or courage." He then fought a brilliant campaign against the German tribes, penetrating to the spot where years before the legions of Varus had been destroyed, and burying the remains of the dead. When he

returned to Rome, the people crowded to meet him, coming as far as the twentieth milestone from the city, and though his guard of honour, from the Praetorian Camp, was composed of two cohorts only, the whole of the force went out to escort him home.

There were not wanting prophets of evil. "The favourites of the Roman people," they said, "are short-lived and unlucky. It loved Drusus, his father, and he died in his prime; it loved Marcellus, his uncle, and he passed away in his youth." Within a year these gloomy prognostications were fulfilled. Germanicus lay dead at Antioch, and there were the darkest rumours about the causes which had brought him to his end. His body was livid; his lips were covered with foam, so said those who had seen his corpse. Stranger still, his heart had been found unconsumed in the funeral pile; and the heart of the man who dies of poison, such was the common belief, the flames cannot touch.

Was the Emperor guilty? everyone asked. The suspicions against him chiefly arose from the strange conduct of a Piso, who had been appointed to the government of Syria at the same time when the Emperor entrusted to Germanicus the general command of the provinces east of the Mediterranean. Piso seemed to have a mission to annoy and torment his superior. Anyhow, he behaved to him in a way on which he would scarcely have ventured, had he not felt himself supported by the Emperor himself. He seemed bound, as it was expressed at the time, to be the enemy either of the father or of the son, of Tiberius or Germanicus, and everyone believed that he chose the second alternative. It may not be a conclusive proof of his guilt, but when he returned to Rome, he was nearly torn in pieces by the people, and condemned to death by the Senate, on the charge of having brought about the death of his chief. Among the evidence brought against him was the discovery in the house which he had occupied at Antioch, of human remains, of papers inscribed with charms and cures, leaden tablets, inscribed with the name of the victim, and other articles belonging to the magician's stock-in-trade. Magic may be an idle fancy, but the story, nevertheless, may be true. That the prince himself believed that he had been poisoned by Piso and his wife is certain.

The corpse was exposed in the market-place of Antioch before it was burnt. About the funeral there was nothing remarkable, except for the crowd that attended it. Agrippina at once embarked with the ashes, though the season was unfavourable for travelling, and sailed to Brundisium, where a crowd of friends and comrades of the dead man, and of strangers, brought together by affection or curiosity—some even by the notion that they were showing their respect to the Emperor—had assembled. The harbour and the shore, the walls and roofs of the city—every point, in short, from which a view could be obtained—were crowded with spectators as the fleet drew near. All eyes were fixed upon the unhappy woman, as with a child on either side, the funeral urn in her hand, she stepped from the ship on to the pier. A deep groan went up from the whole assembly. Kinsmen and strangers, men and women, abandoned themselves to the same passionate grief. But the travellers had exhausted the violence of their sorrow, and the loudest manifestations came from the crowd on shore.

Two Praetorian cohorts had been sent to meet the funeral *cortège*, and the urn was borne on the shoulders of the officers. With the standards furled, and the axes reversed, the Praetorians marched along the great Appian Road. In all the towns on the way, the inhabitants, dressed in mourning, lined the streets, where altars smoked with incense. Even from distant places the people crowded in, eager to pay the same honour to the dead. At Tarracina, about seventy miles from Rome, the procession was met by the Emperor's son, and Claudius, the brother of the deceased. The new Consuls were there, for another year had begun, with a vast crowd of all ranks from the city, weeping with the true southern abandonment to grief. But three conspicuous figures were absent—the Emperor, and the Emperor's mother, and Antonia, the dead man's mother. Tacitus believes that she was not allowed to come.

The day on which the urn was carried to the Mausoleum of Augustus was one of dismal silence, broken now and then by some wild cry of grief. The streets were crowded; the soldiers stood under arms; the magistrates had laid aside the insignia of

office; the people were ranged in their various tribes. But the unprompted, genuine grief of the whole nation was almost the only public honour paid to the memory of Germanicus. Many remembered how different had been the demeanour of Augustus, when the corpse of Drusus had been brought home. He had come to meet it, though the weather was intensely cold, and had not left it till it entered the city. The images of the great Claudian and Julian Houses had been ranged round the bier. The funeral lament had been raised in the Forum, and the panegyric on the dead pronounced from the hustings. All these honours were studiously withheld from the ceremony of Germanicus, whose funeral, but for the universal sorrow, might have been that of the most undistinguished citizen.

It was not the Roman world only that wept for him. The German tribes voluntarily offered a truce when they heard of his death, and the Parthian monarch, then as now styling himself King of Kings, neither followed the chase nor entertained his nobles.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RISE AND FALL OF SEJANUS

"The rise and fall of Sejanus," says Tacitus in one of his most characteristic sentences, "were equally disastrous to the commonwealth of Rome." The country was peaceful before the days of his power; he desolated it with proscription and massacre. The Imperial family was prosperous; he made it by his intrigues like one of the doomed houses of tragedy. And then, when he was crushed by the master whom he had deceived, and Rome was rejoicing to be rid of him, she found herself the victim of a worse tyranny than ever. When Sejanus had fallen, Tiberius, perhaps because he had lost all faith in his fellow-men, became more cruel, more abandoned than before.

Aelius Sejanus was a Tuscan by birth. He obtained in his youth a commission in the Praetorian Guard, and rose from post to post till he became chief-in-command, first as his father's colleague and then alone. It was he who made the Praetorians the formidable force that many a time in after years gave the Empire at its will. He collected its scattered regiments into one *corps*, and gave it a camp outside the walls. He spared no pains to make himself the idol of the troops, not only in Rome, but in the provinces, and he succeeded so well, that his bust was commonly placed beside the Emperor's at headquarters to be common objects of veneration.

His ambition now began to soar higher, to an alliance with the throne, even to the throne itself. The alliance came within his grasp, and then was snatched away again by what must have seemed a trick of fortune. His daughter was betrothed to the young son of Claudius, the Emperor's nephew. But the boy met his death at Pompeii by a curious accident. He was amusing himself by throwing a pear into air and catching it in his mouth. The fruit fixed itself in his throat, and choked him. But this disappointment was soon forgotten in the excitement of greater

schemes. Drusus, the Emperor's son, was a personal enemy. There had been an open quarrel between them, and the young prince, who was violent in temper and somewhat brutal in manner, had struck the powerful minister in the face. The insult was terribly avenged. Sejanus won away the affections of Livia, Drusus's wife, and then persuaded the wretched woman to poison her husband. The crime was committed, and for a time remained undiscovered. One obstacle was removed from the path of his ambition. As soon as etiquette permitted he made another step. He asked for the hand of the widow. The Emperor's answer was vague, but, on the whole, favourable. He pointed out the difficulties of the case, but declared that there was nothing which the high qualities and loyalty of Sejanus might not be held to deserve.

One difficulty, the deposition of Agrippina, was soon removed. Her temper, naturally haughty, had been embittered by wrongs of the cruellest kind. She gave mortal offence to the Emperor, on one occasion, we are told, by showing that she feared to be poisoned at his table. It was Sejanus who had warned her of the danger. Not long afterwards she was banished to an island, and her banishment was soon followed by her death. Nero, her eldest son, shared her fate; and Drusus, who was next to him in age, was kept in close and rigorous confinement at Rome.

Sejanus was now, so to speak, Vice-Emperor. Tiberius had buried himself in his island retreat (of which I shall say more in my next chapter) and his Minister was the visible representative of power. His ante-chambers were crowded from morning to night. The acquaintance of his freedmen and his doorkeepers was eagerly sought. The favour of the great man himself was counted a sure passport to power and wealth.

Then in a moment came the fall of this daring ambition. Tiberius satisfied himself—he had been first warned, it is said, by a letter from a kinswoman—that the man whom he had trusted, on whom he had heaped such honours as had never before been bestowed upon a subject, was preparing to overthrow him. The favourite was, or seemed to be, too powerful to be openly attacked. Possibly, Tiberius found a secret satisfaction in flattering

and fooling him to the last. Nor can we feel a grain of pity for the man who was so basely ungrateful even to such a benefactor as Tiberius.



The insult was terribly avenged.

The Emperor, who had for many years refused to accept the dignity of the Consulship, allowed himself to be nominated again, and he made Sejanus his colleague. At the same time he gave him one of the high priesthoods. But meanwhile he had secured an instrument of his vengeance in one Macro, who held high command in the Praetorian Guard. He sent a letter to the Senate, accusing the favourite of treason. The reading of it was followed by a burst of applause; and Macro was at hand with his soldiers to arrest the accused. His fall was absolute and instantaneous. Not a voice, much less a hand, was raised in his

defence. Scarcely the mockery of a trial was allowed him, before he was hurried off to his death. His statues, which had been erected in every quarter of the city, were thrown down from their pedestals, and, such was the popular fury against him, almost ground into powder.

Tiberius had schemes in reserve if his enemy should be found to have any following. The young Drusus was to be taken out of his dungeon, and shown to the troops and the populace as their new chief. He kept ships in readiness, in which to transport himself to some distant province, if his island retreat should become unsafe. Notwithstanding these precautions, he waited for the issue in intense anxiety, standing on the loftiest peak of the island, and watching for the preconcerted signals from the mainland, which were to show him what had happened. And, after all was over, it was nine months before he ventured to leave the house in which he had concealed himself.

Meanwhile a reign of terror prevailed at Rome. I dare not tell the piteous story of how even the innocent children of the fallen man, a boy and a girl were carried off to the scaffold. That all who were even distantly suspected of sharing his schemes should be involved in his doom was to be expected, but the crowd of flatterers who had courted him, because he had the ear of Caesar, were in sore perplexity. To acknowledge his acquaintance was enough, and yet it seemed impossible to deny it. It is a pleasure to read the courageous words in which one of the accused defended himself. "Whatever may happen," he said, "I will confess that I had the friendship of Sejanus, that I sought it, that I was glad to win it. I and others saw that his friends were the favourites of Caesar, that his enemies were miserable and degraded. To us he was Sejanus no longer; he was a kinsman of the Imperial House, Caesar's colleague and friend, who made and unmade men at his pleasure. Who were we that we should go behind the Emperor's judgment and hesitate to believe in the man whom he trusted? Punish, Sire, his accomplices in crime, but excuse his friends, as you excuse yourself." These bold words saved the speaker and, we may hope, some of his friends.

## CHAPTER IX

### TIBERIUS AT CAPRI

The policy—or was it caprice?—which made Tiberius leave his capital, and spend the last eleven years of his life in the rocky island of Capreae, is one of the puzzles of history. Neither those who, following Tacitus and Suetonius, hold him to have been a monster of wickedness, nor those, chiefly to be found among modern writers, who regard him as a wise prince who has been cruelly maligned, are able to account for it satisfactorily. Among the causes suggested are, as has been already mentioned, his impatience of the influence exercised over him by his mother. Another is the influence of Sejanus, who hoped thus to increase his own power, but who could hardly have carried his point, unless he had found the Emperor already well disposed to the plan. Among the private motives which were mentioned as actuating him was personal vanity, or, rather the unwillingness to display to the eyes of the public a face that had been once handsome, but was now disfigured with disease. In this there was nothing worse than weakness; a darker motive that has been attributed to him, was the desire to engage in disgraceful pleasures in secret. Whatever the cause of his retirement from Rome, he never returned to it, though he sometimes visited the neighbourhood, coming once as far as the Gardens of Caesar on the right bank of the Tiber. His mother's death did not bring him back, nor did he return even when he learnt from the conspiracy of Sejanus what a danger he might incur by his protracted absence from his capital.

The island, now a favourite resort of English visitors to the south, was admirably suited to the solitude which, for some reason or other, he affected. It had only one landing place, and that so limited in extent that no one could approach it without being seen. The cliffs were high and inaccessible, and the sea that surrounded it was deep. The preparations made for fitting this island for his

residence were of the costly style which was customary in Roman life. Twelve villas, named after the twelve great gods and goddesses of the Roman pantheon, crowned as many heights in the island. The largest and the most defensible against attack—no slight recommendation in the eyes of the jealous tyrant—seems to have been the Villa of Jupiter. It was here that he awaited the news of the *coup d'etat* by which he struck down Sejanus; it was in this that he remained shut up till he felt himself again safe on his throne. Strange stories are told of the jealousy with which he guarded the secrecy of this retreat against even casual and perfectly harmless visitors. A fisherman had contrived to elude the guards and make his way to the house in which the Emperor had taken up his abode in order to make him a present of a mullet of unusual size which he had caught. Tiberius ordered the man's face to be rubbed with the fish. The poor wretch was overheard to congratulate himself that he had not also offered a very large lobster which he had also caught. The lobster was brought, and set to mangle the man's face with its claws. It was his practice, it was said, to have his victims thrown from the cliffs into the sea. If any remains of life were found in them there were boatmen in readiness below to dash out their brains. To such a pitch of frantic rage and fear did he come, after the fate of Sejanus, that on one occasion he ordered an old friend from Rhodes, whom he had himself sent for, to be seized and tortured. When he discovered his mistake he silenced the anticipated reproaches by ordering the man to be put to death.

Of the companions of his retirement not the least cherished were the astrologers, in whose power to foretell the future he placed a confidence which seems hardly consistent with his powerful intellect. One of these, Thrasyllus by name, had gained his confidence in a very curious way. Tiberius, if he had any reason to suspect false dealing in the soothsayer whom he had consulted, used to give a signal to an attendant, a man of remarkable strength, that the prophet was to be thrown over the cliff into the sea. Thrasyllus on one occasion had drawn his patron's horoscope, and the attendant was in waiting for the signal of death. "What of your own?" asked Tiberius. The man

calculated it with elaborate care, and then, with every sign of terror, declared that his own last hour was close at hand. The Prince was delighted at his foresight, and made him thenceforward his most trusted adviser when the secrets of the future were in question.

It was not at Capreae, however, that the Emperor breathed his last. He had gone from place to place with the restlessness that often comes before the end, and had settled down for a time in the country house which the great soldier Lucullus had built near the promontory of Misenum. Among his visitors there was a skilful Greek physician, whose advice he was accustomed to ask, though without putting himself under his care. The man came to make his farewell, took the Emperor's hand as if he would have kissed it, and contrived to feel his pulse. Tiberius perceived it, but made no sign—he was accustomed to conceal his resentment. But he kept his place at table longer than usual, and retained his friend to share the festivity. But the man was not deceived. He told the *major-domo* that the Emperor could not last two days more. Despatches were sent to the provinces, and other preparations were made for a new reign. On the 16th of March Tiberius became insensible. Every one believed him to be dead, and Caligula, his successor, came forth to receive the congratulations of the little court. Then, like a thunderbolt, came the news that the Emperor had recovered sight and speech, and was asking for food. A general panic followed; the courtiers dispersed, seeking to assume an expression of ignorance, or of the decent grief that befitted the attendants of a dying prince. Caligula, who, but a moment before, had seemed to grasp the delights of power, was now sunk in the depths of despair. Only Macro retained his presence of mind. He ordered the attendants to pile rugs and coverlets on the old man till he was suffocated. Tiberius was in his seventy-seventh year of his life, and the twenty-third of his reign.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MADMAN ON THE THRONE



Caligula

If it were a law of nature that a son inherits the virtues of his parents, Rome would have had the best of rulers in the young man who, in his twenty-sixth year, succeeded to the throne of Tiberius. Caligula was the youngest son of Germanicus and Agrippina. On Germanicus Suetonius bestows the comprehensive praise that he had all bodily and mental virtues, and these in such degree as no man had ever possessed before or since. Agrippina, though she lacked the gentler virtues of her husband, was a Roman matron of the noblest type. Much was hoped from the son of such parents, but never were hopes more cruelly falsified. The old emperor, indeed, with whom it was the young Caligula's misfortune to live, saw deeper into his nature, and had no illusions. "This lad," he would often say, "will be the death of me and many more." In fact he was a madman, and had all a madman's cunning. In his heart he hated the old emperor, but he kept this hatred a profound secret. So invariably respectful and obedient was he, that it was well said of him, "Never was there a better slave or a worse master."



For the first few months of his reign, he seemed to be all that could be wished. The exiles of the late reign were recalled, and general amnesty proclaimed. The trade of the informer was declared to be at an end. Books proscribed by the jealous tyranny of Tiberius were again permitted to be sold. In short the young emperor seemed determined to "crown the edifice of liberty." "So far," says the historian of the Caesars, "I have been speaking of a ruler; now I have to speak of a monster."

In the front of his offences comes, curiously enough, the insane desire, as a Roman thought it, to be a crowned king. Some of the tributary monarchs, who were protected by Rome, were visiting the city, and he was jealous of their diadems, for was he not the King of Kings? His courtiers prevailed upon him to forego what would have been a fatal offence to the people, always ready to be slaves, so that their master was not a king. He was too great for a crown, they told him; and he turned his thoughts to claiming the honours of godhead. He took his place as a third with the twin brethren Castor and Pollux. He consecrated a temple to his own divinity, founded a college of priests, and set up a statue of gold, which was always covered with the same garments that he himself wore. With Jupiter he claimed the equality of familiar intercourse. He held private conferences with the great deity of the capitol, the head of the Roman Pantheon, whispering in the ear of the statue, and listening in his turn, and sometimes breaking into loud threats. "Slay me, or I slay you," he was once heard to say.

If gods fared thus at his hands, it may be imagined that men did not escape. Aged senators, who had filled the highest offices of State, were compelled to run at his side for miles, or stand, napkin in hand, while he dined. Rome seems to have been always very tolerant of these indignities to the nobles. It was a new and audacious experiment on its patience, when he shut up the granaries, and brought all the city to the verge of famine. In audacity, indeed, he was never wanting. It seems to have been rather by way of a practical witticism than of a measure of precaution that he ordered a general massacre of the exiles. "What were your thoughts while you were in your island?" he asked of one who had come back from exile after the death of Tiberius. "I

always prayed to the gods that Tiberius might die, and you come to the throne." "That is exactly what the exiles are doing now," he replied, and he sent round the executioner.

After these atrocities, which, indeed, are only a few out of the dismal catalogue of Suetonius, it is relief to turn to more harmless eccentricities. He thought of destroying all the copies of Homer. "Plato," he said, "banished him from his commonwealth; why should not I do the same?" Virgil and Livy came under his censure, and he was very nearly expelling their writings and their busts from the libraries. Virgil he thought to be without genius and learning; Livy was a crude and careless historian. His one campaign, albeit it had the merit of being bloodless, was one of his maddest acts. He marched against Britain, which, since the day of Julius Caesar, had been left to itself, winning a victory over the Germans on his way.

The enemy indeed was a sham, a handful of prisoners dressed up for the purpose, whom he was summoned from his mid-day meal, with a great show of alarm, to drive back from the camp. He returned after routing a host which did not exist, loaded his companions with honours, blamed the cowardice of those who had stayed behind, and censured in an angry despatch the carelessness of those who were living at ease in Rome, while their Emperor was imperilling his life. Britain he never saw. But he drew up his army in array, and with all the engines of war in their places, on the opposite coast. No one could imagine what was his purpose, when suddenly he bade the soldiers fill their helmets and their pockets with shells. "Spoils of ocean," he called them, destined for the capitol and the palace. It was possibly in a lucid moment that he ordered a light-house to be built on the spot.

For such a prodigy of cruelty and folly it is hard to feel anything but abhorrence. Yet it moves one's pity to know that the creature was conscious of his own frenzy, and sometimes thought of going into retirement and submitting to some treatment. Of course there is the common story of how his wife Caesonia gave him a love-potion which made him mad; but the historian's account of the matter is sufficient. "He was chiefly troubled by a

want of sleep. He never rested for more than three hours in the night. Even then his sleep was not undisturbed. He was visited by terrible dreams. Accordingly he was wont, wearied as he was of lying so long awake, sometimes to sit upon his bed, sometimes to wander up and down the long corridors of the palace, praying and longing for the dawn."



Cæsonia gave him a love-potion.

After all, it was not the public indignation but private vengeance that brought him to his end. His own household feared and hated him, and no one more so than one Cassius Chærea, a tribune of the Praetorian guard, whom he took every opportunity of insulting. He had risen from his bed after noon-day, for he was indisposed by the excesses of the previous day. He hesitated about

leaving his chamber, but his attendants, who, doubtless, were in the plot, urged him to go. He had to pass through an underground chamber, where some boys were rehearsing a spectacle that was in preparation. As he was speaking to them, Chærea struck him on the neck with his sword, crying, "Take this!" Another conspirator dealt him a blow on the breast. He fell on the ground, and huddling his limbs together, tried to shelter himself from the blows, crying out all the time, *I am alive, I am alive*. Ninety wounds were found afterwards on his corpse. When it was too late, his German bodyguard hurried up. They could do nothing but kill some of the assassins.

Such a story only wants one horror to complete it. The body was hurriedly placed on the funeral pile, and buried when half-burnt in the gardens of Lamiae. The keepers of the place were disturbed by the spirit of the dead (so Suetonius tells us, as if it were a well-known fact), till his sisters, whom he had banished, returned and paid the last honour to his remains in a more seemly fashion. And in his palace, too, till it was burnt to the ground, not a night passed without some terrible sight.

## CHAPTER XI

### CARACTACUS BEFORE CLAUDIUS



Claudius

The scenes which I have been lately presenting to my readers have been scenes of tragedy. The Greek drama itself, which found its favourite subjects in the story of families doomed by fate to an inevitable ruin, never pictured anything more full of terror and gloom than the House of the Julian Caesars. It will be a relief to turn, at least for once, to a less gloomy topic.

Caractacus was the King of the Silures, a tribe of Western Britain, inhabiting the region now known as Monmouthshire and South Wales. It was his hard fate to see the revival of the schemes of conquest which, for nearly a century, Rome had been content to lay aside. Julius had conceived the idea of adding Britain to the Empire, but had found, after the attempt, that Gaul gave his troops employment enough. The action of Augustus was to contract rather than enlarge the Empire, and Tiberius imitated him with scrupulous care. Caligula's campaign against Britain was only a burlesque, but it showed which way Roman thought was setting. Claudius, his successor, undertook a regular conquest of the island, and commanded in person the army first sent over. Britain was now the last witness for freedom in Western Europe, and it

fell to the lot of Caractacus, who had a certain predominance among the British chiefs, to be her champion in the unequal struggle.

The south and east of the island had been subjugated in the course of nine campaigns, and Caractacus was driven to fight for his own home. The locality of the last conflict is uncertain, but the historian describes the position as having been chosen with consummate skill. The British camp was on a hill-side; the approaches to it were steep in the extreme, except in one place, and here a stone rampart had been built. In front was a scarcely fordable stream. Attack was difficult, and retreat dangerous. The King himself could be seen everywhere encouraging his countrymen to repel the invader, and he was received with the greatest enthusiasm by the army. The Roman general was fairly terrified by the strength of the position and the numbers of the enemy, and would have postponed the battle. The soldiers insisted on fighting at once, and they were right. The discipline and arms of civilization triumphed over barbarian valour. The Romans suffered much while they were mounting the ascent under a shower of missiles. When they came to close quarters, their victory was won. The Britons had neither helmets nor breast-plates, and it is probable that some, at least, of their weapons were of bronze.

The wife, the daughter, and the brothers of Caractacus were taken prisoners, and though the king himself escaped, it was only to be betrayed by the friend with whom he had taken refuge, Cartismandua, Queen of the Brigantes. He was handed over to the Roman general, and by him sent in chains to Rome.

The man who had for nine years continued to make head against the forces of the Empire was no common person, and public curiosity was greatly excited about him. The Emperor had not forgotten that his one military achievement had been a victory in Britain, and he wished to take this opportunity of reviving his fame as a soldier, which indeed it was never quite safe for an Emperor to allow to be forgotten.

A great spectacle was prepared in the Field of Mars, and all Rome thronged out to witness it. The Praetorian troops, fully accoutred, were drawn up in front of their camp. Claudius sat on what may be called a platform, but was really a mound of earth. Not far from him sat the Empress, Agrippina the Younger. The standards of the Praetorians were grouped about them both. Men were not wanting there who were shocked at the spectacle of a woman thus arrogating to herself, as it seemed, the command over Roman troops. But then Agrippina thought herself entitled to at least an equal share in a power which her ancestors had won. The spoils of war passed in a brilliant procession before the Imperial seats. Then came the family of Caractacus, and last of all, the captive king himself.

While his companions in misfortune descended to prayers for mercy, he preserved a dignified bearing. Claudius bade him speak if he had anything to say for himself. What follows is the substance of what he said, or, at least, of what the historian puts in his mouth. "If my prudence had been equal to the glories of my position and my greatness, you would be treating me to-day, not as a prisoner, but as an ally. I had horses and men, I had wealth and arms with which to defend it. It is no wonder that I was unwilling to lose them. It does not follow that, because you Romans desire to dominate all mankind, all mankind should bow their necks to your yoke. As for myself, you can kill me, if you will. Then this day will be forgotten. Save my life, and your clemency will be remembered for ever."

Such clemency was almost unknown to a Roman conqueror. Jugurtha had been left to die of hunger in his prison; Vercingetorix, the last of the Gauls, had been put to death by the very man who describes so sympathetically his valour and his skill. Claudius was of a different temper, and, perhaps, the times had altered since that for the better. Anyhow the British king and his family were spared. Policy, however, did not allow them to return to their native country, and they spent the remainder of their days in Italy. The daughter is said to have married a Roman gentleman.

One saying is recorded of the captive, when, after his audience before the Emperor, he was taken to see the sights of Rome. "And you," he said, "who had this magnificent city of your own, envied us our poor huts!" With this remark the British chief vanishes into obscurity.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DEIFICATION OF CLAUDIUS

Claudius, the fourth of the Julian Caesars, was one of those unhappy men who, through no fault of their own, miss their vocation. Nature made him for a scholar, and fortune made him an emperor. He had some learning, and was genuinely fond of literature; but in person and manner he was singularly awkward and ungainly. His mother had the greatest aversion to him. "A greater fool than my son Claudius," was the most unfavourable judgment that she could pass on any one. Augustus thought him unfit to hold any public office of importance; Tiberius annulled certain complimentary resolutions which the senate had passed concerning him. Caligula made him his butt. If he came a minute too late to dinner, he found his place filled up. If he fell asleep after the meal, which he commonly did, the emperor and his guests pelted him with the stones of olives and dates, or woke him up with a stroke from a cane or a whip. In the Senate he was the last of the ex-consuls to be asked his opinion. The solitary honour bestowed on him was his nomination to a priesthood, and for this he had to pay so extravagant a sum that he was reduced to poverty.

Then came a sudden change of fortune. He was in attendance at court when Caligula was assassinated. In his terror he sought to conceal himself under some curtains, but a soldier saw his legs sticking out from his hiding place, and from mere curiosity dragged him out. The poor wretch fell at his captor's knees, and was astonished to find himself saluted as emperor. Other soldiers gathered round, put him into a litter, and carried him through the streets to the camp. All who saw him thought that he was being carried off to execution; and, indeed, for some time his fate was doubtful. The Senate, supported by a few cohorts of the city soldiers, thought of re-establishing the Republic. But there was no energy, no harmony in their action, and the populace was

unmistakably in favour of a despotism. Claudius had the claim of birth, and he was acknowledged without further opposition, but not till he had purchased the Praetorians with the enormous bribe of £120 per man.

I have not to tell the story of his reign. It was a dismal time for Rome, not because the Emperor was bad, but because he fell into bad hands. He was a glutton and a voluptuary, but he was not blood-thirsty. And yet, such was his weakness under the control of designing advisers and counsellors, he shed more innocent blood than rulers who were ten times more cruel. At last the end came. His wife, the younger Agrippina, had induced him to set aside his own offspring, Britannicus, in favour of her son Nero. But he showed signs of repenting of the act. "He that gave the wound can heal," he said one day to the lad. Shortly afterwards he was poisoned, according to common report, by a dish of mushrooms, handed to him by his wife.

This wretched creature, who scarcely deserved to be called a man, was added to the number of the Roman gods. The satire with which Seneca resented this foolish act of adulation is one of the most curious remains of Roman literature.

Claudius, in obedience to the decree which had made him a god, presents himself at the gate of heaven and demands entrance. The report of the door-keeper is that he is tall, lame of one leg, and always shaking his head, that it was impossible to tell of what race he was, especially whether he was a Greek or a Roman. Hercules, as the great traveller among the dwellers in heaven, is deputed to question the stranger, recognises him, and is much impressed by his claims.

A high debate follows among the gods as to whether the new claimant is to be admitted. Janus, who opens it, roundly asserts that, in his opinion, the honour had been made too common, and that, in future, no mortal should be admitted to it. Hercules pleads in his favour. Other gods take sides for or against him. Finally the motion is formally proposed: "Seeing that Claudius is of the kin of Augustus, let him be made a god, and let the thing be added to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid." Hercules is

very urgent in recommending him to his follow-immortals. He canvasses them all, and beseeches them to vote for him as a personal favour. He would do the same for them on another occasion. "Scratch me, and I'll scratch you." Then Augustus rises. "He had never," he said, "addressed them before, but had always been content to mind his own business, but this was a thing that he could not pass over. He must speak, seeing that the fellow was a kinsman of his own. He has filled the world with massacre," he went on, "but of this I will not speak for the present; I will dwell only on the murders with which he has polluted his own house. He slew the two Julias, one of them his niece, and one his cousin; and he slew them unheard and uncondemned. This may be the custom upon earth, but it is not our fashion in heaven. He slew a whole crowd of kinsmen, one of them so foolish that he might have been Emperor himself. Look at him. What a figure he is! Scarcely human, much less divine! Hear him speak. Can he utter three consecutive words? Who will worship such a god as this? If this be the sort of creature that you deify, man will refuse to believe that you are gods yourselves. I propose this motion: 'Seeing that this Claudius slew so many of his kindred and his wife, it is hereby commanded that he quit heaven within thirty days.' "

The Senate of the gods divided on the question, and the motion of Augustus was carried. Thereupon Hermes, the conductor of souls, was called in. He carried off the banished man to the region below, going by way of Rome. As he approached the city, Claudius saw his own funeral, and heard, with great delight, his own praises. So at last it dawned upon his slow intellect that he was really dead. As he came near to the gates of the City of the Dead, there went up a great shout, *Claudius is coming!* And straightway a crowd of his victims went forth to meet him. His kinsmen were there and his wife, and nobles and freedmen, thirty senators among them, and three hundred and fifteen knights, and a crowd of common folk like the sand on the sea-shore for multitude. Claudius stood astonished at the sight. "Why, the whole place is full of them!" he cried; and then, stolidly unconscious of his having had anything to do with their presence, "And pray how did you come here?" He is carried off to be tried by Æacus, judge

of the dead. Æacus hears the charge against him, declines to listen to his defence (a proceeding that astonishes the audience, but is pronounced to be but paying him in his own coin), and finds him guilty. Then his sentence is debated.

Should he take the place of one of the old offenders? Sisyphus or Tantalus might well give place to him. But no. If they were released, Claudius might himself hope for some future remission of his punishment, and that is not to be thought of. Finally Æacus condemns him to throw dice for ever out of a dice-box without a bottom. And so we leave him. It points the story to know that Claudius had actually a temple and a priesthood dedicated to him in the British colony of Camalodunum, and that this was made one of the means of oppression and extortion which exhausted the patience of the natives and led to the bloody revolt of the Iceni under Boadicea.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DEATH OF THE YOUNGER AGRIPPINA

The domestic tragedy which we have seen in the family of the first of the Caesars repeated itself with this last, but with an added horror. Livia had cleared the way to the throne for her own son, and had found herself repaid with jealousy and ingratitude. The younger Agrippina set before herself exactly the same aim, and was equally successful in attaining it. What was the return she met with, it is the object of the present paper to show.

She persuaded her half-imbecile husband, Claudius, to set aside his child, Britannicus, in favour of her own son, Nero. Before Nero had been two years on the throne, Britannicus was dead, poisoned by the young monster who had been put into his place. Agrippina had no hand in this crime. On the contrary, it struck her with dismay. As long as the lad was alive, she could hold his rights *in terrorem* over the head of her son, and keep the unruly youth in subjection to herself. When he was dead, she felt, says the historian, that her main-stay was gone, and that, as he adds with sinister significance, this was but the first kindred blood that the young despot would shed.

The quarrel between the two soon grew furious. The mother tried to make a party for herself; the son stripped her of all the honours which had been bestowed upon her. The breach indeed was not open. They still met; there were the common displays of affection, the kiss given and received; but Agrippina would have stripped her son of the power he owed to her, if she could; and Nero was only waiting his opportunity to rid himself at once of her obligation and his danger.

Poison was first tried. Three times it was administered, and each time it failed. She had fortified herself, it is said, against its action by antidotes. The same story is told of more than one distinguished personage of antiquity; but I fancy this science does

not know of the possibility of any such safe-guarding against deadly drugs. Whatever the cause, the poison failed, and Nero had recourse to another method. He invited his mother to his house on the Campanian coast, the Brighton of Rome, at the same time expressing his regret if there had been anything unfilial in his conduct. He met her as she landed—she came by sea—embraced her affectionately, and invited her to dine with him. A vessel, very handsomely equipped, was at hand. Would she embark, he asked, and go by water to his palace? She declined—for reasons we shall soon be able to understand—preferring to be conveyed by a litter along the shore. Nero was most courteous and affectionate. He gave his mother the seat of honour; he talked long with her on subjects grave and gay. When she bade him farewell for the night, he kissed her more warmly than usual, "so deep was his dissimulation," says Tacitus, "or perhaps," he adds, one can hardly think seriously, "even his savage heart was touched by the thought that he should not see his mother again. Anyhow, his victim's suspicions were thoroughly lulled. She accepted the offer which she had refused before, and embarked.

The night was calm and starlit—"heaven would have it so," says the historian, "that the crime might not escape detection!" Agrippina lay on cushions in the stern; a favourite freed-woman was with her, and a trusted attendant steered. Suddenly the canopy fell. It had been weighted with lead, and the steersman was killed by the blow. The two women escaped, saved by the lofty side of the sofa on which they lay. Then the signal was given to remove the bolts which kept the vessel together (it had been so constructed as to come to pieces when these were withdrawn), but the machinery did not work. Then the rowers tried to upset the ship by throwing their whole weight on to one side. But all were not in the secret. Some resisted the movement. The vessel was upset indeed, but this was done so gradually that the passengers were lowered into the water without being hurt. The freed-woman, thinking to get the speedier help, cried out "I am the Emperor's mother," and was immediately despatched by blows from boat-hooks and oars. Agrippina made no sign and swam to shore, escaping with but one blow on the shoulder.

Agrippina now knew perfectly well what had been intended, but her only hope of safety was in not seeming to know it. She sent a message to her son. "She had escaped," she said, "a terrible danger. Of course he would be very anxious about her, but he must not come to see her, for she wanted rest." The affectionate son was indeed anxious, but it was the escape, not the danger, that troubled him. He pictured to himself the furious woman, whose courage he well knew, appealing to the protection of the soldiers, or making her way into the streets and reproaching him with her wound, and with the death of her friends. Could Seneca and Burrhus, once his tutors, now his counsellors, help him? He sent for them and asked their advice. Seneca was a philosopher who has left the world some admirable morality; Burrhus was a rough, honest soldier. One would like to hear that they rebuked the murderer to his face. But civic courage had degenerated at Rome under a century of despotism. Tacitus even doubts whether they had not been privy to the attempt. Anyhow they stood silent. They knew that they could not dissuade the wretch from his purpose. Possibly they knew that either the mother or the son must perish. At last the philosopher turned to his soldier colleague, and asked him whether the troops could be trusted to do the deed. Burrhus replied that they could not: the memory of Germanicus lived among them, and they would not raise a hand against his daughter. Let those who had failed with their poison and their ship find some surer way.

The advice was taken. The freedman who had been Nero's agent in the matter hurried with a band of assassins to Agrippina's villa. The shore was crowded with a curious and anxious multitude. The news had spread that the Empress-mother had been in peril of her life, but now was safe; and friends and acquaintances hurried to congratulate her, torch in hand, for it was now the dead of night. They fled at the sight of the armed men. The freedman and his followers burst into the villa, and made their way to the dimly lighted chamber, where the unhappy woman sat with a single maid. "Do you leave me too?" she cried, as her solitary attendant rushed from the room. In another minute the deed was done. Years before she had been warned—so the

story ran—that this be would her end. She had consulted the astrologers, and they had told her that her son would be Emperor, and would slay his mother. "Let him slay," she cried, "if only he reign."

## CHAPTER XIV

### A STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

It was a common practice for wealthy testators under the empire to leave a part of their property to the Emperor, and so to purchase his forbearance for the rest. Prasutagus, the King of the Icenii, (a tribe inhabiting what is now Norfolk and Suffolk) had thus endeavoured to save a part of his wealth for his family. The bribe was given in vain. The agents of the Emperor, possibly under the pretence of making a valuation, ransacked the palace, and treated the widowed queen and his daughters with the cruellest indignities.

This act was the signal for the outburst of a hatred which had long been gathering strength. The headquarters of the Roman power in Eastern Britain was the Colony of Camalodunum (Colchester). A Roman colonist was, in theory, a veteran soldier turned into a farmer, still wearing his sword, so to speak, while following the plough. As a matter of fact, he often lived in insolent idleness and profligacy on the labours of the native cultivator of the soil. Camalodunum seems to have had many of these absentee landlords, who were as useless as they were mischievous. They had even neglected the commonest precautions of defence. Walls make a town less agreeable as a place of residence, and so walls had been dispensed with. The only place resembling a fortress was the temple of the deified Claudius. This had itself been made a curious engine of tyranny. It was served by a college of priests, and the honours of this priesthood were forced on wealthy Britons. An enormous fee was demanded from them for admission, they had to support an expensive ritual, and to give extravagant banquets.

The strange portents, of which Roman history is so full, and which it is so difficult either to believe or to disbelieve, were not wanting. The statue of Victory fell, apparently without any cause, and fell in such a way as to seem in the act of flight. A

sound of wailing was heard in the streets. There were terrible sights in the sky and the sea. A more reasonable cause of fear was the defenceless state of the colony and the absence of available help. The main body of the legions was in the extreme west of the island, where Suetonius, the governor, was attacking Mona (Anglesea) the great stronghold of the Druid superstition. This was, of course, the opportunity for which the British chiefs had been waiting. The colonists begged for help. The civil governor sent them two hundred half-armed soldiers. They took refuge in the temple of Claudius. It might have been successfully defended against an unskilful enemy, if proper precautions had been taken. But the place was crowded with non-combatants, who ought to have been sent away long before. For this some excuse might be urged; but the failure to provide the outer defence of a ditch and rampart was absolute folly. The temple held out for two days only. It was then taken by storm and burnt to the ground. The ninth legion was hurrying up to the relief of the colony when it was met by the victorious Britons. Probably the officer in command had expected that his countrymen would make a more obstinate resistance, and was taken by surprise. Anyhow the result of the engagement was disastrous. The cavalry, indeed, escaped to the nearest camp, but the infantry was cut to pieces.

By this time Suetonius had returned from the west. He had hurried on in advance of his main body, and was not strong enough to fight. And yet to fight was necessary, if London was to be saved. It was a difficult situation, for London was the most populous and the wealthiest city in Britain. The instincts of the soldier prevailed. The Roman power must be saved from further disaster, even at the sacrifice of the town. Resisting the entreaties of the inhabitants, he evacuated the place. It fell, without resistance, into the hands of the Britons. Verulamium (St. Albans) shared the same fate. As many as seventy thousand Romans and friendly Britons were massacred in the two towns, for there was no thought either of giving quarter or taking prisoners. When Suetonius found that he could muster as many as ten thousand troops, he resolved to fight. His position was skilfully chosen, with hills on either side and a forest in the rear. The heavy-armed

infantry, in close ranks, occupied the centre, the skirmishers and the cavalry were on the wings. The Britons, who had collected an army more numerous than had ever before been seen in the island, crowded the level ground in front of the Roman position. On two rows of waggons, in the rear, stood the wives and daughters of the combatants, placed there at once to witness their valour and to encourage it.

Tacitus records the speeches with which, as he tells us, the rival commanders raised the courage of their followers. The words which he attributes to Boadicea are just what she might have uttered—more than can be said of the learned oration which a later historian (Dio Cassius) puts into her mouth. She reminded them of the wrongs that she and her children—they rode beside her in the royal chariot—and they themselves had suffered. The day of vengeance was at hand. One legion had been already cut to pieces; the others would share their fate. So tremendous were the odds that the enemy would not endure the mere noise of their onset, much less their active attack. "At the worst," so she concluded, "we must conquer or fall. Men may live to be slaves; but this is what a woman has resolved." Suetonius's harangue it is needless to give. He appealed to the memory of victory after victory won over the same enemy, and appealed, it will be seen, with a confidence that was only too well grounded.

With the steady patience that has decided so many battles, the Romans held their ground till the first force of the British attack was over, and their stores of missiles fell short. Then there was a simultaneous advance along the whole line. Heavy armed, light armed, and cavalry charged together. The really active portion of the British host was small, and even these could not resist the well armed, highly disciplined legionaries. As for the rest of the multitude, it fell an easy, almost unresisting prey to the swords of the Romans. The array of waggons made flight impossible, and the slaughter was fearful. As many as eighty thousand are said to have fallen, while the Roman loss was but four hundred, and as many wounded. Boadicea poisoned herself, and the most hopeful effort that Britain had ever made to shake off the yoke of the conqueror ended in utter failure.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME



Nero

In A.D. 64, when Nero had been about ten years on the throne, Rome was visited by a calamity which surpassed, by common consent, all previous disasters, the capture and destruction of the city by the Gauls alone excepted. A fire broke out on the night of the 20th of July, the very day, as the curious in such matters noted, on which, about four centuries and a half before, the Gauls had entered the city. It lasted five days, not reckoning a smaller and less fatal conflagration which followed shortly afterwards, and before any attempts at rebuilding had been made.

The fire began in the shops which had grown up round the south-eastern end of the great Circus, in the low ground which there divided the Caelian and the Aventine Hills. Tacitus says that these shops contained "goods by which flames are fed," a dignified periphrasis, the commentators tell us, for oil, pitch, resin, sulphur, and the like. There was a strong wind blowing at the time, and in a few minutes the whole length of the Circus was in flames. It was a neighbourhood entirely consisting of poor

houses, and the conflagration swept over it like a storm. If there had been a temple in the way, or even a solidly built stone house, the progress of the fire would have been arrested for a time. As it was, it rushed on without a pause, and before anything could be done to check it, had reached proportions with which it was impossible to grapple.

Tacitus does not tell us what direction the flames took; but we may gather that, at least at first, it was northwesterly. But he tells us how much of the city was destroyed. Something less than a third (four out of the fourteen districts) was uninjured; somewhat more than a fifth (three districts) was utterly destroyed; in the remaining seven, something, but not much was left. Tacitus mentions some of the buildings that were destroyed. The list, both from what it gives and what it omits, helps us in a certain degree to find out what perished and what escaped. Old Rome was destroyed, the Rome, that is, of the kings, and the legendary period that went before the kings. The Temple of Vesta and the glories of the Forum perished. On the other hand, we may infer, as no mention is made of it, that the Capitol escaped. The Palatine Hill was swept bare by the flames. This, apparently, was one of the last regions to be devastated. Nero was at Antium when the fire broke out, and did not return till he heard that his own palace was in danger. Nothing, it would seem, could be done to save it. But the conflagration had now almost exhausted itself. The Villa of Maecenas, which had been, in a way, taken into the Imperial residence, was burnt. This was on the Esquiline Hill. But it was at the foot of this hill, probably the foot on the opposite side to the Palatine, that the fire was finally checked. A vast number of houses were pulled down, and the rest of the city, including parts of the Viminal and Quirinal Hills, was thus saved.

The distress caused by this calamity was wide-spread and deep. The suddenness of the outbreak paralysed not only all efforts to arrest the flames, but, often, the energy to escape. There was barely time for the able-bodied to rescue the weak, the helpless, the sick. The narrow and winding streets, built up, as we know they often were, to an enormous height, made it very difficult to save property or even life. Sometimes the fugitives

would seek refuge in a locality that they fondly imagined to be safe, and would find themselves overtaken a second time. Not a few, in a despair at having lost their all, or broken-hearted at not having been able to rescue children or parents, made no efforts to escape from the flames, and actually perished where they sat.

Nero was not wanting in his duties as a ruler. The buildings in the Field of Mars, especially the splendid structures erected by Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus, his colonnades, baths, and terraced gardens, were thrown open to the homeless and destitute multitude. Temporary buildings were erected for the same purpose of sheltering the victims of the fire in the Emperor's own gardens. Provisions were brought in abundance from Ostia, the port of Rome, and from the neighbouring towns. A public edict lowered the price of wheat to sixpence the peck, the Government, it is to be supposed, reimbursing the dealers for the difference between this and the market price.

The people received his bounty with but little thankfulness. The fact was that dark suspicions were abroad about the origin of the fire. The Emperor himself, so it was whispered, had commanded it. He wanted to have the glory of building a new Rome, that was to be constructed on his plans, and of which he was to be the Second Founder. Suetonius, who was not born till some seven or eight years after the event, speaks with confidence on the point. He writes:—"Displeased, it would seem, at the unsightliness of the old buildings, and the narrow, winding streets, he set the city on fire. This was so notorious, that when some of his personal attendants were found with torches and lighted tow in houses that belonged to him, their captors, though men of the highest rank, did not apprehend them. Certain houses that surrounded his Golden House, the site of which he particularly desired to secure, were actually battered with large engines—they were built with stone walls—and then burnt." Dion Cassius, who was a century later, is equally positive as to the Emperor's guilt, but ascribes a different motive, which, indeed, Suetonius also mentions. This was a frantic desire to destroy the city and the Empire itself. "Happy Priam!" he was wont to exclaim, "who saw Troy and his own dominion perishing together!" Dion tells us of

emissaries sent to kindle fires in various places, and gives us a graphic story of the perplexity of the inhabitants, who did not know where the trouble with which they had to contend began or ended. "The flames were everywhere," he says, "like the fires in a camp." Tacitus speaks distinctly of men who threatened violence against all who attempted to extinguish the flames, and of others who were seen throwing about lighted brands, and who cried out that they had been told to do so. "Either," he goes on, "they wanted larger opportunities for plunder, or they were acting by order." Dion expressly charges the soldiers and watchmen with not only neglecting to extinguish, but actually spreading the fire, "for plunder's sake," he adds.

There is another matter in which Suetonius and Dion agree in making a positive assertion, while Tacitus, who, it must be remembered, had all the hatred of an aristocrat for the imperial system, speaks cautiously of "report." "Nero," says Suetonius, "looked at the conflagration from the tower of the villa of Maecenas. The magnificence of the flames so delighted him, to use his own words, that he put on his theatrical robes, and sang to the harp 'The Burning of Troy.'" Tacitus contents himself with saying that the Emperor's munificence was but little appreciated because of the rumour about the singing. He says nothing of the tower, but mentions the stage in the Palace, from which, of course, there could have been no view of the burning city. It is as well to imitate the caution of the contemporary historian. Nero had such a passion for the monstrous that he was capable of anything, but there is no necessity for supposing his guilt. In a city so circumstanced, a great fire was only too possible. And wherever any such catastrophe has occurred, the popular belief always turns to some particular culprit. The great fire of London was long attributed to the machinations of the Romanists. An inscription on the monument which was erected to commemorate it expressly charged them with the crime. Others said that the Dutch, then our chief rivals in commerce and for the supremacy of the seas, were the incendiaries.

Nero certainly availed himself of the opportunity, however obtained, of building a new city. The most splendid erection was

the new Palace; but even this was less marvellous than the gardens and park which surrounded it, and this, it must be remembered, in the very centre of Rome. "It was not the jewels and the gold, long familiar objects," says Tacitus, "quite vulgarised by our extravagance, that were so wonderful; it was rather the fields and lakes, with woods on one side to resemble a wilderness, and, on the other, open spaces and extensive views."

The rest of the city, "whatever was not occupied by his mansion," says the historian significantly, was built on the most improved plan; not as it had been after the burning by the Gauls, without any regularity or in any fashion, but with rows of streets built according to measurement, with broad thoroughfares, and with a restriction on the height of the houses, with open spaces, and the further addition of colonnades.

The Emperor spared no expense in making everything as perfect as he could. But the money that he spent came, after all, out of the pockets of the people, and the dissatisfaction, if not loudly expressed (for the time for open rebellion had not yet come) was strong and deep. To direct the popular hatred from himself, he had recourse to a strange device. "All the lavish gifts of the Emperor," writes Tacitus, "all the propitiations of the gods did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their odious crimes, to whom the populace gave the name of Christians. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the penalty of death during the reign of Tiberius, at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out, not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where, indeed, all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of setting fire to the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every cause was added to their deaths. They were covered with the skins of beasts, and in

this guise torn to pieces by dogs, or they were nailed to crosses, or finally burnt, serving as a nightly illumination when daylight failed."

In this strange fashion began the long contest that for nearly three centuries was waged between the Empire and the Church. Nero found in the professors of the New Faith nothing but a set of obscure fanatics, and Tacitus echoes faithfully enough the common prejudice of his day. The most important point in what he says is his testimony to the vast numbers of those who were touched by the "new superstition." Paul was still alive, and already a "vast multitude" was convicted of the "crime" of believing in the Master whom he preached.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A GREAT CONSPIRACY

By the time that Nero had been eight years upon the throne his follies and cruelties had made, as we may readily believe, many enemies. The Roman populace, indeed, viewed his excesses, almost to the end of his reign, with a sympathetic indulgence; but the upper classes regarded him with an almost unanimous hatred and contempt. Some had a genuine abhorrence of his vices and crimes; others felt a special disgust at the silly pranks, the acting and harp-playing, by which he lowered the dignity of the ruler of Rome; many had received those personal affronts which supply even more cogent motives than the indignation of the moralist or the pride of the patriot. And as the Emperor fell more and more into disfavour with all that was best and noblest in Rome, all eyes were turned on a man who seemed to be not unworthy to occupy the throne which he had disgraced.

Caius Calpurnius Piso was one of the most popular men in Rome, and, though not of a character that wholly approved itself to sterner judges, not wholly unworthy of his popularity. He did not belong to the highest nobility, the class still represented by the Fabii and the Scipios, but his family, originally plebeian, had long been distinguished in the State. A Piso had served with some credit in the Second Punic War; the head of the house in the next generation had attained the dignity of the Consulship. For the two centuries and a half that followed, the family had produced an abundance of soldiers and statesmen. The name occurs fourteen times in the list of Consuls. A daughter of the house was the famous Calpurnia who became the second wife of the Dictator Julius; the brother of this lady filled the office of Prefect of the City during twenty years of the reign of Tiberius, and died in extreme old age without either forfeiting the favour of his suspicious master or the good-will of his countrymen. Calpurnius Piso had a handsome face and a commanding presence; he was a



wealthy man who knew how to give away; his courtesy was unfailing. He had a great gift of eloquence, and was careful to exercise it, not in conducting prosecutions, an occupation to which a certain stigma was attached, but in defending the accused. And he was not so strict in his habits of life as to rouse the shame or the suspicion of a generation devoted to pleasure. He loved splendour and display; he could on occasion be frivolous; his code of morals was lax. No one needed to dread that with Piso on the throne, a life of rigorous virtue would become the fashion at court.

Piso had no reason to love the Caesars. Caligula, invited to his wedding feast, had robbed him of his wife, and then sent him into exile. But the idea of conspiracy had never occurred to him. He was not ambitious; he was even indolent, though certainly not wanting in courage. But when the succession to the throne was offered to him, he did not refuse; thenceforward he became the head, though, it is true, only the nominal head, of the movement.

One of the leading members of the conspiracy was Plautius Lateranus, probably a kinsman of the distinguished soldier who had conquered Southern Britain for Claudius, a man of high character, free from self-seeking aims, and solely anxious to rid his country of a tyrant who was humiliating and ruining it. Another was Faenius Rufus, one of the joint prefects of the Praetorian Guard, a man of honorable life, who had gained some distinction as a soldier, but now found his position endangered by the arts and calumnies of Nero's odious favorite Sophronius Tigellinus. The Prefect was ably seconded by some of his subordinate officers among whom may be mentioned Subrius, who held the rank of Tribune, about equivalent to that of Colonel, and Aspers a centurion or captain. A more distinguished name is that of the poet Lucan. Tacitus tells us that his motive was revenge. The Emperor, himself a versifier of some skill, was jealous of the superior reputation of the poet of the *Pharsalia*, and had forbidden him to recite in public. This was the wrong for which he sought retaliation. That he had no very exalted motive we are inclined to believe, when we find that while the Emperor was still friendly, the poet thought no flattery too fulsome for him, and when we hear the deplorable story of his cowardice in the

hour of trial. The plot was already formed in the summer of 64, the year of the Great Fire of Rome.



Epicharis had somehow become acquainted with the scheme.

One of the most energetic of the conspirators, the Tribune Subrius, proposed to kill the Emperor with his own hand. One opportunity offered itself when Nero, availing himself of the lurid background supplied by the conflagration, was singing to his own music in one of the chambers of the Palace "The Sack of Troy," another shortly afterwards, when the Palace itself had caught fire, and Nero, in the confusion of the scene, had become separated from his bodyguard. The attempt was postponed, whether by Subrius' own desire, or by the wish of his comrades, we cannot say. Tacitus makes on the occasion the profound remark that it is



the anxiety for personal safety that makes these attempts against the powerful so often fail.

No further step was taken for several months. The conspiracy continued to extend, and the secret was kept with wonderful success. A Greek freedwoman of the name of Epicharis had somehow become acquainted with the scheme, and had thrown herself into it with energy. There is something mysterious about the intervention of this woman. The historian says he does not know how she became privy to the plot. He was equally ignorant of her motives, simply saying that up to that time she had shown no thought or care for higher things.

Epicharis became impatient of the procrastination of her fellow conspirators. After urging them in vain to speedy action, she determined to take the matter into her own hands. Looking about for a place where she might commence operations, she thought that she had found one in the naval station at Misenum. Among the captains of the ships of war that formed the squadron of the Lower or Tuscan Sea was one Volusius Proculus—he had been an accomplice of the Emperor in the murder of his mother Agrippina, probably as one of the subordinate officers of the yacht in which she made her last voyage.

He had received, it would seem, promotion, but not so rapid or so great as his services seemed to him to demand. Epicharis made the acquaintance of this Proculus, or, it may be, renewed an intimacy that had existed at some time. The man enlarged on his services to the Emperor, complained of Nero's ingratitude, and hinted, not obscurely, at a cherished purpose of revenge. He boasted of his influence among his colleagues; many, he declared, would join him if he gave the word; and it would be easy to dispose of the Emperor, who was fond of making boat excursions in the neighbourhood, and was therefore often without any body-guard. Talk so openly treasonable encouraged Epicharis to speak plainly. She enlarged on the enormities of Nero, who had degraded the Senate and ruined the people. The time of his punishment was come, she continued, and there were hands prepared to inflict it. If Proculus was ready to exert himself in the

cause, and to commend it to the most energetic of his comrades, he might certainly look for a fitting reward. All this indicated, not obscurely, that a conspiracy against Nero was on foot. Epicharis, however, had the prudence not to mention any names.

She had mistaken her man. In fact the past of Proculus had been such that he had everything to fear and nothing to hope from a new *régime*. A man who had taken part in the murder of Agrippina could not escape the punishment which was to fall on the chief mover in that crime. He must have seen this himself, for he went straight to Nero, and told him the whole story. Epicharis was arrested, and confronted with the informer. But her prudence in concealing the names of the conspirators stood her in good stead. Proculus could give no details, and she met his story with a flat denial. As nothing had been proved, no further steps were taken. But Nero's suspicions were roused. The accusation had not indeed been proved but it might be true nevertheless. He ordered Epicharis to be kept in custody.

The news of what had happened convinced the conspirators of the necessity for immediate action. A meeting was held, and it was proposed to assassinate the Emperor at Baiae, a well-known watering place which he was in the habit of frequenting. His favorite residence in this place was a villa belonging to Piso. Here it was his custom to throw off the cumbersome trappings of state, dispensing in particular with the presence of his body-guard, when he went to the bath or sat down to dinner. But Piso refused to countenance the scheme. He refused to allow, as he put it, such a profanation of the rights of hospitality, such an insult to the gods of the home. "What we do," he cried, "we do for the sake of our country; let us slay the tyrant in the palace which he has reared out of the spoils of his countrymen, or in the streets of Rome." Piso's real reason for refusing his consent to this hopeful scheme was quite different. He was afraid of a powerful rival in the succession to the throne in the person of Lucius Silanus, a man whose claims, he could not but feel, were superior to his own. He was a direct descendant of Augustus and a man of the highest character.

It was not improbable that if he (Piso) should be discredited by an act which seemed to savour of impiety, the choice of those who stood outside the conspiracy might fall to a claimant so distinguished. Another suggestion, leading practically to the same result, was that Piso dreaded the republican proclivities of Vestinus, one of the consuls of the year. Vestinus was a man of energy, and he might be able to bring about a restoration of the old constitution, under which he would himself in virtue of his office, be called to play a distinguished part. Vestinus, it should be observed, was not privy to the plot, and would not therefore be bound by any agreement to which the conspirators might have come.

The resolution ultimately taken was to assassinate the Emperor during the festivities of the Games of Ceres. The Emperor did not often leave his palace but he would be sure to visit the circus on one or other of the two days on which the Games were held in that place, and it would be easy to approach him in the midst of the general gaiety of the show. It was arranged that Lateranus should seek an audience for the purpose of petitioning for a grant of money from the Emperor's purse towards relieving his embarrassments. He was to fall on his knees, and by a seeming accident throw the Emperor to the ground. His huge strength and stature would make it easy for him to prevent the victim rising again. The military members of the conspiracy, and any others who might feel their courage equal to the occasion, were then to run up and finish the work. Piso was to be in waiting meanwhile at the temple of Ceres, which was in the near neighbourhood of the Circus. As soon as the deed had been perpetrated, Faenius, the Prefect of the Praetorians, with his officers, was to carry him to the camp, and claim from the troops a recognition of the new Emperor. According to some accounts it was arranged that Antonia, the sole survivor of the children of Claudius, should accompany him.

Among the conspirators was a certain Flavius Scaevinus described by the historian as an indolent debauchee, whose complicity in a dangerous enterprise, so alien was it to all his habits of life, surprised everyone that knew him. Scaevinus

demanded that he should have the honour and privilege of striking the first blow against the tyrant, and for some reason of which we have no knowledge, except that he had the rank of a senator, the demand was conceded.

On this he commenced a series of almost incredibly foolish acts. He took down from the walls of the Temple of Fortune at Ferentinum with which his family had probably some connection, a dagger presented, it may be, by an ancestor as a votive offering. This he ostentatiously carried about with him, hinting that it was destined for some great achievement. On the day before that on which the deed was to be done, he handed the weapon to a freedman of the name of Milichus with an injunction that it should be sharpened. Before doing this he had executed a new will. This done, he sat down to a meal of more than usual magnificence, and the meal ended, sent for his favorite slaves, enfranchised some, and made handsome presents of money to others. His manner was sad and depressed; and though he made an effort to talk gaily, it was evident he had some very serious matter on his mind.

His next proceeding was to order the freedman to prepare bandages for wounds, and the appliances by which blood is staunches. These strange proceedings roused the suspicions of Milichus, though it is possible the man had already some knowledge of the plot. Anyhow he now began to speculate on the gain he might make out of the affair. A handsome price in wealth or influence might be made out of the information which he had at his command. In comparison with this his patron's life and his own debt of gratitude for the freedom received at his hands went for little. For a while, however, he hesitated; for a freedman to betray his patron was regarded as an atrocious crime. The advice of his wife, however, determined him. "Other freedmen and slaves," she said, "were present and saw all that you saw. It will be no good to Scaevinus for you to keep silence. Anticipate all other informers, and you will secure your reward."

The day had dawned before the freedman had overcome his scruples. Then he hurried, accompanied by his wife, who was

unwilling, it would seem, to let him out of her sight, to the Servilian Gardens, where Nero was then residing. At first he was refused admittance; but, finally, on his urgent representation that he was the bearer of information of the last importance, was taken to Epaphroditus, one of the Emperor's favorite freedmen. To him he told his story, and the freedman, recognising its importance, introduced him to Nero. By way of giving some proof of the truth of his tale, he produced the actual dagger which he had been ordered, he said, to sharpen. Scaevinus was promptly arrested, brought into Nero's presence and confronted with his accuser. He was prepared with a reply. "The dagger," he said, "is a weapon which has been long regarded in my family with great veneration. I have been accustomed to keep it in my bed-chamber. The freedman has fraudulently taken it away, and has now invented this story about it. As for the will it is not the first by any means I have made. I do it just as the idea occurs to me. I have often given presents of money to some of my slaves, and set others free; if I did so yesterday on a larger scale than usual, it was on account of the embarrassments in which I find myself. My means are greatly reduced; my creditors are pressing me, and I greatly fear that my will might not be held good in respect either of the emancipations or the legacies. My meal was, I confess, on a somewhat extravagant scale: but this is my way; I enjoy myself in a fashion that stern moralists do not quite approve. As for the bandages for wounds that is a mere fiction, invented because Milichus, after playing the part of an informer was also to perform that of a witness."

This was Scaevinus' tale, and he told it with such firmness that it gained general credit. When he turned on his accuser, inveighing against him as a wicked and unscrupulous fellow who would not hesitate to invent a false charge, he carried his hearers with him. Milichus was confounded, but his wife came to his rescue. "Ask Scaevinus," she suggested, "what was the subject discussed at his frequent interviews with Antonius Natalis, and whether both he and his friends are not on intimate terms with Piso?" Natalis, well-known to be Piso's most trusted agent, was promptly sent for. He and Scaevinus were separately examined; as

their accounts did not tally, they were formally arrested and threatened with torture, torture being legal when the accused was charged with compassing the death of the Emperor. Their fortitude gave way. Natalis was the first to turn informer. He was deeper in the secrets of the conspiracy than his companion, and better able to ply the infamous trade. He named Piso first and then Seneca, either because he had actually carried messages from Piso to him, or because he knew that Nero would gladly hear any evidence that might involve the guilt of his old tutor. When Scaevinus heard that Natalis had confessed, he made haste to secure his own safety, and gave the names of the other accomplices. Among these were the poet Lucan, and Senecio, who had long enjoyed the Emperor's intimate friendship. At first they strenuously denied the charge. But a promise of pardon broke down their firmness. Each with disgraceful weakness gave up the names of their dearest friends, Lucan actually informing against his own mother.

Then Nero remembered the charge which Proculus had brought against Epicharis. The woman was brought into court, and tortured. But the cruellest pains could not wring a word from her lips. She met all questions with an obstinate denial. As she was being brought from her dungeon on the following day, she contrived to fasten a bandage round her neck, and then, suddenly springing from the chair in which she was being carried, to strangle herself. Her frame was doubtless already enfeebled by the severity of the sufferings which she had already undergone. The historian bitterly contrasts the noble courage of the freedwoman with the weakness and cowardice of the high-born Senators who had not scrupled to betray their nearest and dearest. She, under the pressure of the fiercest torments, had done her best to save men who were, for the most part, utter strangers to her. They, before they had felt a touch of the rack, had hurried to give up to death kinsfolk and friends.

Nero terrified at the multitude of the names which he heard from the informers, doubled his guards. Rome was in a state of siege. The walls were guarded by troops; the port of Ostia and the river were strictly watched. The suburbs and the neighbouring

towns were continually visited by soldiers, especially Germans, for the Emperor was more disposed to trust barbarians than his own countrymen. Whole troops of chained prisoners were dragged through the streets of the city, and kept in waiting outside the Emperor's residence. When they attempted to defend themselves, they found that the very slightest evidence was sufficient to condemn them. If they had been seen to smile when they saw a conspirator, if they had uttered a chance word which could be twisted into a suspicious meaning, if they had dined with a guilty person, or sat by his side at the Games, it was enough to prove the charge. Nero and his infamous minister Tigellinus conducted the cross-examination with a savage persistence, and were assisted by the Prefect Faenius, himself, as will be remembered, a prominent conspirator. No informer had yet mentioned his name, and in the desperate hope of escaping, he pressed his former associates with incessant questions. The tribune Subrius was in attendance on him, and with a significant gesture enquired whether he should not cut down the Emperor as he sat on the judgment-seat. This energetic soldier had already his hand on the hilt of his sword when the Prefect checked the impulse.

Already another chance had been lost. The news of the treachery of Milichus had been carried without delay to the conspirators. The more energetic among them urged Piso to act at once. "Go," they said, "to the Forum and address the people, or to the camp and make an appeal to the soldiers. We will second you and others will soon follow our example. Set the affair in motion and it will be half accomplished. Nero has made no provision against such an attempt. Even brave men are overwhelmed by a sudden attack. Where will that stage-player, with only Tigellinus and his profligate train to back him, find means to resist? Things that seem impossible while you sit still are often achieved by the mere effort. As for hoping that where so many are in the plot the secret will be kept, it is absurd. The threats of torture, the promise of reward, will break down all resolves. In a few hours Nero's creatures will be here. They will bind you; they will put you to a shameful death. How much more noble to stand or fall with your country, to perish as the champion of freedom. The soldiers may

fail you, the populace may desert; but you will at least make posterity respect you." All this fell upon deaf ears. Piso retired to his house, and prepared to meet his fate with courage. The executioners soon came. Nero unable to trust the veterans with whom Piso, he knew, was popular, had sent some recruits to do the bloody deed. The victim was permitted to put an end to his life by opening the veins in his arms. Lateranus was punished next. He was hurried off from his home without being allowed to bid farewell to his family. The tribune who slew him was actually one of the conspirators; but Lateranus met his fate in dignified silence without a word of reproach to his executioner.

Seneca perished the same day. I have described his last hours in the next chapter. The Prefect Faenius did not long escape detection. Scaevinus turned upon him with the words: "No one knows the truth better than you. Surely you ought to confess your guilt to so kind a prince." The Prefect could hardly stammer out a few words of defiance. Other witnesses were found to corroborate Scaevinus, and he was promptly seized and before long executed.

The Tribune Subrius was the next victim. At first he denied the charge: "Am I likely," he cried, "to have cast in my lot with such a set of cowards?" When the evidence against him proved to be too strong, he confessed his share in the conspiracy, and gloried in what he had done. Nero asked him why he had broken his soldier's oath of fidelity. "Because I hated you. No one among your soldiers could have been more loyal to you while you deserved regard. But I began to hate you when you murdered your mother and your wife, when you exhibited yourself as a chariot-driver, an actor, an incendiary." Nero was confounded by this freedom of speech; ready to commit crime, he had never been used to hear it properly characterised. A fellow tribune was ordered to administer the death-stroke. The grave that was to receive his corpse had already been dug. "It is too shallow and too narrow," he cried, "even this you could not do properly." The executioner bade him hold out his head bravely. "I only hope," said the dauntless soldier, "that you will strike as bravely as I shall submit."

Lucan who had been permitted to open his veins, breathed his last repeating some of his own verses, in which he had described a soldier bleeding to death.

The Great Conspiracy was crushed. If the energetic Subrius had been in the place of the indolent Piso it would almost as certainly have succeeded, and possibly would have spared the world the year of bloodshed which followed, four years later, the fall of Nero.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LAST HOURS OF A PHILOSOPHER

I have called Seneca (for it is of him that I am writing), a philosopher, but it has often been doubted whether he is entitled to the name. In his early manhood he was banished to Sardinia, and he showed a deplorable want of fortitude in bearing the deprivations of exile. He contrived somehow to amass enormous wealth, and he has been accused by one historian, who, however, is obviously unfair, of amassing it by exactions which roused a province to revolt. It is unjust, of course, to judge a tutor by the crimes which his pupil may commit, especially if that pupil comes of a race tainted by madness and crime, and is subjected to the awful temptations of despotic power. Still we have seen Seneca, as Nero's accomplice in crime, do what a good man would sooner have perished than be privy to. On the other hand, there is much that might be argued, did time and space allow, in Seneca's favour. Anyhow, he died with courage and dignity. It may be said indeed that this was an occasion to which a Roman, whatever his character, was seldom unequal. Still there was something more than mere stolidity or bravado in the way in which Seneca bore himself.

A formidable conspiracy against Nero, described in the last chapter, had been detected and crushed. Among the accused was Seneca. Probably he knew of the conspiracy, but he had carefully abstained from taking any part in it. The only thing even alleged against him was the statement of one of the informers that Piso had sent him (the informer) to Seneca with a complaint that he was not allowed to see him, and that Seneca had replied that frequent interviews would not be for the benefit of either of them, adding that his own life depended on the safety of Piso. An officer was sent to interrogate the accused man, who had that day returned from one of his seats in Campania to a villa in the suburbs. The house was surrounded with troops, and the

philosopher, who was dining with his wife and two friends, was examined. He allowed that the informer's account was true to a certain extent. Piso had complained of not being allowed to see him, and he had pleaded in excuse his feeble health and his love of quiet. The other remark he did not acknowledge. The officer carried back this answer to his employers. Asked whether Seneca seemed to be thinking of suicide—the common death of the accused in these days of terror—he replied that he had seen nothing to make him think so. The accused was perfectly cheerful and calm. The officer was sent back with the fatal order: Seneca must either kill himself or be killed. The man, who was himself one of the conspirators, made an effort to save the victim. He went to his general—he was a tribune of the Praetorians—and asked him whether he should execute the order. (It should be explained that there was a party for offering the throne to Seneca.) The general, another conspirator, hoped to save himself, and told him to obey. He went, but had the grace to stay outside and delegate his task to a centurion.

Seneca heard the message without dismay, and called for his will. The centurion said that he must not have it. The philosopher turned to his friends and said, "I am forbidden to recognise your services by a legacy; but I can at least leave you the example of my life." They burst into tears. He rebuked them. "Why," he asked, "have we been studying the maxims of philosophers for so many years, except to help us in a crisis like this? Who did not know the savagery of Nero? He has murdered his mother and his brother. It was only left to him to murder his tutor."

Then he spoke to his wife, bidding her to be of good courage and find consolation in the memory of the days that they had spent happily and virtuously together. She declared that she would die with him. "I have tried," he said, "to reconcile you to life; but if you prefer death, let it be so. I will not grudge it, though yours will be the more illustrious end."

With one blow the two cut the veins in their arms. Seneca was old and feeble, and the blood flowed slowly. So great were

his sufferings that he persuaded his wife to leave him, lest his own courage should fail. When she was gone, he called his secretaries and dictated what we may call his farewell to the world. Tacitus says that he will not repeat what was so well known to his readers. Unhappily it is now lost. His agony was still protracted, and he begged his physician, who was also a kinsman, to give him a dose of hemlock, the poison with which Socrates had been put to death by his countrymen. The dose was administered, but in vain. He then was placed in a warm bath. Playfully scattering the water on the slaves who stood by, "This is a libation," he cried, "to Jupiter the Deliverer." At last he managed to find release from his pain in the suffocating heat of the *calidarium* (the hot chamber). His funeral was conducted with the utmost simplicity. For this he had provided by a will made at the very height of his wealth and power. Whatever may be thought of Seneca's life, his death was the death of a philosopher.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DEATH OF NERO

It was not by his crimes but by his follies that Nero wore out the patience of his people. They endured him when he poisoned his half-brother Britannicus, when he murdered his innocent wife and the mother who had sold her very soul to purchase the throne for him, when he slew or compelled to suicide the best and noblest of Rome—Corbulo, the great general who had saved the Eastern provinces from Parthia, Lucan the rival of Virgil, and Seneca, the most eloquent of philosophers. Even when he set Rome on fire to build on its ruins a city more to his liking, they bore with him. But when he displayed himself as a player and singer, and that not only before his countrymen, which was bad enough, but before the foreigner, his subjects would endure him no longer.

As the end approached he had the curious warnings which fail to warn, and only mock the man who is doomed to ruin with useless fears. He would lose his throne, one soothsayer told him. "Then my art shall support me," he replied, and he applied himself with more diligence than ever to his singing and harp-playing. He consulted the oracle at Delphi, which still professed to foretell the future, and it bade him beware of "the seventy-third year."

Naturally he thought that it was his own seventy-third year that was meant, and, as he was then barely thirty, he saw a large vista of life before him. He became incredibly confident. Some valuables belonging to him were lost about this time at sea. "The fish will bring them back," he said. But a deep discontent was stirring in the provinces. Gaul rose against him under its pro-consul Vindex. He was at Naples when the news reached him. At first he did nothing. For eight days he would give no orders, but seemed simply trying to forget the whole matter. Then he sent a letter to the Senate begging it to avenge him; but the wrong which seemed to touch him most, was a reflection on him as a musician.

"Did you ever know a better?" he asked everyone. The news from the provinces grew worse, and he returned in hot haste to Rome. Then what was really the crushing blow fell upon him. Gaul was nearly helpless, for it was overpowered by the huge armies that guarded the frontier of the Rhine. Vindex actually perished before the prince against whom he had risen. But when Spain under its governor Galba, one of the old Roman nobility, declared against the tyrant, his fate was sealed. This he seemed to know. When he heard that Galba was in arms, he fell speechless to the ground. (It was Galba who fulfilled the prophecy of the "seventy-third year." That was exactly his age.) All attempt at comfort failed. In vain he was reminded that there had been revolts against other emperors. He saw no hope. "I shall lose my throne," he cried, "and live to see it." Then he ordered the wildest schemes of revenge. To put to death all the provincial governors, to massacre all the exiles and every native of Gaul that was in the city, to invite the senators to a banquet and poison them in a mass, to set the city on fire and let loose at the same time the wild beasts that were kept for the shows—such were some of his plans.

But he determined on action. He deposed the two consuls, and appointed himself in their place, and began to prepare to take the field. He equipped companies of women like Amazons, and levied a scarcely more trustworthy force of slaves. Of course baggage-waggons to convey the stage furniture for his performances were not forgotten. His terror awoke the conscience that had been slumbering within him. His sleep had hitherto been dreamless. Now it was disturbed by hideous sights. Now he seemed to be steering a ship, and his mother wrenched the rudder out of his hand; at another time his murdered wife Octavia drew him into some misty darkness, nor was he able to resist.

Within a few days there was not an army that had not revolted. His thoughts now wavered between suicide and escape. He sent to Locusta, the hag who had supplied him with poisons, and obtained from her a deadly drug which he put away in a box of gold. Then he sought to discover whether any of the officers of his Praetorian Guard would accompany him in the flight to some unknown region which he meditated. Some were silent; some

openly refused; one even cried, "Is death then so terrible? To fly to the Parthian king, to throw himself at Galba's feet, to address the people and ask pardon for his misdeeds, begging to have the Empire restored to him, or, at least, to be made Governor of Egypt, were plans that suggested themselves to him. He actually prepared his speech, but never delivered it, fearing to be torn in pieces on his way to the forum.

He put off his decision to the next day and retired to his chamber. Waking about midnight, he found his body-guard had left him. He sent messages to some of his courtiers, which no one answered; he went himself to their houses, but the doors were fast closed against him. He returned to his chamber. His attendants had pillaged it, taking even the golden poison-box. He resolved to die, but could not even find a gladiator to deal the fatal blow. "Have I then neither a friend nor an enemy?" he cried in his despair. Then again the love of life returned, and he thought of escape. A freedman suggested his villa in the suburbs, and Nero started for it on horseback. He was barefooted, with a faded cloak thrown over his shirt, and his head wrapped about with a napkin. The shock of an earthquake and a thunderstorm added a horror to the night, and more terrible than either were the shouts of the Praetorians invoking curses upon Nero and blessings upon Galba. His horse started at corpse in the way; the napkin fell from his face, and a soldier recognised and saluted him.

While waiting to get into the villa he drank from a puddle in the road. "So this is Nero's beverage!" he cried. At last he crept into a wretched little chamber, and lay down to rest on a palliasse of straw. He was hungry and thirsty, but could not eat the coarse bread that was offered to him. A little tepid water he swallowed.

His companions did not forget what was due to a Roman's sense of dignity, and implored him to put an end to his life, and so escape the insults which would be showered upon him. He consented so far as to order a trench to be dug for his grave, and other preparations to be made. Again and again, as the dismal work went on, he exclaimed: "What an artist the world is losing!"

At last he was stung into action. The freedman who was giving him this miserable hospitality received a letter from the city. Questioned as to its contents, he replied: "The Senate has declared you a public enemy, and decreed that you should be punished in the ancient fashion." "What is that?" asked Nero. He was told that the criminal was stripped, with his head thrust into a fork, and flogged to death. The prospect terrified him. He caught up two daggers, which he had brought with him, and tried their edge. But his courage failed. "The time is not come," he said. First he bade a companion begin the funeral lamentation; then, again, begged some one to set him the example of dying with courage; finally, he tried to brace himself to the deed. "It is base to live;" "This ill beseems Nero;" "Nero, rouse yourself." More powerful than anything was the sound of a horse's hoof. A trooper had been sent to take him alive. He hurriedly murmured a verse from Homer—

"I hear the sound of some swift-footed steed,"

and thrust a poniard into his throat, a freedman helping to drive home the blow. He was dying when the officer sent to arrest him rushed into the room, and endeavoured to staunch the blood. "Too late!" he cried; "and this is your fidelity!" With these words he breathed his last, his eyes stiffening with so horrible a look that all who saw it were struck with terror.

And yet this monster was regretted! The Roman populace, when they wanted to compliment a favourite, greeted him as another Nero; and more than once the security of the Empire was disturbed by the rumour that Nero had returned to claim his throne.



## CHAPTER XIX

### A NOBLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL



Galba

Suetonius tells a strange story about the extinction of the house of the Julian Caesars. It runs thus: Livia, the wife of Augustus shortly after her marriage to that prince, paid a visit to one of the country residences of her family at Veii. While she was there an eagle that was flying over her head dropped into her lap a white hen that had a sprig of laurel in its mouth. Livia had the hen carefully tended, and planted the sprig of laurel. The bird became the mother of a numerous family; the sprig grew into a shrubbery so large that the Emperor and his successors always gathered from it the laurel crown which they wore on the occasion of a triumph. The sprigs then used were afterwards planted, and it was observed—so the story runs—that the cutting which each Emperor put into the ground began to wither away when his end approached, while the original shrubbery still flourished. In the last year of Nero's reign this too perished entirely, while the whole brood of fowls descended from Livia's hen also died.

If the fall of the dynasty of Augustus was thus foretold, it was also the case, if the same authorities may be believed, that the future greatness of its successor was indicated long beforehand.

The stories are difficult to believe; and, yet it is not easy to suppose that they were all fictitious.

The young Galba, paying his court, in company with a number of lads of the same age, to the aged Augustus, received from the old man a curious response. He playfully pinched the lad's cheek, and said: "And you too, my boy, shall have a taste of my power." "This is an established fact," writes Suetonius, when he relates the anecdote. Tiberius who was very fond of dabbling in the secrets of the future, was told by the astrologer that Galba would certainly be Emperor, but not before old age. "Then the matter does not concern me," he said, remembering that he was nearly forty years older than his destined successor. A tradition to the same effect was preserved in Galba's family. On one occasion his grandfather, a man who prudently confined his ambition to literature, was performing the expiations commonly offered when a tree had been struck by lightning. An eagle swooped down on the victim, snapped the entrails out of the sacrificer's hands, and carried them to the top of an oak. Galba asks the soothsayers what this incident portended. "It means," they answered, "that one of your house will be the first man in Rome, but not till late in his life." "That will happen," said the incredulous Galba, "when a mule has a foal." This very unusual birth took place when the grandson was thinking of rising against Nero. To everybody else it seemed a disastrous portent, but Galba welcomed it as an omen of success.

He was indeed on both sides of most distinguished descent. His father was a Sulpicius, the scion of one of the very few old patrician families which had survived into the days of the Empire. A Sulpicius had been raised to the Consulship nine years after the expulsion of the Tarquins, and the honours of the family had been continued by a long line of soldiers and statesmen. Among his maternal ancestors he numbered Mummius, the conqueror of Corinth, and Catulus, who shared with Marius—in what proportion was a matter of angry and lasting controversy—the honour of having delivered Rome from the pressing danger of a great barbarian invasion. Indeed he traced up his ancestry to a far more remote antiquity. The family tree which when he

mounted the throne he caused to be hung up in the palace exhibited Jupiter at the head of the paternal, and Minos of Crete of the maternal line.

The young Galba naturally became a considerable personage in Rome, and all the more so because he was a childless widower. His first wife was a Lepida, and had he wished to marry again he might have espoused the mother of the future Emperor Nero. Agrippina indeed showed such a preference for him, even before he was free, that Lepida's mother reproached and even struck her at a ladies' party. He was a close attendant on the Empress-mother Livia, who left him the magnificent legacy of £500,000. This was cut down by Tiberius, the residuary legatee, to £5,000 on the ground that the sum was expressed not in words but in figures. Even this the legatee did not receive.

The high offices of state were opened to him before the usual age. He was praetor probably in his thirty-fifth year, and certainly consul in his thirty-seventh. Persons curious in such matters afterwards observed it as a remarkable coincidence, that his predecessor in the Consulship was the father of Nero, and his successor the father of Otho. Nothing else that was notable occurred except it be that in the Games which it was his duty as Praetor to exhibit he introduced a new spectacle—elephants walking on the tight-rope.

His consulship was followed by a military command in Gaul. His predecessor was a certain Lentulus surnamed Gaetulicus whose easy rule had somewhat weakened the bonds of military discipline. Galba was as conservative in this as in other respects. The day after he took over the command the soldiers applauded the performances of a spectacle exhibited in the camp. This was against rule, and the new general signified his displeasure by giving that night as the watchwords "Hands under cloaks!" The next day everybody in the camp was singing a line which may be Englished thus:

Soldiers! learn to be soldierly:  
Gaetulicus dead,  
Galba rules in his stead:

Soldiers! learn to be soldierly.

All the men, veterans as well as recruits, were kept hard at work, while the now commander practised what he preached, if indeed it is true that on one occasion he ran for twenty miles by the side of the Emperor's chariot.

The death of Caligula gave him the opportunity of which he availed himself twenty-seven years later. The various influential people urged him to declare himself Emperor. He declined the offer. Claudius felt his forbearance so strongly as always to show him the greatest consideration. Among other honours he was specially chosen to take charge of the province of Africa, then much disturbed by internal commotions and by the attacks of barbarous neighbours. Galba acquired a great reputation as a justly severe ruler. Some of his recorded decisions have a very oriental aspect. A soldier who was convicted of having sold a peck of flour for a large sum of money when his comrades were almost starving, he ordered to be starved to death. In a case of the disputed ownership of a horse he directed that the animal should be taken with its head covered to the place where it was accustomed to drink, and be allowed to find its way home.

For his services in Germany and Africa he received the distinctions which had been substituted for the honour of a triumph, by this time reserved for the Emperor, and three priestly offices. The next fifteen years he spent in profound retirement. In A.D. 60 he was appointed to the Governorship of Eastern Spain. Here the old prognostics of power followed him. The hair of the acolyte at a sacrifice at which he was assisting suddenly changed in colour from black to white. The wise men declared that this indicated an approaching change in the government of the world. A young man was to be succeeded by an old. Not less significant was the discovery of twelve axes which seemed to have fallen from the sky at a place which had been struck by lightning. Whatever the cause, Galba found it expedient to change his line of conduct. He began by showing his old severity. He cut off the hands of a fraudulent money-changer, and crucified a guardian who had poisoned his ward, a lad to whose inheritance he stood

next in succession. The man protested that he was a Roman citizen. Galba directed that the cross should be white-washed by way of distinction, and made much loftier than those of the criminals who suffered with him. But such energy he felt to be dangerous. In the later years of his government he did as little as he could. "One has not to render an account for doing nothing," he was wont to say.

After all he was compelled to act in self-preservation. Vindex, who had risen against Nero in Gaul, sent him a letter imploring him to deliver the human race from an intolerable tyranny. This entreaty he might have disregarded; but the prayer was enforced by the discovery that Nero had sent orders for his assassination to the imperial agents. This decided him. He held what we may call an assembly of notables, the chief civil and military authorities of the province. He exhibited as many portraits of the victims of Nero as he could collect, and denounced the tyrant. Saluted Emperor, he preferred to call himself the "Lieutenant of the Senate and People of Rome." His position however was precarious. He had but a small military power; a single legion, two squadrons of cavalry, and some auxiliary infantry. Even these could not be relied upon. He had besides a narrow escape from assassination, and when the news of the death of Vindex arrived he felt his prospects to be so gloomy that he meditated suicide. Then came the news that Nero was dead, and that the armies of the Empire had accepted him. On this he dropped the title of Lieutenant and assumed the style of Caesar.

Unfortunately he was no longer the man that he had been. Avarice in particular had grown upon him until it had become a master passion. Ludicrous stories of his meanness were circulated. The people of Tarraco offered him a crown of gold from the Temple of Jupiter. Its reputed weight was fifteen pounds. Three ounces were found to be wanting, and he ordered the town to make it good. A musician performed very much to his satisfaction, and he made the man a present of something less than five shillings. True or false, these stories showed what people thought of him.

Even when he meant well he was not judicious. It had become a regular custom for the troops to have some bounty bestowed upon them by a new Emperor. Galba refused to conform to it. "I choose my soldiers I do not buy them," he answered. It was a noble sentiment; but was not suited to the times. It was idle to deny that the armies were the ultimate repository of power. Doubtless it was deplorable that they should be so, that the old freedom of Rome should have given place to a despotism essentially military, but the fact had to be recognised and reckoned with.

"It is certain," says Tacitus, "that the troops might have been won over by even the smallest bounty from the parsimonious old man;" and it was the duty of a really statesmanlike ruler to acknowledge the necessity. The old maxim ran: "It is not well to rear a lion in the city, but, once reared, you must humour him." The lion in the Roman Empire was the Army. "And then," adds Tacitus, "the rest of his actions were not after this model. The primitive virtue which he affected in his dealings with the troops was conspicuously absent in his other actions. The consciousness of weakness drove him into cruelty. Officers who were popular, or were supposed to be popular, with the troops were put to death on the slightest grounds. A legion which Nero had levied from the fleet, a service which he always favored, was sent back to the ships. It murmured at the change and the new Emperor ordered his cavalry to charge it, and afterwards selected every tenth man for execution. The real power of the Empire was in the hands of three men, all of them unworthy of the charge. One of them was Vinius, who had been his lieutenant in Spain, a man of insatiable cupidity; another was Laco, prefect of the Praetorians, notorious for his indolence and arrogance; the third was a Greek freedman of the name of Icelus. There was nothing which these unprincipled favorites did not sell, all the while their master was affecting, doubtless in sincerity, a primitive strictness and frugality.

The act that proved immediately fatal to Galba was probably, by a curious irony of fate, one of the very best of his reign. He soon perceived that he must have a younger colleague in the cares of the Empire. Had he chosen Otho, a favorite with the

populace who saw in him another Nero, a strange but a genuine title to their affections, and popular with the troops, he would probably have ended his days in peace. He was too high principled to make such a compromise. It would, he thought, have been useless to deliver Rome from a Nero, if he was to hand her over to an Otho. Accordingly he chose for his adopted son and successor Piso Licinianus, a man of the highest character, but suspected, I may say, of virtues which were highly unpopular. The end came almost immediately. "Two common soldiers," says Tacitus, "undertook to transfer the Empire of Rome, and actually transferred it." Not a sword was drawn to protect the Prince who seven months before had been unanimously accepted by the armies of Rome. We cannot say that he deserved his fate, for he meant well. But we cannot be surprised at it. He failed absolutely under the test of power. "As long as he was a subject, he seemed beyond a subject's measure; and all men would have agreed that he was equal to Empire, had he never been Emperor," is Tacitus's epigrammatic verdict on this "Nobleman of the Old School."

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BATTLE OF BEDRIACUM AND THE DEATH OF OTHO



Otho

A single year, which the historian justly describes as "great and terrible," saw the rise and fall of three Emperors. Galba was murdered on January, 15th. 69; Otho perished by his own hand, exactly three months afterwards; Vitellius was slain on the 23rd. of December in the same year. The fates of the second and the third of these temporary occupants of the throne were decided at nearly the same spot, a village called Bedriacum, probably to be identified with Ustiano, on the left bank of the Oglio, a river which runs into the Po a few miles S.S.E. of Mantua. The locality may be more generally described as part of the great Lombard plain, always one of the battlefields of Europe.

Otho left Rome on the 14th. of March, moving northwards to encounter the armies of Vitellius, which had already crossed the Alps. His prospects were fairly hopeful. His own forces were indeed scarcely a match for the armies of the Rhine which had descended almost *en masse* into Italy; but the legions from the provinces east of the Adriatic were on their march to join him, and his fleet commanded the sea.

The opening operations of the campaign were decided in his favour. Placentia was defended with brilliant success by Spurrina, and Cæcina, one of the hostile generals, suffered a severe check, which might have been turned, but for the inaction of Otho's lieutenant, into a disastrous defeat. But after this everything went wrong. Otho had the best military skill in the Empire at his disposal, but he refused to avail himself of it. Suetonius Paulinus, who had won by his British campaigns a reputation superior to that of any of his contemporaries, was strongly against giving battle. He represented to Otho that the forces then at his disposal were inferior to the invaders', but that every day would add to his strength and diminish that of his opponent. The latter had brought their whole forces into the field. They had no reserves with which to make good any losses in battle or by sickness. From the latter cause they would without doubt suffer severely. Levies from the north would inevitably be decimated by the heat of the Italian plains as the summer advanced. He advised the Emperor to await his enemy behind the walls of the great fortified towns of Italy. Otho was too impatient to listen to these counsels. He could not bear the suspense of a protracted campaign, and so resolved to put his fortune to the touch at once. Even then the struggle might have ended in his favour, but for the fatal advice which his incompetent advisers, his brother being foremost among them, urged upon him, that he should retire to a safe distance from the scene of the action. Paulinus and his colleagues saw the folly of this proceeding, but did not venture to oppose it, fearing to be accused of risking the Emperor's life.

Otho accordingly retired to Brixellum. Two disastrous results followed. The army was weakened, for a strong force, including some of the best troops in the army, was detached to serve as an escort to the Emperor. The disparity in numbers thus became more marked than ever. What was far worse was the fact that the men lost their enthusiasm and spirit. Otho, strange to say, considering how little he showed of the soldierly temper and habit of life, was highly popular with the men, who would have fought

under his eagle with an energy which they were not likely to exhibit under any other commander.

The details of the battle, as given by Tacitus, enable us to form but little idea of what actually took place. That the struggle began with a repulse of the Vitellianist cavalry we know; after that we find little that is definite, only a strong general impression, that the army of Otho was very badly commanded. We read too of one of those strange misunderstandings which have sometimes contributed to, if they have not decided, the issue of battles. A rumour went about the Othonianist legions that their adversaries had capitulated. They greeted the opposing lines with a friendly salutation and only found out their mistake from the angry response with which they were met. So far not much harm would have followed; but the proceeding suggested treachery to their own side whom the report had not reached, and could only suppose that their comrades were fraternising with the enemy. The battle raged most fiercely on the causeway of one of the great roads that ran across the Lombard plain, and on the open space between this and the Po, where a desperate conflict is recorded as having taken place between the Twenty-first Legion, a veteran corps of high reputation which had come from the camp of the Upper Rhine, and a newly levied force, the First Marine Legion, which had never yet fought in a pitched battle. In the first conflict the veterans lost their eagle; infuriated by this disgrace they returned to the charge, and drove their opponents headlong before them. Another legion from the German frontier, the Fifth, routed the Thirteenth; a portion of the Fourteenth was surrounded by superior numbers, and apparently was compelled to surrender. The Praetorians, the best troops in Otho's army, seem to have held their own, refusing afterwards to allow that they had been defeated.

Otho, meanwhile, was awaiting calmly at Brixellum the news of the result, calmly because he had made up his mind how he should act. If the victory was his, well; if not, he was determined not to fight again. He had risked everything on the issue of the day, and he was resolved to abide by it. Suetonius, the historian of the Caesars, gives us an interesting reminiscence

which he had heard from his own father, an officer in one of the defeated legions. Otho had always felt the greatest horror of civil war; if his own conduct towards Galba seemed inconsistent, he excused it by having his own convictions partly justified by the result, that in this case the transference of power could be effected without a struggle. The troops seem to have been aware of the Emperor's reluctance to continue the struggle. Anyhow they at once set themselves to at once combat the resolve. They implored him not to give up hope; he had, they said, great forces still at his disposal. The Praetorians were substantially unbroken, and the legions from Moesia and from the trans-Adriatic provinces were near at hand. Indeed they had sent messengers in advance to announce their approach. These representations were undoubtedly correct. The war was not yet over, if Otho had chosen to carry it on. He had the means of prolonging the struggle, and it might have ended in his favor. But to prolong it was exactly what he had resolved not to do.

The speech in which he announced this determination is finely expressed, though how much is the historian's, how much Otho's we cannot determine. "I do not put so much value on my life, as to make me willing to expose to further danger a spirit so noble, a courage so dauntless as yours. The greater the hope you hold out to me, the more meritorious will be my death. Vitellius began this civil strife; I will at least have the credit of limiting it to a single battle. Others will have held power longer than I have done, but no one shall have left it with more distinction. I am determined that the best youth of Rome, the bravest armies of the Empire shall not be lost to it. I am content to know that you were willing to die for me." He then took farewell of his friends, and gave them such facilities as he could for leaving the place; he destroyed all documents and letters that were likely to compromise their writers. He had originally intended to kill himself that same evening, but changed his mind, playfully saying to his attendants: "I may as well live one night more." He had already discharged, as he thought, all the duties of life, leaving nothing but the preparation for death, when he was roused by a disturbance among the infuriated soldiery. They took it ill that any

of the Emperor's friends should leave him and threatened with violence all who attempted to quit the town.

Verginius, a distinguished officer, who had himself refused the throne when it was offered him by the legions, was in imminent danger, the troops having besieged him in his house. Otho quieted the tumult, and waited till all who wished to go had departed in safety. At sunset, after quenching his thirst with a draught of cold water, he retired to rest, having first put a dagger under his pillow. Two had been brought to him, and he had chosen the one which had the keenest edge.

The night passed quietly. It was believed that he slept. At early dawn the freedmen who were in attendance, and who were watching for every sound, heard him groan. They hurried into his chamber, Plotius Furius, the Prefect of the Praetorians, being with them. They found Otho dead. One blow, which must have been delivered with no common firmness, had been sufficient. The last rites were hastily performed. He had been urgent in his entreaties that his remains should be at once placed on the funeral pile, dreading that his head might be cut off and made the object of insult by the conquerors. The Praetorians carried his corpse to the place where it was to be consumed, covering his hands and his wounded breast with kisses as they went. Those who could not reach the body for the crowd, showed their grief and their affection by their gestures. Soldiers who had been deputed to light the funeral pile killed themselves after they had discharged this mournful office. The number of those who committed suicide either then or shortly afterwards was surprisingly great. There was something in the man which attracted affection in a remarkable way. He had not, so far as we can make out, a single virtue beyond courage; he was vicious; unscrupulous, a foolish profligate and fop; and yet a passionate devotion, which men infinitely better than he could not raise, was lavished upon him. The cause was doubtless some personal charm which defied description.



## CHAPTER XXI

### AN IMPERIAL GLUTTON



Vitellius

It was a curious chance that set Vitellius, ninth of the twelve Caesars, on the Imperial throne. His father, indeed, had been a man of no small distinction. He had done considerable services to the State both at home and abroad. When he held the government of the province of Syria, an office which carried with it the charge of the relations between the Empire and the Parthian King, he had induced that jealous monarch to do homage to the Roman Standards. He had been Consul three times, had been the colleague of the Emperor in the Censorship, and had been his vice-gerent during the British expedition. Less creditable to him was the extraordinary genius for flattery which he developed. When he came back from Syria he found Caligula on the throne. It was one of that mad prince's caprices to fancy himself a god; Vitellius fooled him to the top of his bent. He did not venture to approach so radiant a being except with a veil over his face, and in a prostrate attitude.

Claudius' weakness was a foolish fondness for a profligate wife and for worthless freedmen. Vitellius promptly accommodated himself to it. He begged as a special favour from

the Emperor that he might be allowed to unfasten the Empress's shoes; and he was wont to carry one of her slippers between his gown and his tunic and might be seen frequently kissing it. He must have been between sixty and seventy when he acted this degrading part, for he had the satisfaction about this time of seeing his two sons raised to the consulship in the same year.

The Emperor's freedmen he complimented by putting their busts, executed in gold, among his household gods. He surpassed himself, when, congratulating Claudius on the occasion of the Secular Games, (exhibited once only in a hundred years), he wished him "many happy returns of the day." And yet he had good qualities. Suetonius describes him as a man of energy who never injured others, and Tacitus declares that though many things were said, and not untruly said against him, he showed the high qualities belonging to better times.

Aulus, the elder of his two sons, had no such good qualities. He showed something of his father's talent for flattery. He ingratiated himself with Caligula by assisting in his favorite pursuit of chariot driving; played dice with Claudius; and delighted Nero, who, anxious publicly to exhibit his skill on the harp, was still ashamed to do it, by conveying to him what he represented as the unanimous wish of the people for the performance. Such services had of course to be rewarded. Offices, sacred and secular, were heaped upon him; he was sent to govern Africa, a duty which he performed, strange to say, with singular integrity, though in Rome he had been accused of pilfering ornaments from the temples, and exchanging the gold and silver for baser metals.

Then came the honour which was to prove the occasion of his elevation and of his downfall. He was appointed to the command of the army of Lower Germany. The choice—it was made by Galba—astonished everyone. It was the most important command in the Empire, for nowhere had the frontier to be so diligently guarded, and Vitellius, who had never seen any military service, was confessedly incompetent.



Some found the reason of this strange promotion in the influence of Vinus. Vinus and Vitellius had been associated as partisans of the "Blues," one of the factions of the Circus, amply sufficient reason, it was thought, in the eyes of a notoriously unprincipled favourite. Others declared that the choice was Galba's own, and was due to his jealousy of any ability in his subordinates. "There is no reason to be afraid of men who think of nothing but eating," he is reported to have said. "As for Vitellius even his boundless appetite will be satisfied with what he finds in a province, and no one will suppose that I chose him for any other reason but my contempt."

The new general was so miserably poor—his means having been wasted by extravagant living—that he was without money for his travelling expenses. He had to let his town mansion, putting his wife and children into hired lodgings, while he pledged a costly pearl ear-ring which his mother was accustomed to wear. Even then he had the greatest difficulty in escaping a swarm of importunate creditors, the most troublesome among them being the inhabitants of two Italian towns, the revenues of which he had embezzled. He contrived to get away by threatening them with an action for defamation of character. One unfortunate man who demanded his due somewhat energetically he accused of personal violence, and actually recovered from him a handsome sum of money.

The army received him with open arms. It had been greatly irritated by the treatment it had received from the Emperor. Verginius, its commander, a very able soldier, and popular with his troops, was kept in attendance at court, not because Galba liked him, but because he suspected him. The army had indeed offered him the Empire, and felt that it was regarded with dislike. Accordingly, it was ready for change. The men were strongly prepossessed in favour of Vitellius. He was the son of a distinguished father; he had a commanding presence; he was open-handed and good-natured. His absolute want of courage and ability was still unknown. His arrival was preceded by golden reports of his affability. He was said to greet even common soldiers with a kiss, and to mix with grooms and casual travellers

on terms of even vulgar familiarity. Once established in headquarters his easy and indulgent temper showed itself. No one had to proffer a petition in vain; soldiers degraded for misconduct were restored to their rank; condemned criminals were pardoned. Scarcely a month had passed before the legions saluted him Emperor. He accepted this dignity, and was carried round the camp, holding in his hand a sword that had belonged to the great Julius. Some one had taken it down from the wall of the Temple of Mars, and presented it to him. He made no oration to the soldiers, but the few words that he said indicated some readiness and presence of mind. A room in the head-quarters had caught fire, and there was general consternation, not without a feeling that the incident was an evil omen for the future. "Cheer up, my men!" cried the Prince, "there is a light on the path."

The story of his march to Rome need not be told here. The victory was won for him by his lieutenants. He made—indeed he was called upon to make—no effort. After the victory at Bedriacum he disbanded the whole Praetorian Guard for having fought for his rival. Among Otho's papers he found a hundred and twenty memorials from persons who declared that they had had a share in the death of Galba. He ordered all these claimants to be put to death. Suetonius loudly praises the act as giving the highest hopes of what a ruler he might have been. After all it must have been dictated only by an instinct of self-preservation. No ruler feels that the murder of a predecessor is a thing to be rewarded, however much he may himself have profited by the act.

It was not long before the man's temper began to show itself in its true light. He indulged in the most extravagant luxury as he marched southwards. Nothing was too costly for his travelling equipment, nothing too *recherché* for his banquets. His easy temper, too, was not inconsistent with much brutality. He visited the field of battle at Bedriacum, when the ground was still covered with the unburied corpses of the slain. His suite complained of the intolerable stench. "To me," said Vitellius, "there is nothing sweeter than the smell of a dead enemy, especially if he is a countryman." He was not unwilling however to refresh himself and his companions with copious draughts of

unmixed wine. He jeered at the modest stone which covered the remains of Otho, and ordered the dagger with which his rival had slain himself to be hung up in the temple of Mars in the Colonia Agrippinensis.

The man's recklessness and folly, when he felt himself firmly seated on the throne, exceeded all bounds. He rode into Rome clad in his military cloak and with his sword at his side, to the sound of martial music, while his escort followed fully armed. It was the immemorial custom that a soldier returning from service must put on the garb of peace before he could pass the Gates, unless indeed the honour of a triumph had been conferred upon him. All Rome was shocked when he published an edict on a day marked as unlucky in the public calendar as having been that on which the disasters of Cremera and Allia had happened. The respectable classes were not less horrified when he caused a solemn funeral service to be performed in the Field of Mars to the memory of Nero. This was the model he seemed to propose to himself for imitation. As to the business of government, he allowed it to be conducted by the actors and jockeys with whom he delighted to surround himself. It was on the pleasures of the table that he spent his whole energy. A Roman was commonly content with two meals a day; Vitellius had always three, and sometimes four. He prepared himself for these by the constant use of emetics. His courtiers were commonly directed to supply these entertainments. It was understood that a meal must never cost less than £4000. But the most sumptuous entertainment of his reign, which happily did not extend beyond six months, was that given to him by his brother on his arrival in Rome. At this, two thousand choice fishes and seven thousand choice birds are said to have been served. His own most conspicuous achievement in this line was the manufacture of an enormous dish—so vast in size he called it the shield of "Minerva the city-keeper." This was filled with the livers of a rare kind of fish, (Possibly the "corasse," but not certainly known) the brains of pheasants and peacocks, the tongues of flamingoes—Apicius was credited with the discovery that the tongues of flamingoes had a special delicacy of flavour—and the small intestines of another fish, equally rare with the first,

and, equally difficult to identify. These dainties had been collected by specially commissioned persons from the eastern borders of the Empire to the Pillars of Hercules. But Vitellius' appetite did not restrict itself to these costly viands. It was enormous, and its demands were incessant. Even at a sacrifice he could not keep his hands off the flesh and the salted meal; and he could relish even the coarse food that could be bought in the common cook-shops.

From the torpor into which his perpetual excesses plunged him, he seems never to have roused himself except to commit some fresh act of cruelty. He would make much of old friends, sharing with them, it might be said, everything but the imperial power itself, and then suddenly turn upon them, and put them to death. To one who was suffering from fever he paid what seemed to be a friendly visit, and mixed poison in the cup of cold water he handed to the sick man. His old creditors were made to suffer for the annoyance which they had given him. Scarcely one was allowed to escape.

On one occasion he was supposed to have pardoned the offender, for after ordering him to execution, he recalled him. "What a clement prince!" exclaimed the courtiers. But the "clement prince" had done it only to "feast his eyes," as he put it, with the sight of the poor wretch's death. One wealthy man cried out as he was being carried off by the executioner, "Sire, you are my heir." Vitellius called for the man's will, and finding he shared the inheritance with a freedman, ordered the testator and his co-legatee to be put to death. His victims were taken even from the lowest classes; it was enough if a man was heard to wish bad luck to the "Blues." That was thought to be treason to the Emperor. The one memorable event of his reign is related in the next chapter. It only remains to tell the story of his end. When the troops of Vespasian's lieutenants had found their way into the city, the wretched man was paralysed by fear. His first idea was to make his way to his private house, hide himself there or elsewhere for the day, and fly on the morrow to Tarracona, where his brother still had some troops. Then, to follow the words of Tacitus, "with characteristic weakness, and following the instincts of fear, which dreading everything, shrinks most from what is immediately

before it, he retraced his steps to the desolate and forsaken palace, whence even the meanest slaves had fled or where they avoided his presence. The solitude and silence of the place scared him; he tried the closed doors, he shuddered in the empty chambers, till, wearied out with his miserable wanderings, he concealed himself in some wretched hiding-place, from which he was dragged by the tribune Julius Placidus. His hands were bound behind his back; and he was led along with tattered robes, a revolting spectacle, amid the execrations of many, the tears of none. The degradation of his end had extinguished all pity.

One of the German soldiers met the party, he aimed a deadly blow at Vitellius, perhaps in anger, perhaps wishing to put him out of his misery. Possibly the blow was meant for the Tribune. Anyhow it cut off that officer's ear, and the soldier was immediately despatched. The fallen Emperor, compelled by threatening swords, first to raise his face and offer it to insulting blows, then to behold his own statues falling round him, and more than once to look at the hustings and the spot where Galba was slain, was then driven along till they reached the Gemoniæ, the place where the corpse of Flavius Sabinus had lain. One speech only was heard from him showing a spirit not utterly degraded, when to the insults of a Tribune he answered, "Yet I was your Emperor." Then he fell under a shower of blows, the mob reviling him when he was dead as heartlessly as they had flattered him when he was alive.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE BURNING OF THE CAPITOL

The last month of the tragical "year of the three Emperors" had begun, and the throne of Vitellius, the last of the three, was tottering to its fall. About seven weeks before, Bedriacum, the battle-field on which Otho's fortunes had received a fatal blow, had witnessed the discomfiture of the army of his successor.

At first Vitellius had refused to credit the news of this disaster; an officer sent by himself to examine the state of affairs found his report refused belief and himself charged with having been bribed to exaggerate the defeat.

"You want a proof;" he exclaimed, "as my life or death can be of no further use to you, I will give you one that you can trust," and leaving the imperial presence he put an end to his own life. Then only the supine Vitellius was roused to action. He sent a strong force to occupy the passes of the Apennines, and even summoned up resolution to leave Rome, and show himself in the camp. Even this vigorous action might have at least postponed the end, if it could not change the issue of the campaign. But Vitellius had no faithful friends, and had lost all his energies in excess. He returned hastily to Rome and not long afterwards the army which he had deserted surrendered to the generals of Vespasian.

There was still a possibility, even a probability of a final struggle for the possession of Rome, and this the conquerors were anxious to avoid. They offered terms to Vitellius. His life should be spared; his property should remain intact, and he might choose any retreat that he pleased for the remainder of his days, if only he would quietly abdicate power. The terms of an agreement were actually discussed between the Emperor and Flavius Sabinus, the elder brother of Vespasian, and at that time Governor of the city. The two had several meetings, the last being held in the famous library of the Palatine Apollo in the presence of Cluvius Rufus a

governor of Spain, and Silius Italicus, one of the consuls, the author of the *Punica*, a still extant poem of which every scholar knows the name, but which has seldom been read, so portentous is its dulness.

Vitellius was ready enough to abdicate. His spirit was completely crushed. It was a more creditable motive that he hoped to secure the safety of his family by a speedy submission. His followers were otherwise disposed.

"Vespasian," they told him, "cannot afford to spare you. Whatever promises he may now make you of a peaceful life in some luxurious retreat, be sure that he will not keep them. Neither his friends nor yours will allow him to do so, for peace would never be assured while there was an ex-Emperor alive. Caesar could not let Pompey live, nor Augustus Antony; possibly Vespasian may be more magnanimous, Vespasian who used to wait on Vitellius when he was the Emperor's colleague. Anyhow a man who has had so many honours of his own, and inherited so many from his father is bound not to fall without a struggle."

All this made little or no impression on the Emperor. He had at least the merit of being resigned to his fate, and he was above all things anxious to bespeak the favour of the conqueror for his wife and children.

On the 18th of December he heard of the defection of the force which was garrisoning the Apennine passes, and proceeded to carry out his intention of abdicating. He left the Palace at the head of a procession of freedmen and slaves which bore all the melancholy aspect of a funeral, and walked to the Forum. Such a sight, the historian tells us, had never before been witnessed in Rome. Other Emperors had fallen; the great Julius had been struck down in the Senate House; Caligula had been slain in the retirement of his palace; Nero had perished, but it was where there had been none to see it; Galba had fallen, it might be said, on the battle-field. Here was a man, who but the day before had been the master of the world, voluntarily giving up his throne in an assembly called by himself, and before soldiers who had sworn allegiance to him.

After a brief speech in which he announced his resignation, and an earnest entreaty to all who were present that they would protect his son—the child was present—Vitellius unfastened the dagger which he carried at his side and which was the emblem of his power of life and death, and would have given it up to the consul. The consul refused to receive it, and there was a general shout of protest. Vitellius then turned away, intending to deposit the emblem of imperial power in the Temple of Concord; and to take up his abode in his brother's house. His partisans refused to allow him to enter a private mansion, and blocked up every road but that which led to the Palace. Thither accordingly he returned.

Flavius Sabinus had heard of this resolve to abdicate, and had taken measures accordingly, especially writing to the Tribunes of the Praetorians to confine their soldiers to their quarters. He was in fact preparing to act as his brother's viceroy, when he and his friends were startled by the report that the intention of Vitellius had been baffled. Sabinus had now gone too far to retreat. He was advised to take up arms; but some who gave this counsel declined to share the risk. A collision took place between his party and the adherents of Vitellius, and Sabinus found it his safest course to occupy the Capitoline Hill with such a force as he had at his disposal, a miscellaneous company of troops with a few senators and knights. Some ladies unwilling to leave brothers, children, or husbands, went with him. One, Verulana Gratilla by name, had no motive but the sheer love of adventure.

The troops of Vitellius blockaded the Capitol, but kept so indifferent a watch that Sabinus was able at dead of night to bring his own children and his nephew Domitian into the Capitol, and to send a message to the generals, commanding the advancing force, begging for speedy relief. He had no means, he informed them, of standing a long siege. He might have escaped, so negligent were the besiegers, but for some reason preferred to remain.

Early the next morning he despatched a praetorian officer to Vitellius. The envoy was the bearer of a strong remonstrance. "Was the abdication," Sabinus asked, "a mere pretence intended to

delude a number of distinguished men? If you were bent on resigning, why not go quietly to your wife's house on the Aventine, where no one would have seen you. Your brother's mansion, overlooking the Forum as it does, was most dangerously public. I was still faithful to you, though province after province, army after army had left you. Brother as I am to Vespasian, I did nothing in his interest, till you yourself invited me to treat. What good will it do you to slay an old man and a boy? If you want to fight for your throne, go and meet the armies of your rival in the field."

Vitellius had nothing to reply, except that he was not his own master; the troops had taken the law into their own hands, and he could not hold them back. He could not even protect the person of the envoy, and advised him to leave the Palace unobserved if he would escape death at the hands of the soldiers.

The officer had scarcely regained the Capitol when a furious onslaught was made on the place by the besieging force on the position of Sabinus. The Capitoline Hill had two summits, the Citadel (Arx) on the North east, the Capitol proper on the South-west. Between them was a depression known as the Asylum. There were two approaches: one accessible by vehicles, called the slope (clivus); another for pedestrians only, the hundred steps. The assailants first attempted the former. It was flanked on the right by a colonnade, and the besieged mounting the roof of this building showered down stones and tiles on the attacking party. These were armed with swords only. To send for regular siege artillery meant long delay; they replied by hurling lighted torches on to the colonnade. The building caught fire and the conflagration spread to the doors which, at the top of the ascent, closed the entrance to the Capitol itself. These were partially burnt through, and would have given way but for an extemporised wall built up behind them out of the statues, many of them works of great antiquity and interest, with which the place was ornamented. An assault was now delivered in two fresh directions, one by the hundred steps, the other by the Asylum. It was the second of these attacks which seemed the more formidable. The fact was that the Capitol had ceased to be fortress. During a long period of peace, buildings had

been allowed to grow up in the valleys between the two hills, the roofs of which were on a level with the higher ground on either side. The besiegers climbed on to these roofs, and superior as they were both in numbers and courage, could not be dislodged. And now occurred the fatal catastrophe which made the day one of the most disastrous in the history of Rome. Whether the besieged tried to drive back the attacking party by using fire-brands against them, or whether the latter tried again the tactics that they had employed successfully before is not certain. Tacitus is inclined to the former theory of the cause of the conflagration. The result was that the flames caught first the colonnades round the three temples, and then the great beams (called eagles) which supported the roofs. In a few moments the Capitol was in flames.

This deplorable event, which Tacitus does not scruple to describe as the greatest humiliation that Rome had ever endured, had the immediate effect of paralysing the defence. The troops, mostly unknown to each other and unaccustomed to act together, were struck with panic; Sabinus lost his presence of mind altogether. He seemed unable either to speak plainly or to hear what was said to him. It is doubtful whether anyone could have saved the place; with Sabinus it was hopeless. Very soon the assailants were inside the walls, and though a few officers preferred to die sword in hand, there was a general rush to escape.

In this many succeeded. Some disguised themselves as slaves, some were protected by humble friends, others, again, contrived to pick up the watchword of the assailants and so made their way out unhurt. Domitian hid himself in the house of a temple-servant.

A freedman conceived the ingenious idea of dressing him up in the white linen vestment worn by the attendants of Isis. He thus escaped detection for the time, and found shelter afterwards in the house of a humble friend of the family. During his father's reign he showed his gratitude by building a chapel on the site of the temple-servant's house, and erecting an altar adorned with the story of his escape represented in marble; when he became Emperor he erected a magnificent temple in memory of the

incident. Sabinus was murdered by the populace, against the wishes of Vitellius, who would gladly have preserved his life. One of the consuls, who was captured with him, escaped by taking upon himself the blame of the conflagration. He acknowledged, or rather pretended, that he had fired the Capitol with his own hand.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A STUDENT

The first century of our era was a period of great literary activity at Rome, but of little creative power. We must allow, indeed, one conspicuous exception in Tacitus—but then Tacitus was a republican born out of due time. Perhaps we must allow a second in Juvenal, only that the genius of the satirist is, so to speak, generated by the very corruption of the age in which he lives.

No one is more representative of this literary activity than the writer who, to distinguish him from his nephew and adopted son, is spoken of as the Elder Pliny. Caius Plinius Secundus was a native of *Gallia Transpadana*. Verona (in Venetia), and Como (in Lombardy), contended for the honour of having been his birth-place. The balance of probability inclines to the former. His family connections were certainly with this town. His family was respectable and wealthy, but not distinguished. He was the first of this name known to history. He seems to have been educated at Rome. In his twenty-third year he entered the army, receiving what we may call a commission in a troop of auxiliary horse. (A young Roman gentleman entered the army either as a centurion in the infantry or a prefect in the cavalry. He was "dry-nursed" by an experienced officer who had risen from the ranks.) Here his literary tastes found their first employment. The young captain wrote a treatise on the art of using the javelins which a trooper carried in a quiver on his back, and began a more serious work, which he afterwards completed, on the "Campaigns of Rome in Germany." He used to say that this was suggested by a dream. Drusus, the younger brother of Tiberius, who had formed a plan of reducing Germany from the Rhine to the Elbe into a province, but died before it could be executed, seemed to implore him not to allow his achievements to be forgotten.

His time in the army completed, he returned to Rome, and wrote a treatise in three books, each so large that it had to be divided into three books, on the Training of the Orator. At the same time he engaged in actual practice in the courts. Employment in Spain as collector of imperial revenues followed. Still the book-making went on; but as the times were perilous (Nero was on the throne), and neutral subjects were safest, he wrote a treatise in eight books on "Doubtful Points in Style and Grammar."

Under Vespasian and Titus he still had high official employment. What this was we do not know, except that at the time of his death (of which more hereafter) he was admiral of the fleet at Misenum. His pen was still busy. To this period, including the last ten years of his life, belong the History of Rome in twenty-one books, taking up the subject where Aufidius Bassus left it off, probably at the beginning of the reign of Claudius, and the voluminous work by which alone he is known to us, the Natural History in thirty-seven books.

This somewhat dry catalogue of his official and literary employments is illustrated in a very interesting way by the account which his nephew has given (Epp. iii. 5) of his habits as a student and a man of business. In both capacities he seems to have been absolutely indefatigable.

He rose very early; in summer, before dawn; in winter, never later than six o'clock, and sometimes as early as half-past four. This very short allowance of sleep he could make up in the course of the day; sometimes he would take a nap over his books. When he was at Rome, his first hours were given to business. Vespasian was as early a riser as himself, and used to give him audience before it was light. His instructions from the Emperor received, he proceeded to transact the business put into his hands. This finished, the rest of the day was his own, and was given to study or composition. First came a light breakfast, bread dipped in wine, or, perhaps, eaten with honey; sometimes, it may be, figs or a little cheese. This would bring him to about nine o'clock in the morning. After breakfast, if the weather was fine, he basked

awhile in the sun, listening, however, to the reading of some book, and taking notes and extracts. It was one of his sayings that no book was so bad but that some part of it might be made use of. Then came a cold bath; after this, luncheon and a brief siesta. This brings him on, it will be seen, to noon. The siesta ended, another day of study began.

Neither the bath nor dinner was allowed to interrupt it. While he was actually in the water, the reader had to stop, but when the student was either scraping himself down (using, *i.e.*, the *strigil*, a very rough flesh-brush, but made of horn or metal) or drying himself, he would either listen or dictate. At dinner the reading went on, as it goes on in a monastic refectory. He was so parsimonious of his time that, when a guest on one occasion corrected a mistake of pronunciation, he reproved him. "Did you not understand him?" he asked. The guest allowed that he had understood. "Then why did you make him go over it all again? You have made me lose ten lines of reading." He rose from table in summer before it was dark (Spurinna, it will be remembered, prolonged the repast till far into the night), in winter before six o'clock. (The hours, I may remind my readers, are very indefinite.) In vacation time, *i.e.*, when he had no official duties, the whole day was given to study. Even the time that had to be spent on journeying to and from Rome was not lost. A short-hand writer always sat by his side in the carriage; in winter the man wore gloves lest the cold should hinder him from writing. As it was impossible to read, listen, dictate, or write while walking, he never used to walk. In the country he used a carriage, in town a litter. His nephew incurred his reproof for indulging in an exercise so wasteful of time. "You have lost all these hours," he said; for all time not given to study was, he thought, lost.

The fruits of this prodigious industry were very great. Besides the works mentioned above, he left at his death—and he died in his fifty-sixth year—a hundred and sixty "commonplace books," filled on both sides of the page, (a very uncommon practice) and in a very small hand-writing, with the extracts that he had been making all his life from books. For these volumes he was offered between three and four thousand pounds, and this was



when he was in Spain, and the number was considerably less than it afterwards became. "It amuses me," writes his nephew, "to hear people speak of me as a student. In comparison with him I am an absolute idler."

The story of Pliny's last days is a curious illustration of many of the characteristics here ascribed to him, while it supplies others of a very creditable kind. He was at Misenum, in command, as has been said, of the fleet, had had his cold bath and luncheon, and was busy with his books. (It was about one o'clock p.m. on the 25th. of August.) His sister (the younger Pliny's mother) told him of a strange cloud that was visible on the summit of Mt. Vesuvius. He took a look at it, and resolved to make a nearer investigation. He invited his nephew (who tells the story) to join him. The young man excused himself, pleading a task which his uncle had given him to do. Just as he left the house news reached him which changed his scientific curiosity into an eager anxiety to give any help he could in what he guessed to be some terrible convulsion of nature. A number of ships were launched, and steered, by his command, straight to the scene of danger. All the while, he was taking and recording observations of phenomena. Ashes had begun to fall upon the ships, growing hotter and thicker as they approached the shore. Now came a shower of stones. Then the water grew suddenly shallow. It was suggested that they should turn back. "No," said the philosopher, "Fortune favours the bold. Make for Pomponianus's house." This was at Stabiae (four miles south of Pompeii). Pomponianus had put all his goods on shipboard, and was waiting till the wind, which was blowing strongly on shore, should subside. Pliny cheered him up, said that he should like to have a bath, and then sat down to dinner. He was cheerful, or what, says his nephew, was equally courageous, feigned to be so.

The flames from the crater of Vesuvius were now visible in the darkness. Pliny thought, or pretended to think, that they came from houses that had been left and had caught fire. Then he went to bed and slept soundly, being heard to snore loudly (he was very stout, says his nephew, and we do not wonder after what we have heard of his aversion to exercise). His host and the rest of the

party were too much alarmed to sleep. Meanwhile the open court in the house was becoming choked with cinders. The philosopher was roused: if he slept longer, it would be impossible for him to leave his chamber. As the inmates of the house were now assembled, they consulted as to what had best be done. To stay within doors was dangerous, for the house might fall at any moment, so severe were the shocks of earthquake. The danger would be scarcely less if they went out. Large masses of pumice stone were perpetually falling, and these, though not heavy, might be fatal to life. Still, the latter course seemed, on the whole, the safer. All put cushions on their heads, and so sallied forth.

It was now day, but still as dark as night. The party made their way down to the shore, wishing to see whether they could embark. All looked gloomy and forbidding, and the wind still blew strongly from the sea. Pliny then lay down on a sailcloth, which had been spread for him, and asked twice for a draught of cold water. A strong smell of sulphur was then observed. The rest of the party fled in terror, but his curiosity was excited. He lifted himself from the ground by the help of two slave boys, and almost instantly fell. The rest of the party seem to have fled for their lives and to have escaped; how, we are not told. Some days afterwards the body of the philosopher was found, without any marks of external injury, and with the calm look of a sleeper. This makes one think that he could not have been suffocated by the sulphurous vapours, as his nephew thinks, but that he died from heart-disease, or other similar cause.

It must be confessed that the anxiety to personally investigate remarkable natural phenomena is not characteristic of the *Natural History*, the great work—for it is great in some respects—on which rests Pliny's claim to the character of a man of science. He was an arm-chair philosopher. His industry, as we might expect, was boundless. In his list of authorities—this and his table of contents are features almost peculiar to him among the writers of antiquity—he enumerates his authorities. These amount to a hundred; a wonderful total when we consider how small was the whole literature of the world as compared to what it is now. As a matter of fact, he quotes from more than four times as many

writers, but most of these he did not rank as authorities. But he was a collector, not an investigator; he does not verify or criticise, but heaps up astonishing masses of facts or fictions more or less marvellous. He writes on zoology, botany, mineralogy, astronomy, perhaps I ought to add, anthropology, without having any pretension to be really acquainted with any of these sciences. Sometimes he makes mistakes that are really inexcusable, as when he overstates the length of the year of the planet Venus by more than a half (348 days instead of 225). He seems to have transferred the contents of his note-books, which were probably labelled with the names of various branches of knowledge, with little thought either of where he was putting them or whether they were worth putting anywhere.

Sometimes he may have corrected his authorities; the story that I have told of his end shows him in the character of an enquirer, but the whole tenor of his life was that of a man who sought the ultimate sources of knowledge in books. In this he contrasts remarkably with his great predecessor Aristotle, who set the highest value on the specimens which his pupil Alexander collected for him. Aristotle had a museum, but Pliny had nothing but a library. His book is vastly entertaining; he preserves a numbers of facts which we should not have known without his help. And when he mentions geographical or historical facts, he sometimes fills up gaps that could hardly be supplied anywhere else. And he is not incapable of vigorous thought. Commonly, indeed, he somewhat reminds us of the man of whom, when commended on the score of wisdom, Robert Hall is reported to have said, "He has put so many books on the top of his head that his brains cannot move." Yet sometimes he can express himself with force, and rises to a really lofty and philosophical plane of thought.

Thus, for instance, in his Second Book, really the Introduction to his work, he says: "It is a proof of human weakness to try to imagine the form and likeness of God. Whoever He be, wheresoever He be, He is all feeling, all sight, all hearing, the fulness of life, of Spirit, of Himself. To believe in gods without number, fashioned even of the vices and virtues of

men, is only double dulness. Our frail and troublesome mortality has made all these partitions, remembering its own infirmity, that each might worship piecemeal as his need required."

Pliny was, in fact, something of a Pantheist. Perhaps this habit of thought disposed him to accept the marvellous. "My view of the operations of nature has convinced me," he says in one place, "to think nothing that is told concerning her incredible." It may have also taught him something of his low opinion of man, "the most miserable, but the most arrogant of creatures," as he calls him.

Perhaps it is an unlucky fate which has preserved as an example of Pliny's work just that which the modern world has most outgrown. Possibly any natural history, however carefully put together, would seem somewhat grotesque after the lapse of eighteen centuries. We can value the author quite apart from the merits or demerits of his book. There have been many men of greater genius in literature and in science, but never a more single-minded and indefatigable student.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A MAN OF BUSINESS



Vespasian

We might say that Vespasian, the tenth of the Caesars, was the first to be chosen on his merits. The great Julius seized the supreme power by sheer force of commanding ability and resolute will; the five princes that followed owed their position in the first place to their connection either by blood or marriage alliance to his house. Augustus was a not unworthy successor; possibly the same may be said of Tiberius, though his real character is one of the most doubtful of historical questions.

As for Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, no one would have dreamt of committing the Imperial power to them, had it not been for the fascination, and, it is only right to add the undoubted utility of the hereditary principle. Galba owed his elevation in no small degree to a distinguished descent, which made him one of the first personages of the Empire outside the Imperial house; Otho and Vitellius to the caprice and discontent of the army. Vespasian had no claims but what he had created for himself. His birth, on the father's side, was undistinguished. His grandfather, T. Flavius Petro, fought at Pharsalia on the vanquished side, and obtaining pardon and his discharge, found employment as a bank-clerk in

Rome; his father was a collector of customs and afterwards a money-lender in the country now called Switzerland. He left a wife, Vespasia Polla by name, and two sons. The fate of the elder has already been related; the younger became Emperor. Polla was superior to her husband in social position. Her father was a soldier and rose to a rank which corresponded approximately to that of colonel in our own army; her brother was elected Prætor, and in right of his office became a Senator. Suetonius tells us that many monuments of the family of the Vespasii were still to be seen in his time at a village called Vespasia between Nursia and Spoleum and therefore in the Sabine country.

The younger Flavius was born on Nov. 17th. in the year 9 A.D. and was brought up by his father's mother. So kindly were his after-recollections of the old lady's care of him that when he ascended the throne he frequently visited the place, which he was careful to keep absolutely unchanged, and that on high days he used to drink from a little silver cup which she had been accustomed to use. When the time came for him to choose his profession he showed a strong aversion to public life, an aversion with difficulty overcome by his mother's reproaches.

His first real distinctions were won in Britain. There he fought thirty battles, and added various territories, among which was Vectis (the Isle of Wight), to the Roman dominions. The honour of the consulship followed, and this again was succeeded by the appointment to the Governorship of Africa. His integrity as an administrator was proved, it was thought, by the fact that he came back a poorer man than he went. So great indeed was his straits that he had to mortgage all his estates to his elder brother, and to add to his income by dealing in slaves, horses, etc.

Nero took him in his train on the Greek tour which he made not long before his fall. Vespasian got into great disgrace by his uncourtier-like behaviour. Whatever the Greeks might think or profess to think about the Emperor's performance, he could not help showing his own want of appreciation. Frequently he left the theatre before the entertainment was concluded; sometimes he fell asleep while it was going on. The offended Prince discharged him

from further attendance, and even banished him from court. Vespasian, in no little fear of his life, retired to some out of the way place. Hither, much to his astonishment, he was followed by the offer of a provincial government and the command of an army. The great Jewish rebellion, which was not crushed till Jerusalem had fallen, had broken out; and Nero put aside his private dislike to entrust the care of the war to the ablest soldier that he could find.

The usual prognostics of his elevation had not been wanting, or did not fail to be forthcoming after the event. We have a curious story of an oak, growing in the garden of Vespasian's father, from the stem of which three boughs suddenly shot forth before the birth of his three children. The first was very small and soon withered away. This indicated the birth of a daughter. The second was a large and luxuriant growth; the third had the proportions of a tree. The father consulted a soothsayer as to the meaning of this prodigy, and was so elated by his answer, that he announced to his mother that her youngest grandson would some day be Emperor. The old lady only laughed, remarking that it was very strange that her son should be in his dotage while she was still in full possession of her faculties.

Appearances equally significant were, it is said, observed after the fall of Nero and during the struggle which ended in Vespasian's elevation. A statue of the Great Julius at Rome was found to have turned to the east during the night; before the first battle of Bedriacum, when the armies were just about to engage two eagles were seen to fight; when one had vanquished the other, a third from the east came and conquered the victor. Suetonius tells us that Josephus, whom Vespasian had taken prisoner at Jotopata, predicted to his captor the Imperial dignity; and Josephus himself gives a full account of the incident. Modern habits of thought incline us to put more weight on the expression which Tacitus uses in speaking of the campaign of Claudius in Britain, "Tribes were conquered, kings made prisoners, and destiny learnt to know its favorite," or, it may be, "destiny made its favorite known to the world." It is certain there was a wide

feeling in favor of Vespasian. The Empire was offered to him not only by his own legions but by the armies of Moesia.

After his accession he justified and more than justified the choice. "Alone of all the Emperors before him he was changed for the better by power." He did the work of Empire thoroughly, and, on the whole, did it well. He was conspicuous for his early habits even among a nation of early risers. He began business before it was light, read the despatches which had arrived, and went through the summaries of affairs which his secretaries submitted to him. He put on his own shoes and dressed himself, receiving morning calls while he was so occupied. This done he fulfilled any casual engagements until it was time for his ride or walk and after that for his siesta.

It was in the matter of finance that he chiefly showed his ability as a ruler. He found the treasury empty, as indeed was to be expected after the extravagant reign of Nero, followed by a year of civil war. According to his own estimate not less a sum than forty million pounds sterling was wanted to restore the finances of the Empire to a sound condition—a formidable sum without doubt, in days to which the gigantic monetary transactions of modern times were unknown. This state of things he set himself to remedy, and doubtless incurred process.

Some of his measures were obviously right. It is specially mentioned that he revoked the remission of taxes made by Galba. It was impossible that Galba, who occupied the throne only for a few troubled months, could have taken a just view of the financial position of the Empire. And some of the stories told about Vespasian's avarice and rapacity were doubtless false or exaggerated. There is certainly a formidable catalogue of them. "He openly carried on operations of which even a subject would have been ashamed" says Suetonius, happily ignorant of our modern system of 'corners', "buying up some articles only that he might sell them again at a higher price." He did not hesitate to sell offices to candidates and verdicts of acquittal to persons accused, whether innocent or guilty. He is even believed to have deliberately promoted the most unscrupulous of the Imperial

agents to most important posts, only that he might find them more wealthy when he brought them to an account. "They are my sponges," he was wont to say, "I soak them when they are dry, and squeeze them out when they are full." Suetonius goes on to say that the Emperor's greed of money was his only fault; but he adds that, in his own opinion, the harsh measures which he adopted were a matter of sheer necessity. The machine of government could not, in fact, be worked without recourse to extraordinary means of supplying the deficit in the revenue.

It is not unlikely that the habit of exacting grew upon him, and that he persisted in his oppressive finance after the necessity had passed away. This is strictly in accordance with our experience of human nature, and would reconcile the different estimates of the Emperor's character. We can hardly be said to possess Tacitus' opinion on the subject, unless it be that when he is describing the rebuilding of Cremona after its destruction by the troops of Antonius Primus he means a sarcasm by the words "the temples and squares were restored by the munificence of the burghers, and Vespasian gave his exhortations."

That he had to deal with a state of things in which it was taken for granted that the treasury was a legitimate object for plunder, is certain. Some of the stories of his way of paying unscrupulous persons in their own coin are amusing.

One of his attendants asked that a stewardship might be given to his brother. The Emperor put him off for the time, and sent for the candidate. "How much did you agree to give to So and So for his recommendation?" The man named the sum. "Pay it me," said the Emperor, "and you shall have the place." The original petitioner brought up the subject again. "Ah!" said the Emperor, "you must look for another brother. The man you recommended was, I found, not your brother but mine." His coachman, on one occasion, stopped the conveyance to get the mules shod. The Emperor suspected that it was done to give a litigant, who appeared on the spot with suspicious promptitude an opportunity of urging his suit. "What did you get for having the mules shod?" he asked, and insisted on receiving half the bribe.

But the grimmest joke of all was not his own. It was made upon him amidst the strange license of his funeral. A clown, wearing, according to the curious custom of the time, a mask that resembled the dead man's features and imitating his ways to the life, asked the Imperial agents: "How much will this funeral cost?" "One hundred thousand pounds!" they replied. "What!" cried the sham Vespasian, "One hundred thousand pounds! Give me a thousand and you may throw me into the Tiber!"

That he was certainly not wanting in liberality is abundantly proved by the stories related of him. He made up the incomes of impoverished Senators who had passed the office of Consul to the legal qualification. To towns throughout the Empire that suffered from earthquakes or conflagrations he was very liberal, often rebuilding them with great magnificence. Literature and the arts were generously treated by him.

Various poets received his bounty. Especially we hear of his giving his thousand pounds to Saleius Bassus, an epic poet highly praised by his contemporaries, of whose merits we have no means of judging. He pensioned with the handsome sum of £1000 various Greek and Latin teachers of declamation, and handsomely rewarded an artist who had cleverly restored the great picture of Apelles, the Venus of Cos, and another who repaired the splendid Colossus of Rhodes. An engineer who undertook to carry some large columns to the Capitol was handsomely rewarded for his ingenuity. The Emperor, however, declined to make use of his invention. "I want to give employment to my poor people" he said. A tragic actor received a fee of £4000 from him and two great singers half as much each. His presents to such performers varied from a thousand to four thousand pounds, with the complimentary addition of crowns of gold. Not being a political economist, he encouraged trade by giving splendid entertainments. Gentlemen who were his guests always had presents to carry home at the *Saturnalia*, and ladies on the first of March.

On the whole we get the idea of a vigorous man with some petty weaknesses, possessed with a strong sense of public duty, but without refinement or elevation of character.

If we are to look about for a parallel in modern times, we might, perhaps, find it in President Lincoln. One thing is certainly common to the two men: a gift of rough and somewhat boisterous humour.

Such was his jest to Titus, his son and successor when the latter remonstrated with him on his making a gain from a somewhat unsavory source. He handed Titus a coin and asked him: "Has it a bad smell?" "No," said Titus. "Yet it comes from there."

When his last illness came on, he remarked with a grim allusion to the Roman practice of deifying deceased Emperors, "Dear me! I fancy that I am becoming a god." Almost at the last moment he bade his attendants to help him up from his chair. "An Emperor should die standing," he said. A moment afterwards he breathed his last. The day of his death was the 24th. June, A.D. 79. He was in his sixty-ninth year.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A SOLDIER AND SCHOLAR

"I do not know," says Pliny, writing to his intimate friend, Calvisius, "that I have ever spent a more delightful time than I lately enjoyed when I was on a visit to Spurinna."

The date of the letter is uncertain, but it can hardly be later than the first year of the second century of our era. Before I go on to Pliny's charming description of his host, I may say what is known of him.

He came into notice in that dreadful year during which, amidst convulsions that shook the whole of the Western world, the Imperial throne was thrice handed to a new occupant. Whether he was in command of a legion, a rank about equivalent to that of a general of division, or an officer of the Praetorians, the "Guards" of the Roman army, we cannot say. We find him in independent command of a force which numbered something over four thousand men, three thousand of them being Praetorians.

Some ten months before Servius Galba, Proconsul of Southern Spain, helped by the anxiety and hatred that the cruelties and follies of Nero had excited, had seized the Imperial power. After an uneasy tenure of seven months, he had fallen before what may be called a reaction in favour of the old *régime*. Salvius Otho, a discarded courtier of Nero, was raised by the Praetorians to the throne. But, as Tacitus puts it, that secret of Empire, that Emperors could be made elsewhere than at Rome, had been divulged. The seven legions that guarded the frontier of the Rhine felt that they had a better title to do what had been done by a single legion in Spain. They saluted their general, Vitellius, by the Imperial title, and marched upon Italy. Cæcina, with Vitellius's, first *corps d'armée* had crossed the Alps. The broad and rapid stream of the Po was the second barrier of the capital, and Spurinna was one of the generals sent to guard it. Here again the

defenders were too late, or the line was too extended for their forces. A contingent from the Island of the Batavians crossed the river, apparently by swimming, an art in which they were remarkably skilful. Spurinna threw himself into Placentia (Piacenza), a colony originally planted to keep the Gauls in check, and a strongly fortified place. His troops were dissatisfied with his caution, and came dangerously near to a mutiny. They insisted upon marching out against the enemy, and threatened their general's life when he refused to give the order to march. He appeared to yield, accompanied the insubordinate troops, and waited till better counsels should prevail. Happily he had not to wait long. The labour of constructing a temporary camp, new as it was to the Praetorians, brought the men to their senses, and they were glad enough to get back within the shelter of the walls.

Spurinna occupied the breathing space that was given him in strengthening the fortifications. He needed all the aid that they could afford him, for in a few days Cæcina, with more than thirty thousand men, was before the walls. The defence was brilliantly successful. The first attack, made, it would seem, almost immediately after the arrival of the army, and without any preparation, was easily repulsed.

Cæcina's troops fancied that they could take the place at a rush, and found themselves terribly mistaken. The assault was renewed the next day, this time with the help of such siege works as could be got ready in the night. The fortifications, too, had been reconnoitred, and the weak places discovered. While the skirmishers strove to clear the walls by showers of arrows and stones, the heavy armed soldiers, sheltered by mantlets and penthouses, came up close and endeavoured to undermine them. Others did their best to break down the fortress. Spurinna had a large circuit of fortifications to defend with an insufficient force, but he was equal to the occasion. His skilful dispositions, the contagion of his example, and the enthusiasm of confidence which he inspired, saved Placentia. The issue of the war was not affected, but the town escaped the fate which a few months afterwards, when Vitellius in turn had to defend his throne against Vespasian, overtook its neighbour Cremona.

Spurinna must then have been about forty-six. For more than twenty years he disappears from history, but we know that he must have been consul at some time during that period, though his name does not appear in the *Fasti*. In A.D. 100 he was sent to restore the dethroned king of a German tribe, the Bructeri. The history of the affair is obscure; but we know that the Bructeri were almost destroyed by two neighbouring tribes, greatly to the delight of the Romans. "Heaven keep alive among them," says Tacitus, "not so much the love of us as the hatred of each other!"

The shattered remnant seems to have appealed to the protection of Rome. Hence this interference with their domestic affairs, an interference "to which they submitted without a contest." Pliny makes the most of Spurinna's achievement. "He had only to show his strength: the mere terror of his arms vanquished them; and this is the finest kind of victory." Possibly Trajan, who was now Emperor, would not have appointed the old man—he was now *seventy-six*—to command the expedition, if it had been likely to be anything more than what Professor Mayor calls it, "a military promenade."

It was treated, however, as a serious victory. Under the Empire no one but the Emperor himself was allowed the honour of a formal triumph. All the generals were his lieutenants. But "triumphal distinctions" were granted to successful commanders. These, a statue among them, were voted by the Senate to Spurinna on his return, on the motion of Trajan himself. The honour of a second Consulship was added, with the Emperor for his colleague. At the end of his time of office—probably lasting but a few weeks, for again it is not recorded in the *Fasti*—the old man returned to the retirement of his country house. It was there that Pliny paid him the visit of which he has preserved so delightful a record.

"I never saw an old man," he goes on, "whom I should be better pleased to be like, if only I am permitted to reach old age. Nothing can be more methodical than this mode of life. I must confess that I delight in an orderly arrangement of a man's life, especially in the old, just as I delight in the orderly movements of



the heavenly bodies. In the young a little confusion, a little disorder, is not unbecoming; with the old, everything should be peace and order; the time of business is over for them, and they have nothing to do with ambition."



The old man returned to the retirement of his country house.

After this prelude comes the description of the old soldier's daily routine. He began his day betimes probably at six o'clock, and gave up the first hours to study, "keeping to his sofa," says his guest. At eight o'clock he called for his shoes, and took his first walk, keeping, we may guess, within the grounds of his villa, for if he had not a friend with whom he could converse, a slave or freedman would read a book.

"So," says his guest, "he exercises at once his body and his mind." The walk was always the same length, neither more nor less than three miles. The walk ended, he sat down awhile, amusing himself with more reading or more talk, the latter by preference, if a friend was at hand. The next thing in the programme was a carriage drive. Sometimes his wife was his companion, sometimes a guest. It was a special privilege to be invited to share the drive, for the old man was then most communicative.

"What great deeds, what mighty men you hear about," says Pliny.

And indeed it was a chequered past of which the veteran had to tell! Of the "twelve Caesars," he had seen nine, might even have caught a glimpse of a tenth, for he must have been twelve years old when Tiberius died. He had survived the first emperor of another series, and was high in favour with the second. The carriage drive was always of the same length—seven miles. The seven completed, he alighted from his carriage, and walked another mile.

Returning home, he either rested or wrote. For Spurrinna was a poet, composing both in Latin and Greek. "His odes are most scholarly," his guest tells us. Unhappily, they are lost.

An ingenious German in the seventeenth century (Caspar Barth) published some seventy lines which he professed to have found in an old manuscript in the library at Marburg. Critics are commonly agreed that they are spurious, bad enough, thinks Orelli, to be the work of Barth himself; so we must be content with Pliny's praise of them: "They are marvellously sweet, and tender, and easy, and the charm is enhanced by the blameless character of the writer."

After the labours of composition came the relaxation of the bath. Here it is curious to observe that the exact regularity of life is put out by the want of clocks. "The time of the bath is the ninth hour in winter, the eighth in summer." The Roman hour was a variable measure of time, a normal hour only at the equinoxes,



and varying from seventy-five minutes at mid-summer to forty-five at mid-winter. (The day, whatever its length, was divided into twelve hours).

To calculate the matter nicely, Spurinna had his bath at the summer solstice at 1:15 p.m., at the winter at 1:29. He did his best, it will be seen, to be punctual, but circumstances were too strong for him. The first bath was an air-bath, taken in the sunshine, as the great physician Celsus had recommended, but only if the day was calm. The air-bath was succeeded by a game which, for want of a better term, we may call tennis. Almost all that we know of it is that it was played in a closed court. Pliny had such a court in his own villa. "He plays at ball for a long time, and with much energy: by the help of this kind of exercise he fights against old age." After the game followed the regular bath, and after this some light and entertaining reading. Then, we may guess about six or seven o'clock, came dinner. This was a very late hour for a Roman, and it is curious that here, for the first time, we have any mention of a meal. "Dinner," says Pliny, "is as elegant as it is frugal. It is served on plate, old but plain. A service of Corinthian bronze is sometimes used. Spurinna has a taste for these things, but nothing like a passion."

Dinner was frequently enlivened by recitations, and what with this kind of entertainment, and the host's pleasant talk, was commonly prolonged till somewhat late into the night. "But no guest ever finds it tedious." "By this way of living Spurinna has preserved his senses entire, and his body in such vigour and activity that, though he has reached his seventy-eighth year, he shows no sign of old age except wisdom."

Like most of the Roman nobles of the time, Spurinna was childless. We hear of a son, whom he lost during his absence in Germany, and to whom a triumphal statue was erected, an unusual honour for a young man, and granted, it would seem, partly out of compliment to the father. But probably this was a step-son, whom he had adopted. The young man is spoken of as Cottius, and Spurinna's wife was a Cottia.

So far as it goes, the portrait that Pliny has drawn for us is one that we can admire. If it were a picture of a Christian old age, we should want something more—piety, benevolence, philanthropy. But Roman religion was ceremonial, which had little earnestness in it except so far as it promised to be the means of averting some threatened evil. The care for others as an habitual temper of the mind was being slowly taught to the world by a religion of which Spurinna, it is probable, had never heard. Yet we may look with true pleasure on this old man, cultured, brave, loyal, temperate, enjoying the repose well earned by a life of duty, and may believe that he too was not wholly outside the grace of the Heavenly Father whom he did not know.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE STORY OF EPPONINA

Vespasian, as has been said, was proclaimed Emperor by the legions of the East on July 1st. 69, A. D. A little more than fourteen months afterwards, (Sept. 8th. 70) Jerusalem was taken, and the peace of the East was assured for some years to come. Meanwhile Rome had triumphed over a more formidable enemy in the west, for the disaffection of the Jews, however troublesome it might have been, could never have endangered the stability of the Empire. It was otherwise with the movement commonly called the revolt of Civilis. At one time it seemed as if this might end in the establishment of a Northern Empire.

The march of Vitellius on Italy drained the camps on the Rhine frontier of their best troops. The forces of Upper and Lower Germany consisted of seven legions. All of these contributed to make up the armies which Vitellius and his two lieutenants, Cæcina and Valens, led across the Alps. Tacitus tells us that Cæcina had thirty thousand and Valens forty thousand troops, and that Vitellius himself had a still larger force under his command. The three legions from Britain furnished, we know, considerable contingents, and doubtless various local forces swelled the numbers of this vast host. But it is clear and indeed we are expressly told, that the frontier garrisons were brought to a condition of the utmost weakness, and that they were hastily supplemented by levies made on the spot.

Of this fact Civilis, a chieftain of the Batavi, who inhabited the region now known as Holland, was not slow to avail himself. He had private reasons for hating Rome. His brother had been put to death on a charge of treason, and he had been himself in imminent peril of his life. And his ambition was stirred by what seemed to him a great opportunity of establishing a kingdom that should be independent of Rome. The Batavi were a warlike tribe who were indeed nominally subject to Rome, but whose

dependence did not go beyond the liability to supply a military contingent to the Imperial armies. Their adherence he secured, for his personal prestige was great, while his family was the most distinguished in the whole nation. He found allies in those German tribes which were nearest the Roman frontier, tribes which had been attacked by Rome more than once, and which were always afraid of losing their independence. And he looked also to Gaul for help. Much of this country was indeed by this time thoroughly Romanized, but there were tribes, especially in the North and East, which still cherished the traditions of independence. To these Civilis appealed. He flattered their national vanity by talking of a Gallic Empire, which was to be built on the ruins of the Roman power, though he was perfectly well aware that any new Empire, should any such be established, would be not Gallic but Batavian or German. And he met with some success. The Lingones inhabiting the northern part of the range of the Vosges, and the Treveri, a half German tribe, who occupied the valleys of the Mosel and the Saar, joined him almost *en masse*, and he found adherents among other tribes of the North-east.

It is not my purpose to tell the story of this struggle, but only to give the narrative of one pathetic episode in it. The Lingon chief that took the chief part in bringing his tribe over to the side of Civilis was a certain Julius Sabinus. He prided himself upon his descent from the great Julius. One would have thought it in any case a strange subject for pride, for he did not assert that it was legitimate, while it seems the very weakest of claims to be set up by a pretender to a national empire of Gaul. We may presume he made the boast in days when the idea of independence had not yet presented itself, and that he sought to utilize it as a distinction appealing in some sort to the popular imagination when the scheme of a Gallic Empire had taken shape.

It was doubtless to the general advantage of the country, that the man's rashness and incompetency brought this scheme, which, indeed, could never have been successfully carried out, to a speedy end. Early in 70 A. D., anxious, it would seem to anticipate all other possible claimants to the new throne, he called

his tribe to arms. His first care was to destroy all the public records of the alliance between the state of the Lingones and Rome. The pillars and obelisks on which these were inscribed were thrown to the ground. Having thus proclaimed the independence of the Lingones, he directed his followers to salute him as Emperor. He seems to have been of a weak and foolish nature, and his movement was, as will be seen, almost immediately crushed. Still his name may be remembered as the first of many pretenders who claimed an Empire independent of Rome.

Sabinus' first and last effort to assert his power was directed against his neighbours the Sequani, a Keltic people who occupied the country between the Jura range and the Saône. This tribe he attacked with a hastily levied force of his tribesmen. The fortune of the day went against him, and he fled from the field of battle with a cowardice equal to the rashness with which he had ventured on it. And now begins the romance connected with his name. "Wishing to spread a report that he had perished," writes Tacitus, "he burnt the country-house in which he had taken refuge, and was then supposed to have put an end to his own life. I shall relate at the proper opportunity," he goes on to say, "by what contrivances and in what hiding places he prolonged his life for the nine following years, and describe at the same time the fidelity of his friends and the conspicuous courage of his wife Epponina." Unhappily this part of the historian's narrative has been lost. Plutarch, however, tells the story, which he heard, it would seem, from the lips of one of Sabinus' sons.

Sabinus, thanks, it may be, to his precipitate flight from the field of battle, might, it seems, have easily made his escape to some place which then was, at least, beyond the reach of the Roman arms. But he found it impossible to take with him his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, and, on the other hand, he could not make up his mind to leave her. The plan that occurred to him was to disappear so completely as to make everyone believe that he was dead, and then, waiting awhile till the affair had more or less been forgotten, to escape with his wife. For the present she as well as the rest of the world was to be deceived. He made his

way to one of his country-houses, and dismissed the slaves that belonged to the establishment, after telling them that he meant to commit suicide. This done, he set fire to the house. What he really did was to retire to some subterranean storehouses, the secret of which was known to none but himself and two freedmen. One of these freedmen he sent to his wife charged with a message of farewell. The man was to tell her that her husband had taken poison. Her grief he calculated would give additional credit to the tale of his death.

The plan threatened to succeed only too well. Epponina, on hearing these dismal tidings, abandoned herself to grief. Throwing herself on the ground, she remained for three days and nights without taking any food. Sabinus, informed of what was going on, became fearful for her life, and, as a last resource, sent the freedman again with a message that he was not really dead but in hiding. At the same time he begged her to continue her mourning. Epponina, accordingly, continued to act the part of the disconsolate widow, while she found opportunities of visiting her husband, unknown to all but the two faithful freedmen.

After the expiration of seven months, when Vespasian was firmly seated on the throne, she conceived the bold design of taking her husband to Rome and petitioning for his pardon. Her friends encouraged her to hope that this might be obtained. She made him assume a disguise, probably that of a slave, and contrived that he should escape recognition. The journey however proved to be fruitless. The Emperor could not be approached. Epponina and Sabinus returned to their place of concealment. He of course never emerged from it; but she lived a double life, spending part of her time with her husband, and part in society, paying even occasional visits to Rome.

For several years this went on, the secret never being discovered, even though twice during this period Epponina became a mother. Just before the end of Vespasian's reign husband and wife were arrested—we are not told how this happened—and were brought into the Imperial presence. She made an appeal for mercy which brought tears to the eyes of all

who were present, even affecting the Emperor himself, "See," she cried pointing to her two children, "these boys, I brought them forth, reared them in the tomb, that there might be more of us to beg for your mercy."

But Vespasian, though, as has been said, not unmoved, refused to pardon her husband. Then, it seems, the infuriated woman broke forth into invectives. "Better," she said, "to live in darkness, than to see such a Prince on the throne." It is melancholy to read that she shared the fate of her husband. Both were put to death by the Emperor's order. His temper had been soured, it would seem, by the discovery of plots on the part of trusted and favoured friends. Possibly, he could not forget that Sabinus had assumed the Imperial title, and had claimed descent from the first of the Caesars. The meanness of Vespasian's own origin may have made him sensitive on this point. It is difficult, however, to reconcile what we know of the character of Vespasian with the execution of Epponina.

Plutarch, or rather the character in the dialogue "About Lovers" who tells the story, adds, "Caesar slew her, and paid the penalty for the bloody deed, for before long his whole race utterly perished. In the whole of his reign no darker deed than this, none more odious in the sight of heaven, was committed."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE DARLING OF MANKIND



Titus

The early death of Titus, the elder son of Vespasian, was taken as another proof of the truth of the gloomy saying already quoted, that "the darlings of the Roman People were short lived and unlucky." He reigned two years two months and twenty days, and during that time neither said nor did anything that could be blamed. Of course there were sceptical observers who remarked that such virtue could not have stood the test of time and of a prolonged reign. "Augustus," they said, "would not have been beloved if he had not lived to old age, nor Titus if he had not died in his prime."

Of Augustus, doubtless, this was true. It was only when he was firmly seated on his throne that he felt himself able to be merciful and forbearing; the passions too, of his youth and manhood were moderated by advancing years, and he died at seventy-seven with a reputation for wisdom, moderation and clemency which at fifty he had certainly not earned. What Titus might have become it is impossible to say; and power, we know only too well, has a corrupting influence. Still he was of mature age when he came to the throne, and he certainly found in the

possession of power exactly the reverse of what others have found in it, a reason for discontinuing, not for increasing, the indulgences which as a subject he had allowed himself. On the whole, we may be allowed to believe that if a longer life had been allowed him, he would not have been false to his better reputation.

The young Titus was educated along with Britannicus, the unhappy youth whom Agrippina robbed of his succession to the throne, and Nero of his life. One of the soothsayers who professed to read the fortune of a child by inspecting his forehead was brought to see the young Prince by one of his father's freedmen, and declared that he never would be Emperor, "but this lad" he went on, pointing at Titus, "certainly will be." He had, however, a narrow escape from perishing along with his companion, for he drank of the same poisoned cup, and had a severe illness in consequence. When the prophecy was fulfilled, Titus did not forget the friend of his boyhood, but set up a gilded statue of him in the hall of the Imperial palace.

As a lad the future Emperor showed singular promise. His memory was remarkably retentive. He was an excellent speaker and a skilful verse writer, and as much at home in Greek as in his native tongue. So great was his facility in composition that it amounted to a gift of extemporising. He was a skilful singer and musician, so rapid a writer that he could vanquish his own amanuenses, and so clever in imitating handwritings that he should have made, he was wont to say, the best of forgers. In all martial exercises he was remarkably proficient. Though not tall he was very handsome.

He began life as usual as a soldier, serving in Germany and Britain. He seems to have been popular, but his military reputation was won in the East. Vespasian was busy with the Jewish war, when he was called to the throne, and he left Titus behind to bring it to a close. The young man—he was barely thirty—conducted the siege of Jerusalem with the greatest skill, while showing at the same time the greatest personal courage. So popular was he with the troops that when he was leaving the province for Italy the legions besought him, even adding threats to

their entreaties, that he would either stay or take them with him. There were not wanting, of course, foolish or malignant reports that he intended to trade on this popularity and to revolt from his father. That he had been seen to put a crown on his head when he was consecrating the bull Apis at Memphis—a curious instance, by the way, of Roman toleration—was supposed to give confirmation to the slander. Titus felt the imputation acutely. He took the quickest passage to Italy that he could, hurried to Rome, and burst in unexpectedly upon his father with the exclamation: "I have come, father, I have come!"

From that time to his father's death he was associated in all the cares of Empire. More than once he felt himself compelled to act with an energy that seemed to savour of a tyrannical temper. The most conspicuous instance was that of an ex-consul, Aulus Cæcina. Cæcina had been one of the trusted lieutenants of Vitellius, and had betrayed his master. He now meditated a new treason. Titus invited him to supper, and caused him to be struck down as he was leaving the dining-room; but then he had come into possession of a copy of the speech which Cæcina intended to address to the troops. In his private life too Titus had incurred no little censure. The Roman public was not by any means strict in its moral judgements; but there were some things which it condemned, not so much because they were criminal, as because they were unpatriotic. Such was the young Prince's passion for the Jewish Queen Berenice. She might well, it was thought, be another Cleopatra, and her presence in Rome was regarded with the most unfavorable eyes. Some of these adverse critics went so far as to say that the death of Vespasian would put another Nero on the throne.

When the dreaded change came to pass all these sinister predictions were found to be false. Berenice was sent away from Rome, though the Emperor did not conceal his grief at parting from her. All unworthy favorites were dismissed. Luxury was discountenanced. The Imperial entertainments were pleasant but were not profuse. The justice of the new Emperor's rule was conspicuous. No kind of extortion was practised or allowed. Even customary demands were not made. At the same time there was a

liberal expenditure, especially in the matter so dear to the Roman heart, the public shows, and in what was scarcely less important, the public baths. At the opening of a new amphitheatre there was an exhibition on the most munificent scale. This was followed by a sham sea-fight, and a show in which no less than five thousand wild beasts were exhibited.

Personally Titus was generous even to a fault. No petitioner went away dissatisfied. When his ministers reminded him that he was promising more than lay within his ability, or, it may be, his duty to perform, he answered that no one ought to leave the presence of an Emperor disappointed. "I have lost a day" was his exclamation when at night he could not recall any act of kindness that he had done.

The informers who had been the curse of Rome under his predecessors met with no favour from him. He had them publicly flogged, and then either sold them into slavery, or banished them to the most barren islands of the Ægean. Capital punishment he never inflicted. When he assumed the dignity of Chief Pontiff—always held by the Emperors—he said: "I take this office that I may keep my hands from blood." From that day he never put anyone to death, or acquiesced in others doing it. Sometimes his own safety seemed to require it, but on this point his resolve was inflexible. "I would sooner die than kill," he said. Two Roman nobles conspired against him; he did nothing but bid them desist. "It is only the Fates that can give the Empire," he said to them; "ask me for anything else and you shall have it." The mother of one of the conspirators was living far from Rome. She knew that her son was in danger. The Emperor sent his own courier to assure her of his safety. He invited both to dine at his own table, and at a show of gladiators, exhibited the next day, handed to them for their inspection the weapons of the combatants, which had according to custom been presented to him.

His worst enemy was his brother, yet he never wavered in his affection for him, or went beyond the entreaty that he would return the love which he himself felt.

His short reign was marked by two fearful disasters; the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and a fire which consumed a large portion of Rome. He employed all his resources in repairing the losses of those who suffered by these calamities.

The cause of his death is involved in mystery. Domitian was commonly accused of having at least hastened it. There is nothing in his character that would make us disbelieve in the charge; but in default of absolute proof he may be allowed the benefit of the doubt. Equally mysterious was the dying Emperor's utterance: "I have not deserved to die so young; I have only one thing to repent of." What this one thing was is not known. Some said that it was that he had not anticipated the malignant design of his brother, a solution which in view of Titus' beneficent temper one is unwilling to accept. One thing is certain. There have been few rulers indeed, about whom such a question could not be easily answered, even if it could be asked at all. Well might the historian of the Caesar write, "He was cut off by death, not so much to his own loss as to the loss of mankind."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A GREAT CAPTAIN



Domitian

It is not improbable that the family of Cnæus Julius Agricola was one of the many which, in both Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, assumed the name of the Great Dictator. Cnæus, whom I shall henceforth speak of by his surname of Agricola, was born A.D. 37 at Forum Julii, now Fréjus in Provence. The occupation followed by his family was what, for want of a precise Roman equivalent, I shall call *la haute finance*. The capitalists of the Empire were mostly found among the order of Knights. Their most important, and probably most profitable, function was the farming of the public revenues; and it was a special distinction among them to have the charge of that part of the taxes, customs, etc., which came into the Emperor's private treasury. This distinction was enjoyed by both Agricola's grandfathers. His father, a man of the highest character and, it would seem, of some culture, raised the family rank, becoming a member of the Senate. The promotion was unfortunate, for it brought him under the notice of the Emperor Caligula. The tyrant ordered him to conduct the prosecution of Marcus Silanus. He refused, and was put to death. We do not know the precise year; probably it was about 40 A.D.

The young Agricola, thus left fatherless almost in infancy, was brought up by his mother at Marseilles, a place where, says his biographer, Greek elegance and the frugal habits of provincial life were happily combined—something, one may venture to say, like St. Andrews here, only with the commercial element more prominent. He was an ardent student; so ardent, indeed, that he had thoughts of renouncing the public career which was open to him in favour of the life of a philosopher. Such appears, indeed, to be the meaning of his own confession, made in after years to his son-in-law and biographer, that in his early youth, but for the moderating influence of his mother, he should have pursued philosophical studies with more energy than befitted a Senator and a Roman—an expression curiously characteristic of the practical Roman temper.

He began life, as it was the almost universal practice to begin it, as a soldier, serving in A.D. 60 as *aide-de-camp* to Suetonius Paulinus, who was then in command in Britain. Never was there a better time for a young man to learn his duties and show his mettle. The Roman dominion in the land was passing through the worst crisis that it ever endured. While Paulinus was attacking the stronghold of Mona (Anglesey), the head-quarters of the Druid superstition, the British tribes of the east coast were in rebellion. The colony of Camalodunum (Colchester) was destroyed. Paulinus hurried back, but was not in time to save London, even then a populous and flourishing town. The revolt was suppressed, but not before the young Agricola had had some exciting and instructive experiences. These seem finally to have determined him in favour of a military career. Before he could enter on this, a routine of civil office was necessary. His first promotion was a Quæstorship. The Quæstors were financial secretaries, who assisted the provincial governors, to whom they were assigned by the process of balloting. Agricola happened to be attached to Salvius Otho, Proconsul of Asia. His superior was profligate and rapacious, and the province dangerously full of temptations. The young Quæstor was untouched by these sinister influences. The office of Tribune followed in due time, and was succeeded by that of Praetor. Agricola continued to bear himself

with a judicious discretion. He was living in peculiar days when inaction was wisdom.

Meanwhile he had married. His wife is described as being of illustrious family. As her name was Domitia, it is possible that she was connected with Nero himself. The terrible year which witnessed the fall of three pretenders to the throne brought a grievous trouble to Agricola, in the death of his mother, who was murdered by a party belonging to Otho's fleet at her country-house at Albintemelium (Vintimiglia), not far from Genoa. A second service in Britain followed the next year (A.D. 70), this time under Cerialis, a brilliant but somewhat reckless officer, who had had a great share in suppressing the revolt of Civilis and North-eastern Gaul.

The next promotion was one of great importance. It was nothing less than the Government of Aquitania, a province reaching from the Pyrenees to the Loire. This office he held for somewhat less than three years (74-77). Tacitus is emphatic in praise of his administrative powers, dwelling on his acuteness as a judge, his courtesy, modesty, and disinterestedness, his happy combination of dignity and courtesy. No one, he says, presumed on his kindness, and no one resented his severity. "As to his integrity and blameless life," he goes on, "it would be an insult to such a man even to speak of them." He returned to Rome in A.D. 77, and for the second half of this year was Consul. In the following year he gave his daughter to Tacitus, the historian, a happy choice, which seems to have turned out well for all concerned in it, and for the world, which probably owes to it one of the most admirable of biographies. His period of office completed, Agricola received the command in Britain, and held it for eight years.

It is unnecessary to describe in detail his civil and military administration. He at once justified his appointment by striking a successful blow at a rebellious tribe (the Ordovices) in North Wales. His next exploit was to renew his acquaintance with Mona from which, eighteen years before, Suetonius had been recalled ere he could complete his conquest. The island was surrendered to

Agricola without his having to strike a blow. The next five years were occupied in extending the Roman dominions on the north of the island. One cannot read without regret the story of the unsuccessful struggles which the gallant tribes of Caledonia made in resisting the invader; nor can we wholly acquit Agricola himself of ambition and the lust of conquest; indeed, his biographer expressly states, and without a hint of blame, that he found in war a remedy for the private sorrow of losing his only son. Still we know from our own national experience that frontier wars are the inevitable result of a widely extended empire, and that Agricola did not do much more than meet the necessities of his position. The principal achievement of these campaigns was the establishment of a line of forts between the estuaries of the Forth and the Clyde, and the final victory of the Romans over the forces of Calgacus at the foot of the Grampian hills.

I cannot agree with the patriotic historians who have attempted to read into Tacitus's account of this battle a confession of defeat. It is impossible to doubt that the valour of the tribes was overpowered by the superior discipline and more effective arms of the legions, guided as they were by the consummate genius of one of the greatest of Roman captains.

If we wanted a proof of the reality of the victory, we should find it in the undisguised jealousy of the Emperor. Domitian had tried his own skill as a general with but little success, and he viewed with alarm, not wholly unfounded, seeing that the Imperial power rested ultimately on the army, the great victories of his lieutenant in Britain. Agricola was recalled. So fearful was the Emperor that he might refuse to surrender his power, that he sent a special agent with instructions to offer him, should he have remained in Britain after his recall, the province of Syria, and with it the command of the legions of the East. The agent in crossing the channel met Agricola on his homeward way, and returned without having an interview with him.

Agricola reported himself to the Emperor immediately on his return, visiting the palace (so careful was he to avoid offence)



at night. Domitian received him with an "official kiss," but without a word of welcome or thanks.

For nine years Agricola lived in Rome. It was a time of restlessness at home and disaster abroad. Army after army had been defeated or destroyed; there was no longer any question of extending the limits of the empire; it was doubtful whether Rome could hold her own, whether the frontier legions would not have to abandon their quarters. All eyes were turned on Agricola. He was the one man who could restore supremacy to the Roman arms. The jealousy of Domitian grew more and more frantic as time went on. He offered the great soldier the Government of Asia, and, though it was not one where he could display his military genius, used all his influence to make him decline the appointment.

In 93 A.D. the end came. Tacitus expresses himself in guarded language, which I shall translate as closely as I can. "There was a persistent rumour that he was poisoned. Of this I have no certain knowledge, and so will make no assertion.

"Still, during the whole course of his illness, the Emperor's principal freedmen and most confidential physicians came with a frequency quite unusual with the Emperor, who commonly made such enquiries by ordinary messengers. This may have been affection, or it may have been curiosity. It is known that on the last day of Agricola's life, the particulars of his dying hours were carried to the Emperor by a regular service of messengers; and no one believed that the news which he made such haste to learn was unwelcome. Still, he made a display of grief in spirit and look. His hatred troubled him no more; and it was easier to conceal joy than fear."

The sketch which Tacitus gives of the great soldier's outward appearance is brief and unsatisfying. "He was well made, but not tall; a gracious look was his predominant expression. It was easy to believe him a good man; pleasant to believe him great."

Agricola was barely fifty-four when he died; happy, says his biographer, in being taken away from the evil to come, the dark days of Domitian's reign of terror, a period from the guilt and shame of which Tacitus does not feel himself to be wholly free. He had been an eye-witness of these fearful deeds even a passive participator in them. The last chapter of the "Agricola," in which he confesses his own weakness and pays his last tribute to the dead, is a piece of noble eloquence.

One passage I must quote: "If," he says, "there is a dwelling-place for the souls of the just; if, as the wise believe, great spirits do not perish with the body, rest thou in peace, and recall us thy kindred from weak regrets and womanish laments to the contemplation of thy virtues, virtues for which we may not wail or beat the breast. Let us honour thee with admiration, ay, and if our strength suffice, with imitation, rather than with transitory praises. This will be true respect; this the dutiful affection of thy dearest and nearest. This injunction I would lay on wife, on daughter, to honour the memory of husband, of father, by dwelling on all his great deeds and words, and by cherishing the glorious greatness of his soul rather than of his body. It is not that I object to the likenesses that are wrought in marble or bronze; but as the features of men are frail and mortal, so are the things that picture them: the fashion of the soul is enduring. This we can realize and represent, not by foreign substances, however skilfully wrought, but by the moulding of our own characters. Whatever we loved in Agricola, whatever we admired, abides and will abide in the souls of men, in the endless march of the ages, in the fame that waits on noble deeds."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A ROMAN GENTLEMAN

To the younger Pliny—for it is in him that I see the type of a "Roman Gentleman"—my readers were introduced in an earlier chapter. He was then living with his uncle and adopting father, learning from him, and helping in his literary work. Of his earlier history—he was then in his eighteenth year—there is little to be told. He was a native of Comum, where his family, a branch of the Cæcili, had been long settled. His father died in early manhood, leaving him to the guardianship of Verginius Rufus, a distinguished soldier and statesman, who afterwards twice refused the imperial throne.

Verginius was at the time absent in command of the legions which guarded the frontier of the Upper Rhine. Opportunely enough, his mother's brother, the elder Pliny, left Rome at this time to reside at Comum. With him the widow and her two sons (for there was an elder boy who seems to have survived his father for but a short time) went to live. The arrangement lasted till A.D. 72, when the elder Pliny was summoned to Rome by the Emperor Vespasian. Plinia and her son, who by this time had been adopted by his uncle, accompanied him, and remained with him for the rest of his life. A year after his uncle's death Pliny made his first appearance as an advocate in the "Court of the Hundred," which had a jurisdiction in what we call equity. He was not yet nineteen. Very soon afterwards he was made a subordinate magistrate. Some period of military service was obligatory, and we find him in the following year (A.D. 81) holding an honorary commission as tribune in Syria. He saw no active service, being employed in the finance department of the provincial government. Most of his leisure was spent in the learned and philosophical society of Antioch.

Returning to Rome, probably as soon as the obligatory term of six months was completed, he practised with diligence and

success as an advocate. In 89 he was Quæstor; in 91 Tribune; in 93 Prætor. His prætorship was marked by the discharge of an important duty. He undertook, in company with a friend, the prosecution of Bæbius Massa, late Procurator of Bætica (Portugal) at the instance of the province, and obtained a verdict against him.

Perilous times followed. A reign of terror made the name of Domitian as infamous as that of Nero had been before him. Informers plied their trade with such zeal and success that no man's life was safe. Pliny's name had been already inscribed on the fatal list (his old enemy, Massa, was now in high favour) when Domitian fell by the hand of an assassin, and Rome began to breathe again. The new *régime* brought to Pliny new honours and employments. In A.D. 100 he was made consul, and about eleven years afterwards received, by a special arrangement between the Senate and the Emperor, the governorship of Bithynia. After this we hear no more of him.

The last sixteen years of Pliny's life are covered by a series of letters, which he began to publish in A.D. 97. There are ten books, the last of which contains a correspondence which refers for the most part to the governorship of Bithynia. These letters furnish, as may be supposed, abundant material for my picture.

It is curious to see within what narrow limits the activities of a Roman gentleman who aspired to take a part in public life were confined. In Pliny's case they are almost limited, till he went to take up the government of his province, to what we should call State trials. As Quæstor and Tribune he had practically nothing to do; his duties as Prætor were apparently confined to the management of the public shows and games. But when he was holding this last office, he prosecuted, as has been already said, a corrupt official, and after the fall of the tyrant he became more active in this direction. Immediately after the accession of Nerva, he impeached one Certus, who had been a particularly noxious informer, and though the Emperor vetoed the proceedings, succeeded in stopping the guilty man's career.

Two years afterwards he undertook, this time in concert with his intimate friend, the historian Tacitus, the prosecution of

Marius Priscus, who had been scandalously venal in his government of Northern Africa, and pleaded for his old friends of Bætica against the representatives of their late Governor, Classicus. His subsequent appearances in cases of this kind were for the defence. Political life proper hardly existed under the Empire. Still more remarkable is the complete control which we find the Emperor exercising over the proceedings of the Provincial Governor. It is simply astonishing to find how matters of detail, which a Town Council would now dispose of without any hesitation, are referred by a Governor, specially appointed, it should be remembered, for his efficiency, to the decision of the Emperor.

The people of Nicæa had been building a new gymnasium in place of one that had been burnt down. The new structure was very ill-arranged, and a second architect, who had been called in to advise, declared that the walls were not properly cemented. Pliny wants to know what was to be done. Nicomedia had been half burnt down, while the people looked on without offering help. Would the Emperor sanction the enrolment of a volunteer fire-brigade? Trajan answers with a decided negative. Volunteer associations were apt to become political clubs. At Amastria the river had been turned by sewage into a huge drain—one might be reading of a modern town—would the Emperor sanction the expense of covering it over? After a while Trajan remonstrates, when, for instance, he is asked to send an architect from Rome to superintend some local works. But, on the whole, the system, which implies a quite amazing amount of centralization, approved itself to him. That high officials under it were nothing more than clerks, is perfectly evident.

One can easily understand, therefore, that literature offered more of a career than politics. It is in literature that Pliny's chief interests centre. He was an author himself, though of a somewhat dilettante sort.

He liked to publish any important speech that he made in the Courts or before the Senate. The letters from which I quote were a new experiment in literature. Cicero's letters had, indeed,

been published after his death by his freedman and secretary, Tiro. But the publication was meant as a contribution to history. Pliny published his correspondence, book by book, with a distinctly literary purpose. Then he was something of a poet, though he does not seem to have aimed at anything higher than writing "society verses." But his interest in the literary activity of others was great and genuine. When the opportunity occurred, he played with great zest the part of the kindly critic or the liberal patron.

He makes a handsome present to Martial, the epigrammatist, when he leaves Rome for his native Spain, and laments the poet's death four years afterwards in a sympathetic letter. The Greek *littérateurs* and rhetoricians, against whom Juvenal pours out such unmeasured wrath, found in him a warm friend, ready to help them with his purse, and with what some patrons find it harder to give than money, his personal presence and encouragement.

This he was ready to lend to all aspirants after literary fame. Nothing, indeed, shows the good-nature of the man more than the way in which he speaks of the recitations or public readings by which it was the common practice for writers at Rome to introduce their works to the notice of a larger circle than that of their immediate friends. There is reason to believe that these readings had become a bore of the first magnitude at Rome in Pliny's time. Horace complains of the "troublesome reader," and Juvenal includes among the terrors of city life "the poet who recited from the first day of August till the last."

Pliny seems to have attended these performances with unwearied diligence. He mentions in one of his letters that the year had produced a quite amazing crop of poets, there having been, in particular, scarcely a day in April on which some one did not give a reading. He gravely blames people who were less enthusiastic or patient than himself. There were many who lounged outside as long as they possibly could, and only entered the lecture-room when they were assured that the reader had got through a considerable part of his manuscript. Coming late, they also went away early, some creeping out by stealth, some boldly

leaving the room without any attempt at concealment. Pliny will have none of this indifference and half-heartedness. He has not failed, he tells his correspondent, a single reader. He had stopped in town to hear his friends, and even some who were not his friends, recite. Now he was going to enjoy the leisure that would enable him to write something himself, "something," he adds, *"which I shall not read."* He would not have it thought that he had been doing a service which he looked to have repaid.

This was no affectation in Pliny. Sometimes, doubtless, his presence was chiefly due to a kindly courtesy; but it commonly expressed a genuine interest in literature. In fact this was the most important thing in life to him. His words, when he is speaking on this subject, have an unmistakable ring of true feeling. "I find," he says, "my joy and solace in literature. There is no gladness that this cannot increase, no grief that this cannot lighten. The ill-health of my wife, the grievous sickness, and sometimes, alas! the death of my friends troubles me, but I fly to my books as the alleviation of my fears." The words may seem cold to us who have had the opportunity of learning what Pliny never knew; but they at least show us a man who disdained an ignoble refuge from the ills of life.

Education is closely akin to literature, and in education Pliny showed the liveliest and most practical interest. His native town was without a school. He had himself found an efficient instructor in his uncle, but less fortunate lads had to go for their education to Milan. Accordingly he promised the people of Como that he would add such a sum to what they themselves should raise, that his contribution should bear the proportion of one third of the whole. He would have been glad to give all, but that his experience told him that such endowments were often jobbed away. People, to be careful, must feel that it was their own money that they were spending. With equal sagacity he determined to put the appointment of the teacher into the hands of the townspeople themselves. Pliny seems to have given this money in his lifetime, for it does not appear among his legacies. Indeed his language implies as much. An inscription to a schoolmaster, discovered at

Como, the modern representative of Pliny's birth-place, seems to show that the school was actually founded.

The love of a country life was a prominent feature in Pliny's character. He had abundant opportunities of gratifying it when the time came for leaving Rome. He gives us to understand that he was not in the first rank of wealthy men; nevertheless he seems to have possessed a quite amazing number of country-houses. Two—his winter residence, some twenty miles south of Rome, on the coast of what is now the Campagna, and his summer retreat in Etruria, at the foot of the Apennines—are described at great length. It is not easy to realize their plan and appearance from what their owner tells us about them, but it is quite clear that they were fine houses, with tennis-courts, handsome baths, places for horse exercise, and spacious gardens. He had seats also, which he does nothing more than mention, at the favourite summer resorts of wealthy Romans, as Tusculum, Tibur, and Præneste. And he had several villas on the lake of Como (then commonly known as the Lacus Larius) of which two were his favourites, called respectively, Tragedy and Comedy, from the sombre character of the one, and the cheerful appearance of the other.

We generally connect the idea of sport with a country life. Pliny was not wholly without the taste for such amusements, but he seems to have followed them in a half-hearted sort of way. He would go out boar-hunting when he was at his Tuscan country-house, but contented himself with sitting by the nets, equipped at once with a hunting spear and a pen. If no game happened to come his way, he was perfectly content to spend the time in jotting down something on his tablets. If the hunting goddess, as he puts it, did not favour him, he might be more fortunate with the goddess of letters. Of angling he makes a slight mention. It was an attraction in one of his Como villas that he could fish in the lake from out of the windows.

The glimpses that Pliny gives us of his home life are very pleasing. His first wife he lost in his early manhood; we know nothing about her, not even her name. The second was a Calpurnia, and a native of the same town as her husband. To her

he was most tenderly attached. His letters are the letters of a lover. "I am glad," he writes in one, "that you miss me. For my part, I read and re-read your letters, taking them up again and again, as if they were newly come. But all this only stirs in me a keener longing. Write as often as you can, though this tortures me as much as it delights." In another we read, "I spend a great part of the night awake and dwelling on your image; by day, when the hour returns at which I was wont to visit you, my feet take me, without my knowledge, to your chamber. The only time that is free from these torments is when I am worn out by business. Judge what my life must be when I find my repose in toil and my relief in anxiety!" Writing to an aunt of his wife, another Calpurnia, he is loud in her praise. He dwells on her intelligence, her frugality, her keen interest in his pursuits. It specially charmed him that she set to the harp and sang his verses, taught, he says, "by love, who is the best of masters."

He seems to have had no children. This, indeed, was the greatest disappointment of his life. Of his freedmen and slaves, he always speaks in the kindest way. We find him sending a consumptive freedman to Egypt, and afterwards, when a relapse had come on, to Fréjus in the Riviera. The death of his slaves troubled him, he writes to a friend, greatly, not because they were property, but because they were men. He was always glad to make them free. They had his leave to make wills, with this restriction only that they were not to leave away their property outside the family. Altogether, we may believe, Pliny's slaves had a fortunate lot.

Pliny's friends were numerous. He numbered great soldiers, eminent patriots and famous men of letters among them. He can write to them in very varied moods. He is sportive and serious by turns, and he is especially happy when he seeks to console in trouble. We may allow that his aims were not very lofty. Perhaps a nobler temper would have been less content with the world in which he lived. We miss entirely the note of spiritual feeling. But he lived we may believe, up to his light, a cultured, blameless man, who did his best to make others happy.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A FAMILY OF PATRIOTS

The "Opposition" under the *régime* of the Roman Empire was an aristocratic party; of *popular* revolt against the despotism founded by Julius and consolidated by Augustus and his successor we scarcely hear. That despotism was indeed essentially democratic in its aim and temper. It courted the people, gave them peace and plenty, and even condescended to listen to their voices when they fancied themselves aggrieved.

But it found a bitter enemy in the worthier part of the nobility. When I say "worthier part." I pronounce no opinion on the respective merits of the Roman despots and the Roman oligarchs. It may well be doubted whether the world would have been benefited by the overthrow of the Empire in favour of the aristocratic conspirators who from time to time plotted against it. Still it is a fact that the nobles who hated the Empire were worthier than the nobles who accepted it. They were not satisfied with the safe and ignoble enjoyment of their large possessions. They looked back to the days when their ancestors had ruled the world, and they aspired to restore them. And it is possible to have respect for their aspirations. There are parties which are the better for living in the "cold shade of opposition," and the disaffected aristocrats of the Empire were vastly superior to the faction so foolish, so blind, so incapable, which represented the same class in the last century of the Republic. The subject of this chapter is a family that belonged to this class.

### ARRIA

In the second year of Claudius (A.D. 42) an effort was made to change, if not the system of government, at least the person of the governor. The officer in command of the armies of Dalmatia bore one of the very noblest of Roman names, and

claimed descent from the Camillus who had saved Rome from the Gauls. He sent a letter to the Emperor, bidding him abdicate his throne, and proclaimed the Republic in his camp. For five days the soldiers acquiesced, but the idea created no enthusiasm. At the end of that time the army was in revolt against their general, and either killed him or forced him to commit suicide; for the accounts differ. Among his officers was one Cæcina Paetus. We know nothing about him except that he had been Consul, that he was implicated in his superior's guilt, and was deemed of sufficient importance to be sent for to Rome and brought to trial before the Senate. But his wife was a remarkable woman. She was with her husband in the camp, and had doubtless shared his schemes. When he was being taken to Rome, she begged permission to accompany him. The officer in command refused. She urged her request. "A man of his rank," she said, "will of course have his attendants to wait upon him at table and dress him. You can save the expense; I will do everything myself."

Still meeting with refusal, she hired a fishing boat, and followed the ship in which her husband was being conveyed to Italy. The wife of Camillus turned "King's evidence," and testified against the accused. Arria turned fiercely upon her. "You!" she cried, "shall I listen to you who saw your husband killed in your arms, and yet endure to live?" The trial, of course, ended in condemnation. Paetus was allowed to put an end to his own life. He shrank from the pain. Arria snatched up a dagger and inflicted on herself a formidable wound. "My Paetus," she said, "it does not hurt." She was resolved not to survive her husband. Her son-in-law strove in vain to change her purpose. "If I had to die," he asked, "would you have your daughter die with me?" "Yes," she answered, "if she has lived as happily with you as I have with Paetus."

After this she was closely watched. "It is useless," she told her family, "you may make my death painful; but you cannot prevent it." As she said it she jumped up from her chair, and dashed her head violently against the opposite wall. Brought back to life, she said, "You see I was right; I shall find some way to die, however hard it may be, if you refuse me an easy one." It is a

relief to turn to the picture of a devotion for which we can feel a less qualified sympathy. Some years before, her husband and her son had been dangerously ill. The son, a boy of singular promise, died; the physicians told her that her husband must not know it. She took all the charge of the funeral without his having a suspicion of the truth; answered his questions about the boy with a cheerful air—"He has slept well; he has taken his food with relish." When the tears that she was keeping back were too strong for her, she would leave the room and weep, and then come back again composed and calm, "as if," says Pliny, who tells the story, "she had left her bereavement outside the chamber door."

## THRASEA AND THE YOUNGER ARRIA

Paetus and Arria seem to have left one daughter, another Arria. Little is said of her, except that she was thoroughly loyal to the great traditions of her name. She had found a worthy husband in the Thrasea who has been mentioned in the preceding section. Lucius Fannius Thrasea Paetus was born at Patavium (Padua) about A.D. 15. Wealthy and noble, he naturally came to Rome to seek such a career as the Imperial system still left open to men of ability.

Of his early life we know no details. That he held the usual offices we may infer from the fact that in A.D. 47 we find him a member of the Senate. In that year he undertook the cause of the Cilician provinces against their infamous governor Capito, and conducted it with such energy and success that the accused was condemned. It was a great triumph for Thrasea, but Capito bided his time for vengeance. It was soon evident to shrewd observers that he would not have to wait long. Thrasea began to show in the Senate the independent temper which was certain sooner or later to bring him into collision with the ruling powers. He resisted a motion brought forward by authority. It was but a trifling matter, but the courtiers angrily resented his interference. Thrasea avowed to his friends that his assertion of independence in small matters was to pave the way to a similar course in affairs of importance. A

small Opposition was gathering about him. Outside the Senate his home became the centre of a "liberal" circle.

One of its most distinguished members was the young Helvidius Priscus, an ardent disciple of the Stoic school of thought, who lived so faithfully up to his belief that Thrasea and Arria fixed upon him as a fit husband for their only child, their daughter Fannia.

Topics more dangerous than philosophy were discussed at these gatherings. The politics of the circle were distinctly republican. The birthdays of famous champions of liberty, of the elder Brutus who drove out the Tarquins, of the younger Brutus who slew the Dictator Julius, and of his associate Cassius, were kept with high festivity. No vintage was too precious for the cups in which their memory was toasted. "Wine," says Juvenal, when he would describe the very costliest kind, "such as Thrasea and Helvidius used to drink in high state on the birthdays of the Bruti and of Cassius."

In 59 A.D., came the serious occasion which was sure to occur sooner or later. Nero had reached the climax of wickedness by the murder of his mother. The Senators vied with each other in offering shameful flatteries to the criminal and insults to the dead. This was more than Thrasea could bear: before his turn came to speak he left the Senate-house. Nero took no notice at the time, but he did not forget it.

By his action in the matter of Agrippina, Thrasea, says Tacitus, "imperilled himself without teaching courage to his colleagues," yet his example was not wholly fruitless. In A.D. 62, a certain Antistius was convicted of having recited at a banquet some scurrilous verses about Nero. The penalty of death was proposed, but Thrasea carried the Senate with him when he moved as an amendment that the milder punishment of exile should be substituted.

In the following year he had a warning of Nero's hatred. The Empress Poppæa had given birth to a daughter, and the Senate went in a body to congratulate the Emperor on the event.

Thrasea was forbidden to enter the palace. After this he retired as much as possible from public life, but he could not escape his fate. Indeed he gave great offence to the Emperor by absenting himself from the funeral of Poppæa. He was not one of those who suffered after Piso's conspiracy, but the end was not long delayed. No definite charge was made. His acts of independence, his marked absence from the Senate, were the offences brought up against him. The circle of friends debated whether the accused should or should not present himself in the Senate to hear and answer the accusations brought against him. The result was not doubtful; the only question was whether he should better consult his own dignity and the interests of liberty by his presence or absence.

The more fiery spirits among his friends advised him to go and defy his enemies. One of them even offered to veto the proceedings in his capacity of tribune. This last offer Thrasea refused. "He had lived his life," he said; "his younger friends had theirs before them." The question itself he left for further deliberation. As a matter of fact, he did not go. Probably he would not have been permitted to enter the house, which on the day of trial was beleaguered with troops. Of course the verdict of guilty was returned. Thrasea was condemned to death, but allowed to execute his sentence with his own hand. Helvidius was banished. The officers who brought him the news of his condemnation found him in his gardens, surrounded by a numerous company of friends. He received the message with philosophic calm, even expressing some satisfaction that his son-in-law's life had been spared. His friends he recommended to leave him at once, lest the society of a condemned man should endanger their lives. To his wife, who was eager to follow the example of her mother and die with her husband, he counselled life. "Do not rob our daughter," he said, "of your help and comfort."

His son-in-law and his intimate friend, the Stoic philosopher Demetrius, with whom he had been discussing the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, were kept to be with him to the last.

Retiring to his chamber, he severed the veins in both arms. As the blood flowed forth, he took some on his hand, and sprinkled it on the ground as a libation, with the words, "To Jupiter, who sets me free."

After a few more words, from which we only learn that his death was tedious and painful, the narrative of Tacitus breaks off.

## HELVIDIUS

Helvidius returned from his banishment, which he seems to have spent with his wife Fannia at Apollonia in Macedonia, after the death of Nero.

His first act was to indict Marcellus, the man who had been the instrument of Nero's vengeance on Thræsea. But the accused was too powerful to be overthrown. The establishment of Vespasian on the throne did not please him. A vigorous Emperor put the prospect of a republic into a remote distance. All that he could do now was to assert his independence, and this he did, with a boldness that certainly bordered on rashness. Tacitus cannot praise him too highly; but Suetonius, who was of another temper from the republican historian, speaks of his violent language. When the new Emperor came to Rome, Helvidius, alone among the Senators, saluted him by the name which he had borne before his elevation to the throne. This attitude he continued to maintain. At last Vespasian was provoked into forbidding him to enter the Senate. Helvidius answered him with characteristic courage.

The dialogue between them is thus given by Epictetus:—

*Helvidius*. "You can expel me from the Senate; but while I am yet a member, I must attend its meetings."

*Vespasian*. "Attend, then, but be silent."

*Helvidius*. "Do not then ask me for my opinion."

*Vespasian*. "But I am bound to ask you."

*Helvidius*. "Then I am bound to say what seems to me right."

*Vespasian*. "If you say it, I will kill you."

*Helvidius*. "Have I ever claimed to be immortal? Do your part, and I will do mine. Your part is to kill, mine is to die without fear. Yours is to send me into exile, mine to go into exile without grief."

And Vespasian did first send him into exile and then kill him. When it was too late, the fatal order was recalled. The second messengers were met by the false report of the victim's death, and did not prosecute their journey. Had they done so, his life would have been spared. Vespasian never ceased to regret his act.

## FANNIA

The wife of Helvidius had accompanied him in his second exile. After his death she was permitted to return to Rome. But it was not long before a third period of exile followed. One of the little band of liberal thinkers had written the biography of Helvidius. He was brought to trial for the offence, and pleaded that he had been requested to write by Fannia, the widow. She was summoned before the Senate. "Did you ask him to write?" thundered the prosecutor. "I did," said the dauntless woman. "Did you give him the diaries of Helvidius?" "I did." "Did your mother know of it?" "She did not." She was banished for her share in the matter, and the books were burnt by the public executioner. But Fannia contrived to save some copies, and carried them with her to her place of banishment.

After the death of Domitian, she and her mother returned. Pliny took up their case in the Senate, and endeavoured to obtain the punishment of those who had driven them into exile. In this he did not succeed, but the rest of their lives was at least spent in safety and honour. The last glimpse that we get of Fannia shows a side of her character that we might, perhaps, not otherwise have realised. We see her the tender, affectionate woman.

"I am grievously troubled," Pliny writes, "by the ill-health of Fannia. She fell into this while nursing Junia. The Vestal Virgins, when so seriously ill that they are compelled to leave the



Hall of Vesta, are committed to the care and guardianship of matrons. It was while diligently discharging this duty that Fannia imperilled her own life. She suffers from continual fever, from a harassing cough, and the greatest weakness. Her spirit only is unbroken—a spirit absolutely worthy of Thræsea, her father, and Helvidius, her husband. A purer, holier, nobler, braver woman never was! And at the same time, how delightful she is, how courteous!—how she combines in herself, a thing that is given only to a few to do, all that is venerable and all that is sweet! Another thing that troubles me, is that, in her I seem about to lose again her mother; she recalls that noble woman to us so perfectly, that were we to lose her, it would open that old wound afresh and inflict a new. I honoured both, I loved both; which I honoured and loved most I cannot say, and they would not have me distinguish."

Whether Fannia lived or died we do not know, but Pliny speaks as if he had little hope.

My story has been a sad one, but it at least shows that there were noble men and women even in the worst days of Rome.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A FASHIONABLE POET

*MARCUS VALERIUS MARTIALIS TO M. ULPIUS OF HISPALIS, GREETING.*

Know, most friendly and upright of booksellers that the *Nereid*, which sailed from Ostia for Gades on the kalends of this month of April carries for you a parcel of books. Dispose of them, if the citizens of Hispalis are not by this time weary of me, to your advantage and to mine. But let me first explain to you candidly—for it would be shameful not to deal honestly with an honest man—how it has come to pass that they are sent.

Three years ago I published a book of Epigrams, being the tenth in number of the volumes, which I have sent out since my coming to this city. The thing was done in haste, and, as is usual with things so done, in slovenly fashion. But I was in great straits. Money, which as you know is never abundant with me, was scarce beyond the common. One or two private patrons whose liberality I had been accustomed to enjoy were newly dead; another was absent from Rome; another had taken offence at something that I had written.

The Emperor was in an ill-humour, and not without cause. He was returned newly from his campaign against the Sarmatians, from which he had gathered, to say the least, but a scanty crop of laurels. As for me I did not know whether to be silent about his exploits or to write. I tried both ways, but pleased him with neither. He frowned upon a poem in which I made no mention of warlike matters, he frowned still more upon verses, somewhat flattering, it must be allowed, in which I extolled his martial exploits. In the end I could not get a single *denarius* from him; and indeed the treasury was well nigh empty.

So, for sheer lack of money, I was compelled to publish. The book was ill-written, copied as it was by almost illiterate slaves, and altogether ill got-up. As for the poems, the bad things were in an even greater majority than usual. But what would you have? I had to fill a certain space and was compelled to use the sweepings of my desk. But enough of the past. The present is very different. We have a new Emperor, whom at least it is possible to praise without telling lies. Rome is more prosperous, and my patrons, in consequence more liberal. My own vein has been richer of late, and I have written verses which are not unequal to my best, if that is any commendation. Accordingly, my good friend Trypho, whom doubtless you know to follow your own trade, and whom I have found an honest man, though somewhat sparing of his coin, proposes to me to publish this same tenth book of Epigrams anew.

"What of the old stock?" I ask, for there are some hundreds of copies still unsold. "We will sell them at half-price" he replies. "Here in Rome?" I ask again. "Why not?" says he. "Nay" I answer, "for there are some who prefer a bad thing for one *denarius* to a good thing for two. Let us rather send them elsewhere."

Hence the cargo which the *Nereid* is carrying from Ostia to Gades. Are you offended, my excellent Ulpius, thinking that what is not good enough for Rome is good enough for Hispalis? Then I must throw myself on your mercy. You indeed are worthy of the best. But your townsmen? Are they devoted to letters? Do you find bookselling a lucrative business? Not so, unless you have complained without cause. But this book, believe me, is not altogether bad; and it is cheap. The price is little more than the cost of the paper. I trust to your kindness to do your best for it and for me.

One word more concerning business. The volumes are of two kinds; the more ornamented might be sold for three *denarii*, the plainer for one and a half. But this I leave to your judgment. And now for other matters.

You ask me in your last letter how I have prospered. Do not think that I am a Crassus when I tell you that I have both a country house and a town mansion. As to the country house, it has at least the distinction of being the smallest in the suburbs of Rome. There is a best bed-chamber, in which I cannot lie at length; another, in which I might lodge a friend, if only the friend were a pigmy, and a third, larger indeed, but with a hole in the roof; there is a dining-room which compels me to make my guests less numerous than the Graces, and a kitchen which would scarcely hold a peacock if I could afford to buy one. The garden is scarcely as big as what many dwellers in the town cultivate in their windows. A cucumber cannot lie at full length in it; a single mole does all my digging; and one field-mouse will lay it all as waste as *Ætolia* was by the Great Boar of Calydon. Seriously, it is over small, but it suits my means, and I do not trouble it much save when the autumn heats and fevers drive me from Rome.

Of my town mansion—a grand name if there is nothing else that is grand about it—what need to speak? It is better at least than the lodgings with which I was content when I saw you. I am independent. I have no neighbours below me and above me to drive me mad with their flute-playing or their convivial uproar. Above all, I am not in danger of being burnt to ashes with all my belongings through other people's carelessness.

That was what had nearly happened to me in my last abode. The whole block of buildings caught fire through a drunken freak of some young fellow on the first floor—I, you may remember, lodged on the third. By the favour of the Muses—if indeed the Muses know or care anything about me—I had gone down to my little villa for a breath of fresh air and so escaped. But my luckless neighbours on either side of my apartment were burnt to death; or, rather, one was burnt, the other dashed out his brains by leaping from his window into the street.

While I was looking for another abode, Regulus the advocate, in return for an epigram in which I had compared him to Cicero, presented me with a little house which he did not think it worth while to repair. However, a friendly builder, whom I had

helped to get a good contract, did what was wanted at a moderate cost—only double his own outlay—and I am perfectly content.

The neighbourhood is a doubtful one—it is near the Temple of Flora; it is cold in winter and hot in summer, and damp all the year round. Still it is my own.

But most of my days I spend at the club—for we poets have a club. There are thirty members; and we might have three hundred, if it seemed good to us, for it is incredible how many men write verses nowadays. We have had a chamber assigned to us opening out on the Colonnade of Octavia. It has a fair library, no Roman author of repute, and few of the Greeks, being wanting, and some good casts of the ancient masterpieces in sculpture—originals, of course, are only possible for wealthy publicans and slave dealers.

We do not boast curtains of Tyrian purple, nor fine pavements; and the wine we drink is Sabine or Alban, except some rich patron spares us a cask of Setine or Falernian. But the place is comfortable and clean, and, but for the drawback that we have to listen to each other's verses, would be altogether desirable.

But after all, the time that I have to myself, whether at home or at the Club is very small, and if my business demanded of me anything more serious than the trifles which I can compose and write down almost anyhow, I should have to seek some other place than Rome to do it in. Before day-break I have to pay my morning calls, the first, and, I am bound to say, the most odious of the day's duties.

These rich men, fellows who have got rich by countless rogueries, or worse—for an informer is worse than a cheat, as a murderer is worse than a thief—often do not condescend to take any notice of one's greeting. Their favour is reserved for those who minister to their pleasures, among which hearing or reading verses, either good or bad, is certainly not to be reckoned. This done I have, as often as not, to witness a friend's will, or his marriage contract, or his manumission of a slave, or any one of the hundred things with which the lawyers hedge in our lives. This

done, and a hasty meal snatched at home or wherever else I can find it, I have to show myself in the Consul's court or the Praetor's. Show myself, do I say? I have to sit the whole business out, for when the great man rises, of course I must be among the crowd that escorts him to his home. But I am not sure whether the Consul's court is not a more interesting place than a poet's recitation hall. Anyhow it is sooner over. The Consul cuts it as short as he can, whereas the poet—but you know what poets are. The whole day is hardly enough for some of them. The *Diomedeid* in thirty books; for instance; that was the last horror that I had to endure. Nor are my duties as a listener completed by hearing the poets only. Some noble friend is going to plead a cause; I must form one of the gallery, and applaud his eloquence. If I fail, no more presents, no more dinners for me. Then an orator is going to improvise, or a professor to lecture. Do you think I can excuse myself? Not so; I want Mr. Orator and Mr. Professor to come to my readings, and of course I must go to theirs. It is "scratch me, and I will scratch you" at Rome. It is four o'clock before I can get to the bath, pretty well tired out by that time, you may be sure—and then comes pay-time. I get the wages for my day's work, just enough to pay for my bath, and if I am very frugal indeed for my dinner.

I must allow that I do not often have to dine at my own expense. All sorts of people ask me. You see, though I say it myself, I am fashionable. A new man finds a certain distinction in having me at his table. Proculus, a young lawyer, who fits himself out with handsome rings, a cloak of real Tyrian purple, a litter carried by eight tall Bithynians—all, you must understand, on borrowed money—is not satisfied till he gets me to dine with him. "You will meet Martial," he says in his airy way to the rich contractor whom he invites in the hope of getting employment from him.

Then the men who have made their fortune ask me. I am by way of being a passport to good society. And there are a few real gentlemen of the old Maecenas type. It is true that they sometimes write bad verses of their own to which we have to listen—Maecenas, you remember, did the same—but they do

appreciate anything that is good, and are civil to me, not because it is the fashion, but because I really please them.

But oh! what a place this Rome is! What follies, what shame, what foolishness of fashions, what silly aping of the rich by the poor, what miserable pretences of being poor by the rich! This very day I saw an acquaintance—Mamurra I will call him—posing as a millionaire, though to my certain knowledge, he has not a dozen *denarii* in the world. First he had a look at the slaves, not the common things that you and I see, but delicate creatures that you could not buy under a hundred *sestertia* at the least. "Excellent" he said, when he had priced some half dozen, "but when I come to think of it my household is absolutely filled up."

Then he strolled off to the upholsterer's. There was a splendid tortoise-shell sofa. Out he brings his pocket measure, and measures it—actually four times if you will believe me—and at last comes out with, "Dear me! it is not quite large enough for my citron wood table. Only half a foot more and it would have been a perfect match. If one just a little larger should come in your way," he said to the shopman, "give me the refusal."—"It is the biggest in Rome, Sir," said the man.—"You don't say so," replied Mamurra. "I thought the Emperor's was larger, but one can't measure your host's furniture"—just as if he had ever dined at the Palace!

Next came the turn of the statues. He smelt them; "Hardly true Corinthian" he muttered. "And this" he went on, "seems a little too much fore-shortened."—"It is a genuine Polyclethus," said the shopman.—"You don't say so" answered my friend, "hardly up to his best mark." The crystal cups did not please his lordship; they were a little speckled. "I must be content with porcelain," he said. "Put these ten aside for me." The man stared; they were worth about a hundred *sestertia* apiece, and it is a distinction to have even a pair. However I shall weary you with his follies. Only near the end, just as the shops were going to shut, he bought a couple of earthenware mugs for a penny, and carried them home himself.

To tell you the truth, my dear Ulpius, I am heartily sick of the place. I shall leave it and go back to my own country. You smile: I hear you say: "This is the old story. I have heard it every six months for the last twenty years. He is always coming; he never comes." You are right to laugh at me and to be incredulous. But, nevertheless, this time I mean it. I do love the country at the bottom of my heart, the fields, the vineyards, the woods, and mean to end my days among them. In truth I am too old for Rome. I say to myself as Diomed said to Nestor, "Old man, the younger warriors press thee sore." If I can still hold my own, it costs me more labour than it did; and I am beginning to loathe it all, the posturing, the pretences, the flattery, the lying. There is another thing that will drive me home, my losses, not of money, which, for the best of all reasons I cannot lose, but of those whom I love. My last loss was of dear little Erotion, the gayest, sweetest creature that ever lived. Here are a few lines that I have written about her:

"Dear parents, lend your kindly aid  
To sweet Erotion's tender shade;  
Let not her kindly spirit dread  
The gloomy paths of death to tread;  
Six winters o'er her head had passed,  
Six and no more, and to the last  
Six days were wanting. Let her cheer  
Your reverend age with sportive game,  
And while she plays, be pleased to hear  
Her lisping tongue repeat my name."

Farewell.

Martial did leave Rome finally about a year after the accession of Trajan.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A CRIMINAL LAWYER

Among those who profited by the crimes and cruelties of Nero's later days was a certain Aquilius Regulus. If he belonged to the house whose name he bore, he must have been of good family, for; the Aquilii could boast of a high antiquity.

He had undoubtedly, as we shall find, respectable connections. But he was miserably poor. All his father's property had been seized for the benefit of creditors; the father himself had been banished. But the young Regulus had the gifts and qualities which help men to prosper in evil times. He had ready speech and courage, and he was not hampered by principle. He became, as we should phrase it, a barrister in the criminal courts. The profession had two branches held in very different esteem. A counsel who prosecuted was looked upon askance; a counsel who defended was respected. Regulus chose the more profitable and less reputable. His victims were numerous, and his profits large. He accumulated in the course of two or three years a fortune of £70,000. His Imperial patron, to whom he is said to have given the cynical advice to include the whole Senate under one indictment, bestowed on him the honour of one of the great priesthoods.

Nero fell, and the position of the man who had been the instrument of his cruelty became precarious. When Galba, Nero's successor, adopted as his own heir a Piso, belonging to a family which Regulus had greatly injured, the ex-informer saw that he was in danger.

Three days afterwards, Piso was murdered along with his adopting father; Regulus is said to have made a present to the soldier who dealt the fatal blow, and even to have indulged in the brutality of fastening his teeth in the head of his murdered enemy. Before many months he was called to account for these misdeeds. Otho, who superseded Galba, and Vitellius, who superseded Otho,

perished in the course of a few months. With Vespasian a better order of things was established.

The punishment of those who had made a profit out of the reign of terror was loudly demanded, and Regulus was one of the impeached. He found a defender in his half-brother Vipsanius Messalla, a gallant young soldier of the highest character, who had taken a distinguished part in the campaign which had put the new dynasty on the throne. Thanks partly to the eloquence of his advocate, partly to the fact that men too powerful to be overthrown were equally guilty with himself, he escaped.

For a time he devoted himself to the lawful exercise of his profession. The younger Pliny, who hated him, bears a not very willing testimony to his merits as an advocate. "I can't say that I regret him," he writes, some little time after Regulus's death, "but I certainly miss him." The reason was that Regulus took his profession seriously. He was really anxious about the cases he undertook; he laboured at them even to the extent of injuring his health; he did not grudge the trouble of writing out his speeches and this though his memory was so bad that he could not learn them by heart. He never failed to consult the soothsayer about any important cause. "A superstitious practice, doubtless," remarks his critic, "but showing that he was intensely interested in his work."

Other instances that Pliny gives of the pains that the man took about his work are hard for us to understand. That an advocate would use—even hire, if there was need—fine rings or fashionable clothes to make an impression on his judges, we can understand. But why he should paint one eye, his right, if he was engaged for the plaintiff, his left, if he was pleading for the defendant, it is hard even to guess. If he had painted *both*, we might suppose that he meant to give additional expression to them. Equally perplexing is the white patch which he would transfer, according to the side on which he was engaged, to the right eyebrow or the left. Possibly it was a superstitious fancy. Whatever was the motive, such care showed his interest in his profession, an interest, which, Pliny complains, had decreased since his death.

It was customary for an advocate to ask the court for as much time as he thought he might want for his speech. At the time at which he was writing it was common for an advocate to be content with little more than half an hour, sometimes with less than ten minutes. Regulus, on the contrary, had always asked for a very large allowance of time, with the result, of course, that a proportionate amount was granted to his opponents. It had also been his practice to take the greatest pains to bring together a good audience. "It was pleasant," says Pliny, who had been often opposed to him, "to speak as long as you like without anyone being able to complain, and to address an audience that someone else had collected for you. Still," he goes on, "Regulus did well to die; only he would have done better still to die sooner."

The fact is that under Domitian there had been a reign of terror, scarcely less frightful than that under Nero, and that Regulus had gone back to his old practices, and had done more mischief than before, though not so openly. Pliny tells an anecdote which shows what pitfalls were in the paths of honest men in those days. He was acting as counsel for a lady of the name of Arionilla, and had occasion to quote a dictum of one Metius Modestus, an eminent lawyer who had been banished by Domitian. "What is your opinion of Modestus?" interposed Regulus. It was an awkward dilemma for Pliny. It would have been base to censure and dangerous to praise his friend. "I will tell you when the question comes before the court," he replied; an answer so judicious that afterwards he could only attribute it to inspiration.

The question was repeated. "It is against the accused not the condemned that witnesses are called," was the second reply. Unwilling to be baffled, Regulus put the question a third time in a somewhat different form. "Well, what do you think about the loyalty of Modestus?" But Pliny was equal to it. "For my part," he said, "I do not think it right even to put questions about convicted persons!"

After the death of Domitian Regulus felt himself again to be in danger. Again he escaped. What had helped him before,

helped him again. And he was wealthier than ever. One of his ways of enriching himself is curiously unlike anything in modern manners. Regulus was a notorious legacy hunter. The impudence he displayed in following this second profession, as it may be called, was sublime. His relations with Piso have been mentioned; yet when Piso's widow was dangerously ill, he forced himself into her presence, and got a hearing from her by pretending a knowledge of astrology. He asked her on what day and at what hour she had been born; she told him; after going through a show of elaborate calculation, he gravely assured her, "You are at a critical time; but you will escape; still for your satisfaction I will put the matter before a soothsayer whom I am in the habit of consulting."

A day or two afterwards he informed her that he had done so, and that the aspect of the sacrifice altogether confirmed his prognostication. So comforting an assurance demanded reward, and Verania, who seems, by the way, to have been a very silly woman, put his name in her will for a legacy. She grew worse however, and her last words were a bitter complaint of the cheat, made all the worse by the fact that the lying rascal had sworn by the life of his son. Of course he was not always so successful. All Rome was amused to find that a rich man in whose last hours he had shown an indecent interest had left him nothing. The millionaire had made a new will. Till it was signed, Regulus had been urgent with the doctors to do their very best to prolong their patient's life. After it had been executed he changed his note. "Why do you prolong the poor creature's torture?" was his cry. The testator might have been thought to have heard him, for he left him nothing.

But the man's crowning achievement in the legacy-hunting line was his conduct to his own son. Juvenal might be thought to have indulged in an exaggeration past all belief when he speaks of a tottering father paying court to his own soldier son in the hope of being made his heir, yet what Pliny tells us about Regulus and his son makes it credible. This was what Regulus did. The boy's mother, who had an independent fortune, was afraid to make him her heir as long as he was in his father's power. To do so might

precipitate both her death and his. Regulus therefore emancipated him. The son inherited. And the father used the most unworthy arts to secure his affection and his fortune!

In the end the boy died. The father made a preposterous parade of his sorrow. The lad had kept several of the little horses from Gaul that were fashionable at the time, a number of dogs, small and great, and aviaries full of nightingales, parrots, and blackbirds. All these creatures Regulus caused to be destroyed at the funeral pile.

He had the idea of imitating the customs of the heroic age, possibly the slaughter of the Trojan captives at the burning of the body of Patroclus. He gave commissions for numerous statues and portraits of the deceased. Paintings in colour, masks in wax, statuettes in gold, silver, bronze, iron and marble were to be seen in every studio in the city. He wrote a biography—actually a biography of a boy, says Pliny, to whom such a thing was an absolute novelty—and read it aloud to a vast audience which his wealth enabled him to collect. He had a thousand copies made, and scattered them broadcast through Italy with a request to the local authorities of the towns and villages that the best reader among them would recite the memoir.

So much for what Pliny has to say of our "criminal lawyer." It is curious to see what a very different picture the court-poet Martial gives of him. In his verse the great advocate has every virtue and every talent. If he wants to express his conviction of the guilt of a criminal, he cannot think of a more forcible way of stating it than this—could Cicero be called back from the dead or Regulus retained among the living, the eloquence of neither could avail. He was the wisest, the most devoted to duty, and the ablest of men, and beyond all question the special care of heaven, this last being proved, the poet thinks, by the fact that the colonnade of his great house in the suburbs had fallen in without doing him any harm. His carriage it seems had just passed out before the catastrophe took place.

But Martial is enthusiastic in his praise of the tyrant Domitian, a creature whom the most zealous "whitewasher" of

misunderstood characters in history has not attempted to rehabilitate: we are inclined to take his good opinion, not given, it is probable, without a consideration, as of very little worth, and to accept in preference the estimate of another contemporary, Herennius Senecio, himself one of the victims of Domitian. "Regulus," said Senecio, suggests to us a new definition of an orator. A bad man who does not know how to speak."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A JUST EMPEROR



Trajan

"Gregory," says his biographer, John the Deacon, "walking through the Forum of Trajan, a place which that Prince had adorned with very noble buildings, recollected how this Trajan had, by his just dealing, comforted the soul of a certain widow. As he was hastening with all speed to the war—so the story runs—a widow cried out to him with tears, 'My innocent son has been murdered, and that since you came to be Emperor. I beseech you, seeing that you cannot bring him to life, to avenge his death.' 'I will do so to the utmost,' said he, 'if I return safe from the war.' 'But,' said the widow, 'if you should fall in battle who will do me justice?' He answered, 'My successor.' Said the widow, 'what will it profit thee if another do this good deed?' 'Verily nothing,' he answered. 'Then,' said she, 'is it not better for thee, thyself, to do me justice and gain thy reward, therefore, than to pass this on to another?' Thereupon Trajan dismounted; nor did he depart till he had tried the cause of the widow, and done full justice therein. Gregory, therefore, remembering how righteous this said Trajan had been, came to the great Church of St. Peter, and there wept so sore for the errors of this most merciful prince that, on the

following night, there came to him this answer: "Thou hast been heard for Trajan, but take care that thou pray not for any other pagan soul."

The good John is somewhat troubled in mind by this story. Did not Gregory himself say that the children of God may not pray for unbelievers and wicked men that have departed this life? His doubts drive him into sophistry. Gregory, he says, did not pray but wept only, and we know that God hears the unspoken desire of his servants. Nor is it said that Trajan's soul was removed to Paradise. That, he thinks, would be incredible. It may have remained in hell, but so as not to feel the torments thereof. So far John the Deacon. Dante is not so disturbed by the story. He boldly places the Emperor in the sixth heaven among the spirits of the just made perfect.

My readers will agree with me that such speculations do not concern us: for us the interest of the story lies in its testimony to the lasting impression made by Trajan's government on his own and succeeding generations. He was regarded as emphatically the *just* Emperor.

M. Ulpius Trajanus came from an Italian family, which had been settled some time in Spain. His father had been Consul and Governor of the Province of Asia; he himself was a successful soldier, who had been rewarded with the Consulship, with the government of a province in Spain, and subsequently with the command of the legions that guarded the frontier of the Lower Rhine. He was discharging the duties of this post when he received the news that Nerva, who two years before had been raised to the throne, vacated by the assassination of Domitian, had associated him in the Empire. He made no haste to enter on his new power. He remained on the frontier for a year, completing its defence by establishing colonies and military posts, and commencing the gigantic work which is still known as "Trajan's Wall."

Towards the latter end of 98 he returned to Rome. The modesty with which he bore himself made the most favourable impression on his new subjects. Nerva had been now dead several



months, and Trajan was therefore sole ruler, but his self-restraint and moderation were admirable. The Senate desired to greet him with the flattering title of "Father of the Country," borne by previous Emperors. He declined to receive it till it had been deserved. He entered the city on foot, and without an escort, conspicuous only, says the younger Pliny, by his stately height. All Rome rushed out to see the new ruler. The buildings were crowded, almost to danger, with spectators; not a place where even the most precarious foothold could be gained was empty. The streets were so full that only the narrowest track was left for the Emperor. And as all came to see, so all were charmed with what they saw. The Senators were greeted with the kiss of an equal. The knights were astonished and delighted by the wonderful memory which, without the usual help, could recall their names. The commonalty were allowed to throng about him as closely as they would. When he entered the palace he did so with as little pretension as a private citizen who goes into his own house. The general satisfaction was complete when it was seen that the new ruler's wife was as humble as himself. There had been Empresses who had been more haughty than their husbands. Such had been the Agrippina, who domineered over the feeble Claudius. Plotina was evidently not one of these. At the head of the staircase in the palace Trajan turned to the multitude of spectators and cried: "I enter this house with the same equanimity with which I hope to quit it, should fate so demand." The nobles who had felt so cruelly the suspicious rage of Domitian were reassured by Trajan's oath that he would respect the life of a senator. The turbulent soldiery of the capital were overawed by his firmness.

New emperors had been accustomed to buy their favour by a handsome present. Trajan did not abolish the custom; but he reduced the gift by a half, and the Praetorians received his bounty without a murmur. Yet he was content to demand their loyalty for only so long as he should deserve it. The Prefect of the camp was accustomed to wear a poignard, which he received from the emperor, as a symbol of his power. As Trajan handed it to him, he said. "Use this for me while I do well; use it against me if I do ill."

The new Emperor was keenly alive to the wants of his people. Italy, nominally the mistress of the world, had been growing weaker and weaker, its population diminishing, its land going out of cultivation. Trajan tried to grapple with both evils. Both, it is true, were of a kind with which it was difficult to deal. But the latter may have been in some degree touched by the improvement and extension of communications to which the emperor devoted much care and expenditure. And if he could not altogether remedy it, he could at least provide against its most dangerous effects. A long spell of adverse winds might bring a population which depended for its food on the corn-fields of Egypt and Mauretania to the verge of famine. Trajan built large granaries which were to contain not less than seven years' supply of corn. The growth of population he sought to encourage by establishing foundations for the nurture of poor and orphan children. The poverty of the Italian population, among whom free labour was largely displaced by that of slaves, had encouraged a hideous system of infanticide. Trajan sought to put it down by what may be called a 'bounty' on children, and probably met with some success, as his foundation continued to exist for more than a century, when it was confiscated by Pertinax.

While the poor were thus assisted, the owners of property obtained some relief in the matter of taxation. An impost which seems to have been regarded as especially onerous was the *vicesima* or twentieth, a tax on succession of five per cent. To us indeed, accustomed to a legacy duty of double the amount, when property descends to a stranger, this impost does not seem remarkably grievous, but Trajan gained great credit by the remission which he made in this direction. All persons succeeding to an inheritance were relieved altogether if they were related, within sufficiently near degrees, to the testator. Where the property left was small, it was in all cases exempt.

The zeal with which Trajan provided for the amusements of his subjects aroused their gratitude, we may believe, still more than his wise provision for their welfare. To us they do not seem so admirable. It is with nothing less than horror that we read how in the great shows which he exhibited after his Dacian triumph,

five thousand pairs of gladiators fought in the *arena*. On the same occasion the farces which, probably on account of their license, he had suppressed at the beginning of his reign, were again permitted. The extraordinary industry with which Trajan carried on the administration of public affairs is sufficiently illustrated by his correspondence with Pliny, of which specimens have been given. If the Emperor did as much for other provinces as he did for Bithynia, performing the functions of a Minister of Justice, a Home Secretary, and a President of Board of Works, and we know not of what officials besides, his capacity for business must have been almost supernatural. We wonder whether he still carried it on when he was absent with the army, as he was for a considerable part of his reign. Anyhow the sound sense which he invariably displays in his answers, is worthy of all admiration.

But it is as a judge that Trajan chiefly interests us. We wish that we knew more of his work in this capacity. That the general impression of his justice was strong enough to give rise to a legend that is without a fellow in Christian literature, has been already said. For the rest we must be content with the picture that Pliny has given us of the way in which the Emperor administered justice at his sea-side residence of Centum Cellæ, now *Civita Vecchia*. "I have lately," he writes, "derived the greatest pleasure from having been summoned by our Emperor to act as his assessor at Centum Cellæ. What, indeed, could be more delightful than to have that close view, for which retirement gives an opportunity, of the justice, the dignity, the courtesy of our prince. There were many causes tried, and they were such as to give by their variety an admirable proof of the excellence of the judge."

A wealthy Ephesian was attacked by the professional informers, probably on some charge of treason. He was promptly acquitted. An offending wife was next tried. She was found guilty, though her husband had condoned her offence, and was mulcted of the third part of her dowry and banished to an island. Another case was a somewhat complicated affair of a will which was said to be partly forged. One of the Emperor's freedmen was involved in it, and some of the plaintiffs were disposed, on that account, to let the case fall through. Trajan would suffer nothing of the kind.

"He is no Polycletus," he said, "and I no Nero." On this the plaintiffs were peremptorily ordered to proceed.

Of the merits and the issue of the case we know nothing. "You see," says Pliny, after giving some details about the causes tried, "how honourable, how strict, was the employment of our days. The relaxation that followed them was most delightful. We were daily invited to dinner. The entertainment was most modest, considering that it was an Emperor's table. Sometimes we heard recitations, and sometimes the night was spent in most delightful discourse. On the last day, when we were leaving, Caesar, so careful is his kindness, sent us all presents."

There is, I know, a dark side to Trajan's character. Perhaps we may set aside the grievous charges which Dio Cassius, a pessimistic writer, brings against his morality. Pliny speaks most emphatically of the purity of his life, and Pliny, though a courtier, would not, I think, have condescended to lie. But that Trajan was a persecutor cannot be doubted. Nero had made the Christians the screen of his own crimes, and Domitian, when his frantic jealousy drove him to destroy his cousin, Flavius Clemens, had made the accused man's religion his pretext. But Trajan, the vigorous, justice-loving Emperor, was the first to institute a formal persecution of the Christian faith.

It was always so; the vigorous Emperors showed themselves actively hostile to what the weak and the profligate indolently tolerated. They saw, and rightly saw, that the Empire and this new doctrine could not stand together; and we can hardly blame them if they chose the side to which all their convictions inclined them. Trajan, whatever his ignorance, and, it may be, his faults, remains a noble figure, a strong ruler, whose aim was justice. It was the significant formula, repeated after his time, to every new successor to the throne of the Caesars: "May you be more fortunate than Augustus, and better than Trajan!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A GREAT SHOW

*A.D. 105*

*HIPPONAX OF COLONUS, IN ROME, TO HIS COUSIN AND  
FELLOW-TOWNSMAN CALLIAS,—GREETING.*

I have been greatly at a loss, my dearest Callias, ever since I came to this city, whether I should rather admire or loathe these Romans. It must be confessed that at this moment, when I recall to my mind the things of which I was yesterday a spectator, I incline rather to hatred than love. How brutal they are!—how cruel!—how they delight in unmeaning show and extravagance!—with what a thirst for blood are they possessed, keener than that of the most savage wild beasts, keener, I say, for beasts are content when their hunger is appeased, but the appetite of these barbarians (for barbarians they are, notwithstanding all their wealth and luxury) can never be satisfied.

Yet when I see with what unwearying diligence, with what infinite labour, they prepare even their pleasures, I am beyond measure astonished. For yesterday's entertainment they had ransacked the whole earth; nor could a spectator, however hostile, forget that though they are vulgar in taste and savage in temper, they have conquered the world. But let me relate to you in order the things that I saw.

Trajan the Emperor—who, by the way, both in his virtues and vices is a Roman of the Romans—having added seven new provinces to the Empire, resolved to exhibit to the people such a show as had never been before seen in Rome; and it is confessed by all that he has attained his ambition. The day before yesterday, my host, whose office imposes upon him part of the care of these matters, took me to the public supper at which the gladiators who were to fight on the morrow took leave of their friends and kinsfolk. The tables were spread in the circus itself; and there

were present, I should suppose, not less than two hundred guests (so many gladiators being about to fight on the morrow) for whom most bountiful provision of the richest food and the most generous wines had been made. They were of all nations but chiefly, as I was told, from Gaul and Thrace. From Greece it rejoices me to say, there were but very few, and most of these Arcadians, who, now that the Romans have established peace over all the world, are compelled to hire out their swords, not for honorable warfare, but for baser strifes.

Most of the guests, were, I thought, intent only on indulging in as much pleasure as the time permitted, and ate and drank ravenously. These, I observed, boasted loudly of what they would do on the morrow; the few that were more moderate in their enjoyment were also more modest.

There were not wanting sights that touched the heart. One such I noticed the more particularly because my host was in a way concerned in it. For the most part the gladiators are slaves; but it sometimes happens that a citizen will bind himself for a term of years to the master of the "school", for this is the name by which they call these establishments, receiving in return a considerable sum of money. Such a gladiator may have slaves of his own, if he is able to purchase them—a thing not impossible, seeing that successful athletes often receive no inconsiderable gifts from the young nobles and others who win money by wagering on their success. As we were walking among the tables, a certain Tubero plucked my host by the gown, and begged him to stay awhile.

"Ha! comrade," said my host—I should have told you he is a Fabius and belongs therefore to one of the very noblest families of Rome—"What can I do for you? I hope that all is prosperous with you."

The gladiator, I could see, was profoundly gratified by my host's kindly salutation. He had served under Fabius in Britain, but hardly expected to be so remembered, for a citizen who thus sells his freedom is held to have somewhat demeaned himself.

"I had no reason to complain, most noble Fabius," he replied. "To-morrow I fight for the last time; if Fortune favours me, I shall be entitled to my discharge. But who can tell what may happen? A slip in the sand and it will be all over with me. I would therefore, while I have time, discharge a duty which it would trouble me much to leave undone. You see, noble sir, this worthy man here?"

He pointed to a man of about sixty years, a Syrian, I should judge, from his complexion and eyes, who was standing by weeping unrestrainedly.

"Will you then condescend to be a witness while I set this man free?"

At these words the Syrian broke forth into tears more vehemently than ever. "I will not suffer it," he cried. "'Tis of the very worst omen that a gladiator should do such a thing. He might as well order the pinewood, the oil and the spices for his funeral."

"Be silent," said the gladiator with a certain not unkindly imperiousness. "Shall I not do as I will with mine own? If to-morrow—"

At this the Syrian clapped his hand on the speaker's mouth with a cry, "good words, good words, master."

"Well!" said Tubero, smiling, "If anything should happen to me to-morrow, how will you fare, being still a slave? Say, if I had not bought you, three years since, when your old master of the cookshop sold you as being quite worn-out, would you not have starved? 'Tis not everyone, my masters," he went on, turning to us, "that knows this Dromio. He is the most faithful of men, cares more for his master's interests than his own, and makes, withal, the most incomparable sausage-rolls! Nay, Dromio, you shall be free, whether you will or not. If all goes well, you shall not leave me—no, no, for I like your rolls too well—if otherwise, then there is a legacy of fifty thousand *sestercii*, with which you can set up a cookshop of your own."

So you see there is humanity even in a Roman, and that Roman a gladiator. You will be glad to be told that Tubero

escaped unhurt; he came to pay his respects to Fabius at the morning *levée* on the day after the show.

And now, lest my letter be of so great a length as even to tire your friendly patience, I must pass on without further delay to speak of the show itself.

Happily the day was fine, for though the awnings which are stretched over the amphitheatre suffice to keep the sunshine off the spectators, they are but an indifferent shelter against rain, if it be more than a passing shower. Heavy rain on the day of the Show is indeed a serious calamity, and to none more so than to the unfortunate men who are compelled to exhibit themselves for the amusement of the people. For this same people is on such occasions greatly out of humour, and it goes hard with any performer who may seem to bear himself with any lack of skill or courage.

The day began with an exhibition of wild beasts. In the magnitude of his preparations for this part of the entertainment the Emperor has surpassed, I am told, all his predecessors. My host told me last night that when Titus opened the new amphitheatre which he had built, five thousand wild animals and nearly as many tame were slain, but that Trajan had prepared nearly half as many again, of which, it is probable, but few will remain alive when the Show shall be at last brought to an end.

For a time I saw nothing that was distasteful, and much that was curious and interesting. Strange creatures, of which I had read only in the pages of Aristotle, and which I did not suppose could be seen out of their native deserts, were brought into the arena, and, wonderful to say did not seem unknown to the spectators. A beast that they call the camelopard was one of those—it is something the shape of a camel with the spots of a leopard, only that the neck is longer, and the back without a hump, which, indeed, so does it slope from the forelegs to the hinder, would certainly be convenient for any that desired to ride it. I saw also a monstrous creature that they call a river-horse, why I know not, for it is the clumsiest of all animals, when seen on land at least, for it is its nature to dwell mostly in the water. Of strange

birds there was one that I noticed particularly as overtopping a man in stature. It is by nature white, but these Romans, who are, indeed, somewhat wanting in taste, had coloured it, in part, with vermilion. Pheasants from the land of the Golden Fleece—and some of them seemed to shine with this metal—and flamingoes, of a most brilliant crimson, were also much to be admired.

The tameness of many of these creatures was indeed wonderful. We saw not indeed those performing elephants of which I was told stories that seemed past belief, how, for instance, four would walk up ropes carrying between them a litter in which reposed a fifth figuring to be a sick comrade. But I saw many curious sights, such as a great ape that behaved itself marvellously like a man, now dancing in armour, now fencing with its master, lions that pursued and caught hares without harming them, dogs that imitated the movements of a company of soldiers, and other things which it would weary you to read of, for it is only in the sight that these things are really interesting.

So far then, as I have said, I was delighted with what I beheld, and marvelled much at the pains that had been bestowed on the training and teaching of these creatures. That which followed was to me less pleasing, but to the greater part of the spectators far more so. For now began the combats between men and the more savage and strong of the wild creatures that had been thus gathered together. If a man of his own free will risks his life against some beast in the forest, I find no fault with him; nay I acknowledge that there is a pleasure in such encounters, and that the young may be profitably trained thereby to do battle with the enemies of their country.

Do you not remember, my dear Callias, an adventure with that wild boar in the forest of Tegea, and that it was made far more delightful than our customary pursuit of hares and the like, by the admixture of a certain spice of danger? But that the two should be brought together against nature, the wild beast taken from his haunts, and losing thereby, I doubt not, something of his proper strength and cunning, the man, not moved by the spirit of adventure and the love of sport, but bought by money—this

seemed to me to be a thing not at all to be admired. Yet I will confess, there is a certain fascination in the fight, for it was not possible not to admire the grace and strength of these creatures of the woods and mountains, and the boldness and dexterity of the men that contended with them. But when the conflicts were ended, resulting, for the most part, in the victory of the human combatants, there followed a spectacle which was to me most revolting, for now unarmed men were exposed to the fury of bears, lions and tigers. It was true that, as my neighbours informed me, these men deserved to die, for they were murderers, robbers, forgers of wills and the like (of the guilt of some I doubted, for they had not committed, so far as I could learn, any worse offence than running away from cruel masters—and how cruel a Roman master may be, you, my Callias, can hardly know). But to see them die in this fashion was something horrible.

As for the spectators they were moved by the love of blood rather than by the love of justice. From this spectacle, which indeed lasted but for a short time, the number of the criminals that were so to die being small, I turned away, hiding my face with my hands. When there was a great silence on the assembly, coming after a great shouting and yelling, I looked up and saw a most marvellous thing. The whole arena was empty, save for a single animal, a bear, that was sitting not far, as it chanced, from the place where I myself was situated. Then, at a signal from the Emperor, there was opened a door, from which issued an old man, of singularly venerable aspect, who walked towards the creature, showing no sign of fear in his gait or countenance, for he was so near that I could observe him closely. "Who is he?" I enquired of my neighbour. "Is he also a criminal?" "Yes," said the man, and of the very worst kind." "Then," cried I, "do his looks most strangely belie his nature, for a face more benevolent and virtuous I have never seen." "I say not," replied my neighbour "that he has done murder or theft; but he is a Christian." "A Christian?" said I, "what is that?" "One," my neighbour answered, "that will not worship the gods, believing only in one Christus, whom Pilate the Procurator crucified some seventy years since, but whom those who call themselves by his name affirm to be alive."

This was not a little perplexing to me. "I see not the heinous guilt of so affirming," I said, "but tell me, is this all that is alleged against this man?" "Many things are alleged," answered my informant, "but nothing is proved. Yet he deserves to die, if only for his incredible and intolerable obstinacy. Can you believe that this fellow is willing to be destroyed by the bear yonder, rather than burn a grain of incense in honour of our gracious Emperor? Yet such is the truth; a man may believe what folly he pleases but he must obey; and verily a rebel that is of blameless life may do more harm than a hundred malefactors." But now happened the marvel of the thing. The bear rose from its place, and approached the man, but when we looked to see it tear him, it hurt him not, but fawned upon him, rubbing itself against his legs, as though it were some great cat. When this had lasted some time, the people growing impatient, the master of the Show cried out, "Let go the lion!" Hereupon the door of a cage that was under the Emperor's seat was thrown open, and a great lion rushed forth. He bounded up to the old man with great strides, but when he reached him seemed to drop all his fierceness.

On this there was a great shout of "Pardon! Pardon!" and the Emperor, who likes not to refuse any request of the people on these occasions, except for the very gravest reasons, gave the signal that the man should be led away. What think you of this, my Callias? According to your philosophy, which is taken, I know, from the sages of the Garden of Epicurus, the gods exist indeed, but take no care in human affairs. Yet how was this man protected when none other escaped? You will say, the beasts were well satisfied with food already. Nay, but it was not so, for on this point I made enquiry. Possibly it was some magical power that the man had. I will not fail to see him, for he has been released, I am told, and I will ask him.

This part of the entertainment being finished, the bodies of the slain animals being dragged away, and fresh sand being strewn over the whole place, there fell upon the whole assembly a hush which was yet full, as it seemed to me, of an intense expectation; for now was to come the sight that goes to the inmost heart of these savages—men fighting with men.

It is not to be denied that it was a splendid sight when a hundred of the gladiators who were to play the "first act," so to speak (they were a mere fraction of all the performers to be exhibited), came marching in two by two. They were armed mostly as soldiers but with more of ornament and with greater splendor. Their helmets were of various shapes, but each had a broad brim and a visor consisting of four plates, the upper two being pierced to allow the wearer to see through them. On the top also there was what one might liken to the comb of a cock, and fastened to this, a plume of horse-hair dyed crimson or of crimson feathers.

Some were called "Samnites" (the name of an Italian tribe that once nearly brought Rome to her knees). These carried a short sword and large oblong shield. Others, were armed as Thracians, or as Greeks. Others, again, were distinguished by the symbol of a fish upon their helmets. But the most curious of all were those called "net-men," who were equipped with a net with which to entangle an antagonist; having so disabled him, the "net-man" stabs him with a three-pronged harpoon. These have no helmets, and are equipped as lightly as possible, for if they miss their cast they have no hope of safety but in their fleetness of foot.

You will not think the worse of me, my dear Callias, if I acknowledge that I cannot describe this part of the spectacle. The truth is that after a certain dreadful fascination, which held me, while the first strokes were given, I turned away my eyes. Indeed had I continued to look, undoubtedly I should have fainted. But I could but observe that the young Fabia, my host's daughter, a girl of about seventeen, had no such qualms, for she gazed steadfastly into the arena the whole time, and her face (for I looked at her more than once) was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with a most inhuman light.

Till yesterday I had thought her the fairest maiden I had seen; but now the very girdle of Aphrodite could not make her beautiful in my eyes. Can you believe, my Callias, that this young girl, who a week ago was weeping inconsolably over a dead sparrow, cried aloud, "he has it!" when some poor wretch received

the decisive blow; aye, and when, not being wounded mortally, he appealed for mercy, that she made the sign of death holding forth her hand as if in the act to strike? Verily they have the wolf's blood in their veins, these Romans, both men and women! But what will you say when I relate to you my last experiences?

Hearing my neighbour say the spectacle was over for the day, I ventured to look up; and what think you did I see?—Some sixty bodies lay on the sand, and there came out the figure of one dressed as Charon, the ferryman of Styx, who examined the prostrate forms to try if there was life in them. Finding that none were alive, he returned to the place whence he came, and there followed him presently another person, this one habited as Hermes, bearing in his hand the rod wherewith the messenger of the gods is said to marshal the spirits of the dead when they go down to the shades. At his bidding some attendants removed the poor victims. This done, fresh sand was strewn over such places as showed of conflict, and thus was finished the first day of the Great Show, wherewith Trajan is to please the gods and the Roman people.

It will be continued for many days; how many, I neither know nor care, for I go not again. Next year I hope to see among the palms and olives of Olympia the bloodless sports which please a kindlier, gentler race of gods and men. Farewell.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### A ROMAN AT ATHENS

#### *MARCUS TO HIS BROTHER QUINTUS, GREETING.*

Could I transport you, my dearest Quintus, to this place, and introduce you to even a part of the delights which it ministers to those who frequent it, you would certainly repent that you have chosen to stay in Rome, and have preferred the Forum and the Court of the Hundred to the Areopagus and the Schools of the Philosophers.

Doubtless when I shall return, my studies finished, I shall find that you have outstripped me in the race for wealth and honour, yet I would not exchange for these advantages the manifold goods both of mind and body with which Athens supplies her adopted children. It must be confessed indeed that, for the most part, our countrymen are of your opinion. There are but few Romans or Italians in the city, scarcely more than might be counted on the fingers of one hand. I suppose that it is our national temper to desire the shortest way towards the things that seem desirable, and that such a way is not furnished by philosophy is manifest. But enough of this matter, which we have already discussed sufficiently at other times.

Let me recount some of the things which I have seen or heard. Know then, in the first place, that I reached this place on the Kalends of October, having had a more prosperous voyage than I could have expected considering the lateness of the season. I was almost the last comer of those who intended to study during the year then about to begin. (Here, I should say, the year for civil matters commences with the autumn equinox, and for matters academical some ten days later, or, according to our reckoning, on the Nones of October, or thereabouts, for the day is not absolutely fixed). The time between the day of my arrival and this same commencement was fully occupied with various preparations.

First I provided myself with a convenient lodging in the house of a certain Meniscus, a worthy man who makes his livelihood by copying books and by giving instruction to youths that are backward in their studies. I pay him 500 sesterces by the month and have no reason to complain of the liberality of his table. My wine I purchase for myself, not having a taste for the thin vintage which, according to our bargain, he supplies. It comes, he tells me, from Hymettus, but that mountain must keep, I think, all its sweetness for its honey.

I had to purchase a gown, for all that are devoted to study wear a peculiar dress. This gown is white, and of a shape not unlike to our own toga. Not many years ago the colour was black, but a certain Herodes, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter, caused that it should be changed, providing a sum of money for that purpose. I myself am a sharer in this liberality, for thanks to the endowment furnished by him I bought a handsome white gown of fine material at the same price that was formerly paid for one both black and coarse. The purchase of books I postponed for the time, till I should have for my guidance in this matter the recommendations of my teachers, but I furnished myself with a store of paper and parchment for notes and copies, with other literary material.

On the Nones of October, (here the name of the month is Pyanepsias or the 'month of pulse cooking') we that were new students paraded at the Town Hall. A motley crew we were, so far as country was concerned, Europe, Asia, and Africa being represented in our ranks. Of all towns none sent more than Marseilles, a place which combines in a high degree wealth and culture. From Rome there was but one, myself; from the rest of Italy two.

The birthplaces of the others I need not enumerate, nor indeed did I learn them all; but I noticed two youths from Britain, with whom indeed I have since made acquaintance. They are two brothers, and both of excellent ability. We took an oath that we would observe the laws of the city, that we would study diligently, that we would avoid all idle and loose ways, and that we would be

dutiful to the Governor of the students. This done we inscribed our names upon a roll, from which they will be transferred, if we pass the year without discredit, to a marble slab.

We did not omit to pay certain fees, among which were 500 sesterces for the purchase of books, and 3000 sesterces to be divided among various teachers whose lectures we shall have the duty and privilege of attending. The question was put to us one by one to which school of philosophy we belonged or desired to frequent. In this matter a choice is given to us, but only so far as the Stoics or the various sects which have followed more or less the teaching of Plato are concerned. A student of the first year is not permitted to attend the teaching of the Epicureans. Afterwards, if he be of the number of those who prolong their stay for the purposes of study beyond the year, he may follow his own inclinations. I, having the example of our most noble and wise Emperor before me, chose the Stoics as my instructors. If I can only learn from them to emulate his virtues, I shall indeed have visited this ancient abode of philosophy to most excellent purpose. I must, however, confess that it is not in the Porch, where, as you know, the successors of Zeno still teach, that I have found the most fruitful and suggestive instruction.

I do not desire to disparage the knowledge and ability of the Stoical teacher—and indeed who am I that I should presume, to criticise so celebrated a man? Yet, I say that I have myself gained more profit, as far as I can estimate it, from the teaching of a certain Demonax.

This philosopher professes to be a follower of the Cynic Diogenes. I fancy that you smile as you read these words. "What," you say, "is it possible that anyone willingly calls himself by the name of that madman? Or is there indeed any Cynical philosophy other than a contempt, often itself truly contemptible, for all that men admire and value?" I do not deny that it is not any excellence of system that attracts me in this same Demonax. System he has none, as indeed Diogenes had none. But he gives for all that a singular charm and attraction to his teaching; for every word that he says seems to come from his heart; as we listen we say to



ourselves, "this is a good man and honest, the things that he recommends must be desirable."

He is a man of the most venerable age, having already passed his ninetieth year, and of an aspect that corresponds, though he is still erect and vigorous. As to the people here, they could not honour him more were he a god. 'Tis pretty to see the children run to offer him fruit and flowers, and as for the market people, there is nothing that pleases them better than that he should accept the best things that they have on their stalls. And yet, so I am told, there was a time when he went in danger of his life from his boldness of speech.

After he had been settled here for some years, there was a loud outcry against him because he had never been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. No good man, they said, would have refused to have become a partaker of the highest truth. "My friends," was his answer, "I have avoided the knowledge of these secret things for this reason. Had I found them bad, then I must, for conscience sake, have warned all men against them; had I found them good, then I must, also for conscience sake, have made all men partakers of them to the best of my ability."

And it must be confessed that he has more than once shown such sharpness of tongue that Diogenes himself whom he professes to follow could not have excelled it. To a fat and puffy citizen who practised fencing at a dummy figure, and asked him, "Do I use my weapon well, think you?" he answered, "Admirably, so long as your enemy is of wood." An indifferent pleader he advised to practice much in private if he would improve. "Yes, so I do," answered the man. "I go over all my speeches to myself, not once but many times." "Is it so?" said Demonax, "then you must get another audience."

A soothsayer he thus reproved, "Do you take pay for the exercise of your art?" he asked. The man owned that he did. "Tell me how much," said the philosopher; and when the man named the sum, he answered, " 'Tis either too little or too much; too little if you can change at all the decrees of fate; for such a power no

recompense would suffice; but if these decrees cannot be changed, what profits your soothsaying?"

To me the philosopher has been most friendly. He singled me out from his audience when I first heard him, perceiving that I was a Roman, and asked me many questions about our studies at Rome, and also about our Emperor, of whom he said smiling, that there had never been so good a philosopher wasted on such unprofitable things as commanding armies and the like. Since then I have often supped with him.

A more pleasant and more courteous host could not be, and though he himself practises the severest abstinence, contenting himself with a dish of vegetables and a draught of water, he provides his friends with good cake and generous wine, an entertainment ample but not luxurious. He is, I should have said, and has always been, a single man, though much importuned by his friends in former days to change his condition. Among these, Epictetus the philosopher was specially urgent. Demonax made as if he had yielded to his persuasion. "You are right," said he, "I will marry, if only you will give me one of your daughters to wife." Now Epictetus, who was then an old man, had himself lived single all his life.

Not many days ago, Demonax took me to see that same Herodes of whom I have already made mention. He was for a long time the most notable man in Athens, both as a great benefactor of the City and as a professor of rhetoric, an art in which no one within the memory of man has equalled him. A race course of white marble, and a theatre roofed with cedar are among the benefactions which he bestowed on Athens. For the benefit of learning he has furnished endowments for more than one Professor's chair. Yet the people have been little grateful to him, bearing him a grudge for something that he did in the matter of his father's will.

More than once he has been accused to the Emperor, but has always been honorably acquitted. These things have so disturbed him that he has ceased to frequent the city, living always at his villa that overlooks the plain of Marathon. Here it was that I

saw him, being entertained for two days most hospitably. He fills his house indeed throughout the year with guests, whom he chooses for their love of study.

He took me to see the famous plain, and described to me most minutely the scene of the battle. As he was speaking I found it easy to believe that he had been accounted the most eloquent man of his generation. With Demonax he is on the most friendly terms, though he too has felt the sharpness of the philosopher's tongue, as you will see from what I am about to relate.

Some year's ago Atticus lost his son, Pollux by name, a youth of much promise, and mourned for him so inconsolably, as to excite the displeasure of Demonax, who thinks that men should not allow themselves to be vanquished either by pleasure or by grief. Hear then how the wise man reproved him. Herodes would have the young man's chariot harnessed day by day as though he might use it, and a meal prepared for him as though he might sit down to it. Demonax noting this, said, "You feign to yourself that he is yet alive?" "Yes;" replied the father, "feeling that I cannot live without him." "Is it so?" the other made answer, and departed. The next day he returned, saying "I have a letter for you from Pollux." "What says he?" cried the father, "He complains," returned the other, "that you are so tardy in coming to him." At another time he said: "Know that I have discovered a spell by which I can call up the spirit of your son, but before I can use it you must find three men that have never suffered bereavement."

My host invited me to visit him again when I might find time, and especially he said when the students, according to custom, came to pay the annual honours at the grave of those who fell at Marathon. You must know that this day is one of the chief festivals of the year with us. Another is the anniversary of Salamis, which we honour with boat races on the bay and other sports.

Speaking of these things reminds me to tell you that we are not less careful of the body than of the mind. Athletic exercises are duly practised, and twice or thrice a month we are roused up at

night, and arming ourselves in haste, hurry to the frontier as if to repel the attack of an invader.

To complete the list of my studies I must tell you that I hear Aristides lecture every other day on logic, that every third day Callias discourses on Homer, while not a day passes, except it be devoted to some great festival of the gods, but that I am present at a lecture from one or other of the teachers of philosophy.

From all these I hope to gain much profit. Yet, if they were absent, to live in this place where every stone, so to speak, is eloquent of the great and wise, is in itself a liberal education. Why should I repeat these names to you who know them as well as I? One thing I may tell you which pleased me as a Roman, as without doubt it will please you. Yesterday, as I was walking in one of the streets of the city, my companion said to me, "See, that dwelling yonder is the house where your poet Horatius lived when he studied in this place." Rome therefore has its share among the glories of Athens.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### AN IMPERIAL PHILOSOPHER

#### MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS AUGUSTUS

Marcus Aurelius, like his predecessor Trajan, belonged to a family of Italian origin that had been for some time settled in Spain. Losing his father in childhood, he was adopted by his paternal grandfather, Annius Verus, who was then (A.D. 126) Consul for the third time. The little Verus (for that was then his name) attracted the notice of the Emperor Hadrian, who made him a knight when he was but six years old, and a Priest of Mars two years afterwards.

Among the qualities which excited the admiration of Hadrian was the lad's transparent honesty and truthfulness. *Verissimus*, he would playfully call him, making an appropriate superlative of his name. When he was twelve he assumed the characteristic dress of the philosopher, a thick woollen cloak, worn also by soldiers on active service, and probably intended as a protest against the ornate and luxurious dress of civil life. Luxury, indeed, had no charms for the young Verus. On the contrary, he was strongly inclined to the asceticism which was at this time gaining a strong hold on the Christian community. He adopted the practice of sleeping on the ground, and could hardly be induced by the persuasions of his servants to use a couch covered with lion skins. As it was, his health was affected by his devotion to study. "This," says his biographer, "was the only point on which the life of the boy was open to censure."

We are reminded of what another of the noblest sons of Rome, Agricola, said about himself, that there was a time in his early youth "when he would have imbibed a keener love of philosophy than became a Roman and a senator, had not his mother's good sense checked his excited and ardent spirit."

Meanwhile great prospects were opening out before the youth. Hadrian had adopted one Ceionius Commodus, and Verus was betrothed to his daughter, probably with a view to the succession. The new Prince died but a little more than a year after his adoption.

The Emperor now made a much happier choice in the person of Arrius Antoninus. At the same time he imposed the condition that the newly adopted son should himself adopt the youthful Verus and a son of the deceased Ceionius Commodus. Hadrian died in 138, and Arrius Antoninus succeeded him on the throne. The surname Pius was given him, it is commonly supposed, in recognition of his dutiful conduct in procuring the usual honours of deification for his adopting father, the Senate being disposed to refuse them on account of the cruelties of Hadrian's later years.

In 147, Antoninus Pius shared the Imperial honour with Aurelius (this was the name which Verus had assumed on his adoption). For fourteen years the two acted together with perfect harmony, and this was beyond doubt the happiest period in the life of Aurelius. The Empire enjoyed a repose such as had never fallen to its lot before, and was never realised again; and in his own home the troubles which disturbed his later years had not yet begun, or, at least, did not press.

In 161 Antoninus died, committing the Empire to Aurelius with his last breath, and making no mention, it would seem, of the son of Commodus. The first act of Aurelius was to associate his brother by adoption in the Empire. It was certainly a disinterested act, and it would have been a wise one, had the new colleague been really worthy of his promotion. At the time, indeed, he seemed to be so. He was young, active and vigorous, fit to fight the battles of the Empire, while Aurelius would manage civil affairs. Possibly promotion spoilt him. He took command, indeed, of the armies which were sent to operate against the Parthians, but the command was only nominal. Great victories were won, but they were won by his lieutenants. Verus himself, for that was the name by which he was known, spent his time in dissolute

excesses. He died of apoplexy in 169, and Aurelius was thenceforward sole Emperor.

It was a heavy burden that he had to bear, and he bore it with a courage and a constancy that are beyond all praise. A scholar and a student, he had to spend his life in the camp. This uncongenial task he performed with extraordinary success. The exhaustion of the empire by famine and pestilence compelled him to fill up the ranks of his legions with gladiators and slaves. Yet the armies thus recruited won signal victories under his leadership. A formidable confederacy of the northern tribes threatened the Empire with the ruin which actually overtook it three centuries later. The imperial philosopher crushed it, as if he had been a Marius or a Caesar.

The Marcomanni were defeated in 170, the Quadi in 174. Scarcely had the latter victory been won when intrigues of the Empress Faustina led to troubles in the East. This woman, always the plague and disgrace of her husband, now went dangerously near to a treasonable conspiracy against him. The health of the Emperor was weak; his heir was a vicious lad only just in his teens. Faustina feared lest, if Aurelius should die, the legions might choose another Prince, and wrote to Avidius Cassius, who commanded the armies of the East, bidding him hold himself in readiness to seize the reins of power. Her own hand and the throne were to be his reward.

A rumor reached the East that the Emperor was dead, and Cassius immediately had himself proclaimed. When a contradiction followed, he believed that he had offended beyond all pardon, and persisted in his rebellion. With the greatest reluctance Aurelius marched against him. Nothing, he told his soldiers, was so hateful to him as civil war, and nothing would please him better than to be able to forgive. What he most feared was that Cassius' own shame and despair or the hand of some loyal subject should anticipate his purposes of clemency. The latter anticipation was fulfilled. A little more than three months after his assumption of the purple, Cassius was assassinated by

two of his officers. The murderers brought his bloody head to Aurelius, but he turned away in disgust.

The Emperor would have accorded his forbearance to all concerned in the unhappy affair. The papers of Cassius he destroyed unread. Of those who had notoriously taken part with the usurper not one suffered death. The wretched Empress died while he was on his way eastward. Her son lived to succeed his father, and to be, perhaps, the vilest ruler that ever disgraced a throne. It was a lamentable weakness in the philosophic Emperor to shut his eyes to a wickedness of which he could not have been ignorant. The principle of adoption had had the happiest results. Nerva, chosen by the Senate, had adopted Trajan, Trajan Hadrian, Hadrian Antoninus, and Antoninus Aurelius. The last of the good Emperors reverted to the principle of inheritance, and the golden age of Rome was at an end. Aurelius died in his fifty-ninth year (A.D. 180).

Aurelius was a Stoic, but a Stoic with a difference. He modified the paradoxical tenets of the school with the sobriety of thought that characterized the Roman mind. Suicide, in particular, to which the Stoic teachers had been accustomed to give a hearty approval, did not commend itself to him. It may be truly said that the act is an expression of consummate egotism. The man who, at the bidding of his conscience or his pride, puts an end to his own life, puts himself above nature, or the Ruler of nature. But Aurelius was not an egotist. On the contrary, he develops in his philosophical thought what is notoriously absent from all non-Christian philosophy—humility. The sentence which he quotes with approval from Epictetus—"Thou art a little soul, bearing about a corpse,"—was not one which would have commended itself to a Cato. And, if you change Nature to God, there is a Christian ring in the following:—"To Nature, that giveth all and taketh all away, he that is instructed and modest says, 'Give what thou wilt—take what thou wilt away.' And this he says in a spirit not of pride but of subordination and loyalty." It is interesting, indeed, to see how much the philosopher is penetrated, all unconsciously, we cannot but think, with the Christian spirit. He counsels, for instance, self-examination. He tells us, almost in the

Master's words, that it is not the things without, but the things within, that disturb the man. On the subject of prayer, too, he has some noble utterances. "If the gods can grant anything, why not pray to them to grant that thou mayest not be afraid of anything, or lust after or repine at anything, rather than that anything may or may not come to pass." Many Christians have less exalted conceptions than this.

But if we admire the man, we must also pity him. He was not happy. About the other life he could only doubt. He speaks of dim eternities stretching on either side of us; but whether we have or have not any part in them he could not say. "If the gods," he says in one place, "have ordered all things well, can it be that the men who by holy deeds have become most familiar with the Divine, when once they die, cease to be?" All that he can suggest as an answer is this: "If this be so, be sure that if it ought to have been otherwise, they would have so ordered it. . . . Because it is not so, if in fact it is not so, be certainly assured that it ought not to have been so."

And if the prospect of another life was dim, if not actually closed to him, he found his philosophy, as all have found it, a poor protection against the ills and disappointments of this. His home was wretched: among counsellors and friends he could hardly find one in whom he could trust. Where was he to look for help or comfort? "Come quick," he cries in one place, "lest, perchance, I too should forget myself!"

But he left a memory so dear and so revered as the memory of few rulers has been. "In life and in death," says his biographer, "he was close akin to the lords in heaven." A foolish and blasphemous adulation was wont to give divine rank to the imperial throne. It was a pure and tender gratitude that cherished the memory of Aurelius. He had preserved an unblemished sanctity of life among the temptations of a throne, and he had spent himself unsparingly for the good of his people; and he was not forgotten; for centuries afterwards the likenesses of the philosopher Emperor were among the most cherished possessions of families which kept alive the tradition of his goodness.

And yet, he was a persecutor of the Christian Church. Perhaps his Stoic teachers, who had begun to hate this formidable rival, had turned his heart against it. Perhaps he saw the irreconcilable hostility between the Empire and the new society. The fact remains: Justin at Rome, Polycarp at Smyrna, Blandina and Pothinos at Lyons, suffered by his persecution, it may even be said by his command. What are we to say? Nothing, except it be to give an application which the sufferers themselves would not, we may believe, have refused to give, to the dying words of Stephen, "Lord, forgive him, for he knew not what he did."