



CHAPTER XXXIII

THE IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS OF AUGUSTUS: TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, AND CLAUDIUS

TIBERIUS (TIBERIUS CLAUDIUS NERO CÆSAR), 14–37 A.D.

TIBERIUS came of that ambitious Claudian family which had enjoyed twenty eight consulates, five dictatorships, seven censorships, and as many triumphs. The marriage of his mother Livia with Octavius, and his adoption by Cæsar, had given him entrance into the house of Cæsar. All commissions with which he was charged by his adoptive father were carried out with activity and intelligence, and, at the time of the war with Marbod, he saved the empire in a dangerous crisis. Since the death of Agrippa, no general had been able to command such brilliant service. He had fought in Spain and in the Alps, governed Gaul, given a king to Armenia, subdued the Pannonians, conquered the Germans, transported forty-six thousand barbarians into Belgium and resettled the empire after the defeat of Varus. Such was the man to whom the death of Augustus gave the throne.¹

Respect for Augustus had kept ambitions silent, but Tiberius found himself surrounded by republicans and more than this by candidates for the throne.

Moreover the soldiers had already understood that on them rested the security both of emperor and empire, and, as there were no more civil wars to enrich them, successions to the throne must take their place. Three Pannonian legions revolted, demanding one denarius per day, discharge after sixteen years, and a fixed sum to be paid in camp on the day they became veterans.

Tiberius sent Drusus, his son, and Sejanus, his prætorian prefect, to them at the head of some of the forces remaining in Italy. An eclipse of the moon helped to make the mutineers return to their duty.

On the Rhine there was a dangerous revolt. There were there seven legions, divided into two camps, making the same demands. Four legions

[¹ It may be stated, once for all, that the view of Tiberius here presented has not gone unchallenged. Tarver in particular champions the emperor against his ancient and modern detractors. It is urged that Tiberius was really a sternly moral man, with a high standard of duty, whose want of tact and sociability alone made him unpopular. His letters and addresses to the senate are said to show great dignity and wisdom; and it is claimed that from his youth up his habits were regular and his life simple and frugal. All this may be true of the early years of Tiberius, but the balance of opinion strongly supports the belief that in his later years the emperor showed a different spirit. Perhaps disease or senility may have produced the change.]

killed their centurions. Germanicus, nephew of Tiberius, hastened to them.¹ The rebels offered him the empire, but he refused. In his vexation he had drawn his sword as if to kill himself. "Strike, then," cried the angry men; his friends snatched the sword from him. To appease this dangerous sedition, he, acting on an imaginary letter from Tiberius, granted everything, and doubled the legacy of Augustus. Gallic tribute, all the general's money, and that of his friends had to be put together to pay all this.

EXPEDITIONS OF GERMANICUS; VICTORY OF IDISTAVISUS

It became necessary to give these restless spirits something to do, so their general led them against the enemy. In the country of the Marsi a space of fifty miles was put to fire and sword. In the following spring Germanicus passed the Rhine again, hoping to profit by the quarrels of Arminius and Segestes—the one belonging to the national, the other to the Roman party. He was only able to deliver Segestes, who was besieged by his rival. The wife of the conqueror of Varus was taken captive.

The last Roman ravages and the complaints of Arminius exasperated the Cherusti and a new league was formed. Germanicus went as far as the Teutoburg forest to fight them. Whitening bones marked the spot where the three legions had perished, and the soldiers buried the mutilated remains which had waited six years for this last honour. However, the Germans were nowhere to be found. Tired of pursuing an enemy who was not to be caught, Germanicus stopped. He regained Ems and embarked on the fleet which had brought him, whilst Caecina regained the Rhine by the route of the long bridges. Arminius had preceded him there, and the disaster of Varus was on the point of being renewed, had not Caecina happily been an experienced captain. He gained a strong position where the Romans were encamped and managed to reopen the Rhine route. Germanicus, surprised by equinoctial gales, had himself been in danger, and a number of his vessels had perished.

The barbarians having become singularly bold, a new expedition became necessary. A thousand warships transported eight legions to the shores of the Weser. The Germani ventured to await the Roman army on the plain of Idistavisus. Discipline led them on; but a second action was a second massacre. Varus was avenged. The victors returned to Gaul, half by land the others by sea. A tempest destroyed or dispersed some of their vessels. On hearing this news, Germany trembled and rose, but Germanicus dealt repeated blows, and the astounded barbarians allowed the legions to regain their winter quarters.

There Germanicus found letters from Tiberius recalling him for a second consulship and a triumph. The legions were doubtless, in the emperor's eyes, rather too much devoted to their leader. Germanicus obeyed and returned.

EARLY YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL GOVERNMENT BY TIBERIUS

Tiberius governed mildly and with wisdom, refusing temples offered, and discouraging, as a man who knew their value, base flatteries from the senate. His life was that of a rich private person; his manner, if not

[¹ Full details of the German campaign have been given in Chapter XXX. A brief résumé is given here for added clearness.]

[14-19 A.D.]

affable, at least polite. He rose to meet the consuls, consulted the senate in everything, and accepted the lessons which a dying liberty sometimes dared to offer. He never drew back from "a liberality which had an honourable motive." Yet he was strictly economical with regard to finance, and if he took less trouble than Augustus to please the people with continual shows, he was careful to guard against famine. One year wheat was very dear. He did as we should do to-day, keeping the bread at low prices for the people at the merchants' expense. Without yielding to his soldiers he kept them under austere discipline, although he had need of them.

With regard to the provinces, he continued the policy of Augustus. If he dare not absent himself from Rome to visit them, having neither a Mæcenas nor an Agrippa on whom to rely in his absence, he at least sent them able governors, avoided an increase of taxes, and relieved the misery where it was greatest. Twelve Asiatic towns, ruined by earthquake, were exempted from taxation for five years. Sardis, even worse off, received from him ten million sesterces. Tiberius practised the advice he gave to his provincial governors: "A good shepherd shears his sheep but does not flay them."

Thus the empire was wisely governed; but under this mild discipline the nobles grew bolder. A plot was formed, but, being discovered in time, was frustrated, and Libo, its author, killed himself. At home, Tiberius had domestic troubles. Livia, accustomed to deference from her husband, insisted on being listened to. Agrippina, Germanicus' wife and granddaughter of Augustus, boldly defied the mother of Tiberius, and would not admit that the wife of Drusus had equal rights with herself. These feminine rivalries divided the court and gave birth to hatreds which were embittered by courtiers.

Tiberius had recalled Germanicus from the borders of the Rhine as much to take him away from his legions as to leave himself free to follow on that frontier the prudent policy of Augustus. He allowed Germanicus to enter Rome in triumph, and shared with him the consulship for the following year. Just then the Parthians became hostile. They had driven away Vonones, the king imposed on them by Rome, and replaced him by the Arsacid Artabanus: the two rivals seemed in danger of commencing open hostilities. Moreover, Commagene and Cilicia, now some time without kings, were full of trouble. Syria and Judea claimed a diminution of taxes; "Germanicus alone," said Tiberius, "can with his wisdom calm these eastern agitations."

A senatorial decree gave the young prince powers once held by Agrippa and Caius Cæsar; that is, the government of the provinces beyond the sea, with supreme authority over all the governors. As for Drusus, the son of Tiberius, he set out for Pannonia, so as to watch over the movements of the Suevi.

The task of Drusus was the most simple. He had only to promote or instigate internal dissensions in Germany. Two powerful leagues had been formed. In the north that of the Cherusci under Arminius and his uncle Inguiomer; in the south the Marcomanni under Marbod. War broke out between them. The action was a bloody one; Marbod, being conquered, implored shelter in the empire. He was assigned a residence at Ravenna. The power of the Marcomanni was destroyed; that of the Cherusci did not survive Arminius, who was killed by his own family just as he was about, it is said, to make himself king. The silent intrigues of the Romans certainly had something to do with events which delivered them from two redoubtable foes.

In the East, Germanicus had equal successes. Everywhere he had given justice and peace as the watchword of the new government. In Armenia, he gave the crown to Zenon, son of the king of Pontus and a faithful vassal of the empire. This prince had long since adopted Armenian customs. Germanicus had made a wise choice and the whole nation applauded. Cappadocia, whose old king had just died in Rome, was, like Commagene, reduced to a province. In Syria, Germanicus concluded an alliance with Artabanus, who only asked for the removal of his rival. In Thrace, one of the two kings had killed the other. The assassin was sent to Alexandria and, later on, put to death.

A more serious affair had begun the preceding year [17 A.D.] in Africa. A Numidian, Tacfarinas, a deserter from the legions, had collected and disciplined some troops and persuaded the Musulanii and Moors to rise. The proconsul defeated him, and for this vigorous act, which gave security to a fertile country, he received the distinction of a triumph.

DEATH OF GERMANICUS (19 A.D.); EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

At this prosperous moment Germanicus died, poisoned, it has been alleged, by order of Tiberius. Yet could a man such as he, thoughtful, serious, calculating, have committed such a senseless crime? The death of his adopted son took away no rival. He knew him to be incapable of treason and his death deprived him of a necessary support. The mystery is still unsolved. The perpetrator of the crime was, it is said, Piso, a patrician of a violent disposition, who had obtained the governorship of Syria during the time that Germanicus was in the East. It was on his return from a journey in Egypt, undertaken without permission and in defiance of Tiberius, that Germanicus found that the arrangements he had adopted had been interfered with by Piso.

Lively quarrels took place between them, and the insubordinate governor, rather than yield, preferred to quit the province. The news that Germanicus was seriously ill stopped him at Antioch. The prince becoming better, Piso opposed the celebration of any fêtes in honour of the event, and went on to Seleucia, where the report of an alarming relapse made him stop again. Amongst Agrippina's attendants there was mention of poisoning, and emissaries from Piso who had come to report on the progress of the malady, could show, it was said, by whose hand the blow had been struck. Germanicus died. His body was burnt in the Forum at Antioch, and Agrippina, having piously gathered the ashes, landed at Brundisium, carrying the burial urn herself, and followed by an immense crowd, all plunged in heart-breaking sorrow.

Piso received the news of Germanicus' death with unseemly joy, and immediately set off to return to his province. The legate and the senators throughout Syria had conferred the governorship on one of themselves. Piso did not recoil before the prospect of civil war. Tiberius would not pardon him. Forced to embark, he returned to Italy, where accusers awaited him. These wanted the emperor alone to judge his cause. Now, had the emperor feared possible revelations he would have accepted, but he sent the accusers back to the senate. He presided at the trial, and the accused, says Tacitus, looked at him fearfully as he sat there pitiless, calm, impassive, and impenetrable. This portrait of Tiberius is the most faithful Tacitus has left.

[20-24 A.D.]

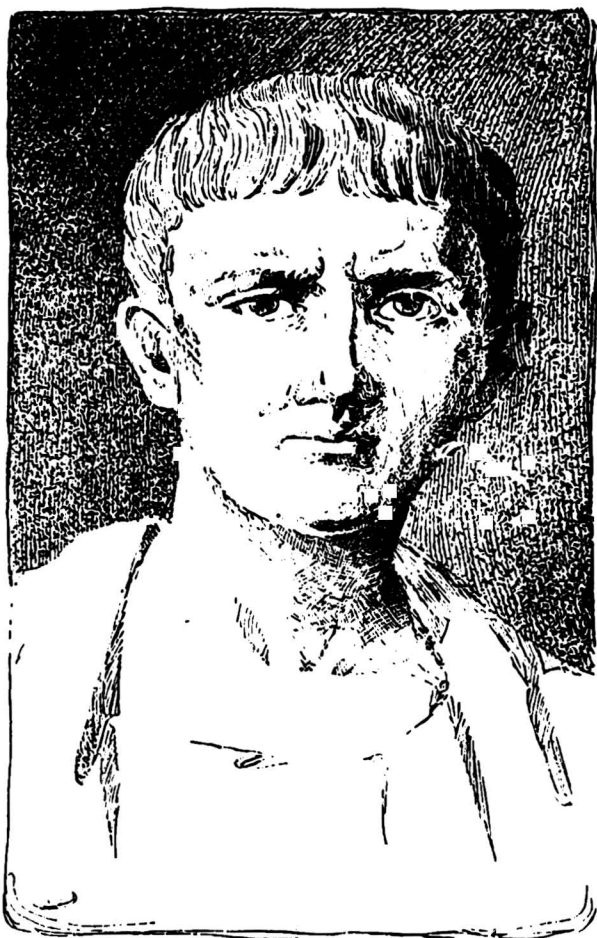
Piso killed himself in his own house. The emperor rewarded the three friends of Germanicus who had come as accusers, and asked for Nero, the eldest of Germanicus' sons, the honour of the quæstorship five years before the regulation age, and married him to a daughter of Drusus. Later on he begged the same favour for the second son of Germanicus.

This long drama ended, Tiberius returned to the cares of government. There were complaints of the too great severity of the Papia-Poppæan law. He named fifteen commissioners to mitigate its demands. Some wanted to extend his power with regard to the choice of governors; this he refused. The limits of sanctuary were restricted, because this had caused much disorder in provincial towns. Informers were also discouraged. One of them denounced the senator Lentulus. Tiberius rose and said he considered himself no longer worthy to live if Lentulus was his enemy. In the provinces, he maintained good administration by skilful choice and severity towards prevaricating officials. In Gaul there was a beginning of revolt. Florus tried to provoke a rising of the Belgæ, but being beaten and hemmed in in the wood of Arduenna, he killed himself. The pretext urged for this rising was the burden of the tribute. The Æduan, Sacrovir, caused still more alarm, by raising forty thousand men and taking Augustodunum. Two of the Rhine legions fell on these badly armed troops and horribly massacred them.

Tacfarinas had also reappeared in Africa. Encouraged by a first success, he ventured to attack Thala, but was repulsed with loss. Then he changed his tactics, divided his troops into small bands and carried on a guerilla warfare. The emperor sent Blæsus, Sejanus' uncle, to deal with this indefatigable foe, and thanks to his activity, Tacfarinas was again forced to flee, leaving his brother in the enemy's hands.^b

[It was not until two years later, 24 A.D., that Rome was finally rid of this troublesome foe. By that time Tacfarinas had collected another large force. P. Dolabella, the Roman governor, attacked it, and in his decisive victory the Numidian leader was slain. Ptolemy, king of Mauretania, was Dolabella's ally.]

Tiberius ruled the provinces on the whole in a Roman spirit, maintaining the dignity of the empire for the most part intact from the centre to the frontiers. The stability of the system, however rotten and decayed at heart, might still be measured by the strength and solidity of its outworks. At no



TIBERIUS

(From a bust in the Vatican)

[14-19 A.D.]

period did the bulwarks of the Roman power appear more secure and unassailable. The efforts of Drusus and his son to overpower the Germani on their own soil had been stupendous; they had wielded forces equal at least to those with which Cæsar had added Gaul to the empire, and yet had not permanently advanced the eagles in any direction. But, on the other hand, it was soon found that the Germani were only formidable under the pressure of an attack. When the assault relaxed, the power they had concentrated in resistance crumbled readily away. With the death of Arminius all combined hostility to Rome ceased among them and meanwhile the arts and manners of the south advanced incessantly among them.

At the same time the long respite from military exactions allowed the pursuits of ease and luxury to fructify within the limits of the provinces. Gaul was no longer drained from year to year by the forced requisitions of men and horses, of arms and stores, which had fed the exhausting campaigns of Germanicus. Her ancient cities decked themselves with splendid edifices, with schools and theatres, aqueducts and temples. The camps on the Rhine and Danube were gradually transformed into commercial stations, and became emporiums of traffic with the north of Europe, where the fur and amber of the Hercynian forests and the Baltic coast were exchanged for wine and oil or gold and silver, those instruments of luxury which nature was supposed, in mercy or in anger, to have denied to the German barbarians. Such a state of affairs allowed the emperor to persist in his favourite plan of leaving the provincial governors for years unchanged at their posts. Each succeeding proconsul was no longer in a fever of haste to aggrandise himself by the plunder or renown of a foray beyond the frontiers. The administration of the provinces became a matter of ordinary routine; it lost its principal charms in the eyes of the senators, who could at last with difficulty be induced to exchange the brilliant pleasures of the capital, with all its mortifications and perils, for the dull honours of a distant government.

Nor can we discover in general the justice of accusing Tiberius of neglecting the safety of his remote possessions, which seem, on the contrary, to have flourished securely in the armed peace of his august empire. In Gaul the revolt of Sacrovir and his Belgian confederates was effectually suppressed; the outbreak of the Frisians, though at some cost of blood, seems to have been speedily quelled. Nor have we any distinct confirmation of the assertion of Suetonius, that Tiberius suffered the province to be ravaged with impunity by the Germani, which, if true, can apply only to some transient violation of the frontiers.

Nor does the assertion of Tiberius' indifference seem to be better founded with regard to Mœsia. Tacitus steps frequently aside from his domestic narrative to record the affairs of this region and the exploits of the emperor's lieutenants; while Appian makes special mention of the conquest of Mœsia under Tiberius, and of the establishment of provincial government in this quarter by his hand. Sabinus, Pandus, and Labeo seem to have held the command there successively during the first half of this principate, and these men at least were not allowed to indulge in indolence, for their exertions and victories are a theme to which the historian repeatedly refers.

But the emptiness of these charges can be more clearly shown in the case of the dependent kingdom of Armenia, which, according to the same authority, Tiberius suffered to be seized by the Parthians, and wrested from the patronage of the empire. It appears, on the contrary, from the particular

[¹ Tacitus, *d* however, speaks of the *legatus Mœsiæ* A.D. 14, so it would seem that Mœsia became a Roman province in the reign of Augustus.]

[4 B.C.—36 A.D.]

recital of Tacitus, that the bold occupation of this kingdom by Artabanus was immediately resented by the emperor with the energy of a younger man. Not only were the wild mountaineers of the Caucasus, the Iberians and Albanians, invited to descend upon the intruders; not only were the sons of Phraates released from their long detention at Rome, and directed to present themselves on their native soil, and claim the allegiance of their father's subjects; but a Roman general, L. Vitellius, a man of distinguished valour and experience, was deputed to lead the forces of Asia and Syria against the enemy; and while it was hoped that a vigorous demonstration would suffice to hurl him back from the territory in dispute, instructions were not withheld, it would appear, to push on if necessary, and smite the Parthians with the strong hand of the empire. But these combinations proved speedily successful. Artabanus, already detested by many of his most powerful subjects, was compelled to descend from his throne, and take refuge in the far wilds of Hyrcania; while Tiridates, the son of Phraates, was accepted in his room [35 A.D.]. The Roman army, which had crossed the Euphrates, returned victorious without striking a blow, though, by a subsequent revolution, Artabanus was not long afterwards restored, and admitted, upon giving the required hostages, to the friendship of his lordly rivals [36 A.D.]

If Tiberius refrained from aggrandising his empire by fresh conquests, he was not the less intent on consolidating the unwieldy mass by the gradual incorporation of the dependent kingdoms enclosed within its limits. The contests between Cotys and his uncle Rhescuporis, in Thrace, gave him a pretext for placing the fairest part of that country under the control of a Roman officer, thus preparing the way for its ultimate annexation. On the death of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, in the year 17, his country was declared a Roman province, and subjected to the rule of an imperial procurator. At the same period the frontier kingdom of Commagene was added to the dominions of the republic under the government of a prætor. Syria, the great stronghold of the Roman power in the East, was still skirted by several tributary kingdoms or ethnarchies, such as Chalcis, Emesa, Damascus, and Abilene; but the dependency of Judea, the wealthiest and proudest of all these vassal states, was wrested in the reign of Augustus from the dynasty to which it had been entrusted, and was still subjected by his successor to the control of the proconsul at Antioch.

Herod the Great, on his death-bed, had sent his seal, together with an ample present, to Augustus, in token of the entire dependence upon Rome in which he held his dominions [4 B.C.]. This act of vassalage procured him, perhaps, the ratification of the disposition he had made of his territories between Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philippos. To the first was allotted the kingdom of Judea, including Samaria and Idumæa, but with the loss of the cities of Gaza, Gadara, and Hippus, which were now annexed to the government of Syria. To the second fell the districts of Galilee to the west, and Pæria to the east of the Jordan; while the Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Gaulonitis formed with Ituræa the tetrarchy of Philip, extending northward to the desert borders of Damascus. But the rival kinsmen were not satisfied with this division. Archelaus and Antipas repaired to Rome to plead against one another; but while they were urging their suits before the tribunal of the senate, the provisional government which the Romans had established in Judea was suddenly attacked on all sides by bodies of armed insurgents. Their leaders, however, were not men of rank or commanding influence, and the revolt was in no sense a national movement. It was speedily crushed by Varus, then proconsul of Syria, the same who ten years afterwards perished so miserably in Germany,

and punished with the atrocious severity too commonly employed in such cases. Archelaus, confirmed in his sovereignty, continued to reign under these lamentable auspices in Judea. His subjects, still mindful of the sons of their beloved Mariamne, never regarded him with favour; and it has been mentioned how they complained to Augustus of his tyranny, and obtained his removal from the throne. He was finally sent into exile at Vienne in Gaul.

The fall of Archelaus left the throne of Judea and Samaria without a direct claimant, and the emperor took the opportunity of attaching them to the Roman dominions. This acquisition was placed under the general administration of the proconsul of Syria, but governed more directly by an imperial procurator, who took up his abode at Cæsarea Philippi. Of the character of the new government we find no complaints even in the Jewish writers whose accounts of this period have been preserved to us.

Both Augustus and his successor appear to have instructed their officers to observe the same respect for the peculiar habits and prejudices of the Jews which had reflected such lustre in their eyes upon the magnanimous Agrippa; whatever may have been the ordinary severities of Roman domination, it was not till the arrival of Pontius Pilate, about the middle of the reign of Tiberius, that any special cause of grievance was inflicted upon them. They complained that the new procurator commenced his career with a grave and wanton insult. He entered Jerusalem with standards flying, upon which, according to the usage of the time, the image of the emperor was displayed. The old religious feeling of the Jews against the representation of the human figure was roused to vehement indignation; they remonstrated with the procurator, nor would they listen to his excuse that the Romans had their customs as well as the Jews, and that the removal of the emperor's portrait from his ensigns by an officer of his own might be regarded as a crime against the imperial majesty. But if Tiberius was merely the creature of the delators in his own capital, in the provinces he retained his good sense and independence. Perhaps it was by a special authorisation from him that Pilate consented to withdraw the obnoxious images. Nevertheless, the Jews, under the guidance of their priests, continued to watch every act of his administration with inveterate jealousy, and when he ventured to apply a portion of the temple revenues to the construction of an aqueduct for the supply of their city, broke out into violence which provoked him to severe measures of repression.

It is probable that mutual exasperation led to further riots, followed by sanguinary punishments; the government of Pilate was charged with cruelty and exaction, and at last the provincials addressed themselves to Vitellius, the governor of Syria. Nor were their expectations disappointed. The proconsul required his procurator to quit the province, and submit himself to the pleasure of the offended emperor. Tiberius, indeed, was already dead before his arrival, but his successor attended without delay to the representations of his lieutenant, and Pilate was dismissed with ignominy to Vienna. From the confidence with which Tiberius was appealed to on a matter of such remote concern, it would seem that the vigilance of his control was not generally relaxed even in the last moments of his life.

While Judea and Samaria were thus annexed to the Roman province, Galilee and the outlying regions of Peræa and Ituræa were still suffered to remain under their native rulers; and the dominions of the great Herod became once more united transiently under a single sceptre at no distant period. If, however, we consider the condition of the Jewish provincials under the Roman fasces, we shall find reason to believe that it was far from intolerable,

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and presented probably a change for the better from the tyranny of their own regal dynasties.

Doubtless the national feeling, as far as it extended, was outraged in its cherished prepossessions by the substitution of a foreign for a native domination. The nobles and the priests, who preserved and reflected this sentiment, and who suffered in consideration under foreign sway, fostered the prejudices of the people to the utmost of their power, excited their discontent, fanned the flame of sedition, and then betrayed their unfortunate clients to the sword of relentless executioners. It may be admitted that the fiscal exactions of the procurator were more uniformly rigid than those of Herod, whose remission of a large portion of his people's taxes had gained him favour in the midst of his atrocities. Yet the amount of freedom and security enjoyed by the Jews under a Quirinus and a Pilate shows the general leniency of the Roman government at this period, and may induce us to believe that the yoke of the conquerors was on the whole a happy exchange for their subjects. The warm descriptions of provincial felicity by the Jewish authority Philo, may be coloured to suit a purpose, and it may be impossible to produce any distinct facts to support this general conjecture. Yet indications are not wanting in the writings of the Evangelists, which contain, abstracted from their religious significance, the most interesting record in existence of the social condition of antiquity, — for they alone of all our ancient documents are the productions of men of the people, — to show that the mass of the population of Judea was contented and comparatively happy under the rule of the Roman procurator.

Such is the impression received from the representations of common life in the scriptures of the New Testament. The instances they allege of cruelty and injustice are drawn from the conduct of the Jews towards one another, rather than of the foreigner towards the native. The scribe and the Pharisee are held up to odium or contempt, not the minister of police or the instrument of government. The Romans are regarded in them as the protectors of the people against their domestic tyrants. The duty of paying them tribute is urged as the proper price of the tranquillity they maintain; their fiscal officers are spoken of with forbearance; their soldiers are cited as examples of thoughtful toleration; the vice of the provincial ruler is indifference and unbelief rather than wanton violence; and the tribunal of the emperor himself is appealed to as the last resort of injured innocence. The freedom of movement enjoyed by the subjects of Rome, the permission so fully allowed them of passing from frontier to frontier, of assembling together for social and religious objects, of flocking in crowds at the call of popular leaders, all indicate a state of personal liberty which might be envied throughout Europe at the present day.



ROMAN EMPRESS
(From a statue in the Capitol)

INTERNAL GOVERNMENT

During the earlier years of Tiberius' sway, his administration was happy for the state. Even Tacitus *d* draws a brilliant picture of it: "Public matters and the more serious of those relating to private persons were determined by the senate. In the distribution of honours, he took birth, military service, and civil talent into consideration, so that it would have been difficult to have made a better choice. As to laws, if one excepts that of majesty, good use was made of them. For his private affairs the prince chose most eminent men, some unknown to him except by reputation, and the greater part grew old in service. He took care that the provinces were not burdened with taxes. The prince's domains in Italy were not much extended. His slaves were not insolent, his freedmen not many. Had he disputes with private persons, the law decided the matter." *b*

His plan was to possess the reality of power without exciting hatred or envy by the useless display of the show of it. He therefore rejected the titles that were offered him, such as that of Emperor, as a *prænomen*, and that of Father of his Country; even that of Augustus, though hereditary, he would only use in his letters to kings and dynasts; above all he rejected that of Master (Dominus); he would only be called Cæsar, or First of the Senate. This last (which we shall henceforth term Prince) was his favourite title; he used to say, "I am the Master of my slaves, the Emperor of the soldiers, and the Prince of the rest." He would not allow anything peculiar to be done in honour of his birthday, nor suffer any one to swear by his fortune; neither would he permit the senate to swear to his acts on New Year's Day, or temples, or any other divine honours, to be decreed him. He was affable and easy of approach; he took no notice of libels and evil reports of which he was the object, while he repelled flattery of every kind.

To the senate and the magistrates he preserved (at least in appearance) all their pristine dignity and power. Every matter, great or small, public or private, was laid before the senate. The debates were apparently free, and the prince was often in the minority. He always entered the senate house without any attendants, like an ordinary senator; he reproved consuls in the command of armies for writing to him instead of the senate; he treated the consuls with the utmost respect rising to them and making way for them. Ambassadors and deputies were directed to apply to them as in the time of the republic. It was only by his tribunician right of interceding that he exercised his power in the senate. He used also to take his seat with the magistrates as they were administering justice, and by his presence and authority gave a check to the influence of the great in protecting the accused; by which conduct of his, while justice gained, liberty, it was observed, suffered.

The public morals and the tranquillity of the city were also attended to. A limit was set to the expenses of plays and public shows, and to the salaries of the players, to whom the senators and knights were forbidden to show marks of respect, by visiting them or attending them in public. Profligacy had become so bold and shameless, that ladies were known to have entered themselves in the list of professed courtesans in order to escape the penalties of the law, and young men of family to have voluntarily submitted to the mark of infamy in order to appear with safety on the stage or the arena; both these infamous classes were now subjected to the penalty of exile. Astrologers and fortune-tellers were expelled the city; the rites and ceremonies of the Egyptian and Judaic religions were suppressed. Guards were

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placed throughout Italy to prevent highway robbery; and those refuges of villainy of all kinds, the sanctuaries, were regulated in Greece and Asia.

Yet people were not deceived by all this apparent regard for liberty and justice; for they saw, as they thought, from the very commencement, the germs of tyranny, especially in the renewal of the law of treason (*majestas*). In the time of the republic there was a law under this name, by which any one who had diminished the greatness (*majestas*) of the Roman people by betraying an army, exciting the plebs to sedition, or acting wrongly in command, was subject to punishment. It applied to actions alone; but Sulla extended it to speeches, and Augustus to writings against not merely the state, but private individuals, on the occasion of Cassius Severus having libelled several illustrious persons of both sexes. Tiberius, who was angered by anonymous verses made on himself, directed the prætor, when consulted by him on the subject, to give judgment on the law of treason. As this law extended to words as well as actions, it opened a wide field for mischief, and gave birth to the vile brood of delators or public informers answering to the sycophants, those pests of Athens in the days of her democratic despotism. This evil commenced almost with the reign of Tiberius, in whose second year two knights, Falonius and Rubrius, were accused, the one of associating a player of infamous character with the worshippers of Augustus, and of having sold with his gardens a statue of that prince, the other of having sworn falsely by his divinity. Tiberius however would not allow these absurd charges to be entertained. Soon after Granius Marcellus, the prætor of Bithynia, was charged with treason by his quæstor, Cæpio Crispinus, for having spoken evil of Tiberius, having placed his own statue on a higher site than that of the Cæsars, and having cut the head of Augustus off a statue to make room for that of Tiberius. This last charge exasperated Tiberius, who declared that he would vote himself on the matter; but a bold expression used by Cn. Piso brought him to reason, and Marcellus was acquitted.

After the death of Germanicus, Tiberius acted with less restraint; for his son Drusus did not possess the qualities suited to gain popularity, and thus to control him. In fact, except his affection for his noble adoptive brother, there was nothing in the character of Drusus to esteem. He was addicted to intemperance, devoted to the sports of the amphitheatre, and of so cruel a temper, that a peculiarly sharp kind of sword was named from him *drusian*. Tiberius made him his colleague in the consulate, and then obtained for him the tribunician power (22); but Drusus was fated to no long enjoyment of the dignity and power thus conferred on him. A fatal change was also to take place in the conduct and government of Tiberius himself, of which we must now trace the origin.

Seius Strabo, who had been made one of the prefects of the prætorian cohorts by Augustus, had a son, who, having been adopted by one of the Ælian family, was named in the usual manner L. Ælius Sejanus. This young man, who was born at Vulsinii in Tuscany, was at first attached to the service of Caius Cæsar, after whose death he devoted himself to Tiberius; and such was his consummate art, that this wily prince, dark and mysterious to all others, was open and unreserved to him. Sejanus equalled his master in the power of concealing his thoughts and designs; he was daring and ambitious, and he possessed the requisite qualities for attaining the eminence to which he aspired; for though proud he could play the flatterer; he could and did assume a modest exterior, and he had vigilance and industry, and a body capable of enduring any fatigue.

When Drusus was sent to quell the mutiny of the Pannonian legions, Sejanus, whom Tiberius had made colleague with his father Strabo in the command of the prætorians, accompanied him as his governor and director. Strabo was afterwards sent out to Egypt, and Sejanus was continued in the sole command of the guards; he then represented to Tiberius how much better it would be to have them collected into one camp instead of being dispersed through the city and towns, as they would be less liable to be corrupted, would be more orderly, and of greater efficiency if any insurrection should occur. A fortified camp was therefore formed for them near the Viminal Gate, and Sejanus then began to court the men, and he appointed those on whom he could rely to be tribunes and centurions. While thus securing the guards, he was equally assiduous to gain partisans in the senate, and honours and provinces only came to those who had acquired his favour by obsequiousness. In all these projects he was unwittingly aided by Tiberius, who used publicly to style him "the associate of his labours," and even allowed his statues to be placed and worshipped in temples and theatres, and among the ensigns of the legions.

Sejanus had in fact formed the daring project of destroying Tiberius and his family, and seizing the supreme power. As besides Tiberius and Drusus, who had two sons, there were a brother and three sons of Germanicus living, he resolved, as the safer course, to remove them gradually by art and treachery. He began with Drusus, against whom he had a personal spite, as that violent youth had one time, publicly given him a blow in the face. In order to effect his purpose, he seduced his wife Livia or Livilla, the sister of Germanicus; and then, by holding out to her the prospect of a share in the imperial power, he induced her to engage in the plan for the murder of her husband. Her physician Eudemus was also taken into the plot, but it was some time before the associates could finally determine what mode to adopt. At length a slow poison was fixed on, which was administered to Drusus by a eunuch named Lygdus, and he died apparently of disease (23). Tiberius, who while his son was lying dead, had entered the senate house and addressed the members with his usual composure, pronounced the funeral oration himself, and then turned to business for consolation.

So far all had succeeded with Sejanus, and death carried off the younger son of Drusus soon after his father; but Nero and Drusus, the two elder sons of Germanicus, were now growing up, and the chastity of their mother and the fidelity of those about them put poison out of the question. He therefore adopted another course; and taking advantage of the high spirit of Agrippina, and working on the jealousy of her which Augusta was known to entertain, he managed so that both she and Livia should labour to prejudice Tiberius against Agrippina by talking of the pride which she took in her progeny, and the ambitious designs which she entertained. At the same time he induced some of those about her to stimulate her haughty spirit by their treacherous language. He further proposed to deprive her of support by destroying those persons of influence who were attached to her family, or the memory of her husband. With this view he selected for his first victims C. Silius and Titius Sabinus, the friends of Germanicus, and Silius' wife, Sosia Galla, to whom Agrippina was strongly attached, and who was therefore an object of dislike to Tiberius. Omitting however Sabinus for the present, he caused the consul Visellius Varro to accuse Silius of treason for having dissembled his knowledge of the designs of Sacrovir, having disgraced his victory by his avarice, and countenanced the acts of his wife. Having vainly asked for a delay till his accuser should go out of office, and

[24-25 A.D.]

seeing that Tiberius was determinedly hostile to him, Silius avoided a condemnation by a voluntary death. His wife was banished; a portion of his property was confiscated, but the remainder was left to his children.

Urged by his own ambition, and by the importunity of Livia, Sejanus had soon (25) the boldness to present a petition to Tiberius, praying to be chosen by him for her husband. Tiberius took no offence; his reply was kind, only stating the difficulties of the matter with respect to Sejanus himself, but at the same time expressing the warmest friendship, for and confidence in him. Sejanus however was suspicious, and he began to reflect that while Tiberius remained at Rome, many occasions might present themselves to those who desired to undermine him in the mind of that jealous prince; whereas, could he induce him to quit the city, all access to him would be only through himself, all letters would be conveyed by soldiers who were under his orders, and gradually, as the prince advanced in years, all the affairs of the state would pass into his hands. He therefore, by contrasting the noise and turbulence of Rome with the solitude and tranquillity of the country, gradually sought to bend him to his purpose, which he effected in the following year.

During this time the deadly charge of treason was brought against various persons. The most remarkable case was that of A. Cremutius Cordus, the historian. He had made a free remark on the conduct of Sejanus, and accordingly two of that favourite's clients were directed to accuse him of treason, for having in his history called Cassius the last of the Romans. Cremutius, when before the senate, observing the sternness of Tiberius' countenance, took at once the resolution of abandoning life, and therefore spoke as follows:

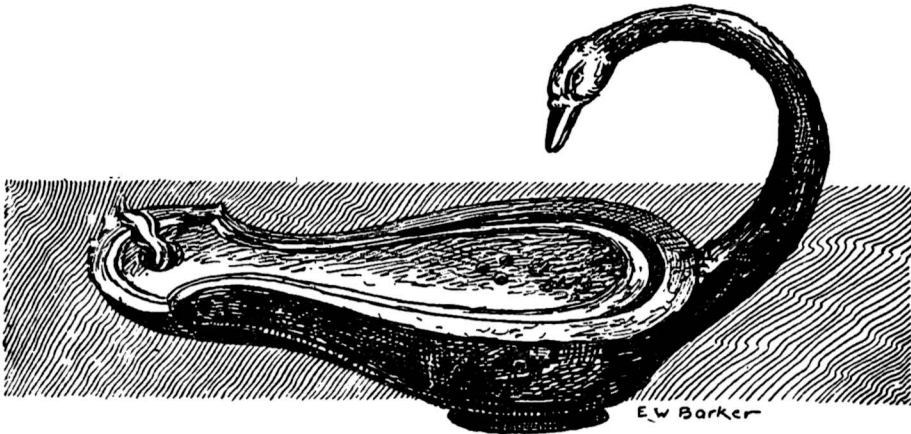
Fathers, my words are accused, so guiltless am I of acts; but not even these are against the prince or the prince's parent, whom the law of treason embraces. I am said to have praised Brutus and Cassius, whose deeds, while several have written, no one has mentioned without honour. Titus Livius, who is pre-eminent for eloquence and fidelity, extolled Pompeius with such praises, that Augustus used to call him a Pompeian; nor was that any hindrance of their friendship. He nowhere calls Scipio, Afranius, this very Cassius, this Brutus, robbers and parricides, which names are now given them; he often speaks of them as distinguished men. The writings of Asinius Pollio transmit an illustrious record of them; Messala Corvinus used to call Cassius his general; and both of them flourished in wealth and honours. To the book of Marcus Cicero, which extolled Cato to the skies, what did the dictator Caesar but reply in a written speech as if before judges? The letters of Antonius, the speeches of Brutus, contain imputations on Augustus which are false, and written with great bitterness. The verses of Bibaculus and Catullus, which are full of abuse of the Cæsars, are read; nay, the divine Julius himself, the divine Augustus himself, both bore with them and let them remain; I cannot well say whether more through moderation or wisdom; for what are despised go out of mind; if you are angry with them their truth seems to be acknowledged. I speak not of the Greeks, among whom not only liberty but license was unpunished; or if any one did take notice, he avenged himself on words by words. But there was the greatest freedom, and no reproach, when speaking of those whom death had removed from enmity or favour. Do I, in the cause of civil war, inflame the people by my harangues while Brutus and Cassius are in arms, and occupying the plains of Philippi? Or do they, who are now dead these seventy years, as they are known by their images, which the

[25-27 A.D.]

conqueror did not destroy, retain in like manner their share of memory in literary works? Posterity allots his meed to every one; nor, should a condemnation fall on me, will there be wanting those who will remember not only Brutus and Cassius, but also me."

Having thus spoken, Cordus left the senate house, and returning to his own abode starved himself to death. The senate decreed that the copies of his work should be collected and burned by the ædiles; but some were saved by his daughter Marcia, and were republished in the succeeding reign.

"At length (26) Tiberius quitted Rome and went into Campania, under the pretext of dedicating a temple to Jupiter at Capua, and one to Augustus at Nola; but with the secret intention of never returning to the city. Various causes, all perhaps true, are assigned for this resolution. The suggestions of Sejanus were not without effect; he was grown thin, and stooped; he was quite bald, and his face was full of blotches and ulcers, to which he was obliged to have plasters constantly applied; and he may therefore have sought, on this account, to retire from the public view. It is further said that he wished to escape from the authority of his mother, who seemed to consider herself entitled to share the power which he had obtained



ROMAN LAMP

through her exertions. [But whatever the exact motive that actuated Tiberius, his withdrawal constituted a virtual desertion of the capital, since he never returned.]

He was accompanied only by one senator, Cocceius Nerva, who was deeply skilled in the laws, by Sejanus and another knight, and by some persons, chiefly Greeks, who were versed in literature. A few days after he set out an accident occurred, which was near being fatal to him, but proved fortunate for Sejanus. As at one of his country-seats near Fundi, named the Caverns (Speluncæ), he was, for the sake of the coolness, dining in one of the natural caverns, whence the villa derived its appellation, a great quantity of the stones, which formed its roof, fell down and crushed some of the attendants to death. Sejanus threw himself over Tiberius to protect him with his own body, and was found in that position by the soldiers who came to their relief. This apparent proof of generous self-devotion raised him higher than ever in the estimation of the prince.

While Tiberius was rambling from place to place in Campania (27), a dreadful calamity occurred at Fidenæ, in consequence of the fall of a temporary amphitheatre erected by a freedman named Atilius for giving a show of gladiators; the number of the killed and maimed is said to have been

[27-29 A.D.]

fifty thousand.¹ The conduct of the nobility at Rome on this melancholy occasion showed that all virtue had not departed from them; they threw open their houses for the sufferers, and supplied them with medical attendance and remedies; so that, as the great historian observes, the city wore the appearance of the Rome of the olden time, when after battles the wounded were thus humanely treated. This calamity was immediately followed by a tremendous fire on the Caelian Hill; but Tiberius alleviated the evil by giving the inhabitants the amount of their losses in money.

Having dedicated the temples, and rambled for some time through the towns of Campania, Tiberius finally fixed on the islet of Capræ [the modern Capri] in the Bay of Naples as his permanent abode. This isle, which lay at the short distance of three miles from the promontory of Surrentum, was accessible only in one place; it enjoyed a mild temperature, and commanded a most magnificent view of the bay of Naples and the lovely region which encompassed it.² But the delicious retreat was speedily converted by the aged prince into a den of infamy, such as has never perhaps found its equal; his vicious practices, however, were covered by the veil of secrecy, for he still lay under some restraint.

When Tiberius left Rome, Sejanus renewed his machinations against Agrippina and her children and friends. He directed his first efforts against her eldest son Nero, whom he surrounded with spies; and as this youth was married to a daughter of Livia, his wife was instructed by her abandoned mother to note and report all his most secret words and actions. Sejanus kept a faithful register of all he could learn in these various ways, and regularly transmitted it to Tiberius. He also drew to his side Nero's younger brother Drusus, a youth of a fiery turbulent temper, and who hated him because he was his mother's favourite. It was however Sejanus' intention to destroy him also when he should have served his purpose against Nero.

At this time also he made his final and fatal attack on Titius Sabinus, whose crime was his attachment to the family of Germanicus. The bait of the consulate, of which Sejanus alone could dispose, induced four men of prætorian dignity to conspire his ruin. The plan proposed was that one of them, named Latinus Latiaris, who had some knowledge of Sabinus, should draw him into conversation, out of which a charge of treason might be manufactured. The plot succeeded; Latiaris, by praising the constancy of Sabinus in friendship, led him gradually on to speak as he thought of Sejanus, and even of Tiberius. At length, under pretence of having something of great importance to reveal, he brought him into a chamber where the other three were concealed between the ceiling and the roof. A charge of treason was therefore speedily concocted and forwarded to Tiberius, from whom a letter came on New Year's Day (28), plainly intimating to the senate his desire of vengeance. This sufficed for that obsequious body, and Sabinus was dragged forth and executed without delay.

In his letter of thanks to the senate, Tiberius talked of the danger he was in, and of the plots of his enemies, evidently alluding to Agrippina and Nero. These unfortunate persons lost their only remaining refuge the following year (29) by the death of the prince's mother, Julia Augusta,³ whose

[¹ This is the number as stated by Tacitus; Suetonius says twenty thousand.]

² Augustus was so taken with the charms of this island, that he gave lands in exchange for it to the people of Naples to whom it belonged. Dion, *J* LII, 43.

³ Writers differ as to her age. Tacitus merely says *extrema ætate*. Pliny's (*XIV*, 8) makes her eighty-two, Dion (*J* LVIII, 1) eighty-six years old. This last seems to be the more correct, as her son Tiberius was now seventy years of age.

influence over her son, and regard for her own descendants, had held Sejanus in restraint. This soon appeared by the arrival of a letter from Tiberius, accusing Nero of unnatural practices, and speaking of the arrogance of Agrippina; but while the senate were in debate, the people surrounded the house, carrying the images of Agrippina and Nero, and crying out that the letter was forged, and the prince deceived. Nothing therefore was done on that day, and Sejanus took the opportunity of irritating the mind of Tiberius, who wrote again to the senate; but as in the letter he forbade their proceeding to extremes, they passed a decree, declaring themselves prepared to avenge the prince, were they not hindered by himself.

Most unfortunately the admirable narrative of Tacitus fails us at this point; and for the space of more than two years, and those the most important of the reign of Tiberius, we are obliged to derive our knowledge of events from the far inferior notices of Dion Cassius and Suetonius. We are therefore unable to display the arts by which Sejanus effected the ruin of Agrippina and her children, and can only learn that she was relegated to the isle of Pandataria, where, while she gave vent to her indignation, her eye was struck out by a centurion; and that Nero was placed in the isle of Pontia, and forced to terminate his own life. The further fate of Agrippina and Drusus we shall have to relate.

Sejanus now revelled in the enjoyment of power; every one feared him, every one courted and flattered him. "In a word," says Dion, "he seemed to be emperor, Tiberius merely the ruler of an island"; for while the latter dwelt in solitude and apparently unthought of, the doors of the former were thronged every morning with saluting crowds, and the first men of Rome attended him on his way to the senate. His pride and insolence, as is always the case with those who rise otherwise than by merit, kept pace with his power, and men hated while they feared and flattered him.^e

Let us cite an instance of this fulsome flattery from the pages of the contemporary chronicler, Velleius Paterculus, a Roman who had served nine years as a soldier in Germany, and who had been military tribune and afterwards quæstor and prætor. The panegyric with which Velleius closes his *Epitome of Roman History* eulogises Sejanus along with the emperor himself, and his mother. This eulogium is worth transcribing at length as it illustrates the contrast between contemporary estimates—be they candid or hypocritical—and the judgment of posterity.^a

VELLEIUS PATERCULUS EULOGISES TIBERIUS

It is seldom," says Velleius, "that men who have arrived at eminence, have not had powerful coadjutors in steering the course of their fortunes; thus the two Scipios had the two Lælii, whom they set in every respect on a level with themselves; thus the emperor Augustus had Marcus Agrippa, and after him Statilius Taurus. The newness of these men's families proved no obstruction to their attainment of many consulships and triumphs, and of sacerdotal offices in great numbers. For great affairs demand great co-operators (in small matters, the smallness of assistance does not mar the proceedings), and it is for the interest of the public, that what is necessary for business should be eminent in dignity, and that usefulness should be fortified with influence. In conformity with these examples, Tiberius Cæsar has had, and still has, Ælius Sejanus, a most excellent coadjutor in all the toils of government, a man whose father was chief of the equestrian order,

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and who, on his mother's side is connected with some of the most illustrious and ancient families, ennobled by high preferments; who has brothers, cousins, and an uncle, of consular rank; who is remarkable for fidelity in the discharge of his duties, and for ability to endure fatigue, the constitution of his body corresponding with the vigour of his mind; a man of pleasing gravity, and of unaffected cheerfulness; appearing, in the despatch of business, like a man quite at ease; assuming nothing to himself, and hence receiving every honour; always deeming himself inferior to other men's estimation of him; calm in looks and conversation, but in mind indefatigably vigilant.

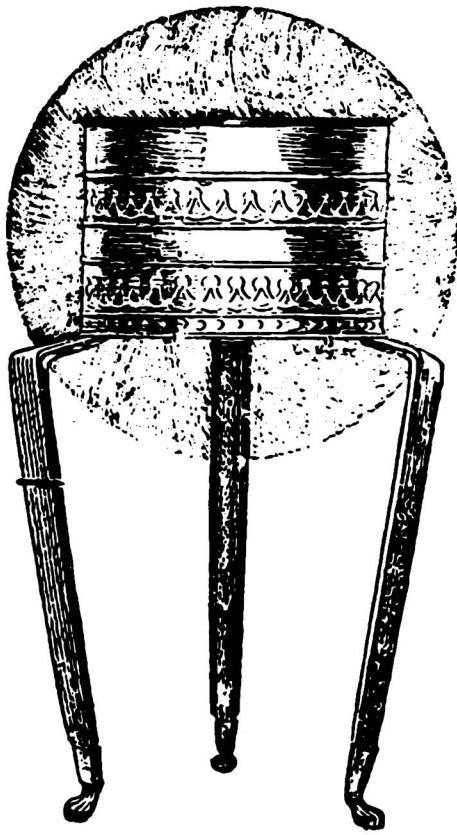
"In esteem for Sejanus' virtues, the judgment of the public has long vied with that of the prince. Nor is it at all new with the senate and people of Rome, to consider the most meritorious as the most noble. The men of old, before the First Punic War, three hundred years ago, exalted to the summit of dignity T. Coruncanus, a man of no family, bestowing on him, besides other honours, the office of chief pontiff; they promoted Spurius Carvilius, a man of equestrian birth, and afterwards Marcus Cato, another new man (not a native citizen, but born at Tusculum), as well as Mummius Achaicus, to consulships, censorships, and triumphs. And they who considered Caius Marius, a man of the most obscure origin, as unquestionably the first in the Roman nation, before his sixth consulship; who had so high an esteem for Marcus Tullius, that he could obtain, almost by his sole recommendation, the highest offices for whomsoever he chose; and who refused nothing to Asinius Pollio, which men of the noblest birth had to obtain with infinite labour, were certainly of opinion that he who possessed the greatest virtues was entitled to the greatest honours. The natural imitation of other men's examples led Cæsar to make trial of Sejanus, and occasioned Sejanus to bear a share of the burdens of the prince; and induced the senate and people of Rome cheerfully to call to the guardianship of their safety him whom they saw best qualified for the charge.

"Having exhibited a general view of the administration of Tiberius Cæsar, let us now enumerate a few particulars respecting it. With what wisdom did he bring to Rome Rhescuporis, the murderer of Cotys, his own brother's son, and partner in the kingdom, employing in that affair the services of Pomponius Flaccus, a man of consular rank, naturally inclined to all that is honourable, and by pure virtue always meriting fame, but never eagerly pursuing it! With what solemnity as a senator and a judge, not as a prince, does he hear causes in person! With what precepts did he form the mind of his Germanicus, and train him in the rudiments of war in his own camp, so that he afterwards hailed him the conqueror of Germany! What honours did he heap on him in his youth, the magnificence of his triumph corresponding to the grandeur of his exploits! How often has he honoured the people with donations! How readily has he, when he could do it with the sanction of the senate, supplied senators with property suitable to their rank, neither encouraging extravagance, nor suffering honourable poverty to be stripped of dignity! In what an honourable style did he send his Germanicus to the transmarine provinces! With what energy, employing Drusus as a minister and adjutor in his plans, did he force Marbodius, who was clinging to the soil of the kingdom which he had possessed, to come forth, like a serpent concealed in the earth (let me speak without offence to his majesty), by the salutary charms of his counsels! How honourably, yet how far from negligently, does he keep watch over him! How formidable a war, excited by the Gallic chief Sacrovir

[14-37 A.D.]

and Julius Florus, did he suppress, and with such amazing expedition and energy, that the Roman people learned that they were conquerors, before they knew that they were at war, and the news of victory outstripped the news of the danger! The African war too, perilous as it was, and daily increasing in strength, was quickly terminated under his auspices and direction.

“What structures has he erected in his own name, and those of his family! With what dutiful munificence, even exceeding belief, is he building a temple to his father! With how laudable a generosity of disposition is he repairing even the buildings of Cneius Pompey that were consumed by fire! Whatever has been at any time conspicuously great, he regards as his own, and under his protection. With what liberality has he at all times, and particularly at the recent fire on the Cælian Mount, repaired the losses



ROMAN TRIPUD

of people of all conditions out of his own property! With what perfect ease to the public does he manage the raising of troops, a business of constant and extreme apprehension, without the consternation attendant on a levy! If either nature allows us, or the humility of man may take upon itself, to make a modest complaint of such things to the gods, what has he deserved that, in the first place, Drusus Libo should form his execrable plots; and, in the next, that Silius and Piso should follow his example, one of whom he raised to dignity, the other he promoted? That I may pass to greater matters (though he accounted even these very great), what has he deserved, that he should lose his sons in their youth, or his grandson by Drusus? But we have only spoken of causes for sorrow, we must now come to occasions of shame. With what violent griefs, Marcus Vinicius, has he felt his mind tortured in the last three years! How long has his heart been consumed with affliction, and, what is most unhappy, such as he was obliged to conceal, while he was compelled to grieve, and to feel indignation and shame, at the conduct of his daughter-in-law

and his grandson! And the sorrows of this period have been aggravated by the loss of his most excellent mother, a woman who resembled the gods more than human beings; and whose power no man ever felt but in the relief of distress or the conferring of honour.

“Let our book be concluded with a prayer. O Jupiter Capitolinus, O Jupiter Stator! O Mars Gradivus, author of the Roman home! O Vesta, guardian of the eternal fire! O all ye deities who have exalted the present magnitude of the Roman Empire to a position of supremacy over the world, guard, preserve, and protect, I entreat and conjure you, in the name of the commonwealth, our present state, our present peace (our present prince)! And when he shall have completed a long course on earth, grant him successors to the remotest ages, and such as shall have abilities to support the empire of the world as powerfully as we have seen him support it!”

These words of the fawning courtier require no comment, unless it be to note that such are often the materials from which the historian is supposed

[31 A.D.]

to extract truthful estimates of men and events. Fortunately, in the present instance, the more trustworthy accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius have also come down to us — the former, however, not quite intact.

THE FALL OF SEJANUS

Sejanus had thus ruled for more than three years at Rome with power nearly absolute, when (31) Tiberius made him his colleague in the consulate — an honour observed to be fatal to every one who had enjoyed it. In fact the jealous tyrant, who had been fully informed of all his actions and designs,¹ had secretly resolved on his death; but fear, on account of Sejanus' influence with the guards, and his uncertainty of how the people might stand affected, prevented him from proceeding openly against him. He therefore had recourse to artifice, in which he so much delighted. At one time he would write to the senate, and describe himself as so ill that his recovery was nearly hopeless; again that he was in perfect health, and was about to return to Rome. He would now praise Sejanus to the skies, and then speak most disparagingly of him; he would honour some and disgrace others of his friends solely as such. In this way both Sejanus himself and all others were kept in a state of the utmost uncertainty. Tiberius further bestowed priesthoods on Sejanus and his son, and proposed to marry his daughter to Drusus, the son of Claudius, the brother of Germanicus; yet at the same time, when Sejanus asked permission to go to Campania, he desired him to remain where he was, as he himself would be coming to Rome immediately.

All this tended to keep Sejanus in a state of great perturbation; and this was increased by the circumstance of Tiberius, when appointing the young Caius to a priesthood, having not merely praised him, but spoken of him in some sort as his successor in the monarchy. He would have proceeded at once to action, were it not that the joy manifested by the people on this occasion proved to him that he had only the soldiers to rely on, and he hesitated to act with them alone. Tiberius then showed favour to some of those to whom Sejanus was hostile. The senators easily saw whither all this tended, and their neglect of Sejanus was now pretty openly displayed.

Tiberius, having thus made trial of the senate and the people, and finding he could rely on both, resolved to strike the long-meditated blow. In order to take his victim more completely unawares, he gave out that it was his intention to confer on him the tribunician power. Meantime he gave to Nævius Sertorius Macro a secret commission to take the command of the guards, made him the bearer of a letter to the senate, and instructed him fully how to act. Macro entered Rome at night, and communicated his instructions to the consul, P. Memmius Regulus (for his colleague was a creature of Sejanus), and to Græcinus Laco, the commander of the watchmen and arranged with them the plan of action. Early in the morning he went up to the temple of the Palatine Apollo, where the senate was to sit that day, and meeting Sejanus, and finding him disturbed at Tiberius having sent him no message, he whispered him that he had the grant of the tribunician power for him. Sejanus then went in highly elated; and Macro, showing his commission to the guards on duty, and telling them that he had letters promising them a largess, sent them down to their camp, and put the watchmen about the temple in their stead. He then entered the temple; and having

¹ According to Josephus, Antonia, the widow of his brother Drusus, wrote him a full account of Sejanus' proceedings, and sent it by a trusty slave named Pallas.

delivered the letter to the consuls, immediately went out again, and leaving Laco to watch the progress of events there, hastened down to the camp lest there should be a mutiny of the guards.

The letter was long and ambiguous; it contained nothing direct against Sejanus, but first treated of something else, then came to a little complaint of him, then to some other matter, then it returned to him again, and so on; it concluded by saying that two senators, who were most devoted to Sejanus, ought to be punished, and himself be cast into prison; for though Tiberius wished most ardently to have him executed, he did not venture to order his death, fearing a rebellion. He even implored them in the letter to send one of the consuls with a guard to conduct him, now an old man and desolate, into their presence. We are further told that such were his apprehensions, that he had given orders, in case of a tumult, to release his grandson Drusus, who was in chains at Rome, and put him at the head of those who remained faithful to his family; and that he took his station on a lofty rock, watching for the signals that were to be made, having ships ready to carry him to some of the legions in case anything adverse should occur.

His precautions, however, were needless. Before the letter was read, the senators, expecting to hear nothing but the praises of Sejanus and the grant of the tribunician power, were loud in testifying their zeal towards him; but as the reading proceeded their conduct sensibly altered; their looks were no longer the same; even some of those who were sitting near him rose and left their seats; the prætors and tribunes closed round him lest he should rush out and try to raise the guards, as he certainly would have done had not the letter been composed with such consummate artifice. He was in fact so thunderstruck, that it was not till the consul had called him the third time that he was able to reply. All then joined in reviling and insulting him; he was conducted to the prison by the consul and the other magistrates. As he passed along the populace poured curses and abuse on him; they cast down his statues, cut the heads off of them, and dragged them about the streets. The senate seeing this disposition of the people, and finding that the guards remained quiet, met in the afternoon in the temple of Concord, close to the prison, and condemned him to death. He was executed without delay; his lifeless body was flung down the Gemonian steps, and for three days it was exposed to every insult from the populace; it was then cast into the Tiber. His children also were put to death; his little daughter, who was to have been the bride of the prince's grand nephew, was so young and innocent, that as they carried her to prison she kept asking what she had done, and whither they were dragging her, adding that she would do so no more, and that she might be whipped if naughty. Nay, by one of those odious refinements of barbarity which trample on justice and humanity while adhering to the letter of the law, because it was a thing unheard of for a virgin to be capitally punished, the executioner was made to deflower the child before he strangled her. Apicata, the divorced wife of Sejanus, on hearing of the death of her children, and seeing afterwards their lifeless bodies on the steps, went home; and having written to Tiberius a full account of the true manner of the death of Drusus and of the guilt of Livilla, put an end to herself. In consequence of this discovery Livilla, and all who were concerned in that murder, were put to death.

The rage of the populace was also vented on the friends of Sejanus, and many of them were slaughtered. The prætorian guards, too, enraged at being suspected and at the watchmen being preferred to them, began to burn and plunder houses. The senators were in a state of the utmost perturbation,

[31-33 A.D.]

some trembling on account of their having paid court to Sejanus, others, who had been accusers or witnesses, from not knowing how their conduct might be taken. All however conspired in heaping insult on the memory of the fallen favourite.

Tiberius, now free from all apprehension, gave loose to his vengeance. From his island-retreat he issued his orders, and the prison was filled with the friends and creatures of Sejanus; the baleful pack of informers was unkenelled, and their victims of both sexes were hunted to death. Some were executed in prison; others were flung from the Capitol; the lifeless remains were exposed to every kind of indignity, and then cast into the river. Most however chose a voluntary death; for they thus not only escaped insult and pain, but preserved their property for their children.

In the following year (32) Tiberius ventured to leave his island, and sail up the Tiber as far as Caesar's gardens; but suddenly, no one knew why, he retreated again to his solitude, whence by letters he directed the course of cruelty at Rome. The commencement of one was so remarkable that historians have thought it deserving of a place in their works; it ran thus: "What I shall write to you, P. C., or how I shall write, or what I shall not write at this time, may the gods and goddesses destroy me worse, than I daily feel myself perishing, if I know." A knight named M. Terentius at this time, when accused of the new crime of Sejanus' friendship, had the courage to adopt a novel course of defence. He boldly acknowledged the charge, but justified his conduct by saying that he had only followed the example of the prince, whom it was their duty to imitate. The senate acquitted him and punished his accusers with exile or death, and Tiberius expressed himself well pleased at the decision. But in the succeeding year (33) his cruelty joined with avarice (a vice new to him), broke out with redoubled violence. Tired of murdering in detail, he ordered a general massacre of all who lay in prison on account of their connection with Sejanus. Without distinction of age, sex, or rank, they were slaughtered; their friends dared not to approach, or even be seen to shed tears; and as their putrefying remains floated along the Tiber, no one might venture to touch or to burn them.

The deaths of his grandson Drusus, and his daughter-in-law Agrippina, were added to the atrocities of this year. The former perished by the famine to which he was destined, after he had sustained life till the ninth day by eating the stuffing of his bed. The tyrant then had the shamelessness to cause to be read in the senate the diary which had been kept of everything the unhappy youth had said or done for a course of years, and of the indignities which he had endured from the slaves and guards who were set about him. Agrippina had cherished hopes of meeting with justice after the fall of Sejanus; but finding them frustrated, she resolved to starve herself to death. Tiberius, when informed, ordered food to be forced down her throat, but she finally accomplished her purpose; he then endeavoured to defame her memory by charging her with unchastity. As her death occurred on the same day as that of Sejanus two years before, he directed it to be noted, and he took to himself as a merit that he had not caused her to be strangled or cast down the Gemonian steps. The obsequious senate returned him thanks for his clemency, and decreed that on the 18th of October, the day of both their deaths, an offering in gold should be made to Jupiter.

The Cæsarian family was now reduced to Claudius the brother and Caius the son of Germanicus, and his three daughters, Agrippina, Drusilla, and Livilla, (whom Tiberius had given in marriage respectively to Cn. Domitius, L. Cassius, and M. Vinicius,) and Tiberius and Julia the children of Drusus,

which last had been married to her cousin Nero, and now was given in marriage to Rubellius Blandus.

From his very outset in life, Tiberius had been obliged more or less to conceal his natural character. Augustus, Germanicus, Drusus, his mother, had successively been a check on him; and even Sejanus, though the agent of his cruelty, had been the cause of his lusts being restrained. But now all barriers were removed; for Caius was so abject a slave to him, that he modelled himself on his character and his words, only seeking to conceal his own vices. He therefore now at length gave free course to all his vicious propensities, and it almost chills the blood to read the details of the horrid practices in which he indulged amidst the rocks of Capreæ. Meantime there was no relaxation of his cruelty; Macro was as bad as Sejanus, only more covertly; there was no lack of delators, and men of rank perished daily.^e

TACITUS DESCRIBES THE LAST DAYS OF TIBERIUS

At Rome, meanwhile, were sown the seeds that were destined to yield a harvest of blood after the decease of Tiberius. Lælius Balbus had charged Acutia, sometime the wife of Publius Vitellius, with high treason; and, as the senate was, after her condemnation, decreeing a reward to the accuser, Junius Otho, tribune of the people, interposed his veto; hence their mutual hate, and afterwards the exile of Otho. Then Albucilla, infamous for her many amours, who had been married to Satrius Secundus, the man who revealed the conspiracy of Sejanus, was impeached of impiety towards the prince. In the charge were involved, as her accomplices and her adulterers, Cneius Domitius, Vibius Marsus, and Lucius Arruntius. Domitius was of noble descent. Marsus, too, was distinguished by the ancient dignities of his house, and his own fame for learning. The minutes, however, transmitted to the senate, imported, "that in the examination of the witnesses, and torture of the slaves, Macro had presided;" and as no letter came from the emperor against the accused, it was suspected, that, while he was ill, and perhaps without his privity, the accusations were in great measure forged, in consequence of the notorious enmity of Macro to Arruntius.

Domitius therefore by preparing for his defence, and Marsus by seeming determined to starve himself to death, protracted their lives. Arruntius, to the importunity of his friends, urging him to try delays and evasions, answered that the same measures were not honourable to all men alike: he had lived long enough; his only regret was, that exposed on all sides to derision and peril, he had submitted to bear thus far an old age loaded with anxieties; long obnoxious to the malice of Sejanus, now of Macro, always of some minion of power; not because he was guilty of any crime, but because he was intolerant of the grossest iniquities. Grant that the few and last days of Tiberius could be got over, yet how could he escape all that he would have to endure under the youth who threatened to succeed him? When the mind of Tiberius, a man of consummate experience, underwent such a convulsion and transformation from the potent influence of imperial power, was it likely that Caligula, who had scarce outgrown his childhood, ignorant of everything, or nursed and trained up in the worst, would follow a course more righteous under the guidance of Macro; the same Macro, who, as the more expert villain, having been selected for the task of crushing Sejanus, had brought the commonwealth to a state of wretchedness the most abject, by his numerous atrocities? He had now before him, he said, a

[57 A.D.]

prospect of slavery still more embittered; and therefore it was that he withdrew at once from the horrors which had been enacted, and those that impended.

While pouring forth these warnings with the intense emotion of a prophet, he opened his veins. That Arruntius was wise in resorting to suicide the following events will testify. Albucilla, after inflicting an ineffectual wound upon herself, was by order of the senate dragged to prison. As to the ministers of her lusts, it was decreed, "that Carsidius Sacerdos, of prætorian rank, should be banished to an island; Pontius Fregellanus expelled the senate; and that upon Laelius Balbus the same penalty be inflicted." The senators gave the latter judgment with feelings of joy, as he was accounted a man of turbulent eloquence, and zealous in his efforts against the innocent.

About the same time, Sextus Papinius, of a consular family, chose a sudden and frightful end, by throwing himself down from an eminence. The cause was ascribed to his mother, who, after many repulses, had, by fondling and excitement, brought him into a situation from which he could escape by death only. She was therefore accused in the senate; and, though she embraced the knees of the fathers, and pleaded "the natural tenderness of a mother's grief, and the greater weakness of a woman's spirit under such a calamity," with other motives of pity in the same doleful strain, she was banished from Rome for ten years, till her younger son was past the slippery period of youth.¹

As for Tiberius, his body was now wasted and his strength exhausted, but his dissimulation did not fail him. He exhibited the same inflexibility of mind, the same energy in his looks and discourse; and even sometimes by affected vivacity tried to hide his decaying strength, though too manifest to be concealed. And after much shifting of places, he settled at length at the promontory of Misenum, in a villa which Lucullus once owned. There it was discovered that his end was approaching, in the following manner: In his train was a physician, named Charicles, noted in his profession, not indeed to prescribe for the prince in cases of indisposition, but that he might have some one to consult if he thought proper. Charicles, as if he were departing to attend to his own affairs, and taking hold of his hand under pretence of taking leave, felt his pulse. But he did not escape detection, for he instantly ordered the entertainment to be renewed; whether incensed, and therefore the more concealing his displeasure, is uncertain: but at table he continued beyond his wont, as if to do honour to his friend on his departure. Charicles, however, assured Macro that life was ebbing fast, and could not outlast two days.¹ Hence the whole court was in a bustle with consultations, and expresses were despatched to the generals and armies. On the seventeenth, before the calends of April, he was believed to have finished his mortal career, having ceased to breathe; and Caligula, in the midst of a great throng of persons, paying their congratulations, was already going forth to make a solemn entrance on the sovereignty, when suddenly a notice came, "that Tiberius had recovered his sight and voice, and had called for some persons to give him food to restore him." The consternation was universal: the concourse about Caligula dispersed in all directions, every man affecting sorrow or feigning ignorance; he himself stood fixed in silence—fallen from

[¹ In attempting clearly to comprehend the disturbances that attended the later period of Tiberius, we must bear in mind that the republican reaction against the empire was now at its height, and that severe measures were doubtless necessary in crushing the movement. The adoption of such measures does not necessarily imply that Tiberius had changed his public policy: it was but natural that he should defend the principate to the utmost of his ability. But such conditions reacted disastrously upon the public morals, and fostered the hatred of the emperor.]

the highest hopes, he now expected the worst. Macro, undismayed, ordered the old man to be smothered with a quantity of clothes, and the doorway to be cleared. Thus expired Tiberius, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.^d

This story of the last moments of Tiberius is questioned by Merivale,^f who comments on the fact that Tacitus, writing long after the event, gives no authority for his version of the affair as just quoted, and says: On the other hand, a contemporary of the event seems to describe the old man's death as simply natural. "Feeling himself sinking," said Seneca,^l "Tiberius took off his ring, and held it for a little while, as if about to present it to some one as an instrument of authority; but he soon replaced it on his finger, and lay for a time without motion. Then suddenly he called for his attendants, and when no one answered, raised himself from his bed with failing strength, and immediately fell lifeless beside it. This account was distorted by others into the denial of necessary sustenance, and actual death by exhaustion, while some did not scruple to affirm that Caius had caused the sick man to be poisoned."

SUETONIUS CHARACTERISES TIBERIUS

Tiberius was in his person large and robust, of a stature somewhat above the common size, broad in the shoulders and chest, and in his other parts proportionable. He used his left hand more readily than his right; and his joints were so strong that he would bore a fresh sound apple through with his finger, and would wound the head of a boy, or even a young man, with a fillip. He was of a fair complexion, and had his hair so long behind that it covered his neck, which was observed to be a mark of distinction affected by the family. He had a handsome face, but often full of pimples. His eyes, which were large, had a wonderful faculty of seeing in the night time, and in the dark, but for a short time only, and immediately after awaking from sleep; for they soon grew dim again. He walked with his neck stiff and unmoved, commonly with a frowning countenance, being for the most part silent; when he spoke to those about him it was very slowly, and generally accompanied by an effeminate motion of his fingers. All those things being disagreeable, and expressive of arrogance, Augustus remarked in him, and often endeavoured to excuse to the senate and people, assuring them that "they were natural defects, which proceeded from no viciousness of mind." He enjoyed a good state of health, and without any interruption, almost during the whole time of his government; though, from the thirtieth year of his age he managed himself in respect of his health according to his own discretion, without any medical assistance.

In regard to the gods, and matters of religion, he discovered much indifference; being greatly addicted to astrology, and full of a persuasion that all things were governed by fate. Yet he was extremely afraid of lightning, and in cloudy weather always wore a laurel crown on his head; because an opinion prevails among many, that the leaf of that tree is never touched by the lightning.

He applied himself with great diligence to the liberal arts, both Greek and Latin. In his Latin style, he affected to imitate Messalla Corvinus, a respectable old man, whose company he had much frequented in his youth. But he rendered his style obscure by excess of affectation and niceness; so that he was thought to talk better extempore, than in a premeditated discourse. He composed likewise a lyric ode, under the title of *A Lamentation*

[37 A.D.]

upon the *Death of L. Cæsar*, as also some Greek poems in imitation of Euphorion, Rhianus, and Parthenius. These poets he greatly admired, and set up their works and statues in the public libraries, amongst the eminent authors of antiquity. On this account, most of the learned men of the time vied with each other in publishing observations upon them, which they addressed to him. What he chiefly attended to was the knowledge of the fabulous history; and this he prosecuted with a zeal that might justly be deemed ridiculous. For he used to try the grammarians, a class of people which I have already observed he much affected, with such questions as these: "Who was Hecuba's mother? What had been Achilles' name amongst the young women? What song were the Sirens used to sing?" And the first day that he entered the senate house, after the death of Augustus, as if he intended to pay a respect both to the memory of his father and the gods, in imitation of Minos upon the death of his son, he made an offering of frankincense and wine, but without any music.

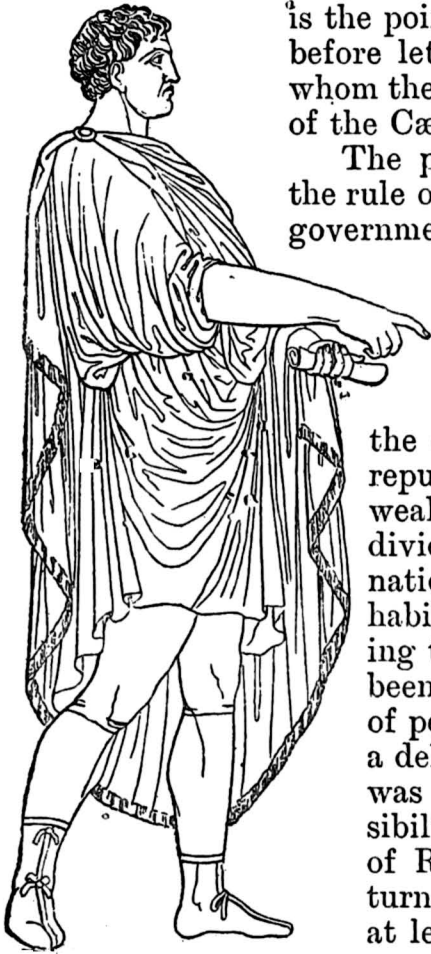
Though he was ready and conversant with the Greek tongue, yet he did not use it everywhere, but chiefly declined it in the senate house; insomuch that having occasion to use the word *monopolium* (monopoly), he first begged pardon for being obliged to trouble the house with a foreign word. And when in a decree of the senate, the word *emblema* (emblem) was read, he advised to have it changed, and that a Latin word should be substituted in its room; or if no proper one could be found, to express the thing in a circumlocutory manner. A soldier who was examined, as a witness upon a trial, in Greek, he would not allow to make any answer but in Latin.

The people rejoiced so much at his death, that, upon the first news of it, they ran up and down the city, some crying out, "Away with Tiberius into the Tiber"; others exclaiming, "May the earth, the common mother of mankind, and the infernal gods, allow no place for the dead, but amongst the wicked." Others threatened his body with the hook and the *scalæ gemoniæ*, their indignation at his former cruelty being increased by a recent instance of the same kind. It had been provided by an act of the senate, that the punishment of persons condemned to die should always be deferred until the tenth day after the sentence. Now it happened that the day on which the news of Tiberius' death arrived, was the time fixed by law for the execution of some persons that had been sentenced to die. These poor creatures implored the protection of all about them; but because Caius was not in town, and there was none else to whom application could be made in their behalf, the men who were charged with the care of their execution, from a dread of offending against that law, strangled them, and threw them down the *scalæ gemoniæ*. This excited in the minds of the people a still greater abhorrence of the tyrant's memory, since his cruelty subsisted even after his death. As soon as his corpse began to move from Misenum, many cried out for its being carried to Atella, and broiled there in the amphitheatre. It was however brought to Rome, and burned with the usual ceremony.^c

MERIVALE'S ESTIMATE OF TIBERIUS

Cæsar, the high-handed usurper, met an usurper's death, by open violence in the light of day. Augustus, after fifty years of the mildest and most equitable rule the times admitted, sank at last by a slow and painless decay into the arms of those dearest to him, amidst the respectful sympathies of an admiring people. The end of Tiberius, whether consummated by treachery

or not, was shrouded in gloom and obscurity; the chamber of mortality was agitated to the last by the intrigues and fears of the dying man and his survivors. The fellow-countrymen of the detested tyrant seem to have deemed it fitting that one whose life was to them an enigma should perish by a mysterious death. It seems preferable to represent him as a man whose character was sufficiently transparent, the apparent inconsistencies in whose conduct, often exaggerated and misrepresented, may generally be explained by the nature of his position, and the political illusions with which he was required to encircle himself. It is the character of the age in which he was placed, an age of rapid though silent transition, rather than of the man himself, which invests him with an historical interest. This is the point to which it will be well to direct our attention, before letting the curtain drop upon the personage with whom the forms of the republic perished, and the despotism of the Cæsars finally dropped its mask.



EMPEROR IN MILITARY
TUNIC

(From Trajan's Column)

The practice of delation, so rapidly developed under the rule of Tiberius, introduced a new principle into the government of his day, and marked it with features of its own. It is hardly possible to overrate the effects of this practice upon the general complexion of the Roman polity, nor is it easy to exaggerate the horror with which it came to be regarded. It was an attempt to reconcile the despotism of the monarch with the forms of a republic; to strengthen the sovereign power by weakening its subjects; to govern the people by dividing them, by destroying their means of combination among themselves, by generating among them habits of mutual distrust and fear, and finally plunging them into a state of political imbecility. It has been asserted that this system was in fact the product of peculiar circumstances rather than the creation of a deliberate will; nevertheless the chief of the state was made, not unnaturally, to bear the whole responsibility of it, and the disgust of the nobler spirits of Rome at the tyranny of spies and informers was turned against the prince himself, in whose interest at least, if not at whose instigation, their enormities were for the most part perpetrated.

If we examine the authorities for the history of the reign we have been reviewing, we shall find that those who were nearest to the times themselves have generally treated Tiberius with the greatest indulgence. Velleius Paterculus indeed, and Valerius Maximus, his contemporaries and subjects, must be regarded as mere courtly panegyrists; but the adulation of the one, though it jars on ears accustomed to the dignified self-respect of the earlier Romans, is not more high-flown in language and sentiment than what our own writers have addressed to the Georges, and even the Charleses and Jameses, of the English monarchy; while that of the other is chiefly offensive from the connection in which it stands with the lessons of virtue and patriotism which his book was specially designed to illustrate. The elder Seneca, the master of a school of rhetoric, to which science his writings are devoted, makes no mention of the emperor under whom he wrote; but his son, better

[25-37 A.D.]

known as the statesman and philosopher, though he was under the temptation of contrasting the austere and aged tyrant with the gay young prince to whom he was himself attached, speaks of him with considerable moderation, and ascribes the worst of his deeds to Sejanus and the delators rather than to his own evil disposition.

In the pages of Philoⁱ and Josephus,^h the government of Tiberius is represented as mild and equitable; it is not till we come to Suetonius and Tacitus, in the third generation, that his enormities are blazoned in the colours so painfully familiar to us.¹ It will suffice here to remark that both these later writers belong to a period of strong reaction against the Cæsarian despotism, when the senate was permitted to raise its venerable head and assume a show, at least, of its old imperial prerogatives; when the secret police of Rome was abolished, delation firmly repressed, freedom of speech proclaimed by the voice of the emperor himself, and the birthright of the Roman citizen respectfully restored to him. There ensued a strong revulsion of feeling, not against monarchy, which had then become an accepted institution, but against the corruptions which had turned it into tyranny; and Tiberius, as the reputed founder of the system of delation, bore the odium of all the crimes of all the tyrants who had succeeded him. Tacitus admits that the *affairs of Tiberius* were misrepresented during his power by fear, and after his death by spite; yet we cannot doubt that Tacitus himself often yields to the bias of his detractors, while Suetonius is at best indifferent to the truth. After all, a sober discretion must suspend its belief regarding many of the circumstances above recorded, and acknowledge that it is only through a treacherous and distorting haze that we have scanned the features of this ill-omened principate.

THE CHARACTER OF THE TIMES

Nevertheless, the terror which prevailed in the last years of Tiberius, to whomsoever it is chiefly to be ascribed, exercised a baleful influence over society at Rome, and shows by effects which are still discoverable that it has been but little exaggerated. It has left permanent traces of itself in the manifest decline and almost total extinction of literature under its pressure. The Roman writers addressed only a small class in the capital; to be popularly known in the provinces, to be read generally throughout the Roman world, was a privilege reserved for few, and anticipated perhaps rarely by any. Even in the capital the poet and historian composed their works for a circle of a few thousand knights and senators, for the friends and families of their own few hundreds of acquaintances, whom they invited to encourage their efforts by attending their recitations. The paralysis which benumbed the energies of the Roman nobility at this crisis of terror and despair, extended naturally to the organs of their sentiments and opinions. Not history and philosophy only suffered an eclipse, but poetry also, which under Augustus had been the true expression of the national feelings, became mute when the feelings themselves could no longer be trusted with utterance. Cremutius was subjected to persecution for pronouncing that Brutus and Cassius were the last of the Romans. A tragedian was accused, and if accused, we may presume, perhaps, that he was condemned for speaking evil

[¹ It must, however, be understood that Tacitus unquestionably based his opinions upon contemporary accounts that have not come down to us, or upon the verbal testimony of eye-witnesses. Tacitus was born only about twenty years after the death of Tiberius. It would appear, however, that the famous historian was led to adopt systematically the opinions, and even the indignant gossip, of the emperor's enemies.]

[37 A.D.]

of the king of men, Agamemnon; and various authors were assailed, and their writings sentenced to proscription, to whose recitations the last princeps had himself listened with indulgence.

The poems which were tolerated were generally the most trifling, and perhaps licentious in character. The sly irony of the fable, a style of composition adopted by slaves, and imitated from the servile Orientals, seems not unsuitable to these perilous times. The name of Phædrus belongs in all probability to the Tiberian period, but it is curious that no later writer for four centuries should have cared to notice him. Similar or worse has been the fate of a more serious writer, Manilius, the author of an elaborate poem on astronomy and its spurious sister astrology, a theme of some danger under the circumstances of the times, but which he has treated with irreproachable discretion; it is owing, perhaps, to the disgrace under which the forbidden science fell that this innocent work lapsed into entire oblivion, and has escaped the mention of any writer of antiquity.

The deep gloom which settled upon the face of higher society at Rome during the reign of Tiberius was heightened by its contrast with the frivolous dissipation of the populace, who, though deprived of the glitter of a brilliant court, and surrounded by signs of mourning and humiliation among their natural leaders, not the less abandoned themselves to the sensual enjoyments which alone they relished, and rejoiced in their utter indifference to political principles, to parties, and to men. When Sejanus fell, they clamoured with exultation over the body of the traitor; nevertheless, had the goddess *Nursia*, says the moralist, but favoured her Etruscan votary; had but the false intriguer circumvented the guileless old man, on the instant they would have been heard proclaiming Sejanus a Cæsar and an Augustus. In the one class was abandonment of public life, shame, despair, and suicide; the intolerable evils of the time drove men not to religious consolations, but to a restless inquiry into the future, or a vain attempt to lull the sense of the present in philosophic apathy: the other rushed headlong, hour by hour, to the baths, shows, and largesses, or shouted at the heels of the idol of the moment, or sighed and perhaps murmured at his loss, and speedily resigned itself to oblivion of the fitful emotion of the day.

We must be careful notwithstanding to observe that both the shame and the degradation were for the most part confined to the city and its vicinity, which were oppressed by the shadow of the imperial despot.

CALIGULA (CAIUS JULIUS CÆSAR CALIGULA), 37—41 A.D.

All Rome drew a deep breath at the great news. Macro's adroitness and the devotion of the Romans to the house of Germanicus induced the senate to confer all the imperial prerogatives on the youthful Caligula. Thus began one of the strangest and most terrible episodes in the history of Rome. The dangerous defects and the baleful forces inherent in the system created by the first two emperors were fated to come to light with amazing rapidity in the course of this young Cæsar's reign; a reign which it is difficult for the historian to consider critically, because one result of the wrath and contempt most justly evoked by his scandalous misrule has been that of many of his sanguinary and foolish deeds no record except a deliberate caricature has come down to us. The fervid enthusiasm with which the capital hailed the son of Germanicus seemed at first justified by the manner in which Caligula exercised the authority which had now devolved upon him.

[37-41 A.D.]

Impelled by nervous haste and violent passion in all things, whether good or evil, and relying on neither minister nor favourite, he displayed a restless energy of the type natural to a man of but moderate ability who is wholly deficient in administrative training and incapable of exact thought. His delight at the enthusiastic acclamations of the Roman people inspired this singularly organised being with the best of resolutions; he fully intended to make the Romans happy.

Thus he bore himself at first with modesty and good sense, especially in his dealings with the senate. His liberality to the populace and the soldiery, his pious reverence towards the dead, no less than his consideration for the living members of his house, and the pardon of all persons accused of offences of *majestas*, together with various liberal ordinances, all conspired to produce a strong impression in his favour. But what most roused the enthusiasm of all classes was that, casting aside the niggardly economy of the emperor Tiberius, he shared freely with them all in the festive humour of "games" of every kind.

For eight months he ruled in this fashion, and at the end of that time his unbridled excesses brought on a dangerous malady, from which he recovered much to the hurt of the Roman Empire and his own reputation. Previous to this time he had lived as in a state of perpetual mental intoxication, brought to a climax probably by the fulsome expressions of popular concern during his illness. Whether the latter really had an ill effect upon his mental faculties or not, the madness of which he thenceforth gave manifest proofs is of a different type; a type to which critical students of the history of imperial Rome have given the name of megalomania or *Cæsarian madness*, and we meet with it in others besides Caligula.

A man in this condition—sane enough to realise that as long as the material basis of his power, the loyalty of the soldiery and the masses, is unshaken, he will meet with no opposition in the gratification of his maddest whims—may at any moment conceive the idea of testing the validity of his omnipotence in any direction. It is a mere chance whether this display of power is directed towards great or even reasonable ends, or whether it issues in deeds of crime and horror. This is more particularly the case when the monarch in question is the victim of shattered nerves, the child of caprice, and the toy of every passing impulse.

The premonitory signs of the evil to come manifested themselves soon after the beginning of the year 38. Caligula, who chiefly delighted in the company of charioteers, stage-players, and buffoons, began to make a wanton exhibition of his despotic power, thus abruptly breaking with the astute policy of his predecessors. And it was a despotism which ignored the precepts of ancient Roman decorum, which, in sexual relations, overstepped all bounds of law and modesty, nay, even of common decency. To the wearisome admonitions of Macro, who exhorted him to act with some degree of discretion, he replied by forcing both the general and his wife to commit suicide.

Presently, however, the monarch having spent the vast riches of Tiberius in the space of nine or ten months, and being possessed with a mania for building as well as with a passion for games, became aware of a very perceptible limit to his omnipotence. To relieve himself of his financial embarrassments, he had recourse to the most sanguinary as well as to the pettiest and most infamous measures. Capital charges, most of which were decided before the emperor's own tribunal, became more and more numerous, partly to satisfy Caligula's growing lust of blood, partly to fill his coffers with the

proceeds of confiscation. Trials for offences of *majestas* were revived as a matter of course (39 A.D.).

The money thus acquired was squandered again and again on objects that could only be called colossal whims. Of these the most notorious was the construction of the ephemeral bridge of boats between Puteoli and Baiæ, across which he caused a substantial highway to be made, with aqueducts and posting stations, after the model of the Appian way, for the sole purpose of crossing it, surrounded by his guards, in the character of triumphator, and celebrating this chaining of the ocean by a gorgeous banquet.

His administration of imperial affairs was characterised by the same whimsical caprice. Having restored for no good purpose the kingdom of Commagene, he bestowed upon his friend and contemporary, M. Julius Agrippa (or Herod Agrippa, born 11 B.C.), grandson of Herod the Great, the greater part of his grandfather's dominions, most of which had been annexed to Syria under Augustus and Tiberius. On the other hand, he summoned Ptolemy, king of Mauretania (from 23 B.C. onwards), to Rome in the year 40, and there put him out of the way for the sake of his wealth.

Tradition represents all the scenes of Caligula's visit to Gaul in a light absolutely grotesque. [Some details from Suetonius will be introduced presently.] The shout of triumph after a sortie across the Rhine in which some of his Germanic guards were brought back as sham prisoners, strikes the reader as wholly comic, but we note with indignation that at Lyons Caligula continued the disgraceful system of making money by capital sentences and criminal charges against persons of rank, and recruited his finances by putting interesting and ancient articles from the palace of the Cæsars at Rome up to public auction.

The collection of an army, estimated at some 250,000 men, in the ports of the Morini on the Channel with a view to the conquest of Britain remained nothing but an empty demonstration. It may have induced the British chiefs to avert the danger by a formal act of homage and valuable presents; but tradition represents Caligula as concluding this bloodless expedition with a piece of buffoonery, and after bestowing costly gifts on the soldiers, commanding them to pick up shells on the shore as "spoils won from the ocean."

When he returned to Rome, late in the summer of the year 40, his humour assumed a more and more sinister character. He regarded his own person as divine, though he loved to appear with the attributes of the various gods and goddesses of the Græco-Roman Pantheon; and he now instituted a college of priests in his own honour, and while heaping ignominy on the most revered of ancient images of the gods, commanded that he himself should be worshipped in temples set apart for the purpose throughout the provinces.

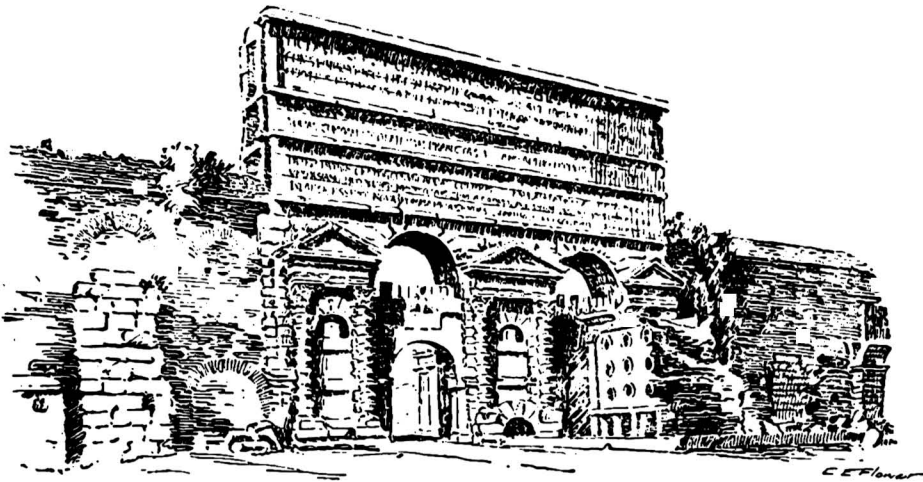
In this attempt he met with serious resistance only from the orthodox Jews. When P. Petronius, legate of Syria, received orders to set up a colossal gilded statue of the emperor in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem, the wrath of the Jews rose to such a pitch that nothing but the sudden death of Caligula prevented the outbreak of grave trouble throughout Judea. By this time the tyrant's popularity was declining even among the masses at Rome, whom he had pampered with games and presents; for he had lately begun to impose on the citizens of the capital a series of burdensome taxes, which were exacted with the utmost rigour. Nevertheless his fate did not overtake him till his conduct gave deep offence to several of the officers of the prætorian guard. Then Cassius Chærea, tribune of a prætorian cohort, headed a conspiracy, and aided by Cornelius Sabinus and others slew the emperor in a corridor of the palace on the 24th of January, 41 A.D.^m

[37-41 A.D.]

SUETONIUS DESCRIBES CALIGULA

For details of his brief but appalling career we cannot do better than go to the fountain head — Suetonius. There is no other important ancient source for this reign except Dion Cassius; and modern research can only interpret and criticise, without adding to the original records.^a

He assumed a variety of titles, such as “Dutiful, the Son of the Camp, the Father of the Armies, and the Greatest and the Best Cæsar.” Upon hearing some kings, who came to the city to pay their respects to him, contending amongst themselves at supper, about the nobleness of their birth, he exclaimed, “Let there be but one prince, one king.” He was strongly inclined to take a crown immediately, and to turn the imperial dignity into



THE CLAUDIAN AQUEDUCT
(Begun by Caligula; finished by Claudius)

the form of a kingdom; but being told that he far exceeded the grandeur of kings and princes, he began to arrogate to himself a divine majesty. He ordered all the images of the gods, that were famous either for their beauty or the veneration paid them, amongst which was that of Jupiter Olympius, to be brought from Greece, that he might take the heads off, and put on his own. He carried on a part of the Palatine as far as the Forum; and the temple of Castor and Pollux being converted into a kind of porch to his house, he would often stand betwixt the two brothers, and so present himself to be worshipped by all votaries, some of whom saluted him by the name of Jupiter Latiaris. He ordered likewise a temple and priests, and the most choice victims for his own godhead. In his temple stood an image of gold, exactly of the same size as himself, and which was every day dressed up in the same sort of garment as that which he used. The most opulent persons in the city offered themselves as candidates for the honour of being his priests, and purchased it successively at an immense price. The victims were flamingoes, peacocks, bustards, numidicæ, turkey-hens, and pheasant-hens, each sacrificed on their respective days. In the night he used constantly to invite the moon, when full, to his embraces. In the daytime he talked in private to Jupiter Capitolinus, one while whispering to him, and another turning his ear to him; sometimes he would talk aloud, and in railing language.

He was unwilling to be thought or called the grandson of Agrippa, because of the obscurity of his birth; and he was offended if any one, either in prose or verse, ranked him amongst the Cæsars. He said his mother was the fruit

of an incestuous commerce, maintained by Augustus with his daughter Julia. And not content with this vile reflection upon the memory of Augustus, he forbade his victories at Actium, and upon the coast of Sicily, to be celebrated as usual; affirming that they had been of the most pernicious and fatal consequence to the Roman people. He called his grandmother Livia Augusta "Ulysses in a woman's dress," and had the indecency to reflect upon her in a letter to the senate, as of mean birth, and descended, by the mother's side, from a grandfather who was only a member of the council of state at Fundi; whereas it is certain, from authentic documents, that Aufidius Lingo held public offices at Rome.

His grandmother Antonia desiring a private conference with him, he denied the request, unless Macro, commander of the guards, might be present. By affronts of this kind, and ill usage, he was the occasion of her death; but, as some think, not without giving her a dose of poison. He paid not the smallest respect to her memory after her death; and gratified himself at beholding, from his parlour, her funeral pile on fire. His brother Tiberius, who had no expectation of any violence, he despatched, by suddenly sending to him a military tribune for that purpose. He forced Silanus his father-in-law to kill himself, by cutting his throat with a razor. The pretext he alleged for these murders was, that the latter had not followed him upon putting to sea in stormy weather, but stayed behind with the view of seizing the city, if he should have been lost in the voyage. The other, he said, smelt of an antidote, which he had taken to prevent his being poisoned by him; whereas Silanus was only afraid of being seasick, and of the trouble of the voyage; and Tiberius had only made use of a medicine for a habitual cough, which was constantly increasing upon him. As to his successor Claudius, he only saved him to make sport with.

He lived in the habit of incest with all his sisters; when one of them, Drusilla, was married to Cassius Longinus, a man of consular rank, he took her from him, and kept her openly as his wife. In a fit of sickness, he by his will appointed her heiress of his estate, and the empire likewise. After her death, he ordered a public mourning for her; during which it was capital for any person to laugh, use the bath, or sup with parents, wife, or children. Being inconsolable under his affliction, he went hastily, and in the night-time, from the city, going through Campania to Syracuse; and then suddenly he returned without shaving his beard, or trimming his hair all that time. Nor did he ever after, in matters of the greatest importance, not even in the assemblies of the people and soldiers, swear any otherwise, than "By the divinity of Drusilla."

He never but once in his life concerned himself with military affairs, and then not deliberately, but in his journey to Mevania, to see the grove and river of Clitumnus. Being put in mind of recruiting his company of Batavians, which he had about him, he resolved upon an expedition into Germany. Immediately he drew together several legions and auxiliary forces from all quarters, and made everywhere new levies with the utmost rigour. Laying in provisions of all kinds, beyond what had ever been done upon the like occasion, he set out on his march; and pursued it with so much haste and hurry sometimes, that the guards were obliged, contrary to custom, to lay their standards upon the backs of horses or mules, and so follow him. At other times, he would march with such slowness and delicacy, that he would be carried in a chair by eight men; ordering the roads to be swept by the people of the neighbouring towns, and sprinkled with water to lay the dust.

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Upon arriving in the camp, to show himself an active general, and severe disciplinarian, he cashiered the lieutenant-generals that came up late with the auxiliary forces from different parts. In reviewing the army, he took their companies from most of the centurions of the first rank, who had now served their legal time in the wars, and from some but a few days before their time would have expired; alleging against them their great age and infirmity; and railing at the covetous disposition of the rest of them, he reduced the premiums due to such as had served out their time to the sum of six thousand sesterces. Though he only received the submission of Adminius, the son of Cinobelinus a British prince, who being forced from his native country by his father, came over to him with a small body of troops; yet, as if the whole island had been surrendered to him, he despatched magnificent letters to Rome upon the occasion, ordering the bearers to proceed in their chaise directly up to the Forum and the senate house, and not to deliver the letters but to the consuls in the temple of Mars, and in the presence of a full assembly of the senators.

Soon after this, there being a general tranquillity, he ordered a few Germani of his guard to be carried over and concealed on the other side of the Rhine, and word to be brought him after dinner, in a great hurry, that an enemy was advancing. This being accordingly done, he immediately posted away with his friends, and a party of the horse-guards, into the adjoining wood, where lopping the branches of some trees, and dressing them up in the manner of trophies, he returned by torchlight, upbraiding those who did not follow him, with timorousness and cowardice; but presented the companions and sharers of his victory with a new kind of crown, and under a new name, with the representation of the sun, moon, and stars upon them, which he called *exploratoriæ*. Again, some hostages were by his order taken out of a school, and privately sent off; upon notice of which he immediately rose from table, pursued them with the horse, as if they had run away, and coming up with them, brought them back in chains; proceeding to an extravagant pitch of ostentation likewise in this military comedy. Upon again sitting down to table, when some came to acquaint him that the army was all come in, he ordered them to sit down as they were in their coats of mail, animating them in the words of a well-known verse of Virgil.

In the meantime, he reprimanded the senate and people of Rome by a very severe proclamation, "for revelling and frequenting the diversions of the circus and theatre, and enjoying themselves in their country-houses, whilst their emperor was fighting, and exposing his person to the greatest dangers."

At last, as if resolved to make an end of the war at once, drawing up his army upon the shore of the ocean, with his *balistæ* and other engines of war,



ROMAN SOLDIER'S METHOD OF FORDING A RIVER, CARRYING HIS ARMS AND CLOTHING ON HIS SHIELD

whilst nobody could imagine what he intended to do, on a sudden he commanded them to gather up the sea shells, and fill their helmets, and the laps of their coats with them, calling them, "the spoils of the ocean due to the Capitol and the Palatine." As a monument of his success, he raised a high tower, upon which he ordered lights to be put in the night-time, for the direction of ships at sea; and then promising the soldiers a donative of a hundred denarii a man, as if he had surpassed the most eminent examples of generosity, "Go your ways," said he, "and be merry; go and be rich."

Upon his applying himself to make preparations for his triumph, besides prisoners and those who had deserted from the barbarians, he picked out the men of greatest stature in all Gaul, such as he said were fittest for a triumph, with some of the most considerable persons in the province, and reserved them to grace the solemnity; obliging them not only to dye their hair of a yellowish colour, and let it grow long, but to learn the German language, and assume the names commonly used in that country. He ordered likewise the galley in which he had entered the ocean, to be carried a great part of the way to Rome by land, and wrote to the collectors of his revenue in the city, "to make proper preparations for a triumph against his arrival, at as small expense as possible; but such a one, however, as had never been seen before, since they had full power and authority to seize the estates of all men whatever."

In person, Caligula was tall, of a pale complexion, ill shaped, his neck and legs very slender, his eyes and temples hollow, his forehead broad and grim, his hair thin, and about the crown quite decayed. The other parts of his body were much covered with hair. On this account, it was reckoned a capital crime for any person to look down from above, as he was passing by, or so much as to name a goat. His countenance, which was naturally hideous and frightful, he purposely rendered more so, forming it by a glass into the most horrible contortions. He was crazy both in body and mind, being subject when a boy to the falling sickness. When he arrived at the age of manhood, he would endure fatigue tolerably well, yet so that occasionally he was liable to a faintness, during which he remained incapable of any effort, even for his own preservation. He was not insensible of the disorder of his mind, and sometimes had thoughts of retiring to purge his brain. It was believed that his wife Cæsonia had administered to him a love-potion which threw him into a frenzy. What most of all disordered him was want of sleep, for he seldom had more than three or four hours' rest in a night; and even then he slept not soundly, but disturbed by strange dreams; fancying one time that the ocean spoke to him. Being therefore often weary with lying awake so great a part of the night, he would one while sit upon the bed, and another while walk in the longest porticos about his house, and now and then invoke and look out for the approach of day.

In his clothes, shoes, and other parts of his dress, he neither followed the usage of his country, his sex, nor indeed any fashion suitable to a human creature. He would often appear abroad dressed in an embroidered coat set with jewels, in a tunic with sleeves, and with bracelets upon his arms; sometimes all in silks and habited like a woman; at other times in the *crepidæ* or buskins; sometimes in a sort of shoes used by the meaner soldiers, or those of women, and commonly with a golden beard fixed to his chin, holding in his hand a thunderbolt, a trident, or a caduceus, marks of distinction belonging to the Gods only. Sometimes too he appeared in the dress of Venus. He wore very commonly the triumphal dress, even before

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his expedition, and sometimes the breast-plate of Alexander the Great, taken out of the vault where his body lay.

In respect of the liberal sciences, he was little conversant in philology, but applied himself with assiduity to the study of eloquence, being indeed in point of enunciation sufficiently elegant and ready; and these qualities appeared most conspicuous when he happened to be in a passion. In speaking, his action was vehement, and his voice so strong that he was heard at a great distance. When he was about to harangue, he threatened "the sword of his lucubration." He so much despised a soft smooth style that he said Seneca, who was then much admired, "wrote only boyish declamations," and that "his language was nothing else but sand without lime." When pleaders were successful in a cause, he often wrote answers to their speeches; and would exercise himself in composing accusations or vindications of eminent persons that were impeached before the senate; and according to his success he would exasperate or assuage the situation of the party by his vote in the house; inviting the equestrian order, by proclamation, to hear him.

He likewise applied himself with alacrity to the practice of several other arts, as fencing, riding the chariot, singing, and dancing. In the first of these, he practised with the weapons used in fighting; and drove the chariot in circuses built in several places. He was so extremely fond of singing and dancing that he could not refrain in the theatre from singing with the tragedians, and imitating the gestures of the actors, either in the way of approbation or correction. A *pervigilium* which he had ordered the day upon which he was slain was thought to be intended for no other reason than to take the opportunity afforded by the licentiousness of such a season to make his first appearance upon the stage. Sometimes he danced likewise in the night. Sending once, in the second watch of the night, for three men of consular rank, who were under great apprehensions from the message, he placed them by the stage, and then all of a sudden came bursting out, with a loud noise of flutes and *Scabella*, dressed in a pella and tunic reaching down to his heels. Having danced out a song, he retired. Yet he who had acquired such dexterity in other exercises, could never swim.

Those for whom he once conceived a regard he favoured even to madness. He used to kiss Mnester, the pantomimic, publicly in the theatre; and if any person made the least noise while he was dancing, he would order him to be dragged out of his seat and scourged him with his own hand. A Roman knight once making some bustle, he sent him, by a centurion, an order to go forthwith down to Ostia, and carry a letter from him to King Ptolemy in Mauretania. The letter was comprised in these words: "Do neither good nor harm to the bearer." He made some gladiators captains of his German guards. He took from the gladiators called Mirmillones some of their arms. One Columbus coming off with victory in a combat, but being slightly wounded, he ordered some poison to be infused into the wound, which he thence called *Columbinism*. For thus it certainly was put down with his own hand amongst other poisons. He was so extravagantly fond of the party of charioteers that rode in green, that he supped and lodged for some time constantly in the stable where their horses were kept. At a certain revel he made a present of two millions of sesterces to one Cythicus a driver of a chariot. The day before the Circensian games, he used by his soldiers to enjoin silence in the neighbourhood, that the repose of his horse Incitatus might not be disturbed. For this favourite animal, besides a marble stable, an ivory manger, scarlet body clothes, and a bracelet of jewels, he appointed a house, with a retinue

of slaves, and fine furniture, for the reception of such as were invited in the horse's name to sup with him. It is even said that he designed to have made him consul.

Such is the picture of this lunatic as Suetonius vividly paints it. For four years the world bore his furious madness without by sedition protesting against such a saturnalia of power. "How I wish," said the monster, "that the Roman people had only one head, so I could strike it off at a blow." The senate, however, grew tired of finding him victims, and finally, as already mentioned, a prætorian tribune, Chærea, strangled him.

Chærea was a republican. He and his friends thought that, after such a prince, monarchical government had been sufficiently judged by experience. The occasion now seemed favourable for the senate to resume the power. It did so, and for three days deemed a republic assured. But this was reckoning without either soldiers or people.

At the time of Caligula's murder, Claudius, his uncle, who was with him, had hidden in an obscure corner. A soldier found and showed him to his comrades. Claudius begged for life. "Be our emperor," they answered, and as he trembled and could not walk, they carried him to their camp, where he regained sufficient courage to harangue the troops, promising them money (*donativum*). It was the price of an empire he paid, an unfortunate innovation which amongst the soldiers had passed into law.

The senators, abandoned little by little, themselves hastened to greet the new master. Chærea was sentenced to death. "Do you know how to kill?" he asked the soldier charged to execute him. "Your sword is not well-ground perhaps. That which I used for Caligula would be better."

CLAUDIUS (TIBERIUS CLAUDIUS DRUSUS CÆSAR), 41-45 A.D.

Claudius, brother to Germanicus and grandson to Livia, through his father Drusus the first, was then fifty years old. During his youth he had been continually ill, and in the royal household every one had neglected the poor child, not daring to show him either to the people or the soldiers. At last his existence was almost forgotten and at forty-six he was not even a senator. He consoled himself by study and writing a history of the Etruscans and Carthaginians. Caligula, who named him consul, brought him a little more into prominence; the soldiers' whim did the rest. They gave him the empire, but could not do away with the effects of his upbringing, that timidity, irresolution, and want of self-dependence which resulted most disastrously, so that he often did evil with the very best intentions. In his reign the real rulers were his wife, Messallina, whose name is one with all debauchery and even with most repulsive coarseness, and his freedmen Polybius, Narcissus, and Pallas. [At least they exercised an undue influence over him.]

Claudius began well. He revoked the acts of Caligula, had the Augustan laws sworn to, and recalled the banished. Naturally kind-hearted, he easily adopted the manners that had contributed to the popularity of the first emperor. He visited his sick friends, consulting the consuls and the senate as if he were quite dependent on their favour. He liked to act as judge and often did it very well. Unfortunately, his undignified bearing, his shaking head stammering and often ridiculous speech made him of very little account. He re-established the censorship and often exercised it himself, but rather with the tastes of an antiquarian loving old customs than with a sense of the real needs of the empire.

[41-50 A.D.]

In spite of these oddities and weaknesses, this prince, without regarding the examples of infamy and crime given by his surroundings, can hardly be counted among the worst emperors. The freedmen whom long power had not yet spoiled sought to justify their influence by good service, and we find what we should hardly have expected — namely, several wise measures with regard to slaves in the interior; against too greedy advocates, usurers, and those banished from the provinces who flocked to Rome, etc. Moreover, there were useful works: an aqueduct, a port at Ostia, an attempt to drain Lake Fucinus, etc. In the provinces a liberal administration and a firm foreign policy were crowned by success.

Augustus had wished to constitute a Roman minority in the midst of the submissive nations which would prove a support to the government. But it was to govern always in Rome's interests. A futile effort, because he was aiming at nothing less than arresting the course of the world, as if the emperors could have continued an aristocracy against which they had contended in the battles of Pharsalia, Thapsus, and Philippi. In his will Augustus had advised a careful guarding of civic privilege, and in the short space of thirty-four months, the number of citizens had nearly doubled. Tiberius aided much in this increase. Claudius also contributed largely, because he made the law of continuous extension and progressive assimilation, which had made the fortune of the republic, a rule of policy. He personally asked that the nobles of *Gallia Comata*, who had long been citizens, should also assume Roman dignities and have a seat in the senate.

Only one religious provincial sect was persecuted under Claudius — that of the Druids, because their priests refused the peace offered by Augustus on condition of their uniting their gods to the Olympian deities. Claudius tried, therefore, to abolish their worship, and punished with death both priests and their adherents.

In the interior parts of Britain, the natives, under the command of Caractacus, maintained an obstinate resistance, and little progress was made by the Roman arms, until Ostorius Scapula was sent over to prosecute the war. He penetrated into the country of the Silures, a warlike tribe who inhabited the banks of the Severn; and having defeated Caractacus in a great battle, made him prisoner, and sent him to Rome (50 A.D.). The fame of the British prince had by this time spread over the provinces of Gaul and Italy; and upon his arrival in the Roman capital, the people flocked from all quarters to behold him. The ceremonial of his entrance was conducted with great solemnity. On a plain adjoining to the Roman camp, the prætorian troops were drawn up in martial array; the emperor and his court took their station in the front of the lines, and behind them was ranged the whole body of the people. The procession commenced with the different trophies which had been taken from the Britons during the progress of the war. Next



THE EMPEROR CLAUDIUS
(From a bust in the Vatican)

[41-50 A.D.]

followed the brothers of the vanquished prince, with his wife and daughter, in chains, expressing by their supplicating looks and gestures the fears with which they were actuated. But not so Caractacus himself. With a manly gait and an undaunted countenance, he marched up to the tribunal, where the emperor was seated, and addressed him in the following terms:

“If to my birth, and distinguished rank, I had added the virtues of moderation, Rome had beheld me rather as a friend than a captive; and you would not have rejected an alliance with a prince descended from illustrious ancestors, and governing many nations. The reverse of my fortune to you is glorious, and to me humiliating. I had arms, and men, and horses; I possessed extraordinary riches; and can it be any wonder that I was unwilling to lose them? Because Rome aspires to universal dominion, must men therefore implicitly resign themselves to subjection? I opposed for a long time the progress of your arms, and had I acted otherwise, would either you have had the glory of conquest, or I of a brave resistance? I am now in your power; if you are determined to take revenge, my fate will soon be forgotten, and you will derive no honour from the transaction. Preserve my life, and I shall remain to the latest ages a monument of your clemency.”

Immediately upon this speech, Claudius granted him his liberty, as he did likewise to the other royal captives. They all returned their thanks, in a manner the most grateful to the emperor; and as soon as their chains were taken off, walking towards Agrippina, who sat upon a bench at a little distance, they repeated to her the same fervent declarations of gratitude and esteem.

History has preserved no account of Caractacus after this period; but it is probable that he returned in a short time to his own country, where his former valour, and the magnanimity which he had displayed at Rome, would continue to render him illustrious through life, even amidst the irretrievable ruin of his fortunes.

In Germany a successful expedition had restored to the Romans the last of the eagles of Varus. But Claudius, practising on this side Tiberian politics, busied himself particularly in taking up a strong position on the Rhine and winning barbarian chiefs to the interests of Rome. He succeeded so well that in 47 the Cherusci came to him, asking for a king. Corbulo, the greatest general of this time, wanted to carry out the plans of the first Drusus against the Germans. He subdued the Frisians and attacked the Chauci. Claudius stayed his advance. “Happy were the old Roman consuls!” said the ambitious general as he obeyed. In order at least to occupy his soldiers he had a canal dug from the Meuse to the Rhine, another leader made his men open the mines. Everywhere these useful works were now demanded from the troops.

On the Danube peace was undisturbed. In Thrace various troubles made Claudius intervene and reduce the country to a province. In the Bosphorus, a king deposed by him took arms, was conquered, and gave himself up. In the East the emperor had the glory of reconquering Armenia and giving a king to the Parthians. Unfortunately these successes did not continue; the Roman candidate to the throne of the Arsacidæ was overthrown and for some time Vologeses kept the Armenian crown on the head of his brother Tiridates.

Lycia made bad use of her liberty, so Claudius took it away, and the Jewish king, Agrippa dying in 44, he united Palestine to the government of Syria. In Africa, Suetonius Paulinus and Geta subdued the Moors, whose country formed two provinces — the Mauretania Cæsariensis and Mauretania Tingitana

[41-54 A.D.]

The emperor now lacked neither military nor political glory. Mauretania and the half of Britain were conquered; the Germans coerced, the Bosphorus reduced to obedience; Thrace, Lycia, and Judea made provinces, and the Parthian troubles long since smoothed over. Within the empire there was growing prosperity; the army was well disciplined and its activity was directed to the public welfare under the direction of generals grown old in command. Certainly, results everywhere were sufficient to gratify the pride of a prince. It is with regret that we have to turn to Rome to see nobles whose only occupation was conspiracy or base flattery—and to that imperial palace which was disgraced by a weak prince and his immoral wife, the shameless Messallina.^b The misdeeds of the latter will now claim our attention. Let Tacitus draw her portrait:

THE MISDEEDS OF MESSALLINA DESCRIBED BY TACITUS

The facility of ordinary adulteries having produced satiety, Messallina broke forth into unheard-of excesses; when even Silius, her paramour, whether impelled by some fatal infatuation, or judging that the dangers hanging over him were only to be averted by boldly confronting them, urged that all disguises should now be renounced, for matters, he said, were gone too far for them to wait for the death of the emperor; blameless counsels were for the innocent, but in glaring guilt safety must be sought in reckless daring. They were backed by accomplices who dreaded the same doom. As for himself, he was single, childless, ready to marry her, and to adopt Britannicus to Messallina would still remain her present power; with the addition of security, if they anticipated Claudius; who, as he was unguarded against the approaches of stratagem, so was he headstrong and impetuous when provoked to anger. These suggestions were but coldly received by Messallina; from no love to her husband; but lest Silius, when he had gained the sovereignty, should scorn his adulteress; and the treason, which in his present perilous predicament he approved, would then be estimated according to its real desert. She, however, coveted the name of matrimony, from the greatness of the infamy attaching to it; which, with those who are prodigal of fame, forms the crowning gratification of depraved appetite. Nor stayed she longer than till Claudius went to Ostia, to assist at a sacrifice; when she celebrated her nuptials with Silius, with all the usual solemnities.

I am aware [Tacitus continues] that it will appear fabulous that any human beings should have exhibited such recklessness of consequences; and that, in a city where everything was known and talked of, any one, much more a consul elect, should have met the emperor's wife, on a stated day, in the presence of persons called in, to seal the deeds, as for the purpose of procreation, and that she should have heard the words of the augurs, entered the house of the husband, sacrificed to the gods, sat down among the guests at the nuptial banquet, exchanged kisses and embraces, and in fine passed the night in unrestrained conjugal intercourse. But I would not dress up my narrative with fictions to give it an air of marvel, rather than relate what has been stated to me or written by my seniors.

The consequence was that the domestic circle of the prince was horror-struck; especially those who had the chief sway, and who dreaded the result, if the state of things should be changed, no longer confined themselves to secret communications, but exclaimed with undisguised indignation that while the emperor's beechamber was made the theatre for a stage-

player to dance upon, a reproach was indeed incurred, but the immediate dissolution of the state was not now threatened: a young man of noble rank, of fascinating person, mental vigour, and just entering upon the consulship, was addressing himself to higher objects; nor was it any enigma what remained to be done after such a marriage. It is true, when they reflected on the stupidity of Claudius, his blind attachment to his wife, and the many lives sacrificed to her fury, they were unable to divest themselves of apprehensions; again, even the passive spirit of the emperor revived their confidence; that, if they could first possess him with the horrid blackness of her crimes, she might be despatched without trial. But the danger turned upon this — that she might make a defence; and that even if she confessed her guilt, the emperor might be deaf to that evidence also.

But first it was deliberated by Callistus, whom, in relating the assassination of Caligula, I have already mentioned; by Narcissus, who plotted the murder of Appius; and by Pallas, then the reigning favourite, whether, feigning ignorance of all other circumstances, they should compel Messallina to break off her amour with Silius by secret menaces; but they afterwards abandoned this project from fear lest they should themselves be dragged to execution as culprits. Pallas was faint hearted; and Callistus, a courtier in the last reign also, had learned by experience that power was secured more effectually by wary measures than by daring counsels. Narcissus persisted; with this difference only, that he took care not to let fall a word by which she might know beforehand the charge against her or her accuser; and watching all occasions, while the emperor lingered at Ostia, he prevailed with two courtesans, who were the chief mistresses of Claudius, to undertake the task of laying the matter before him, by means of presents and promises, and by representing to them in attractive colours that by the fall of his wife their own influence would be increased.

Calpurnia therefore, for that was the name of the courtesan, upon the first occasion of privacy, falling at the emperor's feet, exclaimed, that Messallina had married Silius; and at the same time asked Cleopatra, who purposely attended to attest it, whether she had not found it to be true. Claudius, upon a confirmation from Cleopatra, ordered Narcissus to be called. He, when he came, begged pardon for his past conduct in having concealed from the prince her adulteries while they were limited to the Vectii and Plautii; nor meant he now, he said, to charge Silius with adulteries; nor urge that he should restore the house, the slaves, and the other decorations of imperial fortune: the adulterer might still enjoy these; let him only break the nuptial tables, and restore the emperor's wife. "Know you, Cæsar, that you are in a state of divorce? In the face of the people, and senate, and soldiery, Messallina has espoused Silius; and unless you act with despatch, her husband is master of Rome."

He then sent for his most confidential friends, particularly for Turranius, superintendent of the stores; next for Lusius Geta, captain of the prætorian guards; and inquired of them. As they avouched it, the rest beset him with clamorous importunities, that he should forthwith proceed to the camp, secure the prætorian cohorts, and consult his preservation before his revenge. It is certain that Claudius was so confounded and panic-stricken that he was incessantly asking whether he were still emperor — whether Silius was still a private man.

As to Messallina, she never wallowed in greater voluptuousness; it was then the middle of autumn, and in her house she exhibited a representation of the vintage; the wine-presses were plied, the wine vats flowed, and round

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them danced women begirt with skins, like Bacchanalians at their sacrifices, or under the maddening inspiration of their deity. She herself, with her hair loose and flowing, waved a thyrsus; by her side Silius, crowned with ivy, and wearing buskins, tossed his head about; while around them danced the wanton choir in obstreperous revelry. It is reported that Væctius Valens, having in a frolic climbed to an exceeding high tree, when asked what he saw, answered, "A terrible storm from Ostia."

It was now no longer vague rumour; but messengers poured in on all sides with tidings that Claudius, apprised of all, had approached, bent upon instant vengeance. They separated; Messallina betook herself to the gardens of Lucullus, and Silius, to dissemble his fear, resumed the offices of the Forum. As the rest were slipping off different ways, the centurions came up with them and bound them, some in the street, others in lurking-places, according as each was found. Messallina, however, though in her distress incapable of deliberation, formed the bold resolution of meeting her husband, and presenting herself to his view — an expedient which had often proved her protection. She likewise ordered that Britannicus and Octavia should go forth and embrace their father; and besought Vibidia, the oldest vestal, to intercede with the chief pontiff, and earnestly importune his clemency. She herself meanwhile traversed on foot the whole extent of the city, attended only by three persons (so suddenly had her whole train forsaken her), and then, in a cart employed to carry out dirt from the gardens, took the road to Ostia, unpitied by anyone, as the enormity of her crimes overpowered every feeling of the kind.

Claudius was in a state of no less trepidation; for he could not implicitly rely on Geta, the captain of his guards — an equally fickle instrument of fraud



MESSALLINA
From a portrait bust)

or honesty. Narcissus therefore, in concert with those who entertained the same mistrust, assured the emperor, that there was no other expedient to preserve him than the transferring the command of his guards to one of his freedmen, for that day only; and offered himself to undertake it. And, that Lucius Vitellius and Publius Largus Cæcina might not on his way to the city prevail with Claudius to relent, he desired to have a seat in the same vehicle, and took it.

It was afterwards currently reported that, while the emperor was giving expression to the opposite feelings which agitated his breast, at one time inveighing against the atrocities of his wife, and then at length recurring to the recollection of conjugal intercourse and the tender age of his children, Vitellius uttered nothing but "Oh! the villainy! Oh! the treason!" Narcissus indeed pressed him to discard all ambiguity of expression, and let them know his real sentiments; but he did not therefore prevail upon him to give any other than indecisive answers, and such as would admit of any interpretation which might be put upon them; and his example was followed by Largus Cæcina. And now Messallina was in sight, and importunately called on the emperor "to hear the mother of Octavia and Britannicus," when her accuser drowned her cries with the story of Silius and the marriage, and delivered at the same time to Claudius a memorial reciting all her whoredoms; to divert him from beholding her. Soon after, as the emperor was entering Rome, it was attempted to present to him his children by her; but Narcissus ordered them to be taken away. He could not, however, prevent *Vilgilia* from insisting, with earnest remonstrances, that he would not deliver his wife to destruction without a hearing; so that Narcissus was obliged to assure her that the prince would hear Messallina, who should have full opportunity of clearing herself; and advised the vestal to retire and attend the solemnities of her goddess.

The silence of Claudius, while all this was going on, was matter of astonishment. Vitellius seemed like one who was not in the secret: the freedman controlled everything; by his command, the house of the adulterer was opened, and the emperor escorted thither, where the first thing he showed him was the statue of Silius, the father, in the porch, though it had been decreed to be demolished by the senate; then that all the articles belonging to the Neros and Drusi had now become the price of dishonour. Thus incensed, and breaking forth into menaces, he led him direct to the camp, where the soldiers being already assembled, by the direction of Narcissus, he made them a short speech; for shame prevented his giving utterance to his indignation, though he had just cause for it.

The soldiers then clamoured unremittingly and importunately that the culprits should be tried and punished. Silius was placed before the tribunal; he made no defence, he sought no delay, but begged only to be despatched immediately. Illustrious Roman knights also, with similar firmness of mind, were eager for a speedy death. He therefore commanded Titius Proculus, assigned by Silius as a guard to Messallina; Vectius Valens, who confessed his guilt, and offered to discover others, Pompeius Ubcus and Saufellus Trogus, as accomplices, to be all dragged to execution. On Decius Calpurnianus too, præfect of the watch; Sulpicius Rufus, comptroller of the games; and Juncus Vergilianus, the senator, the same punishment was inflicted.

Mnester alone caused some hesitation. He tore off his clothes and called upon the emperor to behold upon his body the impressions of the lash; to remember his own commands, obliging him to submit to the pleasure of Messallina without reserve: others had been tempted to the iniquity by great

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presents or aspiring hopes; but his offence was forced upon him. Nor would any man have sooner perished had Silius gained the sovereignty. These considerations affected Claudius, and strongly inclined him to mercy; but his freedmen overruled him. They urged that after so many illustrious sacrifices, he should by no means think of saving a player; that in a crime of such enormity, it mattered not whether he had committed it from choice or necessity. As little effect had the defence even of Traulus Montanus, a youth of signal modesty and remarkably handsome, summoned by Messallina to her bed without any solicitation on his part, and in one night cast off; such was the wantonness with which her passion was alike surfeited and inflamed. The lives of Suius Cæsoninus and Plautius Lateranus were spared; of the last, on account of the noble exploits of his uncle: the other was protected by his vices, as one who, in the late abominable society, had prostituted himself like a woman.

Meanwhile Messallina was in the gardens of Lucullus, still striving to prolong her life, and composing supplications to the prince, sometimes in the language of hope, at others giving vent to rage and resentment, so indomitable was her insolence even under the immediate prospect of death. And had not Narcissus hastened her assassination, the doom which he had prepared for her would have recoiled upon himself. For Claudius, upon his return home, experienced a mitigation of his wrath, from the effects of a sumptuous repast; and as soon as he became warm with wine, he ordered them "to go and acquaint the miserable woman (for this was the appellation which he is said to have used) that to-morrow she should attend and plead her cause." These words indicated that his resentment was abating, his wonted affection returning; besides, if they delayed, the effect of the following night, and the reminiscences which the conjugal chamber might awaken in Claudius, were matter for alarm. Narcissus therefore rushed forth, and directed the tribune and centurions then attending upon duty to despatch the execution, for such, he said, was the emperor's command. With them he sent Euodus of the freedmen, as a watch upon them, and to see his orders strictly fulfilled. Euodus flew before them to the gardens, and found her lying along upon the earth; her mother, Lepida, sitting by her side — who during her prosperity had not lived in harmony with her, but, in this her extreme necessity, was overcome by compassion for her, and now persuaded her not to wait for the executioner. "the course of her life was run, and her only object now should be to die becomingly." But a mind sunk and corrupted by debauchery retained no sense of honour; she was giving way to bootless tears and lamentations when from the shock of the approaching party the door flew open: the tribune stood in silence before her; but the freedman upbraided her with many and insolent reproaches, characteristic of the slave.

Then for the first time she became deeply sensible of her condition, and laying hold of the steel, applied it first to her throat, then to her breast, with trembling and irresolute hand, when the tribune ran her through. Her corpse was granted to her mother. Tidings were then carried to Claudius that Messallina was no more, without distinguishing whether by her own or another's hand; neither did he inquire, but called for a cup of wine, and proceeded in the usual ceremonies of the feast. Nor did he indeed, during the following days, manifest any symptom of disgust or joy of resentment or sorrow, nor, in short, of any human affection; not when he beheld the accusers of his wife exulting at her death, not when he looked upon her mourning children. The senate aided in effacing her from his memory, by

decreeing that from all public and private places her name should be rased, and her images removed. To Narcissus were decreed the decorations of the quæstorship; a very small reward indeed, considering his towering elevation; for he was more influential than Pallas and Callistus.^d

THE INTRIGUES OF AGRIPPINA

The freedmen now had the task of selecting another wife for their feeble prince, who was not capable of leading a single life, and who was sure to be governed by the successful candidate. The principal women in Rome were ambitious for the honour of sharing the bed of the imperial idiot, but the claims of all were forced to yield to those of Lollia Paulina, the former wife of Caligula, Julia Agrippina the daughter of Germanicus, and Ælia Petina, Claudius' own divorced wife. The first was patronised by Callistus, the second by Pallas, the last by Narcissus. Agrippina, however, in consequence of her frequent access to her uncle, easily triumphed over her rivals; the only difficulty that presented itself was that of a marriage between uncle and niece being contrary to Roman manners, and being even regarded as incestuous. This difficulty, however, the compliant L. Vitellius, who was then censor, undertook to remove. He addressed the senate, stating the necessity of a domestic partner to a prince who had on him such weighty public cares. He then launched forth in praise of Agrippina; as to the objection of the nearness of kindred, such unions he said were practised among other nations, and at one time first-cousins did not use to marry, while now they did so commonly. The servile assembly outran the speaker in zeal; they rushed out of the house, and a promiscuous rabble collected, shouting that such was the wish of the Roman people. Claudius repaired to the senate house, and caused a decree to be made legalising marriages between uncles and nieces, and he then formally espoused Agrippina. Yet such was the light in which the incestuous union was viewed that, corrupt as the Roman character was become, only two persons were found to follow the imperial example.

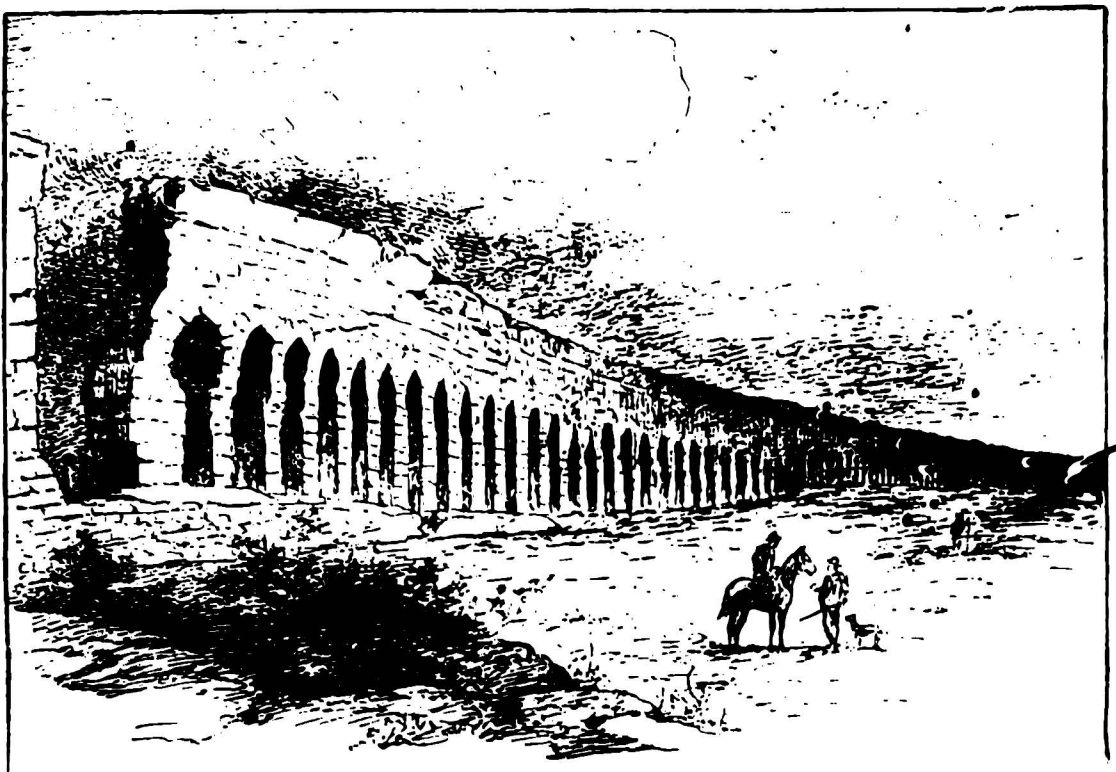
Agrippina also proposed to unite her son Domitius with Octavia the daughter of Claudius; but here there was a difficulty also, for Octavia was betrothed to L. Silanus. Again, however, she found a ready tool in the base Vitellius, to whose son Julia Calvina, the sister of Silanus, had been married. As the brother and sister indulged their affection imprudently, though not improperly, the worthy censor took the occasion to make a charge of incest against Silanus, and to strike him out of the list of senators. Claudius then broke off the match, and Silanus put an end to himself on the very day of Agrippina's marriage. His sister was banished, and Claudius ordered some ancient rites, expiatory of incest to be performed, unconscious of the application, of them which would be made to himself.

The woman, who had now obtained the government of Claudius and the Roman Empire, was of a very different character from the abandoned Messalina. The latter had nothing noble about her, she was the mere bondslave of lust, and cruel and avaricious only for its gratification; but Agrippina was a woman of superior mind, though utterly devoid of principle. In her, lust was subservient to ambition; it was the desire of power or the fear of death, and not wantonness, that made her submit to the incestuous embraces of her brutal brother Caligula, and to be prostituted to the companions of his vices. It was ambition and parental love that made her now form an

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incestuous union with her uncle. To neither of her husbands, Cn. Domitius or Crispus Passienus, does she appear to have been voluntarily unfaithful. The bed of Claudius was, however, not fated to be unpolluted; for as a means of advancing her views, Agrippina formed an illicit connection with Pallas.

The great object of Agrippina was to exclude Britannicus, and obtain the succession for her own son Nero Domitius, now a boy of twelve years of age. She therefore caused Octavia to be betrothed to him, and she had the philosopher Seneca recalled from Corsica, whither he had been exiled by the



RUINS OF THE AQUEDUCT OF CLAUDIUS

arts of Messallina, and committed to him the education of her son, that he might be fitted for empire. In the following year Claudius, yielding to her influence, adopted him.

In order to bring Nero forward, Agrippina caused him to assume the virile toga before the usual age, and the servile senate desired of Claudius that he might be consul at the age of twenty, and meantime be elect with proconsular power without the city. A donative was given to the soldiers, and a congiary (congiarium) to the people in his name. At the Circensian games, given to gain the people, Nero appeared in the triumphal habit; Britannicus in a simple *pretexta*. Every one who showed any attachment to this poor youth was removed on one pretence or another, and he was surrounded with the creatures of Agrippina. Finally, as the two commanders of the guards were supposed to be attached to the interests of the children of Messallina, she persuaded Claudius that their discipline would be much improved if they were placed under one commander. Accordingly those officers were removed, and the command was given to Burrus Afranius, a man of high character for probity and of great military reputation, and who knew to whom he was indebted for his elevation.

The pride and haughtiness of Agrippina far transcended anything that Rome had as yet witnessed in a woman. When the British prince Carac-tacus and his family, whom P. Ostorius had sent captives to the emperor, were led before him as he sat on his tribunal in the plain under the præto-rian camp, with all the troops drawn out, Agrippina appeared seated on another tribunal, as the partner of his power. And again, when the letting off of the Fucine Lake was celebrated with a naval combat, she presided with him, habited in a military cloak of cloth of gold.

Agrippina at length grew weary of delay, or fearful of discovery. Nar-cissus, who saw at what she was aiming, appeared resolved to exert all his influence in favour of Britannicus ; and Claudius himself, one day when he was drunk, was heard to say that it was his fate to bear with the infamy of his wives and then to punish it. He had also begun to show peculiar marks of affection for Britannicus. She therefore resolved to act without delay.^e

TACITUS DESCRIBES THE MURDER OF CLAUDIUS

Claudius was attacked with illness, and for the recovery of his health had recourse to the soft air and salubrious waters of Sinuessa. It was then that Agrippina, long since bent upon the impious deed, and eagerly seizing the present occasion, well furnished too as she was with wicked agents, deliberated upon the nature of the poison she would use : whether, if it were sudden and instantaneous in its operation, the desperate achievement would not be brought to light ; if she chose materials slow and consuming in their operation, whether Claudius, when his end approached, and perhaps having discovered the treachery, would not resume his affection for his son. Something of a subtle nature was resolved upon, "such as would disorder his brain and require time to kill." An experienced artist in such preparations was chosen, her name Locusta ; lately condemned for poisoning, and long reserved as one of the instruments of ambition. By this woman's skill the poison was prepared ; to administer it was assigned to Halotus, one of the eunuchs, whose office it was to serve up the emperor's repasts, and prove the viands by tast- ing them.

In fact all the particulars of this transaction were soon afterwards so thoroughly known that the writers of those times are able to recount how the poison was poured into a dish of mushrooms, of which he was particularly fond ; but whether it was that his senses were stupefied, or from the wine he had drunk, the effect of the poison was not immediately perceived ; at the same time a relaxation of the intestines seemed to have been of service to him. Agrippina therefore became dismayed ; but as her life was at stake, she thought little of the odium of her present proceedings, and called in the aid of Xerophon the physician, whom she had already implicated in her guilty purposes. It is believed that he, as if he purposed to assist Claudius in his efforts to vomit, put down his throat a feather besmeared with deadly poison ; not unaware that in desperate villainies the attempt without the deed is peril- ous, while to ensure the reward they must be done effectually at once.

The senate was in the meantime assembled, and the consuls and pontiffs were offering vows for the recovery of the emperor, when, already dead, he was covered with clothes and warm applications, to hide it till matters were arranged for securing the empire to Nero. First there was Agrippina, who, feigning to be overpowered with grief and anxiously seeking for consolation, clasped Britannicus in her arms, called him "the very model of his father,"

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and by various artifices withheld him from leaving the chamber. She likewise detained Antonia and Octavia, his sisters, and had closely guarded all the approaches to the palace: from time to time too she gave out that the prince was on the mend, that the soldiery might entertain hopes till the auspicious moment, predicted by the calculations of the astrologers, should arrive.

At last, on the thirteenth day of October, at noon, the gates of the palace were suddenly thrown open, and Nero, accompanied by Burrus, went forth to the cohort, which according to the custom of the army, was keeping watch. There, upon a signal made by the prefect, he was received with shouts of joy, and instantly put into a litter. It was reported that there were some who hesitated, looking back anxiously, and frequently asking where Britannicus was, but as no one came forward to oppose it, they embraced the choice which was offered them. Thus Nero was borne to the camp, where, after a speech suitable to the exigency, and the promise of a largess equal to that of the late emperor his father, he was saluted emperor. The voice of the soldiers was followed by the decrees of the senate; nor was there any hesitation in the several provinces. To Claudius were decreed divine honours, and his funeral obsequies were solemnised with the same pomp as those of the deified Augustus; Agrippina emulating the magnificence of her great-grandmother Livia. His will, however, was not rehearsed, lest the preference of the son of his wife to his own son might excite the minds of the people by its injustice and baseness.^d

THE CHARACTER OF CLAUDIUS

We meet with more than one instance in the imperial history of the parents suffering for the sins of their children. We have already seen how much reason there is to believe that the hatred of the Romans to Tiberius disposed them readily to accept any calumny against Livia. Tiberius himself was hated the more for the crimes of his successor Caius; and there is ground to surmise that much of the odium which has attached to Claudius is reflected from the horror with which Nero came afterwards to be regarded. Thus did the Romans avenge themselves on the authors of the principle of hereditary succession so long unknown to their polity, and known at last so disadvantageously.

Of Claudius, at least, a feeling of compassion, if not of justice, may incline us to pronounce with more indulgence than has usually been accorded to him. He was an imitator, as we have seen, of Augustus, but only as the silver age might parody the golden; for the manners he sought to revive, and the sentiments he pretended to regenerate, had not been blighted by the passing tempest of civil war, but were naturally decaying from the over-ripeness of age. Nevertheless, it was honourable to admire a noble model; there was some generosity even in the attempt to rival the third founder of the state. Nor, in fact, does any period of Roman history exhibit more outward signs of vigorous and successful administration: none was more fertile in victories or produced more gallant commanders or excellent soldiers; domestic affairs were prosperously conducted; the laborious industry of the emperor himself tired out all his ministers and assistants. The senate recovered some portion of its authority, and, with authority, of courage and energy.

Claudius secured respect for letters, in an age of show and sensuality, by his personal devotion to them. From some of the worst vices of his age and

class he was remarkably exempt. His gluttony, if we must believe the stories told of it, was countenanced at least by many high examples; his cruelty, or rather his callous insensibility, was the result of the perverted training which made human suffering a sport to the master of a single slave, as well as to the emperor on the throne; and it was never aggravated at least by wanton caprice or ungovernable passion. The contempt which has been thrown upon his character and understanding has been generated, in a great degree, by the systematic fabrications of which he has been made the victim. Though flattered with a lip-worship which seems to our notions incredible, Claudius appears to have risen personally above its intoxicating vapours; we know that, in one instance at least, the falsome adulation of a man, the most remarkable of his age for eloquence and reputed wisdom, failed to turn the course whether of his justice or his anger.

THE LIVING CLAUDIUS EULOGISED BY SENECA

The circumstances of this adulation, and of its disappointment, it is due to the memory of Claudius to detail. We have no distinct account of the cause of Seneca's banishment, which is ascribed, by little better than a guess, to the machinations of Messalina against the friends and adherents of Julia. However this may be, we have seen with what impatience the philosopher bore it. On the occasion of the death of a brother of Polybius, he addressed a treatise from his place of exile to the still powerful freedman, such as was styled a "consolation," in which he set forth all the arguments which wit and friendship could suggest to alleviate his affliction and fortify his wisdom. After assuring him of the solemn truth that all men are mortal, and reminding him that this world itself, with all that it contains, is subject to the common law of dissolution; that man is born to sorrow; that the dead can have no pleasure in his grief; that his grief at the best is futile and unprofitable; he diverts him with another topic which is meant to be still more effectual. "The emperor," he says, "is divine, and those who are blessed by employment in his service, and have him ever before their eyes, can retain no idle interest in human things; their happy souls neither fear nor sorrow can enter; the divinity is with them and around them. Me," he declares, "this god has not overthrown rather he has supported when others supplanted me; he still suffers me to remain for a monument of his providence and compassion. Whether my cause be really good or bad, his justice will at last pronounce it good, or his clemency will so regard it. Meanwhile, it is my comfort to behold his pardons travelling through the world; even from the corner where I am cast away his mercy has called forth many an exile before me. One day the eyes of his compassion will alight on me also. Truly those thunderbolts are just which the thunderstricken have themselves learned to adore. May the immortals long indulge him to the world! May he rival the deeds of Augustus and exceed his years! While still resident among us, may death never cross his threshold! Distant be the day, and reserved for the tears of our grandchildren, when his divine progenitors demand him for the heavens which are his own."

Such were the phrases, sonorous and unctuously polished, which Polybius was doubtless expected to recite in the ears of the imperial pedant. Standing high as he still did in the favour of Claudius and Messalina, he had the means and was perhaps not without the will, to recommend them with all his interest, and intercede in the flatterer's behalf. Yet Claudius,



HADRIAN

CAPITOLIN MUSEUM, ROME

[64 A.D.]

it would seem, remained wholly unmoved by a worship more vehement than Ovid's, and enhanced still more by the unquestioned reputation of its author. Whatever had been the motives of his sentence against Seneca, it was not by flattery that he could be swayed to reverse it. Surely, as far as we are competent to judge, we must think the better both of his firmness and his sense. Shortly afterwards Polybius was himself subverted by the caprice of Messallina; Messallina in her turn was overthrown by Agrippina; and it was not till the sister of Julia had gained the ascendant that Seneca obtained at her instance the grace he had vainly solicited through the good offices of the freedman.

THE DEAD CLAUDIUS SATIRISED BY SENECA

But however little Claudius may have relied on the sincerity of this brilliant phrase-monger, he could scarce have anticipated the revulsion of sentiment to which so ardent a worshipper would not blush to give utterance on his demise. It was natural of course that the returned exile should attach himself to his benefactress; from her hands he had received his honours, by her he was treated with a confidence which flattered him. No doubt he was among the foremost of the courtiers who deserted the setting to adore the rising luminary. Yet few, perhaps, could believe that no sooner should Claudius be dead, ere yet the accents of official flattery had died away which proclaimed him entered upon the divine career of his ancestors, than the worshipper of the living emperor should turn his deification into ridicule, and blast his name with a slander of unparalleled ferocity. There is no more curious fragment of antiquity than the *Vision of Judgment* which Seneca has left us on the death and deification of Claudius.

The traveller who has visited modern Rome in the autumn season has remarked the numbers of unwieldy and bloated gourds which sun their speckled bellies before the doors, to form a favourite condiment to the food of the poorer classes. When Claudius expired in the month of October, his soul, according to the satirist, long lodged in the inflated emptiness of his own swollen carcass, migrated by an easy transition into a kindred pumpkin. The senate declared that he had become a god; but Seneca knew that he was only transformed into a gourd. The senate decreed his divinity, Seneca translated it into pumpkinity; and proceeded to give a burlesque account of what may be supposed to have happened in heaven on the appearance of the new aspirant to celestial honours. A tall gray-haired figure has arrived halting at the gate of Olympus; he ntops and



"SENECA"

(From a bust in the Naples Museum)

mows, and shakes his palsied head, and when asked whence he comes and what is his business, mutters an uncouth jargon in reply which none can understand. Jupiter sends Hercules to interrogate the creature, for Hercules is a travelled god, and knows many languages; but Hercules himself, bold and valiant as he is, shudders at the sight of a strange unearthly monster, with the hoarse inarticulate moanings of a seal or sea-calf. He fancied that he saw his thirteenth labour before him. Presently, on a nearer view, he discovers that it is a sort of man. Accordingly he takes courage to address him with a verse from Homer, the common interpreter of gods and men; and Claudius, rejoicing at the sound of Greek, and auguring that his own histories will be understood in heaven, replies with an apt quotation.

To pass over various incidents which are next related, and the gibes of the satirist on the Gaulish origin of Claudius, and his zeal in lavishing the franchise on Gauls and other barbarians, we find the gods assembled in conclave to deliberate on the pretensions of their unexpected visitor. Certain of the deities rise in their places, and express themselves with divers exquisite reasons in his favour; and his admission is about to be carried with acclamation, when Augustus starts to his feet (for the first time, as he calls them all to witness, since he became a god himself — for Augustus in heaven is reserved and silent, and keeps strictly to his own affairs), and recounts the crimes and horrors of his grandchild's career. He mentions the murder of his father-in-law Silanus, and his two sons-in-law Silanus and Pompeius, and the father-in-law of his daughter, and the mother-in-law of the same, of his wife Messallina, and of others more than can be named.

The gods are struck with amazement and indignation. Claudius is repelled from the threshold of Olympus, and led by Mercury to the shades below. As he passes along the Via Sacra he witnesses the pageant of his own obsequies, and then first apprehends the fact of his decease. He hears the funeral dirge in which his actions are celebrated in most grandiloquent sing-song, descending at last to the abruptest bathos. But the satirist can strike a higher note; the advent of the ghost to the infernal regions is described with a sublime irony. "Claudius is come!" shout the spirits of the dead, and at once a vast multitude assemble around him, exclaiming, with the chant of the priests of Apis, "We have found him, we have found him; rejoice and be glad!"¹ Among them was Silius the consul and Junius the prætor and Traulus and Trogus and Cotta, Vectius, and Fabius, Roman knights, whom Narcissus had done to death. Then came the freedmen Polybius and Myron, Harpocras, Amphæus, and Pheronactes, whom Claudius had despatched to hell before him, that he might have his ministers below. Next advanced Catonius and Rufus, the prefects, and his friends Lusius and Pedro, and Lupus and Celer, consulars, and finally a number of his own kindred, his wife and cousins and son-in-law. "Friends everywhere!" simpered the fool; "pray how came you all here?" "How came we here?" thundered

¹ Seneca, *Apocol.* 13. Claudius Cæsar venit . . . εὐρηκαμεν, συγχάλρωμεν. Great has been the success of this remarkable passage, which may possibly have suggested the noble lines of Shakespeare (*Rich. III.* Act i. sc. 4):

"Clarence is come, false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
That stabbed me in the field by Tewksbury."

It is more probable that Voltaire had it in his mind when he pronounced on the fate of Constantine and Clovis; and more than one stanza of Byron's *Vision of Judgment* is evidently suggested by it.

[54 A.D.]

Pompeius Pedo: "who sent us here but thou, O murderer of all thy friends?" And thereupon the newcomer is hurried away before the judgment seat of Æacus. An old boon companion offers to plead for him; Æacus, most just of men, forbids, and condemns the criminal, one side only heard. "As he hath done," he exclaims, "so shall he be done by." The shades are astounded at the novelty of the judgment; to Claudius it seems rather unjust than novel. Then the nature of his punishment is considered. Some would relieve Tantalus or Ixion from their torments and make the imperial culprit take their place; but no, that would still leave him the hope of being himself in the course of ages relieved. His pains must be never ending, still beginning; eternal trifler and bungler that he was, he shall play for ever and ever with a bottomless dice-box.

Such was the scorn which might be flung upon the head of a national divinity, even though he were the adoptive father of the ruler of the state; nor perhaps was the new and upstart deity much more cavalierly treated than might sometimes be the lot of the established denizens of Olympus. It is true that Nero at a later period thought fit to degrade his parent from these excessive honours, and even demolished the unfinished works of his temple on the Cælian Hill; but there is no reason to suppose that Seneca reserved his spite until this catastrophe, or that the prince evinced any marks of displeasure at the unrestrained laughter with which doubtless his satire was greeted.

While the memory of the deceased emperor was thus ruthlessly torn in pieces, the writer had been careful to exalt in terms the most extravagant the anticipated glories of his successor; and the vain, thoughtless heir perceived not that the mockery of his sire was the deepest of insults to himself. Of the figure, accomplishments, and character of Nero we shall speak more particularly hereafter; enough that he was young, that he was not ungraceful in appearance, that he had some talents, and, above all, the talent of exhibiting them.

With such qualifications the new occupant of a throne could never want for flatterers. To sing them, the sage of the rugged countenance mounts gaily on the wings of poetry, and sports in lines of mellifluous mellowness, such as might grace the erotic lyre of the most callow votary of the Muses. At last, he says, in mercy to his wretchedness, the life-thread of the stolid Claudius had been severed by the fatal shears. But Lachesis, at that moment, had taken in her hands another skein of dazzling whiteness, and as it glided nimbly through her fingers, the common wool of life was changed into a precious tissue—a golden age untwined from the spindle. The sisters ply their work in gladness, and glory in their blessed task; and far, far away stretches the glittering thread, beyond the years of Nestor and Tithonus. Phœbus stands by their side, and sings to them as they spin—Phœbus the god of song and the god of prophecy. "Stay not, oh stay not, gentle sisters; he shall transcend the limits of human life; he shall be like me in face, like me in beauty; neither in song nor in eloquence behind me. He shall restore a blissful age to wearied men, and break again the long silence of the Laws. Yes, as when Lucifer drives the stars before him, and morning dissipates the clouds, the bright sun gazes on the world, and starts his chariot on its daily race,—so Cæsar breaks upon the earth; such is the Nero whom Rome now beholds—beams his bright countenance with tempered rays, and glistens his fair neck beneath its floating curls." f