

CHAPTER XII

IF I were to confine my account of the events of the next twenty-five years or more merely to my own performances it would not cost me much in paper and make very dull reading; but the later part of this autobiography, in which I figure more prominently, will only be intelligible if I continue here with the personal histories of Livia, Tiberius, Germanicus, Postumus, Castor, Livilla, and the rest, which are far from dull, I promise you.

Postumus was in exile, and Germanicus was at the wars, and only Athenodorus remained of my true friends. Soon he left me too, returning to his native Tarsus. I did not grudge his going because he went at the urgent appeal of two of his nephews there who begged him to help them free the city from the tyranny of its governor. They wrote that this governor had insinuated himself so cleverly into their God Augustus's good graces that it would need the testimony of a man like Athenodorus, in whose integrity their God Augustus had complete confidence, to persuade their God Augustus that the fellow's expulsion was justified. Athenodorus succeeded in ridding the city of this blood-sucker, but afterwards found it impossible to return to Rome as he had intended. He was needed by his nephews to help them rebuild the city administration on a firm foundation. Augustus, to whom he wrote a detailed report of his actions, showed his gratitude and confidence by granting Tarsus, as a personal favour to him, a five years' remission from the Imperial tribute. I corresponded regularly with the good old man until his death two years later at the age of eighty-

two. Tarsus honoured his memory with an annual festival and sacrifice; at which the leading citizens took turns to read his *Short History of Tarsus* through from beginning to end, starting at sunrise and finishing after sunset.

Germanicus wrote to me occasionally but his letters were as brief as they were affectionate: a really good commander has no time for writing letters home to his family, his entire time between campaigns being spent in getting to know his men and officers, in studying their comfort, in increasing their military efficiency, and in gathering information about the disposition and plans of his enemy. Germanicus was one of the most conscientious commanders who ever served in the Roman army—and more beloved even than our father. I was very proud when he wrote asking me to make for him, as quickly and thoroughly as I could, a digest of all reliable reports that I could find in the libraries on the domestic customs of the various Balkan tribes against whom he was fighting, the strength and geographical situation of their cities, and their traditional military tactics and ruses, particularly in guerrilla warfare. He said that he could not get enough reliable information locally: Tiberius had been most uncommunicative. With Sulpicius's help and a small group of professional research-men and copyists working night and day I managed to get together exactly what he wanted and sent off a copy to him within a month of his asking for it. I was prouder than ever when he wrote to me not long afterwards for an edition of twenty copies of the book for circulation among his senior officers, for it had already proved of the greatest service to him. He said that every paragraph was clear and relevant, the most useful sections being those giving particulars of the secret extra-tribal military brotherhood against which, rather than against the tribes themselves, the war was being fought; and of the various sacred trees and bushes—a different sort was revered by each tribe—under whose protective shade the tribesmen were accustomed to bury their stores of corn, money and weapons when they had to abandon their villages in a hurry. He

promised to tell Tiberius and Augustus of my valuable services.

No public mention of this book was made, perhaps because if the enemy had heard of its existence they would have modified their tactics and dispositions. As it was, they believed that they were being constantly betrayed by informers. Augustus rewarded me unofficially by appointing me to a vacancy in the Augurs' College, but it was clear that he gave all the credit for the compilation to Sulpicius, though Sulpicius did not write a word—he merely found me some of the books. One of my chief authorities was Pollio, whose Dalmatian campaign had been a model of military thoroughness combined with brilliant intelligence-work. Though his account of local customs and conditions seemed nearly fifty years out of date, Germanicus found my extracts from it more helpful than any more recent campaign-history. I wished Pollio had been alive to hear that. I told Livy instead, who said rather crossly that he had never denied Pollio credit for writing competent military textbooks; he had merely denied him the title of historian in the higher sense.

I must add to this, that if I had been more tactful I am pretty sure that Augustus would have commended me in his speech to the Senate at the conclusion of the war. But my references to his own Balkan campaigns had been fewer than they might have been had he written a detailed account of it, as Pollio did of his; or if the official historians had been less concerned with flattering their Emperor, and more with recording his successes and reverses in an unprejudiced, technical way. I could extract little or no useful matter from these eulogies and Augustus in reading my book must have felt himself slighted. He identified himself so closely with the success of the war that during the last two campaigning seasons he moved from Rome to a town on the North-East frontier of Italy, to be as near as he could to the fighting; and as Commander-in-Chief of the Roman Armies he was continually sending Tiberius not very helpful military advice.

I was now working on an account of my grandfather's part in the Civil Wars: but I had not gone very far before I was once more stopped by Livia. I only managed to complete two volumes. She told me that I was no more capable of writing a life of my grandfather than a life of my father and that I had behaved dishonestly in starting it behind her back. If I wanted a useful employment for my pen, I had better choose a subject that did not allow of so much misrepresentation. She offered me one: the reorganization of religion by Augustus since the Pacification. It was not an exciting subject, but had not been treated before in any detail and I was quite willing to undertake it. Augustus's religious reforms had been almost without exception excellent: he had revived several ancient societies of priests, built and endowed eighty-two new temples in Rome and its environs, re-edified numerous old ones that were falling into decay, introduced foreign cults for the benefit of visiting provincials and re-instituted a number of interesting old public festivals that had been allowed to lapse one after the other during the civil disturbances of the previous half-century. I went into the subject very closely and completed my survey within a few days of the death of Augustus six years later. It was in forty-one volumes, averaging five thousand words apiece, but a great deal of this consisted of transcripts of religious decrees, nominal lists of priests, catalogues of gifts made to temple treasuries and so on. The most valuable volume was the introductory one dealing with primitive ritual at Rome. Here I found myself in difficulties, because Augustus's ritualistic reforms were based on the findings of a religious commission which had not done its work properly. There had apparently been no antiquarian expert among the commissioners, so that a number of gross misunderstandings of ancient religious formulas had been embodied in the new official liturgies. Nobody who has not made a study of the Etruscan and Sabine languages is capable of correctly interpreting the more ancient of our religious incantations; and I devoted a great deal of my time to mastering the

rudiments of both. At this time there were a few countrymen who still talked nothing but Sabine in the home and I persuaded two of them to come to Rome and provide Pallas, who was now acting as my secretary, with material for a short Sabine dictionary. I paid them well for this. Callon, the best of my other secretaries, I sent to Capua to collect material for a similar dictionary of the Etruscan language from Aruns, the priest who had given me the information about Lars Porsena which had so pleased Pollio and so disgusted Livy. These two dictionaries, which later I enlarged and published, enabled me to clear up, to my own satisfaction, a number of outstanding problems of ancient religious worships; but I had learned to be careful and nothing that I wrote reflected on Augustus's scholarship or judgment.

I shall not spend any time on an account of the Balkan War, beyond saying that in spite of the wise generalship of my uncle Tiberius, the able assistance given him by my father-in-law Silvanus, and the dashing exploits of Germanicus it dragged on for three years. In the end the whole country was reduced, and practically made into a desert, because these tribes, men and women, fought with extraordinary desperation and only acknowledged defeat when fire, famine and plague had more than halved the population. When the rebel leaders came to Tiberius to treat for peace he questioned them closely. He wanted to know why they had taken it into their heads to revolt in the first instance and then to offer so desperate a resistance. The chief rebel, a man called Bato, answered: "You yourselves are to blame. You send as guardians of your flocks neither shepherds nor watch-dogs, but wolves."

This was not exactly true. Augustus chose the governors of his frontier provinces himself and paid them a substantial salary and saw to it that they did not divert any of the Imperial revenues into their own pockets. Taxes were paid directly to them, no longer farmed out to unprincipled tax-collecting companies. Augustus's governors were never

wolves, as had been most of the Republican governors, whose only interest in their provinces was how much they could squeeze out of them. Many of them were good watch-dogs and some were even honest shepherds. But it often happened that Augustus would unintentionally put the tax at too high a rate, discounting the distress caused by a bad harvest or a cattle plague or an earthquake; and rather than complain to him that the assessment was too high the governors would collect it to the last penny, even at the risk of revolt. Few of them took any personal interest in the people they were supposed to govern. A governor would settle in the Romanized capital town, where there were fine houses and theatres and temples and public baths and markets, and never think of visiting the outlying districts of his province. The real governing was done by deputies and by deputies of deputies and there must have been a great deal of petty jack-in-office oppression by the smaller men: perhaps it was these whom Bato called wolves, though "fleas" would have been a better word. There can be no doubt that under Augustus the provinces were infinitely more prosperous than under the Republic, and further that the home-provinces, which were governed by nominees of the Senate, were not nearly so well off as the frontier-provinces governed by Augustus's nominees. This comparison provided one of the few plausible arguments that I ever heard advanced against republican government; though based on the untenable hypothesis that the standard of personal morality among the leading men of an average republic is likely to be lower than the personal morality of an average absolute monarch and his chosen subordinates; and on the fallacy that the question of how the provinces are governed is more important than the question of what happens in the City. To recommend a monarchy on account of the prosperity it gives the provinces seems to me like recommending that a man should have liberty to treat his children as slaves, if at the same time he treats his slaves with reasonable consideration.

For this costly and wasteful war a great triumph was

decreed by the Senate for Augustus and Tiberius. It will be recalled that now only Augustus himself or members of his family were to be permitted a proper triumph, other generals being awarded what were called "triumphal ornaments". Germanicus, though a Cæsar, was granted only these ornaments, on technical grounds. Augustus might have stretched the point but he was so grateful to Tiberius for his successful conduct of the war that he did not wish to antagonize him by giving Germanicus equal honours with him. Germanicus was also raised a degree in magisterial rank, and allowed to become Consul several years before the customary age. Castor, though he had taken no part in the war, was granted the privilege of attending meetings of the Senate before becoming a member of it, and was also advanced a degree in magisterial rank.

At Rome the populace was looking forward with excitement to the triumph, which would mean largesse in corn and money and all sorts of good things: but a great disappointment was in store for them. A month before the date fixed for the triumph a terrible omen was observed—in Mars Field the temple of the War God was struck by lightning and nearly destroyed—and a few days later news came through from Germany of the heaviest military reverse suffered by Roman arms since Carrhæ, I might even say since The Allia, not quite four hundred years before. Three regiments had been massacred and all the conquests east of the Rhine had been lost at a stroke; it seemed that there was nothing to prevent the Germans crossing the river and laying waste the three settled and prosperous provinces of France.

I have already told of the crushing effect that this news had on Augustus. He felt it so strongly because he was not only officially responsible for the disaster, as the man charged by the Roman Senate and people with the security of all frontiers, but morally responsible as well. The disaster had been due to his imprudence in trying to force civilization on the barbarians too rapidly. The Germans

conquered by my father had been gradually adapting themselves to Roman ways, learning the use of coinage, holding regular markets, building and furnishing houses in civilized style, and even meeting in assemblies that did not end, as their former assemblies had always ended, in armed battles. They were allies in name and if they had been allowed to forget their old barbarous ways gradually and to rely on the Roman garrison to protect them from their still uncivilized neighbours while they enjoyed the luxuries of provincial peace, they might perhaps in a couple of generations or less have grown as peaceful and docile as the French of Provence. But Varus, a connection of mine, whom Augustus appointed Governor of Germany Across the Rhine, began treating them not as allies but as a subject race: he was a vicious man and showed little regard for the extraordinarily strong feelings that Germans have about the chastity of their women-folk. Then Augustus needed money for the military treasury which the Balkan War had emptied. He imposed a number of new taxes from which the Across-Rhine Germans were not exempted. Varus advised him as to the paying capacity of the province and in his zeal assessed it too high.

There were in Varus's camp two German chieftains, Hermann and Siegmyrgh, who spoke Latin fluently and appeared to be completely Romanized. Hermann had commanded German auxiliaries in a previous war and his loyalty was unquestioned. He had spent some time in Rome and had actually been enrolled among the noble knights. These two often ate at Varus's table and were on terms of the most intimate friendship with him. They encouraged him to suppose that their compatriots were no less loyal and grateful to Rome for the benefits of civilization than they themselves were. But they were in constant secret communication with malcontent fellow-chieftains whom they persuaded for the time being to make no armed resistance to the Roman power and to pay their taxes with the greatest possible show of willingness. Soon they would be given the signal for a mass-revolt. Hermann, whose name

means "warrior", and Siegmyrgrth—or let us call him Segimerus—whose name means "joyful victory", were too clever for Varus. Members of his staff were constantly warning him that the Germans were unnaturally well-behaved of recent months and that they were trying to disarm his suspicions before making a sudden rising; but he laughed at the suggestion. He said that the Germans were a very stupid race and incapable either of thinking out any such plan or of executing it without giving the secret away long before the time was ripe. Their docility was mere cowardice. The harder you hit a German the more he respected you: he was arrogant in prosperity and independence but once defeated came crawling to your feet like a dog and kept to heel ever afterwards. He refused even to heed warnings given him by another German chieftain who had a grudge against Hermann and saw far into his designs. Instead of keeping his forces concentrated as he should have done in an only partially subdued country, he broke them up.

On the secret instructions of Hermann and Segimerus, outlying communities sent Varus requests for military protection against bandits and for escorts to convoys of merchandise from France. Next came an armed uprising at the Eastern extremity of the province. A tax-collector and his staff were murdered. When Varus gathered his available forces for a punitive expedition, Hermann and Segimerus escorted him for part of his journey and then excused themselves from further attendance, promising to assemble their auxiliary forces and come to his help, if needed, as soon as he sent for them. These auxiliaries were already under arms and in ambush a few days' journey ahead of Varus on his line of march. The two chieftains now sent word to the outlying communities to fall upon the Roman detachments sent for their protection and not to let a man escape.

No news came to Varus about this massacre because there were no survivors, and he was, in any case, out of touch with his headquarters. The road he was following was a mere forest track. But he did not take the precaution of putting

out an advance-guard of skirmishers or flank-guards, but let the whole force—which contained a large number of non-combatants—string out in a disorderly column with as little precaution as if he had been within fifty miles of Rome. The march was very slow because he had constantly to be felling trees and bridging streams to enable the commissariat carts to get across; and this gave time for huge numbers of tribesmen to join the ambushing forces. The weather suddenly broke, a downpour of rain lasting for twenty-four hours or more soaked the men's leather shields, making them too heavy for fighting, and putting the archers' bows out of commission. The clay track became so slippery that it was difficult to keep one's footing and the carts were constantly getting stuck. The distance between the head and tail of the column increased. Then a smoke signal went up from a neighbouring hill and the Germans suddenly attacked from front, rear and both flanks.

The Germans were no match for the Romans in fair fight and Varus had not much exaggerated their cowardice. At first they only dared to attack stragglers and transport drivers, avoiding hand-to-hand fighting but flinging volleys of assegais and darts from behind cover, and running back into the forest if a Roman so much as shook a sword and shouted. But they caused many casualties by these tactics. Parties led by Hermann, Segimerus and other chieftains made blocks on the road by wheeling captured carts together, breaking their wheels and felling trees across the wreckage. They made several of these blocks and left tribesmen behind them to harass the soldiers when they tried to clear them away. This so delayed the men at the tail of the column that, afraid of losing touch, they abandoned all the carts which were still in their possession and hurried forward, hoping that the Germans would be so busy plundering that they would not return to the attack for some time.

The leading regiment had reached a hill where there were not many trees because of a recent forest fire and here they formed up in safety and waited for the other two. They

still had their transport and had only lost a few hundred men. The other two regiments were suffering much more heavily. Men got separated from their companies, and new units were formed of from fifty to two hundred men apiece, each with a rear-guard, an advance-guard and flank-guards. The flank-guards could only go forward very slowly because of the denseness and marshiness of the forest and frequently lost touch with their little units; the advance-guards lost heavily at the barricades and the rear-guards were constantly being assailed from behind. When the roll was called that night Varus found that nearly a third of his force was killed or missing. The next day he fought his way into open country, but he had been obliged to abandon the remainder of his transport. Food was scarce and on the third day he had to plunge into the forest again. The casualties on the second day had not been severe, for a large number of the enemy were occupied plundering the wagons and carrying the loot away with them, but when the roll was called on the evening of the third day only a quarter of the original force were present to answer their names. On the fourth day Varus was still advancing, for he was too wrong-headed to admit defeat and abandon his original objective, but the weather, which had improved somewhat, now became worse than ever, and the Germans, who were accustomed to heavy rain, grew bolder and bolder as they saw resistance weakening. They came to closer quarters.

About noon Varus saw that all was over and killed himself rather than fall alive into the hands of the enemy. Most of the senior officers surviving followed his example, and many of the men. Only one officer kept his head—the same Cassius Chærea who fought that day in the amphitheatre. He was commanding the rear-guard, composed of mountaineers from Savoy, who were more at home in a forest than most; and when news came by a fugitive that Varus was dead, the Eagles captured and not three hundred men of the main body left on their feet, he determined to save what he could from the slaughter. He turned his force

about and broke through the enemy with a sudden charge. Cassius's great courage, something of which he managed to convey to his men, awed the Germans. They left this small resolute body of men alone and ran forward to make easier conquests. It stands as perhaps the finest soldiering feat of modern times that of the hundred and twenty men whom Cassius had with him when he turned about he managed after eight days' march through hostile country to bring eighty safely back, under the company banner, to the fortress from which he had set out twenty days previously.

It is difficult to convey an impression of the panic that reigned at Rome when the rumours of the disaster were confirmed. People started packing up their belongings and loading them on carts as if the Germans were already at the City gates. And indeed there was good reason for anxiety. The losses in the Balkan War had been so heavy that nearly all the available reserves of fighting men in Italy had been used up. Augustus was at his wits' end to find an army to send out under Tiberius to secure the Rhine bridge-heads, which apparently the Germans had not yet seized. Of Roman citizens who were liable for service few came forward willingly on the publication of the order calling them up; to march against the Germans seemed like going to certain death. Augustus then issued a second order that of those who did not offer themselves within three days every fifth man would be disenfranchised and deprived of all his property. Many hung back even after this, so he executed a few as an example and forced the remainder into the ranks, where some of them, as a matter of fact, made quite good soldiers. He also called up a class of men over thirty-five years of age and re-enlisted a number of veterans who had completed their sixteen years with the colours. With these and a regiment or two composed of freedmen, who were not normally liable for service (though Germanicus's reinforcements in the Balkan War had consisted largely of such), he built up quite an imposing force and sent each company off North on its own as soon as it was armed and equipped.

It was the greatest shame and grief to me that in this hour of Rome's supreme need I was incapable of serving as a soldier in her defence. I went to Augustus and begged to be sent out in some capacity where my bodily weakness would not be a disability: I suggested going as intelligence-officer to Tiberius and undertaking such useful tasks as collecting and collating reports of enemy movements, questioning prisoners, making maps, and giving special instructions to spies. Failing this appointment (for which I considered myself qualified because I had made a close study of the campaigns in Germany and had learned to think in an orderly way and to direct clerks) I volunteered to act as Tiberius's Quartermaster-General: I would indent to Rome for necessary military supplies, and check and distribute them on their arrival at the base. Augustus seemed pleased that I had come forward so willingly and said that he would speak to Tiberius about my offer. But nothing came of it. Perhaps Tiberius believed me incapable of any useful service; perhaps he was merely annoyed at my coming forward with this request when his son Castor had hung back and had persuaded Augustus to send him to raise and train troops in the South of Italy. However, Germanicus was in the same case as myself, which was some comfort. He had volunteered for service in Germany, but Augustus needed him at Rome, where he was very popular, to help him quell the civil disturbances which he feared might break out as soon as the troops had left the City.

Meanwhile the Germans hunted down all the fugitives from Varus's army and sacrificed scores of them to their forest-gods, burning them alive in wicker cages. The remainder they held as captives. (Some of them were later ransomed by their relatives at an extravagantly high price, but Augustus forbade them ever to enter Italy again.) The Germans also enjoyed a long succession of tremendous drinking-bouts on the captured wine, and quarrelled bloodily over the glory and plunder. It was a long time before they became active again and realized how little opposition they

would meet if they marched to the Rhine. But as soon as the wine began to give out they attacked the weakly-held frontier-fortresses and one by one captured and sacked them. Only a single fortress put up a decent resistance: it was the one held by Cassius. The Germans would have occupied this as easily as the rest because the garrison was small, but Hermann and Segimerus were elsewhere and none of the rest understood the Roman art of siege-warfare with catapults, mangonels, the tortoise, and sapping. Cassius had a big supply of bows and arrows in his fortress and taught everyone, even the women and slaves, to use them. He successfully beat off several wild attacks on the gates and had great pots of boiling water always ready to pour on any Germans who attempted to scale the walls with ladders. The Germans were so busy trying to capture this place, where they expected to find rich plunder, that they did not push on to the Rhine bridge-heads which were held by inadequate guards.

News came of Tiberius's rapid approach at the head of his new army. Hermann at once rallied his forces, determined to capture the bridges before Tiberius could reach them. A detachment was left to invest the fortress, which was known to be badly supplied with provisions. Cassius, who got wind of Hermann's plans, decided to get away while there was still time. One stormy night he slipped out with the whole garrison, and managed to get past the first two enemy outposts before the crying of some of the children who were with him gave the alarm. At the third outpost there was hand-to-hand fighting and if the Germans had not been so anxious to get into the town to plunder it Cassius's party would have had no chance of survival. But he got clear somehow and half an hour later told his trumpeters to sound the "advance at the double" to make the Germans believe that a relief force was coming up; so there was no pursuit. The troops at the nearest bridge heard the distant sound of Roman trumpets, for the wind was blowing from the east, and guessing what was happening sent out a detachment to

escort the garrison back to safety. Cassius two days later successfully held the bridge against a mass-attack of Segimerus's men; after which Tiberius's vanguard came up and the situation was saved.

The close of the year was marked by the banishment of Julilla, on the charge of promiscuous adultery—just like her mother Julia—to Tremerus, a small island off the coast of Apulia. The real reason for her banishment was that she was just about to bear another child, which if it were a boy would be a great-grandson of Augustus, and unrelated to Livia; Livia was taking no risks now. Julilla had one son already, but he was a delicate, timorous, slack-twisted fellow and could be disregarded. Æmilius himself provided Livia with grounds for the accusation. He had quarrelled with Julilla and now charged her in the presence of their daughter Æmilia with trying to father another man's child on him. He named Decimus, a nobleman of the Silanus family, as the adulterer. Æmilia, who was clever enough to realize that her own life and safety depended on keeping in Livia's good books, went straight to her and told what she had heard. Livia made her repeat the story in Augustus's presence. Augustus then summoned Æmilius and asked whether it was true that he was not the father of Julia's child. It did not occur to Æmilius that Æmilia could have betrayed her mother and himself, so he assumed that the intimacy which he suspected between Julilla and Decimus was a matter of common scandal. He therefore held by his accusation, though it was founded rather on jealousy than on knowledge. Augustus took the child as soon as it was born and had it exposed on the mountain-side. Decimus went into voluntary exile and several other men accused of having been Julilla's lovers at one time or another followed him: among them was the poet Ovid whom Augustus, curiously enough, made the principal scapegoat as having also written (many years before) *The Art of Love*. It was this poem, Augustus said, that had debauched his granddaughter's mind. He ordered all copies of it found to be burned.