

CHAPTER XX

I WAS nearly a year in Carthage. (It was the year that Livy died, at Padua, where his heart had always been.) Old Carthage had been razed to the ground and this was a new city, built by Augustus on the south-east of the peninsula and destined to become the first city of Africa. It was the first time I had been out of Italy since my baby-^{A.D. 18}hood. I found the climate very trying, the African natives savage, diseased and overworked; the resident Romans dull, quarrelsome, mercenary and behind the times; the swarms of unfamiliar creeping and flying insects most horrible. What I missed most was the absence of any wild wooded countryside. In Tripoli there is nothing to mediate between the regularly planted land—fig and olive orchards, or cornfields—and the bare, stony, thorny desert. I stayed at the house of the Governor, who was that Furius Camillus, my dear Camilla's uncle, of whom I have already written; he was very kind to me. Almost the first thing he told me was how useful my *Balkan Summary* had been to him in that campaign and that I should certainly have been publicly rewarded for compiling it so well. He did everything he could to make my dedication ceremony a success and to exact from the provincials the respect due to my rank. He was also most assiduous in showing me the sights. The town did a flourishing trade with Rome, exporting not only vast quantities of grain and oil, but slaves, purple dye, sponges, gold, ivory, ebony, and wild beasts for the Games. But I had little occupation here and Furius suggested that it would be a good thing for me, while I was here, to collect materials for a complete history of Carthage. There was no such book to be found

in the libraries at Rome. The archives of the old town had recently come into his hands, discovered by natives quarrying in the ruins for hidden treasure, and if I cared to use them they were mine. I told him that I had no knowledge of the Phœnician language; but he undertook, if I was sufficiently interested, to set one of his freedmen the task of translating the more important manuscripts into Greek.

The idea of writing the history pleased me very much: I felt that historical justice had never been done to the Carthaginians. I spent my leisure time in making a study of the ruins of the Old City, with the help of a contemporary survey, and familiarizing myself with the geography of the country in general. I also learned the rudiments of the language well enough to be able to read simple inscriptions and understand the few Phœnician words used by authors who have written about the Punic Wars from the Roman side. When I returned to Italy I began to write the book concurrently with my Etruscan history. I like having two tasks going at the same time: when I tire of one I turn to the other. But I am perhaps too careful a writer. I am not satisfied merely with copying from ancient authorities while there is any possible means of checking their statements by consulting other sources of information on the same subject, particularly accounts by writers of rival political parties. So these two histories, each of which I could have written in a year or two if I had been less conscientious, kept me busy between them for some twenty-five years. For every word I wrote I must have read many hundreds; and in the end I became a very good scholar both of Etruscan and Phœnician, and had a working knowledge of several other languages and dialects too, such as Numidian, Egyptian, Oscan and Faliscan. I finished the *History of Carthage* first.

Shortly after my dedication of the temple, which went off without a hitch, Furius had suddenly to take the field against Tacfarinas with the only forces available in the province—a single regular regiment, The Third, together with a few

battalions of auxiliaries and two cavalry squadrons. Tacfarinas was a Numidian chief, originally a deserter from the ranks of the Roman auxiliaries, and a remarkably successful bandit. He had recently built up a sort of army on the Roman model in the interior of his own country and had allied himself with the Moors for an invasion of the province from the West. The two armies together outnumbered Furius's force by at least five to one. They met in open country about fifty miles from the City and Furius had to decide whether to attack Tacfarinas's two semi-disciplined regiments which were in the centre or the undisciplined Moorish forces on the flank. He sent the cavalry and auxiliaries, mostly archers, to keep the Moors in play and with his regular regiment marched straight at Tacfarinas's Numidians. I was watching the battle from a hill some five hundred paces away—I had ridden out on a mule—and never before or since, I think, have I been so proud of being a Roman. The Third kept perfect formation: it might have been a ceremonial parade on Mars Field. They advanced in three lines at fifty paces distance. Each line consisted of one hundred and fifty files, eight men deep. The Numidians halted in a defensive posture. They were in six lines, with a frontage the same as ours. The Third did not halt but marched straight at them without pausing a moment, and it was only when they were ten paces off that the leading line discharged their javelins in a shining shower. Then they drew their swords and charged, shield to shield. They rolled the enemy's first line, who were pike-men, back on the second. This new line they broke with a fresh discharge of javelins—every soldier carried a pair. Then the Roman support-line passed through them, to give them a chance to reorganize. Soon I saw still another shower of javelins, simultaneously thrown, fly shining at the Numidians's third line. The Moors on the flanks, who were greatly bothered by the arrows of the auxiliaries, saw the Romans cutting their way deep into the centre. They began howling, as if the battle was lost, and scattered in all directions. Tacfarinas

had to fight a costly rear-guard action back to his camp. The only unpleasant memory I have of this victory was the banquet with which it was celebrated: in the course of which Furius's son, who was called Scribonianus, made satiric references to the moral support I had given the troops. He did this chiefly to call attention to his own gallantry, which he thought had not been sufficiently praised. Furius afterwards made him beg my pardon. Furius was voted triumphal ornaments by the Senate—the first member of his family to win military distinction since his ancestor Camillus saved Rome more than four hundred years previously.

When I was finally recalled to Rome, Germanicus had already gone to the East, where the Senate had voted him supreme command of all the provinces. With him went Agrippina, and Caligula, who was now aged eight. The elder children remained at Rome with my mother. Though Germanicus was greatly disappointed at having to leave the German War unfinished, he decided to make the most of things and improve his education by visiting places famous in history of literature. He visited the Bay of Actium, and there saw the memorial chapel dedicated to Apollo by Augustus, and the camp of Antony.

As Antony's grandson the place had a melancholy fascination for him. He was explaining the plan of the battle to young Caligula, when the child interrupted with a silly laugh: "Yes, father, my grandfather Agrippa and and my great-grandfather Augustus gave your grandfather Antony a pretty good beating. I wonder you're not ashamed to tell me the story." This was only one of many recent occasions on which Caligula had spoken insolently to Germanicus, and Germanicus now decided that it was no use treating him in the gentle, friendly way he treated the other children—that the only course with Caligula was strict discipline and severe punishments.

He visited Bœotian Thebes, to see Pindar's birth-chamber, and the island of Lesbos, to see Sappho's tomb. Here another of my nieces was born, who was given the unlucky name of

Julia. We always called her Lesbia, though. Then he visited Byzantium, Troy and the famous Greek cities of Asia Minor. From Miletus he wrote me a long letter describing his journey in terms of such delighted interest that it was clear that he no longer greatly regretted his recall from Germany.

Meanwhile affairs at Rome relapsed into the condition in which they had been before Germanicus's Consulship; and Sejanus revived Tiberius's old fears about Germanicus. He reported a remark of Germanicus's made at a private dinner-party at which one of his agents had been present, to the effect that the Eastern regiments probably needed the same sort of overhauling as he had given the ones on the Rhine. This remark had actually been made, but meant no more than that these troops were probably being mishandled by the inferior officers in much the same way as the others had been: and that he would review all appointments at the first opportunity. Sejanus made Tiberius understand the remark as meaning that the reason why Germanicus had delayed his usurpation of power so long was that he could not count on the affection of the Eastern regiments: which he was now going to win by letting the men choose their own captains, and giving them presents and relaxing the severity of their discipline—just as he had done on the Rhine.

Tiberius was alarmed and thought it wise to consult Livia: he counted on her to work with him. She knew what to do at once. They appointed a man called Gnæus Piso to the governorship of the province of Syria—an appointment which would give him command, under Germanicus, of the greater part of the Eastern regiments—and told him in private that he could count on their support if Germanicus tried to interfere with any of his political or military arrangements. It was a clever choice. Gnæus Piso, an uncle of that Lucius Piso who had offended Livia, was a haughty old man who twenty-five years before had earned the bitter hatred of the Spanish, when sent to them by Augustus as Governor, for his cruelty and avarice. He was deeply in debt and the

hint that he could behave how he liked in Syria, so long as he provoked Germanicus, seemed an invitation to make another fortune to replace the one he had made in Spain and had long since run through. He disliked Germanicus for his seriousness and piety and used to call him a superstitious old woman; and he was also extremely jealous of him.

Germanicus, when he had visited Athens, had shown his respect for her ancient glories by appearing at the city gates with only a single yeoman as escort. He had also made a long and earnest speech in eulogy of Athenian poets, soldiers and philosophers, at a festival which was organized in his honour. Now Piso came through Athens on his way to Syria and, since it was not part of his province and he did not take any pains to be civil to them as Germanicus had done, the Athenians did not take any pains to be civil to him. A man called Theophilus, the brother of one of Piso's creditors, had just been condemned for forgery by a vote of the City Assembly. Piso asked as a personal favour that the man should be pardoned, but his request was refused, which made Piso very angry: if Theophilus had been pardoned, the brother would have certainly cancelled the debt. He made a violent speech in which he said that the latter-day Athenians had no right to identify themselves with the great Athenians of the days of Pericles, Demosthenes, Æschylus, Plato. The ancient Athenians had been extirpated by repeated wars and massacres and these were mere mongrels, degenerates and the descendants of slaves. He said that any Roman who flattered them as if they were the legitimate heirs of those ancient heroes was lowering the dignity of the Roman name; and that for his part he could not forget that in the last Civil War they had declared against the great Augustus and supported that cowardly traitor Antony.

Piso then left Athens and sailed for Rhodes on his way to Syria. Germanicus was at Rhodes too, visiting the University, and news of the speech, which was plainly directed at himself, reached him just before Piso's ships were sighted. A sudden squall rose and Piso's ships were seen

to be in difficulties. Two smaller vessels went down before Germanicus's eyes, and the third, which was Piso's, was dismantled and was being driven on the rocks of the northern headland. Who but Germanicus would not have abandoned Piso to his fate? But Germanicus sent out a couple of well-manned galleys which succeeded by desperate rowing in reaching the wreck just before it struck and towing it safely to port. Or who but a man as depraved as Piso would not have rewarded his rescuer with lifelong gratitude and devotion? But Piso actually complained that Germanicus had delayed the rescue until the last moment, in the hope that it would come too late; and without stopping a day at Rhodes, he sailed away again while the sea was still rough in order to reach Syria before Germanicus.

As soon as he arrived at Antioch he began to overhaul the regiments in just the opposite sense to that intended by Germanicus. Instead of removing slack bullying captains, he reduced to the ranks every officer who had a good record and appointed scoundrelly favourites of his own in their places—with the understanding that a commission of half whatever they succeeded in making out of their appointments should be paid to him, and no questions asked. So a bad year began for the Syrians. Shopkeepers in the towns and farmers in the country had to pay secret "protection-money" to the local captains; if they refused to pay there would be a raid at night by masked men, their houses would be burned down and their families murdered. At first there were many appeals made to Piso against this terrorism by city guilds, farmers' associations and so forth. He always promised an immediate enquiry but never made one; and the complainers were usually found beaten to death on the road home. A delegation was sent to Rome to enquire privately from Sejanus whether Tiberius was aware of what was going on and, if so, whether he countenanced it. Sejanus told the provincials that Tiberius knew nothing officially; and though he would, no doubt, promise an enquiry, Piso had done as much for them as that, had he

not? Perhaps the best course for them to take, he said, would be to pay whatever protection-money was demanded with as little fuss as possible. Meanwhile the standard of camp-discipline in the Syrian regiments had sunk so low that Tacfarinas's bandit-army would by comparison have seemed a model of efficiency and devotion to duty.

Delegates also came to Germanicus at Rhodes, and he was disgusted and amazed at their revelations. In his recent progress through Asia Minor he had made it his task to inquire personally into all complaints of maladministration and to remove all magistrates who had acted in an illegal or oppressive way. He now wrote to Tiberius telling him of the reports that had reached him of Piso's behaviour, saying that he was setting out for Syria at once; and asking for permission to remove Piso and put a better man in his place if even a few of the complaints were justified. Tiberius wrote back that he had also heard certain complaints but they appeared to be unfounded and malicious; he had confidence in Piso as a capable and just Governor. Germanicus did not suspect Tiberius of dishonesty and was confirmed in the opinion he already had of him as simple-minded and easily imposed upon. He regretted having written for permission to do what he should have done at once on his own responsibility. He now heard another serious charge against Piso, namely, that he was plotting with Vonones, the deposed king of Armenia, who was in refuge in Syria, to restore him to his throne. Vonones was immensely wealthy, having fled to Syria with most of the contents of the Armenian treasury, so Piso hoped to do well out of the business. Germanicus went at once to Armenia, called a conference of nobles and, with his own hands, but in Tiberius's name, put the diadem on the head of the man they had chosen for king. He then ordered Piso to visit Armenia at the head of two regiments to pay his neighbourly respects to the new monarch: or, if he was held by more important business, to send his son. Piso neither sent his son nor went himself. Germanicus, having visited other outlying provinces and

allied kingdoms and settled affairs there to his satisfaction, came down into Syria and met Piso at the winter quarters of the Tenth Regiment.

There were several officers present as witnesses of this meeting, because Germanicus did not wish Tiberius to be misinformed as to what was said. He began, in as gentle a voice as he could command, by asking Piso to explain his disobedience of orders. He said that if there was no explanation of it but the same personal animosity and discourtesy which he had shown in his speech at Athens, in his ungrateful remarks at Rhodes, and on several occasions since, a strong report would have to be forwarded to the Emperor. He went on to complain that, for troops living under peacetime conditions in a healthy and popular station, he found the Tenth Regiment in a most shockingly undisciplined and dirty condition.

Piso said grinning: "Yes, they *are* a dirty lot, aren't they? What would the people of Armenia have thought if I had sent them there as representatives of the power and majesty of Rome?" ("The power and majesty of Rome" was a favourite phrase of my brother's.)

Germanicus, keeping his temper with difficulty, said that the deterioration seemed to date only from Piso's arrival in the province, and that he would write to Tiberius to that effect.

Piso made an ironical plea for forgiveness, coupled with an insulting remark about the high ideals of youth which often have to yield, in this hard world, to less exalted but more practical policies.

Germanicus interrupted with flashing eyes: "Often, Piso, but not always. To-morrow, for instance, I shall sit with you on the appeal tribunal and we shall see whether the high ideals of youth are controlled by any obstacle at all: and whether justice to the provincials can be denied them by any incompetent, avaricious, bloody-minded sexagenarian debauchee."

This ended the interview. Piso at once wrote to Tiberius

and Livia, telling what had happened. He quoted Germanicus's last sentence in such a way that Tiberius believed that the "incompetent, avaricious, bloody-minded sexagenarian debauchee" was himself. Tiberius replied that he had the fullest confidence in Piso, and that if a certain influential person continued to speak and act in this disloyal way, any steps, however daring, taken by a subordinate to check this disloyalty would doubtless be pleasing to the Senate and people of Rome. Meanwhile Germanicus sat on the tribunal and heard appeals from the provincials against unjust sentences in the courts. Piso did his best at first to embarrass him by legal obstructionism, but when Germanicus kept his patience and continued the hearing of the cases without any respite for meals or siestas, he gave up that policy and excused himself from attendance altogether on the grounds of ill-health.

Piso's wife, Plancina, was jealous of Agrippina because, as Germanicus's wife, she took precedence over her at all official functions. She thought out various petty insults to annoy her, chiefly discourtesies by subordinates which could be explained away as due to accident or ignorance. When Agrippina retaliated by snubbing her in public, she went still further. One morning in the absence of both Piso and Germanicus she appeared on parade with the cavalry and put them through a burlesque series of movements in front of Germanicus's headquarters. She wheeled them through a cornfield, charged a line of empty tents, which were slashed to ribbons, had every possible call sounded from "Lights Out!" to the fire-alarm, and arranged collisions between squadrons. She finally galloped the whole force round and round in a gradually dwindling circle, and then, when she had narrowed the centre space to only a few paces across, gave the order, "Right about wheel," as if to reverse the movement. Many horses went down, throwing their riders. There never was such a mess-up seen in the whole history of cavalry manœuvre. The rowdier men increased it by sticking daggers into their neighbours' horses to make them

buck, or wrestling from the saddle. Several men were badly kicked, or had legs broken, their horses falling on them. One man was picked up dead. Agrippina sent a young staff-officer to request Plancina to stop making a fool of herself and the Army. Plancina sent back the answer, in parody of Agrippina's own brave words at the Rhine bridge: "Until my husband returns *I* am in command of the cavalry. I am preparing them for the expected Parthian invasion." Some Parthian ambassadors had, as a matter of fact, just arrived in camp, and were watching this display in astonishment and contempt.

Now Vonones, before he had been king of Armenia, had been king of Parthia, from which he had been quickly expelled. His successor had sent these ambassadors to Germanicus to propose that the alliance between Rome and Parthia should be renewed and to say that in honour of Germanicus he would come to the River Euphrates (the boundary between Syria and Parthia) to greet him. In the meantime he requested that Vonones might not be allowed to remain in Syria, where it was easy for him to carry on a treasonable correspondence with certain Parthian nobles. Germanicus replied that as representative of his father, the Emperor, he would be pleased to meet the king, and renew the alliance, and that he would remove Vonones to some other province. So Vonones was sent to Cilicia, and Piso's hope of a fortune vanished. Plancina was as angry as her husband: Vonones had been giving her almost daily presents of beautiful jewels.

Early the next year news reached Germanicus of great scarcity in Egypt. The last harvest had not been good, but there was plenty of corn from two years before, stored in granaries. The big corn-brokers kept up the price by putting only very small supplies on the market. A.D. 19 Germanicus sailed at once to Alexandria and forced the brokers to sell at a reasonable price all the corn that was needed. He was glad of this excuse for visiting Egypt, which interested him even more than Greece. Alexandria

was then, as it is now, the true cultural centre of the world, as Rome was, and is, the political centre, and he showed his respect for its traditions by entering the city in simple Greek costume, with bare feet and no bodyguard. From Alexandria he sailed up the Nile, visiting the pyramids and the Sphinx and the gigantic ruins of Egyptian Thebes, a former capital, and the great stone statue of Memnon, the breast of which is hollow, and which shortly after the sun rises begins to sing, because the air in the hollow becomes warm and rises in a current through the pipe-shaped throat. He went as far as the ruins of Elephantis, keeping a careful diary of his travels. At Memphis he visited the pleasure-ground of the great God Apis, incarnate as a bull with peculiar markings; but Apis gave him no encouraging sign, walking away from him the moment that they met and entering the "malevolent stall". Agrippina was with him but Caligula had been left behind at Antioch in the charge of a tutor, as a punishment for his continued disobedience.

Germanicus could do nothing now that did not encourage Tiberius's suspicions of him; but going to Egypt was the worst mistake he had yet made. I shall explain why. Augustus, realizing early in his reign that Rome was now chiefly dependent on Egypt for her corn supply and that Egypt, if it fell into the hands of an adventurer, could be successfully defended by a quite small army, had laid it down as a precept of government that no Roman knight or senator should henceforth be allowed to visit the province without express permission from himself. It was generally understood that the same rule held under Tiberius. But Germanicus, alarmed by reports of the corn famine in Egypt, had not wasted time by waiting to get permission to go there. Tiberius was certain now that Germanicus was about to strike the blow that he had withheld so long; he had certainly gone to Egypt to bring the garrison there over to his side; the sight-seeing up the Nile was merely an excuse for visiting the frontier-guards; it had been a great mistake to send him to the East at all. He made a public complaint

in the Senate against so daring a breach of Augustus's strict injunctions.

When Germanicus returned to Syria, feeling much hurt by Tiberius's reprimand, he found that all his orders to the regiments and to the cities had either been neglected or superseded by contradictory ones from Piso. He re-issued them and now for the first time gave public notice of his displeasure by issuing a proclamation that all orders issued by Piso during his own absence in Egypt were hereby declared cancelled and that, until further notice, no order signed by Piso would be valid in the province unless endorsed by himself. He had hardly signed this proclamation when he fell ill. His stomach was so disordered that he could keep nothing down. He suspected that his food was being poisoned and took every possible precaution against this. Agrippina prepared all his meals herself and none of the household staff had any opportunity of handling the food either before or after she cooked it. But it was some time before he was sufficiently recovered to leave his bed and sit propped in a chair. Hunger made his sense of smell abnormally acute and he said that there was a stench of death in the house. Nobody else smelt it and Agrippina at first dismissed the complaint as a sick fancy. But he persisted in it. He said that the stench grew daily worse. At last Agrippina herself became aware of it. It seemed to be in every room. She burned incense to cleanse the air but the smell persisted. The household grew alarmed and whispered that witches were at work.

Germanicus had always been extremely superstitious, like every member of our family but myself: I am only somewhat superstitious. Germanicus not only believed in the luckiness or unluckiness of certain days or omens, but had bound himself in a whole network of superstitions of his own. The number seventeen and the midnight crowing of cocks were the two things which distressed him most. He took it as a most unlucky sign that, having been able to recover the lost eagles of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Regiments,

he had been recalled from Germany before he could recover that of the Seventeenth. And he was terrified of black magic of the sort that Thessalian witches use, and always slept with a talisman under his pillow which was proof against them: a green jasper figure of the Goddess Hecate (who alone has power over witches and phantoms) represented with a torch in one hand and the keys of the Underworld in another.

Suspecting that Plancina was practising witchcraft against him, for she had the reputation of being a witch, he made a propitiatory sacrifice of nine black puppies to Hecate; which was the proper course to take when so victimized. The next day a slave reported with a face of terror that as he had been washing the floor in the hall he had noticed a loose tile and, lifting it up, had found underneath what appeared to be the naked and decaying corpse of a baby, the belly painted red and horns tied to the forehead. An immediate search was made in every room and a dozen equally gruesome finds were made under the tiles or in niches scooped in the walls behind hangings. They included the corpse of a cat with rudimentary wings growing from its back, and the head of a negro with a child's hand protruding from its mouth. With each of these dreadful relics was a lead tablet on which was Germanicus's name. The house was ritually cleansed and Germanicus began to be more cheerful, though his stomach continued troublesome.

Soon after this hauntings began in the house. Cocks' feathers smeared in blood were found among the cushions and unlucky signs were scrawled on the walls in charcoal, sometimes low down as if a dwarf had written them, sometimes high up as if written by a giant—a man hanging, the word Rome upside down, a weasel; and, though only Agrippina knew of his private superstition about the number seventeen, this number was constantly recurring. Then appeared the name Germanicus, upside down, every day shortened by a letter. It would have been possible for Plancina to hide charms in his house during his absence in Egypt,

but for this continued haunting there was no explanation. The servants were not suspected, because the words and signs were written in rooms to which they had no access, and in one locked room, with a window too small for a man to squeeze through, they covered the walls from floor to ceiling. Germanicus's one consolation was the courage with which Agrippina and little Caligula behaved. Agrippina did her best to make light of the hauntings, and Caligula said that *he* felt safe because a great-grandson of the God Augustus couldn't be hurt by witches, and that if he met a witch he would run her through with his sword. But Germanicus had to take to his bed again. In the middle of the night following the day when only three letters remained of his name, Germanicus was awakened by the noise of crowing. Weak as he was, he leaped out of bed, snatched up his sword and rushed into the adjoining room where Caligula and the baby Lesbia slept. There he saw a cock, a big black one with a gold ring around its neck, crowing as if to wake the dead. He tried to strike off its head but it flew out of the window. He fell down in a faint. Agrippina somehow got him back to his bed again, but when he recovered consciousness he told her that he was doomed. "Not while you have your Hecate with you," she said. He felt under his pillow for the charm and his courage returned.

When morning came he wrote a letter to Piso, in the old Roman manner, declaring private war between them; ordering him to leave the Province, and defying him to do his worst. Piso had, however, already sailed and was now at Chios waiting for news of Germanicus's death and ready to return to govern the Province as soon as it reached him. My poor brother was growing hourly weaker. The next day while Agrippina was out of the room and he was lying half-insensible he felt a movement under his pillow. He turned on his side and fumbled in terror for the charm. It was gone; and there was nobody in the room.

The next day he called his friends together and told them that he was dying and that Piso and Plancina were his

murderers. He charged them to tell Tiberius and Castor what had been done to him and implored them to avenge his cruel death. "And tell the people of Rome," he said, "that I entrust my dear wife and my six children to their charge, and that they must not believe Piso and Plancina if they pretend to have had instructions to kill me; or, if they do believe it, that they must not on that account pardon them." He died on the ninth of October, the day that the single letter G appeared on the wall of his room facing his bed, and on the seventeenth day of his illness. His wasted body was laid out in the market-place of Antioch so that everyone could see the red rash on his belly and the blueness of his nails. His slaves were put to torture. His freedmen, too, were cross-examined in turn, each for twenty-four hours on end and always by fresh questioners, and they were so broken in spirit at the end of this that if they had known anything they would certainly have revealed it, only to be left in peace. The most that could be discovered, however, either from freedmen or slaves, was that a notable witch, one Martina, had been frequently seen in Plancina's company and that she had actually been in the house one day with Plancina when nobody was there but Caligula. And that one afternoon, just before Germanicus's return, the house had been left unattended except by a single deaf old janitor, all the remaining staff having gone out to see a sword-fight exhibited by Piso in the local amphitheatre. No natural explanations could however be offered for the cock, or for the writing on the wall, or for the disappearance of the talisman.

There was a meeting of regimental commanders and all the other Romans of rank in the Province, to appoint a temporary Governor. The Commander of the Sixth Regiment was chosen. He immediately arrested Martina and had her sent under escort to Rome. If Piso came up for trial she would be one of the most important witnesses.

When he heard that Germanicus was dead, Piso, so far from concealing his joy, offered up sacrifices of thanksgiving

in the temples. Plancina, who had recently lost a sister, actually threw off her mourning and put on her gayest clothes again. Piso wrote to Tiberius saying that he had only been dismissed from his governorship, to which he had been personally appointed by Tiberius, because of his bold opposition to Germanicus's treasonable designs against the State; he was now returning to Syria to resume his command. He also referred to Germanicus's "luxury and insolence". He did try to return to Syria and even got some troops to support him, but the new Governor besieged the castle in Cilicia which he had made his stronghold, forced him to surrender and sent him to Rome to answer the charges that would surely be brought against him there.

Meanwhile Agrippina had sailed for Italy with the two children and the ashes of her husband in an urn. At Rome the news of his death had brought such grief that it was as though every single household in the City had lost its most beloved member. Three whole days, though there was no decree of the Senate or order of the magistrates for it, were consecrated to public sorrow: shops shut, law-courts were deserted, no business of any sort was transacted, everyone wore mourning. I heard a man in the street say that it was as though the sun had set, and would never rise again. Of my own sorrow I cannot trust myself to write.