

## CHAPTER XXII

GERMANICUS was dead, but Tiberius did not feel much more secure than before. Sejanus came to him with stories of what this or that prominent man had whispered against him during Piso's trial. Instead of saying, as he had once said of his soldiers, "Let them fear me, so long as they obey me," he now told Sejanus, "Let them hate me, so long as they fear me." Three knights and two senators who had been most outspoken in their recent criticism of him he put to death on the absurd charge of having expressed pleasure on hearing of the death of Germanicus. The informers divided up their estates between them.

About this time Germanicus's eldest boy Nero\* came of age and though he showed little promise of being as capable a soldier or as talented an administrator as his father, he had much of his father's good looks and sweetness of character and the City hoped much from him. There was great popular rejoicing when he married the daughter of Castor and Livilla, whom at first we called Helen because of her surprising beauty (her real name was Julia) but afterwards Heluo, which means Glutton, because she spoilt her beauty by over-eating. Nero was Agrippina's favourite. The family was divided, being of Claudian stock, into good and bad; or, in the words of the ballad, "crabs and apples". The crabs outnumbered the apples. Of the nine children whom Agrippina bore Germanicus three died young—two girls and a boy—and from what I saw of them this boy and the elder girl were the best of the nine. The boy, who died on his eighth birthday, had been such a favourite with Augustus

\* This Nero is not to be confused with the Nero who became Emperor.—R.G.

that the old man kept a picture of him, dressed in Cupid's costume, in his bedroom and used to kiss it every morning as soon as he got out of bed. But of the surviving children only Nero had a wholly good character. Drusus was morose and nervous and easily inclined to evil. Drusilla was like him. Caligula, Agrippinilla, and the youngest, whom we called Lesbia, were wholly bad, as the younger of the girls who died seemed also to be. But the City judged the whole family by Nero because, so far, he was the only one old enough to make a strong public impression. Caligula was still only nine years old.

Agrippina visited me in great distress one day when I was in Rome and asked my advice. She said that wherever she went she felt that she was being followed and spied on, and it was making her ill. Did I know anyone besides Sejanus who had any influence over Tiberius? She was sure that he had decided to kill or banish her if he could get the slightest handle against her. I said that I only knew two people who had any influence for the good over Tiberius. One was Cocceius Nerva, and the other was Vipsania. Tiberius had never been able to root his love for Vipsania out of his heart. When a granddaughter was born to her and Gallus, who at the age of fifteen exactly resembled Vipsania as she had been when Tiberius's wife, Tiberius could not bear the thought of anyone marrying her but himself; and was only prevented from doing so by her being Castor's niece, which would have made the marriage technically incestuous. So he appointed her the Chief Vestal in succession to old Occia who had just died. I told Agrippina that if she made friends with Cocceius and Vipsania (who as Castor's mother would do all in her power to help her) she was safe, and so were her children. She took my advice. Vipsania and Gallus, who were very sorry for her, made her free of their house and their three country villas and took a great deal of trouble with the children. Gallus, for instance, chose new tutors for the boys because Agrippina suspected the old ones of being agents of Sejanus. Nerva

was not so much help. He was a jurist and the greatest living authority on the laws of contract, about which he had written several books: but in all other respects he was so absent-minded and unobservant as to be almost a simpleton. He was kind to her, as he was to everyone, but did not realize what she expected from him.

Unfortunately Vipsania died soon afterwards and the effect on Tiberius was apparent at once. He no longer made any serious attempt to conceal his sexual depravity, the rumours of which everyone had shrunk from taking literally. For some of his perversities were so preposterous and horrible that nobody could seriously reconcile them with the dignity of an Emperor of Rome, Augustus's chosen successor. No women or boys were safe in his presence now, even the wives and children of senators; and if they valued their own lives or those of their husbands and fathers they willingly did what he expected of them. But one woman, a Consul's wife, committed suicide afterwards in the presence of her friends, telling them that she had been forced to save her young daughter from Tiberius's lust by consenting to prostitute herself to him, which was shameful enough; but then the Old He-Goat had taken advantage of her complaisance by forcing her to such abominable acts of filthiness with him that she preferred to die rather than to live on with the memory of them.

There was a popular song circulated about this time which began with the words: "Why, o why did the Old He-Goat . . . ?" I should be ashamed to quote more of it, but it was as witty as it was obscene and was supposed to have been written by Livia herself. Livia was the author of a number of similar satires against Tiberius which she circulated anonymously through Urgulania. She knew that they would reach him sooner or later and that he was extremely sensitive to satires, and thought that while he felt his position insecure because of them, he would not dare to break with her. She also now went out of her way to be pleasant to Agrippina, and even told her in confidence that

Tiberius alone had given Piso the instructions about baiting Germanicus. Agrippina did not trust her, but it was clear that Livia and Tiberius were at enmity, and she felt, she told me, that if she had to choose between the protection of one or the other she would prefer to be under Livia's. I was inclined to agree with Agrippina. I had observed that no favourite of Livia had yet been made the victim of Tiberius's informers. But I had forebodings of what might happen when Livia died.

What had begun to impress me as particularly ominous, though I could not altogether account for my feelings, was the strong bond between Livia and Caligula. Caligula had in general only two ways of behaving: he was either insolent or servile. To Agrippina and my mother and myself and his brothers and Castor, for instance, he was insolent. To Sejanus and Tiberius and Livilla he was servile. But to Livia he was something else, difficult to express. He was almost like her lover. It was not the usual tender tie that binds little boys to indulgent grandmothers or great-grandmothers, though it is true that he once took great pains over a copy of affectionate verses for her seventy-fifth birthday and that she was always giving him presents. I mean that there was a strong impression of some unpleasant secret between them—but I don't mean to suggest that there was any indecent relationship between them. Agrippina felt this too, she told me, but could find out nothing definite about it.

One day I began to understand why Sejanus had been so polite to me. He suggested the betrothal of his daughter to my son Drusillus. My personal feelings against the marriage were that the girl, who seemed a nice little thing, was unlucky to be matched to Drusillus, who seemed more of a lubber every time I saw him. But I could not say so. Still less could I say that I loathed the thought of being even remotely related in marriage with a scoundrel like Sejanus. He noticed my hesitation in answering and wanted to know whether I considered the match beneath the dignity of my family. I stammered and said no, certainly I did not: his

branch of the Ælian family was a very honourable one. For Sejanus, though the son of a mere country knight, had been adopted in early manhood by a rich senator of the Ælian family, a Consul, who had left him all his money; there was a scandal connected with this adoption, but the fact remained that Sejanus was an Ælian. He anxiously pressed me to explain my hesitation and said that if I had any feeling against the marriage, he was sorry he had mentioned it, but of course he had only done so on Tiberius's suggestion. So I told him that if Tiberius proposed the match I would be glad to give my consent: that my chief feeling had been that four years old was rather young for a girl to be betrothed to a boy of thirteen, who would be twenty-one before he could legally consummate the marriage and by that time might have formed other entanglements. Sejanus smiled and said that he trusted me to keep the lad out of serious mischief.

There was great alarm in the City when it was known that Sejanus was to become related with the Imperial family, but everyone hastened to congratulate him, and me too. A few days later Drusillus was dead. He was found A.D. 23 lying behind a bush in the garden of a house at Pompeii where he had been invited, from Herculaneum, by some friends of Urgulanilla's. A small pear was found stuck in his throat. It was said at the inquest that he had been seen throwing fruit up in the air and trying to catch it in his mouth: his death was unquestionably due to an accident. But nobody believed this. It was clear that Livia, not having been consulted about the marriage of one of her own great-grandchildren, had arranged for the child to be strangled and the pear crammed down his throat afterwards. As was the custom in such cases, the pear tree was charged with murder and sentenced to be uprooted and burned.

Tiberius asked the Senate to decree Castor Protector of the People, which was as much as pointing him out as heir to the monarchy. This request caused general relief. It was taken as a sign that Tiberius was aware of Sejanus's ambitions and intended to check them. When the decree was

passed someone proposed that it should be printed on the walls of the House in letters of gold. Nobody realized that it was at Sejanus's own suggestion that Castor was so honoured; he had hinted to Tiberius that Castor, Agrippina, Livia and Gallus were in league together and proposed this as the best way to see who else belonged to their party. It was a friend of his own who had made the proposal about the gold inscription, and the names of senators who supported this extravagant motion were carefully noted. Castor was more popular now among the better citizens than he had been. He had given up his drunken habits—the death of Germanicus seemed to have sobered him—and though he still had an inordinate love of bloodshed at sword-fights and dressed extravagantly and betted enormous sums on the chariot races, he was a conscientious magistrate and a loyal friend. I had little to do with him, but when we met he treated me with far greater consideration than before Germanicus's death.

The bitter hatred between him and Sejanus always threatened to blaze up into a quarrel, but Sejanus was careful not to provoke Castor until the quarrel could be turned to account. The time had now come. Sejanus went to the Palace to congratulate Castor on his protectorship and found him in his study with Livilla. There were no slaves or freedmen present, so Sejanus could say what he pleased. By this time Livilla was so much in love with him that he could count on her to betray Castor as she had once betrayed Postumus—somehow he knew that story—and there had even been talk between them in which they had regretted that they were not Emperor and Empress, to do as they pleased. Sejanus said, "Well, Castor, I've worked it for you all right! Congratulations!"

Castor scowled. He was only "Castor" to a few intimates. He had won the name, as I think I have explained, because of his resemblance to a well-known sword-fighter, but it had stuck because one day he had lost his temper in an argument with a knight. The knight had told him bluntly at a

banquet that he was drunk and incapable, and Castor, shouting "Drunk and incapable, am I? I'll show you if I'm drunk and incapable," staggered from his couch and hit the knight such a terrific blow in the belly that he vomited up the whole meal. Castor now said to Sejanus: "I don't allow anyone to address me by a nickname except a friend or an equal, and you're neither. To you I'm Tiberius Drusus Cæsar. And I don't know what you claim to have 'worked' for me. And I don't want your congratulations on it, whatever it is. So get out."

Livilla said: "If you ask *me*, I call it pretty cowardly of you to insult Sejanus like this, not to mention the ingratitude of kicking him out like a dog when he comes to congratulate you on your protectorship. You know that your father would never have given it you except on Sejanus's recommendation."

Castor said: "You're talking nonsense, Livilla. This filthy spy has had no more to do with the appointment than my eunuch Lygdus. He's just pretending to be important. And tell me, Sejanus, what's this about cowardice?"

Sejanus said: "Your wife is quite right. You're a coward. You wouldn't have dared to talk to me like this before I got you appointed Protector and so made your person sacrosanct. You know perfectly well that I'd have thrashed you."

"And serve you right," said Livilla.

Castor looked from one face to the other and said slowly: "So there's something between you two, is there?"

Livilla smiled scornfully: "And suppose there is? Who's the better man?"

Castor shouted: "All right, my girl, we'll see. Just forget for a moment that I'm a Protector of the People, Sejanus, and put your fists up."

Sejanus folded his arms.

"Put them up, I say, you coward."

Sejanus said nothing, so Castor struck him hard across the face with his open palm. "Now get out!"

Sejanus went out with an ironical obeisance and Livilla followed him.

This blow settled Castor's fate. The account that Tiberius heard from Sejanus, who came to him with the mark of Castor's slap still red on his cheek, was that Castor had been drunk when Sejanus had congratulated him on his protectorship and had struck him across the face saying: "Yes, it's good to feel that I can do this now without fear of being hit back. And you can tell my father that I'll do the same to every other dirty spy of his." Livilla confirmed this the next day when she came to complain that Castor had beaten her; she said that he had beaten her because she told him how disgusted she was with him for striking a man who could not strike back and for insulting his father. Tiberius believed them. He said nothing to Castor but put up a bronze statue of Sejanus in the theatre of Pompey, an extraordinary honour to be paid to any man in his lifetime. This was understood to mean that Castor was out of favour with Tiberius in spite of his protectorship (for Sejanus and Livilla had circulated their version of the quarrel) and that Sejanus was now the one person whose favour was worth courting. Many replicas of the statue were therefore made, which his partisans put in a place of honour in their halls on the right hand of Tiberius's statue: but statues of Castor were rarely seen. Castor's face showed his resentment so clearly now whenever he met his father that Sejanus's task was made easy. He told Tiberius that Castor was sounding various senators as to their willingness to support him if he usurped the monarchy and that some of them had already promised their help. The ones who seemed most dangerous to Tiberius were therefore arrested on the familiar charge of blaspheming against Augustus. One man was condemned to death for having gone into a privy with a gold coin of Augustus's in his hand. Another was accused of having included a statue of Augustus in a list of furniture for sale in a country villa. He would have been condemned to death if the Consul who was judging the case had not asked



Tiberius to give his vote first. Tiberius was ashamed to vote for the death-penalty, so the man was acquitted, but condemned soon after on another charge.

Castor became alarmed and asked Livia for her help against Sejanus. Livia told him not to be afraid: she would soon bring Tiberius to his senses. But she had no confidence in Castor as an ally. She went to Tiberius and told him that Castor had accused Sejanus of debauching Livilla, of abusing his position of confidence by levying blackmail on rich men in Tiberius's name, and of aiming at the monarchy; that he had said that unless Tiberius dismissed the rascal soon he would take the matter into his own hands; and that he had then asked for her co-operation. By putting the case like this to Tiberius she hoped to make him as mistrustful of Sejanus as he was of Castor and thus to cause him to fall back into his old habit of dependence on her. For a time at least she succeeded. But then an accident suddenly convinced Tiberius that Sejanus was as loyally devoted as he pretended to be and as all his actions had hitherto shown him. They were picnicking together one day with three or four friends in a natural cave by the sea-shore, when there was a sudden rattle and roar and part of the roof fell in, killing some of the attendants and burying others, and blocking up the entrance. Sejanus crouched with arched back over Tiberius—they were both unhurt—to shield him from a further fall. When the soldiers dug them out an hour later he was found still in the same position. Thrasyllus, too, by the way, increased his reputation on this occasion: he had told Tiberius that there would be an hour of darkness about noon that day. Tiberius had Thrasyllus's assurance that he would outlive Sejanus by a great many years, and that Sejanus was not dangerous to him. I think that Sejanus had arranged this with Thrasyllus, but I have no proof: Thrasyllus was not altogether incorruptible but when he made prophecies to suit his clients' wishes they seemed to come off just as well as his ordinary ones. Tiberius did outlive Sejanus as it happens, by a number of years.

Tiberius gave a further public sign that Castor was out of favour by censuring him in the Senate for a letter he had written. Castor had excused himself from attending the sacrifice when the House opened after the summer recess, explaining that he was prevented by other public business from returning to the City in time. Tiberius said scornfully that anyone would think that the young fellow was on campaign in Germany or on a diplomatic visit to Armenia: when all the "public business" that kept him was boating and bathing at Terracina. He said that he himself, now in the decline of life, might be excused for an occasional absence from the City: he might plead that his energies had been exhausted by prolonged public service with the sword and the pen. But what except insolence could detain his son? This was most unjust: Castor had been commissioned to make a report on coastal defence during the recess and had not been able to collect all the evidence in time: rather than waste time by a journey to Rome and then back again to Terracina he was finishing his task.

When Castor returned he almost immediately fell ill. The symptoms were those of rapid consumption. He lost colour and weight and began coughing blood. He wrote to his father and asked him to come and visit him in his room—he lived at the other end of the Palace—because he believed that he was dying, and to forgive him if he had in any way offended. Sejanus advised Tiberius against the visit: the illness might be real, but on the other hand it might easily be a trick for assassinating him. So Tiberius did not visit him and a few days later Castor died.

There was not much sorrow at the death of Castor. The violence of his temper and his reputation for cruelty had made the City apprehensive of what would happen if he succeeded his father. Few believed in his recent reformation. Most people thought it had merely  
A.D. 23  
been a trick to win popular affection, and that he would have been just as bad as his father as soon as he found himself in his father's place. And now Germanicus's

three sons were growing up—Drusus, too, had just come of age—and were unquestionably Tiberius's heirs. But the Senate, out of respect for Tiberius, mourned for Castor as noisily as it could and voted the same honours in his memory as it had voted Germanicus. Tiberius made no pretence of sorrow on this occasion but pronounced the panegyric he had prepared for Castor in a firm resonant voice. When he saw tears rolling down the faces of several senators he remarked in an audible aside to Sejanus at his elbow: "Faugh! The place smells of onions!" Gallus afterwards rose to compliment Tiberius on his mastery over his grief. He recalled that even the God Augustus, during his presence among them in mortal shape, had so far given way to his feelings at the death of Marcellus, his adopted son (not even his real son), that when he was thanking the House for its sympathy he had to break off in the middle, unable to go on for emotion. Whereas the speech they had just heard was a masterpiece of restraint. (I may mention here that when four or five months later deputies arrived from Troy to condole with Tiberius on the death of his only son, Tiberius thanked them: "And I condole with you, gentlemen, on the death of Hector.") Tiberius then sent for Nero and Drusus, and when they arrived at the House he took them by the hand and introduced them: "My Lords, three years ago I committed these fatherless children to their uncle, my dear son whom to-day we are all so bitterly mourning, desiring him to adopt them as his sons, though he already had sons of his own, and bring them up as worthy inheritors of the family tradition. (Hear hear! from Gallus, and general applause.) But now that he has been snatched from us by cruel fate (groans and lamentations) I make the same request of *you*. In the presence of the Gods, in the face of your beloved Country, I beseech you, receive into your protection, take under your tuition, these noble great-grandchildren of Augustus, descended from ancestors whose names resound in Roman history: see that your duty and mine is honourably fulfilled towards them. Grandsons, these sena-

tors are now in the place of fathers to you, and your birth is such that whatever good or evil may befall you will spell the good or evil of the entire State." (Resounding applause, tears, benedictions, shouts of loyalty.)

But instead of leaving off there he spoils the whole effect by ending on a familiar note with his old stale phrases about presently retiring and restoring the Republic—when "the Consuls or someone else" would "take the burden of government off" his "aged shoulders". If he did not intend Nero and Drusus (or one or other of them) as his Imperial successors, what did he mean by identifying their fortune so closely with that of the State?

Castor's funeral was less impressive than Germanicus's, being marked by very few genuine expressions of grief, but on the other hand far more magnificent. Every one of the family masks of the Cæsars and Claudians was worn in the procession, beginning with those of Æneas, the founder of the Julian family, and Romulus, the founder of Rome, and ending with those of Gaius, Lucius and Germanicus. Julius Cæsar's mask appeared because, like Romulus, he was only a demi-god, but Augustus's did not appear, because he was a major Deity.

Sejanus and Livilla had now to consider how to achieve their ambition of becoming Emperor and Empress. Nero, Drusus and Caligula stood in the way and would have to be removed. Three seemed rather many to get rid of safely, but, as Livilla pointed out, her grandmother had apparently managed to get rid of Gaius, Lucius and Postumus when she wanted to put Tiberius into power. And Sejanus was clearly in a much better position than Livia had been for carrying their plans through. To show Livilla that he really intended to marry her, as he had promised, Sejanus divorced his wife Apicata, by whom he had three children. He charged her with adultery and said that she was about to become the mother of a child which was not his own. He did not publicly name her lover but told Tiberius in private that he suspected Nero. Nero, he said, was getting a

bad reputation for his affairs with the wives of prominent men and seemed to think that, as heir-presumptive to the monarchy, he could behave how he liked. Livilla meanwhile did her best to detach Agrippina from Livia's protection, by warning Agrippina that Livia was only using her as a weapon in her conflict with Tiberius—which happened to be true—and by warning Livia, through one of her ladies-in-waiting, that Agrippina was only using *her* as a weapon in her conflict with Tiberius—which was also true. She made each believe that the other had sworn to kill her as soon as her usefulness ended.

The twelve pontiffs now began to include Nero and Drusus in the customary prayers they offered for the health and prosperity of the Emperor, and the other priests followed their example. Tiberius as High Pontiff sent a letter of complaint to them, saying that they had made no difference between these boys and himself, a man who had honourably held most of the highest offices of State twenty years before they were born, and all the rest since: it was not decent. He called them into his presence and there asked them whether Agrippina had merely coaxed them to make this addition to the prayer or whether she had frightened them into making it by using threats. They denied, of course, that she had done either, but he was not convinced; four of the twelve, including Gallus, were in some way connected with her by marriage and five others were on very friendly terms with her and her sons. He reprimanded them severely. In his next speech he warned the Senate to "award no further premature distinctions that might encourage the giddy minds of young men to indulge in presumptuous aspirations."

Agrippina found an unexpected ally in Calpurnius Piso. He told her that he had defended his uncle Gnaeus Piso merely out of regard for family honour and that he must not be thought of as her enemy; he would do all that he could to protect her and her children. But Calpurnius did not live long after this. He was charged in the Senate with

“treasonable words spoken in private”, and of keeping poison in his house, and of coming into the Senate armed with a dagger. These two last articles were so absurd that they were dropped, but a day was fixed for his trial on the “treasonable words” charge. He killed himself before the trial came off.

Tiberius believed Sejanus's story that there was a secret party, called the Leek Green party, now being formed by Agrippina, the sign of which was an extravagant partisanship of the Leek Green faction in the chariot-races in the Circus. In these races there were four colours—scarlet, white, sea-blue and leek-green. The Leek Green faction happened to be most in favour at this time and the Scarlet the most unpopular. So now when Tiberius went to watch the races on public holidays, as he was bound to do in his official position—though he had not hitherto been at all interested in them and discouraged idle racing-talk at the Palace or at banquets to which he was invited—and began for the first time to notice what sort of support the different colours were being given he was greatly disturbed to hear the Leek Green so cried up. He had been also told by Sejanus that Scarlet was the secret symbol used by Leek Greens when they wished to refer to his own supporters, and he noticed that whenever a Scarlet chariot won, which was seldom, it came in for loud groans and hisses. Sejanus was clever: he knew that Germanicus had always backed the Leek Green and that Agrippina, Nero and Drusus, for sentimental reasons, continued to favour the colour.

There was a nobleman called Silius who had been for many years a corps-commander on the Rhine. I think I have mentioned him as the General of the four regiments in the Upper Province of Germany which did not take part in the great mutiny. He had been my brother's most capable lieutenant and had been granted triumphal ornaments for his successes against Hermann. Recently, at the head of the combined forces of the Upper and Lower Provinces he had put down a dangerous revolt of the French tribes in the

neighbourhood of my birthplace, Lyons. He was not a modest man but not particularly boastful and if he had really said in public, as was reported, that but for his tactful handling of those four regiments in the mutiny they would have joined the other mutineers, and that therefore, but for him, Tiberius would not have had any Empire at all to rule over—well, that was not far from the truth. But naturally Tiberius did not like it, if only because the mutinous regiments were, as I explained, the ones with which he had himself had most to do. Silius's wife Sosia was Agrippina's best woman friend. It so happened that Silius at the great Roman Games, which were held early in September, was betting very heavily on the Leek Green. Sejanus shouted across to him: "I'll take you up to any amount. My money's on Scarlet." Silius shouted back: "You're backing the wrong colour, my friend. The Scarlet charioteer hasn't the least idea of managing his reins. He tries to do it all with the whip. I'll bet you an even thousand that Leek Green wins. Young Nero here says he'll make it fifteen hundred; he's an enthusiastic Leek Greener." Sejanus looked significantly at Tiberius, who had heard the whole exchange and was astonished at Silius's boldness. He took it as a good omen when the leader of the Leek Green chariot fell in rounding the mark on the last lap but one, and Scarlet came in an easy winner.

Ten days later Silius was impeached before the Senate. The charge was high treason. He was accused of having connived at the French revolt during its earlier stages and having taken a third part of the plunder as payment for non-intervention, of making his victory the excuse for further plunder of loyal provincials, and of afterwards imposing excessive emergency taxes on the province for the expenses of the campaign. Sosia was accused of complicity in the same offences. Silius had been unpopular at the Palace ever since the French rebellion. Tiberius had come in for a good deal of criticism for not having taken the field against the rebels, and for having shown more interest in the treason

trials that were going on at the time than in the campaign. He had excused himself to the Senate on the ground of age—and Castor had been engaged in important business—and explained that he had been keeping in touch with Silius's headquarters all along, giving him valuable advice. Tiberius was very sensitive about the whole French revolt. When the French were beaten he had been made ridiculous by the motion of a waggish senator, an imitator of Gallus's tricks, that he should be awarded a triumph for being the man really responsible for victory. He was so displeased by this, taking the line that in any case the victory was not worth talking about, that nobody dared to vote Silius the triumphal ornaments which he thoroughly well deserved. Silius had been disappointed and what he had said about the Rhine mutiny had been said in resentment of Tiberius's ingratitude.

Silius disdained to reply to the charges of treason. He was not guilty of any understanding with the rebels and if the soldiers under his command had in some cases failed to distinguish between the property of rebels and the property of loyalists that was only to be expected: many pretended loyalists were secretly financing the rebellion. As for the taxation, the fact was that Tiberius had promised him a special grant from the Treasury to cover the expenses of the campaign and to indemnify Roman citizens for their loss of houses, crops and cattle. In anticipation of the payment of this grant Silius had imposed a tax on certain Northern tribes, promising to refund the money when it was paid him by Tiberius: which it never was. Silius was a poorer man by twenty thousand gold pieces after the revolt than before it, because he had raised a troop of volunteer horse which he armed and paid at his own expense. His chief accuser, who was one of the Consuls of the year, pressed the charges of extortion with great malice. He was a friend of Sejanus and was also the son of the military governor of the Lower Province who had wished to take supreme command of the Roman forces against the French and had been forced to stand aside in Silius's favour. Silius could not even produce



evidence of Tiberius's promised grant, because the letter in which it was contained was sealed with the Sphinx. And the charges of extortion were in any case irrelevant, because the trial was for treason, not for extortion.

He finally burst out: "My Lords, I could say much in my defence but shall say nothing, because this trial is not being conducted in a constitutional manner and the verdict has been long ago decided. I understand that my real crime is having said that, but for my handling of them, the regiments in Upper Germany would have mutinied. I shall now put my culpability in this matter beyond question. I shall say that, but for Tiberius's previous handling of them, the troops in Lower Germany would *not* have mutinied. My Lords, I am the victim of an avaricious, jealous, blood-thirsty, tyrannical . . ." The rest of his speech was drowned in a roar of horrified protest from the House. Silius saluted Tiberius and walked out with his head high in the air. When he arrived at his house he embraced Sosia and his children, gave an affectionate message of farewell to Agrippina, Nero, Gallus, and his other friends, and going to his bedroom drove his sword into his throat.

His guilt was held to be proved by his insults to Tiberius. His entire estate was confiscated, with a promise that the provincials should have the unjust tax repaid them out of it, and that his accusers should be given the fourth part of what remained, as the law required, and that the money which had been left him under Augustus's will as an earnest of his loyalty should return to the Treasury as paid him under a misapprehension. The provincials did not dare to press for the tax to be refunded, so Tiberius kept three-quarters of the estate: for there was no longer any real distinction between the Military Treasury, the Public Treasury and the Privy Purse. This was the first time that he had benefited directly from the confiscation of an estate or that he had let a spoken insult to himself be construed as a proof of treason.

Sosia had property of her own and, to save her life and

keep the children from becoming paupers, Gallus moved that she should be banished and that half of her effects should be forfeited to her accusers, half left to the children. But a cousin by marriage of Agrippina's, who was a confederate of Gallus, proposed that the accusers should only be paid one-fourth, which was the legal minimum, saying that Gallus was more loyal to the Emperor than just to Sosia; for Sosia was known, at least, to have reproved her husband, as he lay dying, for his treasonable and ungrateful utterances. So Sosia was only banished—she went to live in Marseilles; and since Silius as soon as he knew that he would be tried for his life had secretly given Gallus and certain other friends most of his money in cash to hold in trust for the children, the family came off quite well. His eldest son lived to cause me much distress.

From now onward Tiberius, who had hitherto made his accusations of treason hang on supposed blasphemies of Augustus, enforced more and more strongly the edict which had been passed in the first year of his monarchy, making it treason for anyone to assai' nis own honour and reputation in any way. He accused a senator, whom he suspected to be of Agrippina's party, of having recited a scurrilous epigram aimed against him. The fact was that the senator's wife one morning noticed a sheet of paper posted high up on the gate of the house. She asked her husband to read out what was on it—he was taller. He slowly spelt out.

“He is no drunkard now of wine  
As he was drunkard then:  
He warms him up with a richer cup—  
The blood of murdered men.”

She asked innocently what the verse meant and he said, “It's unsafe to explain in public, my dear.” A professional informer was hanging about the gate on the chance that when the senator read the epigram, which was Livia's work, he would say something worth reporting. He went straight

to Sejanus. Tiberius himself cross-examined the senator, asking what he meant by "unsafe", and to whom, in his opinion, the epigram referred. The senator shuffled and would not give direct answers. Tiberius then said that many libels had been current when he was a younger man, all accusing him of being a drunkard, and that in recent years he had been ordered by his doctors to abstain from wine because of a tendency to gout, and that several libels had lately been published accusing him of bloodthirstiness. He asked the accused whether he was not aware of these facts, and whether he thought that the epigram could refer to anyone but his Emperor. The wretched man agreed that he had heard the libels on Tiberius's drunkenness but knew them to have no foundation in truth and had not made any connection in his mind between them and the one on his gate. He was then asked why he had not reported the former libels to the Senate as it was his duty to do. He answered that when he had heard them it was not yet a punishable offence to utter or repeat any epigram, however scurrilous, written against anyone, however virtuous; nor treason to utter or repeat scurrilities directed even against Augustus so long as one did not publish them in writing. Tiberius asked to what time he referred, for Augustus had late in life made an edict against spoken scurrilities too. The senator answered: "It was during your third year at Rhodes." Tiberius cried out, "My Lords, how can you permit this fellow to insult me so?" So the Senate actually condemned him to be thrown down the Tarpeian cliff, a punishment ordinarily reserved for the worst traitors—generals who sold battles to the enemy, and such-like.

Another man, a knight, was put to death for writing a tragedy about King Agamemnon in which Agamemnon's queen, who murdered him in his bath, cried as she swung the axe:

"Know, bloody tyrant, 'tis no crime  
T'avenge my wrongs like this."

Tiberius said that he was intended by the character Agamemnon and that the line quoted was an incitement to assassinate him. So the tragedy, which everyone had laughed at because it was so lamely and wretchedly composed, won a sort of dignity by having all its copies called in and burned and its author executed.

This prosecution was followed two years later—but I put it down here because the Agamemnon story reminds me of it—by that of Cremutius Cordus, an old man who had come into collision with Sejanus some time before over a trifle. Sejanus entering the House one wet day had hung his cloak on the peg which had always been Cremutius's, and Cremutius, when he came in, not knowing that it was Sejanus's cloak, had moved it to another peg to make room for his own. Sejanus's cloak had fallen down from this new peg and somebody with muddy sandals had trampled on it. Sejanus retaliated in a variety of malicious ways, and Cremutius came so to loathe the sight of his face and the sound of his name that when he heard that Sejanus's statue had been set up on the Theatre of Pompey he exclaimed: "That just about ruins the Theatre". So now he was named to Tiberius as one of Agrippina's principal adherents. But as he was a venerable, mild old man who had no enemy in the world but Sejanus and never spoke a word more than necessary, it was difficult to support any accusation against him with evidence that even a brow-beaten Senate could decently accept. In the end Cremutius was charged with having written in praise of Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Julius Cæsar. The evidence produced was an historical work which he had written thirty years before and which Augustus himself, Julius's adopted son, was known to have included in his private library and occasionally consulted.

Cremutius made a spirited defence against this absurd charge, saying that Brutus and Cassius had been dead so long and had been so frequently praised for their deed by subsequent historians that he could not believe that the trial

was not a hoax—such a hoax as a young traveller recently suffered in the city of Larissa. This young man was publicly accused of having murdered three men, though they were no more than wineskins, hanging outside a shop, which he had slashed at in the dark, mistaking them for robbers. But this Larissan trial had taken place on the annual festival of Laughter, which gave some point to the proceedings, and the young man was a drunkard and much too ready with his sword and perhaps deserved a lesson. But he, Cremutius Cordus, was too old and too sober to be made a fool of in this way, and this was no festival of Laughter but, on the contrary, the four hundred and seventy-sixth anniversary of the solemn promulgation of the Laws of the Twelve Tables, that glorious monument to the legislative genius and the moral rectitude of our forefathers. He went home and starved himself to death. All copies of his book were called in and burned except for two or three which his daughter hid away somewhere and republished many years later when Tiberius was dead. It was not very good writing; it got more fame than it really deserved.

I had been all this time saying to myself, "Claudius, you're a poor fellow and not much use in this world, and you have led a pretty miserable life with one thing and another, but at least your life is safe." So when old Cremutius whom I knew very well—we had often met and chatted in the Library—lost his life on a charge like this it was a great shock to me. I felt like a man living on the slopes of a volcano when it suddenly throws up a warning shower of ash and red hot stones. I had written far more treasonable things in my time than Cremutius. My history of Augustus's religious reforms contained several phrases that could easily be made the subject of an accusation. And though my estate was so small that it would hardly be worth an accuser's while to impeach me for the sake of a fourth share, I realized well enough that all the recent victims of treason-trials were friends of Agrippina, whom I continued to visit whenever I went to Rome. I was not at all sure how far my being a

brother-in-law of Sejanus would be sufficient protection to me.

Yes, I had lately become Sejanus's brother-in-law, and now I shall tell how it came about.