

## CHAPTER XXXI

THE expense of this two days' entertainment drained the Treasury and the Privy Purse completely dry. To make things worse Caligula, instead of returning the vessels to their masters and crew, ordered the breach in the bridge to be repaired and then, riding back to Rome, busied himself with other affairs. Neptune, to prove himself no coward, sent a heavy storm at the bridge from the west and sank about a thousand ships. Most of the rest dragged their anchors and were driven ashore. About two thousand rode the storm out or were hauled in on the beach for safety, but the loss of the rest caused a great shortage of ships for the carriage of corn from Egypt and Africa, and so a serious food-shortage in the City. Caligula swore to be revenged on Neptune. His new ways of raising money were most ingenious and amused all but the victims and their friends or dependants. For instance, any young men whom he put so deeply in his debt by fines or confiscations that they became his slaves he sent to the sword-fighting schools. When they were trained he put them into the amphitheatre to fight for their lives. His only expense in this was their board and lodgings: being his slaves they were given no payment. If they were killed, there was an end of them. If they were victorious he auctioned them off to the magistrates whose duty it was to give similar contests—lots were drawn for this distinction—and to anyone else who cared to bid. He ran up the prices to an absurd height by pretending that people had made bids when they had done no more than scratch their heads or rub their noses. My nervous toss of the head got me into great trouble: I was saddled with three sword-

fighters at an average of two thousand gold pieces each. But I was luckier than a magistrate called Aponius who fell asleep during the auction. Caligula sold him sword-fighters whom nobody else seemed to fancy, raising the bid every time his head nodded on his breast: when he woke up he found he had no less than ninety thousand gold pieces to pay for thirteen sword-fighters whom he did not in the least want. One of the sword-fighters I had bought was a very good performer, but Caligula betted against him heavily with me. When the day came for him to fight he could hardly stand and was easily beaten. It appears that Caligula had drugged his food. Many rich men came to these auctions and willingly bid large sums, not because they wanted sword-fighters but because if they loosened their purse-strings now Caligula would be less likely to bring some charge against them later and rob them of their lives as well as of their money.

An amusing thing happened on the day that my sword-fighter was beaten. Caligula had betted heavily with me against five net-and-trident men who were matched against an equal number of chasers armed with sword and shield. I was resigned to losing the thousand gold pieces that he had made me bet against five thousand of his own; for as soon as the fight began I could see that the net-men had been bribed to give the fight away. I was sitting next to Caligula and said: "Well, you seem likely to win, but it's my opinion that those net-men aren't doing their best." One by one the chasers rounded up the net-men, who surrendered, and finally all five were lying with their faces in the sand and each with a chaser standing over him with a raised sword. The audience turned their thumbs downwards as a signal that they should be killed. Caligula, as the President, had a right to take this advice or not, as he pleased. He took it. "Kill them!" he shouted. "They didn't try to win!" This was hard luck on the net-men, to whom he had secretly promised their lives if they allowed themselves to be beaten; for I wasn't by any means the only man who had been

forced to bet on them—he stood to win eighty thousand if they lost. Well, one of them felt so sore at being cheated that he suddenly grappled with his chaser, overturned him and managed to pick up a trident, which was lying not far off, and a net, and dash away. You wouldn't believe it, but I won my five thousand after all! First that angry net-man killed two chasers who had their backs to him and were busy acknowledging the cheers of the audience after dispatching their victims, and then he killed the other three, one by one, as they came running at him, each a few paces behind the other. Caligula wept for vexation and exclaimed, "Oh, the monster! Look, he's killed five promising young swordsmen with that horrible trout-spear of his!" When I say that I won my five thousand, I mean that I would have won it if I hadn't been tactful enough to call the bet off. "For one man to kill five isn't fair fighting," I said.

Up to this time Caligula had always spoken of Tiberius as a thorough scoundrel and encouraged everyone else to do the same. But one day he entered the Senate and delivered a long eulogy on him, saying that he had been a much misunderstood man and that nobody must speak a word against him. "In my capacity as Emperor I have the right to criticize him if I please, but you have no right. In fact, you are guilty of treason. The other day a senator said in a speech that my brothers Nero and Drusus were murdered by Tiberius after having been imprisoned on false charges. What an amazing thing to say!" Then he produced the records which he had pretended to burn, and read lengthy extracts. He showed that the Senate had not questioned the evidence collected against his brothers by Tiberius, but had unanimously voted for them to be handed over to him for punishment. Some had even volunteered testimony against them. Caligula said: "If you knew that the evidence which Tiberius laid before you (in all good faith) was false, then you are the murderers, not he; and it is only since he has been dead that you have dared to blame your cruelty and treachery on him. Or if you thought at the time that the

evidence was true, then he was no murderer and you are treasonably defaming his character. Or if you thought that it was false and that he knew it was false, then you were as guilty of murder as he was, and cowards too." He frowned heavily in imitation of Tiberius and made Tiberius's sharp chopping motion of the hand, which brought back frightening memories of treason-trials, and said in Tiberius's harsh voice, "Well spoken, my Son! You can't trust any one of these curs farther than you can kick him. Look what a little God they made of Sejanus before they turned and tore him to pieces! They'll do the same to you if they get half a chance. They all hate you and pray for your death. My advice to you is, consult no interest but your own and put pleasure before everything. Nobody likes being ruled over, and the only way that I kept my place was by making this trash afraid of me. Do the same. The worse you treat them, the more they'll honour you."

Caligula then reintroduced treason as a capital crime, ordered his speech to be at once engraved on a bronze tablet and posted on the wall of the House above the seats of the Consuls, and rushed away. No more business was transacted that day: we were all too dejected. But the next day we lavished praise on Caligula as a sincere and pious ruler and voted annual sacrifices to his Clemency. What else could we do? He had the Army at his back, and power of life and death over us, and until someone was bold and clever enough to make a successful conspiracy against his life all that we could do was to humour him and hope for the best. At a banquet a few nights later he suddenly burst into a most extraordinary howl of laughter. Nobody knew what the joke was. The two Consuls, who sat next to him, asked whether they might be graciously permitted to share in it. At this Caligula laughed even louder, the tears starting from his eyes. "No," he choked, "that's just the point. It's a joke that you wouldn't think at all funny. I was laughing to think that with one nod of my head I could have both your throats cut on the spot."

Charges of treason were now brought against the twenty reputedly wealthiest men in Rome. They were given no chance of committing suicide before trial and all condemned to death. One of them, a senior magistrate, proved to have been quite poor. Caligula said: "The idiot! Why did he pretend to have money? I was quite taken in. He need not have died at all." I can only remember a single man who escaped with his life from a charge of treason. That was Afer, the man who had prosecuted my cousin Pulchra, a lawyer famous for his eloquence. His crime was having put an inscription on a statue of Caligula in the hall of his house, to the effect that the Emperor in his twenty-seventh year was already Consul for the second time. Caligula found this treasonable—a sneer at his youth and a reproach against him for having held the office before he was legally capable of doing so. He composed a long, careful speech against Afer and delivered it in the Senate with all the oratorical force at his command, every gesture and tone carefully rehearsed beforehand. Caligula used to boast that he was the best lawyer and orator in the world, and was even more anxious to outshine Afer in eloquence than to secure his condemnation and confiscate his money. Afer realized this and pretended to be astonished and overcome by Caligula's genius as a prosecutor. He repeated the counts against himself, point by point, praising them with a professional detachment and muttering "Yes, that's quite unanswerable" and "He's got the last ounce of weight out of that argument" and "A very real dilemma" and "What extraordinary command of language!" When Caligula had finished and sat down with a triumphant grin, Afer was asked if he had anything to say. He answered: "Nothing except that I consider myself most unlucky. I had counted on using my oratorical gifts as some slight offset against the Emperor's anger with me for my inexcusable thoughtlessness in the matter of that cursed inscription. But Fate has weighted the dice far too heavily against me. The Emperor has absolute power, a clear case against me, and a thousand times more eloquence than I

could ever hope to achieve even if I escaped sentence and studied until I was a centenarian." He was condemned to death, but reprieved the next day.

Speaking of weighted dice—when rich provincials came to the City they were always invited to dinner at the Palace and a friendly gamble afterwards. They were astonished and dismayed by the Emperor's luck: he threw Venus every time and skinned them of all they had. Yes, Caligula always played with weighted dice. For instance, he now removed the Consuls from office and fined them heavily on the ground that they had celebrated the usual festival in honour of Augustus's victory over Antony at Actium. He said that it was an insult to his ancestor Antony. (By the way, he appointed Afer to one of the vacant Consulships.) He had told us at dinner a few days before the festival that whatever the Consuls did he would punish them: for if they refrained from celebrating the festival they would be insulting his ancestor Augustus. It was on this occasion that Ganymede made a fatal mistake. He cried: "You *are* clever, my dear! You catch them every way. But the poor idiots will celebrate the festival, if they have any sense; because Agrippa did most of the work at Actium and he was your ancestor too, so they will at least be honouring two of your ancestors out of three."

Caligula said: "Ganymede, we are no longer friends."

"Oh," said Ganymede, "don't tell me that, my dear! I said nothing to offend you, did I?"

"Leave the table," ordered Caligula.

I knew at once what Ganymede's mistake was. It was a double one. Ganymede, as Caligula's cousin on the maternal side, was descended from Augustus and Agrippa, but not from Antony. All his ancestors had been of Augustus's party. So he should have been careful to avoid the subject. And Caligula disliked any reminder of his descent from Agrippa, a man of undistinguished family. But he took no action against Ganymede yet.

He divorced Lollia, saying that she was barren, and

married a woman called Cæsonia. She was neither young nor good-looking and was the daughter of a captain of the Watchmen, and married to a baker, or some such person, by whom she already had three children. But there was something about her that attracted Caligula in a way that nobody could explain, himself least of all. He used often to say that he would fetch the secret out of her, even if he had to do it with the fiddle-string torture, why it was that he loved her so entirely. It was said that she won him with a love-philtre, and further that it sent him mad. But the love-philtre is only a guess, and he had begun to go mad long before he met her. In any case, she was with child by him and he was so excited at the thought of being a parent that, as I say, he married her. It was shortly after his marriage with Cæsonia that he first publicly declared his own Divinity. He visited the temple of Jove on the Capitoline Hill. Apelles was with him. He asked Apelles, "Who's the greater God—Jove or myself?" Apelles hesitated, thinking that Caligula was joking, and not wishing to blaspheme Jove in Jove's own temple. Caligula whistled two Germans up and had Apelles stripped and whipped in sight of Jove's statue. "Not so fast," Caligula told the Germans. "Slowly, so that he feels it more." They whipped him until he fainted, and then revived him with holy water and whipped him until he died. Caligula then sent letters to the Senate announcing his Divinity and ordered the immediate building of a great shrine next door to the temple of Jove, "in order that I may dwell with my brother Jove". Here he set up an image of himself, three times the size of life, made of solid gold and dressed every day in new clothes.

But he soon quarrelled with Jove and was heard to threaten him angrily: "If you can't realize who's master here I'll pack you off to Greece." Jove was understood to apologize, and Caligula said: "Oh, keep your wretched Capitoline Hill. I'll go to the Palatine. It's a much finer situation. I'll build a temple there worthy of myself, you shabby old belly-rumbling fraud." Another curious thing

happened when he visited the temple of Diana in company with a former governor of Syria called Vitellius. Vitellius had done very well out there, having surprised the King of Parthia, who was about to invade the province, by a forced march across the Euphrates. Caught on ground unfavourable for battle the Parthian King was obliged to sign a humiliating peace and give his sons up as hostages. I should have mentioned that Caligula had the eldest son as a prisoner with him in his chariot when he drove across the bridge. Well, Caligula was jealous of Vitellius and would have put him to death if Vitellius had not been warned by me (he was a friend of mine) what to do. A letter from me was waiting for him at Brindisi when he arrived, and as soon as he reached Rome and was admitted to Caligula's presence he fell prostrate and worshipped him as a God. This was before the news of Caligula's Divinity was officially known, so Caligula thought it was a genuine tribute. Vitellius became his intimate friend and showed his gratitude to me in many ways. As I was saying, Caligula was in Diana's temple talking to the Goddess—not the statue but an invisible presence. He asked Vitellius whether he could see her too, or only the moonlight. Vitellius trembled violently, as if in awe, and keeping his eyes fixed on the ground said: "Only you Gods, my Lord, are privileged to behold one another."

Caligula was pleased. "She's very beautiful, Vitellius, and often comes to sleep with me at the Palace."

It was about this time that I got into trouble again. I thought at first that it was a plot of Caligula's to get rid of me. I am still not so sure that it was not. An acquaintance of mine, a man I used to play dice with a good deal, forged a will and took the trouble to forge my seal to it as witness. Luckily for me he had not noticed a tiny chip on the edge of the agate seal-gem, which always left its mark on the wax. When I was suddenly arrested for conspiracy to defraud and brought to Court, I bribed a soldier to carry a secret appeal to my friend Vitellius, begging him to save my life as I had saved his. I asked him to hint about the chip to Caligula,



who was judging the case, and to have a genuine seal of mine ready for Caligula to compare with the forged one. But Caligula must be encouraged to find the difference for himself and to take all the credit. Vitellius managed the affair very tactfully. Caligula noticed the chip, boasted of his quickness of eye and absolved me with a stern warning to be more careful in future about my associates. The forger had his hands cut off and hung around his neck as a warning. If I had been found guilty I would have lost my head. Caligula told me so at supper that night.

I replied: "Most merciful God, I really don't understand why you trouble so much about my life."

It is the nature of nephews to enjoy an uncle's flattery. He unbent a little and asked me, with a wink to the rest of the table, "And what precise valuation would you put on your life to-night, may I ask?"

"I have worked it out already: one farthing."

"And how do you arrive at so modest a figure?"

"Every life has an assessable value. The ransom that Julius Cæsar's family actually paid the pirates who had captured him and threatened to kill him—though they asked a great deal more than this at first—was no more than twenty thousand in gold. So Julius Cæsar's life was actually worth no more than twenty thousand. My wife Ælia was once attacked by footpads, but persuaded them to spare her life by handing over an amethyst brooch worth only fifty. So Ælia was worth only fifty. My life has just been saved by a chip of agate weighing, I should judge, no more than the fortieth part of a scruple. That quality of agate is worth perhaps as much as a silver-piece a scruple. The chip, if one could find it, which would be difficult, or find a buyer, which would be still more difficult, would therefore be worth one fortieth part of a silver piece, or exactly one farthing. So my life is also worth exactly one farthing—"

"—If you could find a buyer," he roared, delighted with his own wit. How everybody cheered, myself included! For a long time after this I was called "Teruncius" Claudius

at the Palace, instead of Tiberius Claudius. Teruncius is Latin for farthing.

For his worship he had to have priests. He was his own High Priest and his subordinates were myself, Cæsonia, Vitellius, Ganymede, fourteen ex-Consuls and his noble friend the horse Incitatus. Each of these subordinates had to pay eighty thousand gold pieces for the honour. He helped Incitatus to raise the money by imposing a yearly tribute in his name on all the horses in Italy: if they did not pay they would be sent to the knackers. He helped Cæsonia to raise the money by imposing a tax in her name on all married men for the privilege of sleeping with their wives. Ganymede, Vitellius and the others were rich men; though in some instances they had to sell property at a loss to get the hundred thousand in cash at short notice, they still remained comfortably off. Not so poor Claudius. Caligula's previous tricks in selling me sword-fighters, and charging me heavily for the privilege of sleeping and boarding at the Palace, had left me with a mere thirty thousand in cash, and no property to sell except my small estate at Capua and the house left me by my mother. I paid Caligula the thirty thousand and told him the same night at dinner that I was putting up all my property for sale at once to enable me to pay him the remainder when I found a buyer. "I've nothing else to sell," I said. Caligula thought this a great joke. "Nothing at all to sell? Why, what about the clothes you're wearing?"

By this time I had found it wisest to pretend I was quite half-witted. "By Heaven," I said. "I forgot all about them. Will you be good enough to auction them for me to the company? You're the most wonderful auctioneer in the world." I began stripping off all my clothes until I had on nothing but a table-napkin which I hastily wrapped round my loins. He sold my sandals to someone for a hundred gold pieces each, and my gown for a thousand, and so on, and each time I expressed my boisterous delight. He then wanted to auction the napkin. I said "My natural modesty

would not prevent me from sacrificing my last rag, if the money it brought in helped me to pay the rest of the fee. But in this case, alas, something more powerful even than modesty prevents me from selling."

Caligula frowned. "What's that? What's stronger than modesty?"

"My veneration for yourself, Cæsar. It's your own napkin. One that you had graciously set for my use at this excellent meal."

This little play only reduced my debt by three thousand. But it did convince Caligula of my poverty.

I had to give up my rooms and my place at table and lodged for a time with old Briseis, my mother's former maid, who was caretaker of the house until it found a buyer. Calpurnia came to live with me there, and would you believe it, the dear girl still had the money which I had given her instead of necklaces and marmosets and silk dresses, and offered to lend it to me. And what was more, my cattle hadn't really died as she pretended, nor had the ricks burned. It was just a trick to sell them secretly at a good price and put the money aside for an emergency. She paid it all over to me—two thousand gold pieces—together with an exact account of the transactions signed by my steward. So we managed pretty well. But to keep up the pretence of absolute poverty I used to go out with a jug every night, using a crutch instead of a sedan-chair, and buy wine from the taverns.

Old Briseis used to say, "Master Claudius, people all think that I was your mother's freedwoman. It isn't so. I became your slave when you first grew up to be Master, and it was you who gave me my freedom, not she, wasn't it?"

I would answer, "Of course, Briseis. One day I'll nail that lie in public." She was a dear old thing and entirely devoted to me. We lived in four rooms together, with an old slave to do the porter's work, and had a very happy time, all considered.

Cæsonia's child, a girl, was born a month after Caligula married her. Caligula said that this was a prodigy. He took the child and laid her on the knees of the statue of Jove—this was before his quarrel with Jove—as if to make Jove his honorary colleague in fatherhood, and then put her in the arms of Minerva's statue and allowed her to suck at the Goddess's marble breast for awhile. He called her Drusilla, the name that his dead sister had discarded when she became the Goddess Panthea. This child was made a priestess too. He raised the money for the initiation fee by making a pathetic appeal to the public, complaining of his poverty and the heavy expenses of fatherhood, and opening a fund, called The Drusilla Fund. He put collecting boxes in every street marked "Drusilla's Food", "Drusilla's Drink" and "Drusilla's Dowry", and nobody dared pass by the Guards posted there without dropping in a copper or two.

Caligula dearly loved his little Drusilla, who turned out as precocious a child as he had himself been. He took delight in teaching her his own "immovable rigour", beginning the lessons when she was only just able to walk and talk. He encouraged her to torture kittens and puppies and to fly with her sharp nails at the eyes of her little playmates. "There can be no reasonable doubt as to your paternity, my pretty one," he used to chuckle when she showed particular promise. And once in my presence he bent down and said slyly to her: "And the first full-sized murder your commit, Precious, if it's only your poor old grand-uncle Claudius, I'll make a Goddess of you."

"Will you make me a Goddess if I kill Mamma?" the little fiend lisped. "I hate Mamma."

The gold statue for his temple was another expense. He paid for it by publishing an edict that he would receive New-Year's gifts at the main-gate of the Palace. When the day came he sent parties of Guards out to herd the City crowds up the Palatine Hill at the sword-point and make them shed every coin they had on them into great tubs put out for the

purpose. They were warned that if they tried to dodge the Guards or hold back a single farthing of money they would be liable to instant death. By evening two thousand huge tubs had been filled.

It was about this time that he said to Ganymede and Agrippinilla and Lesbia: "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you idle drones. What do you do for your living? You're mere parasites. Are you aware that every man and woman in Rome works hard to support me? Every wretched baggage-porter gladly pays me one-eighth of his wage, and every poor prostitute the same."

Agrippinilla said: "Well, brother, you have stripped us of practically all our money on one pretext or another. Isn't that enough?"

"Enough? Indeed it isn't. Money inherited is not the same as money honestly earned. I'm going to make you girls and boys work."

So he advertised in the Senate, by distributing leaflets, that on such and such a night a most exclusive and exquisite brothel would be opened at the Palace, with entertainment to suit all tastes provided by persons of the most illustrious birth. Admission, only one thousand gold pieces. Drinks free. Agrippinilla and Lesbia, I am sorry to say, did not protest very strongly against Caligula's disgraceful proposal, and indeed thought that it would be great fun. But they insisted that they should have the right of choosing their own customers and that Caligula should not take too high a commission on the money earned. Much to my disgust I was dragged into this business, by being dressed up as the comic porter. Caligula, wearing a mask and disguising his voice, was the bawd-master, and played all the usual bawd-master tricks for cheating his guests of their pleasure and their money. When they protested, I was called upon to act as chucker-out. I am strong enough in the arms, stronger than most men, I may say, though my legs are very little use to me: so I caused a great deal of amusement by my clumsy hobbling and by the unexpectedly heavy drubbing I gave

the guests when I managed to get hold of them. Caligula declaimed in a theatrical voice, the lines from Homer:

Vulcan with awkward grace his office plies  
And unextinguished laughter shakes the skies.

This was the passage in the First Book of the *Iliad* where the lame God goes hobbling about Olympus and the other Gods all laugh at him. I was lying on the floor pounding Lesbia's husband with my fists—it wasn't often that I got such a chance of paying back old scores—and raising myself up I said:

Then from his anvil the lame craftsman rose.  
Wide, with distorted legs, oblique he goes,

and staggered over to the refreshment table. Caligula was delighted and quoted another couple of lines which occur just before the "unextinguished laughter" passage:

If you submit, the Thunderer stands appeased,  
The Gracious God is willing to be pleased.

This was how he came to call me Vulcan, a title that I was glad to win, because it gave me a certain protection against his caprices.

Caligula then quietly left us, removed his disguise and reappeared as himself, coming in from the Palace courtyard by the door where he had posted me. He pretended to be utterly surprised and shocked at what was going on and stood declaiming Homer again—Ulysses's shame and anger at the behaviour of the palace-women:

As thus pavilioned in the porch he lay,  
Scenes of lewd loves his wakeful eyes survey;  
Whilst to nocturnal joys impure repair  
With wanton glee, the prostituted fair.

His heart with rage this new dishonour stung,  
 Wavering his thought in dubious balance hung.  
 Or, instant should he quench the guilty flame  
 With their own blood, and intercept the shame;  
 Or to their lust indulge a last embrace,  
 And let the peers consummate the disgrace;  
 Round his swoln heart the murmurous fury rolls;  
 As o'er her young the mother-mastiff growls,  
 And bays the stranger groom: so wrath compress'd  
 Recoiling, mutter'd thunder in his breast.  
 "Poor, suffering heart", he cried, "support the pain  
 Of wounded honour and thy rage restrain!  
 Not fiercer woes thy fortitude could foil  
 When the brave partners of thy ten-year toil  
 Dire Polypheme devoured: I then was freed  
 By patient prudence from the death decreed."

"For 'Polypheme' read 'Tiberius'," he explained. Then he clapped his hands for the Guard, who came running up at the double. "Send Cassius Chærea here at once!" Cassius was sent for and Caligula said: "Cassius, old hero, you who acted as my war-horse when I was a child, my oldest and most faithful family-friend, did you ever see such a sad and degrading sight as this? My two sisters prostituting their bodies to senators in my very Palace, my uncle Claudius standing at the gate selling tickets of admission! Oh, what would my poor mother and father have said if they had lived to see this day!"

"Shall I arrest them all, Cæsar?" asked Cassius, eagerly.

"No, to their lust indulge a last embrace  
 And let the peers consummate the disgrace,"

Caligula replied resignedly, and made mother-mastiff noises in his throat. Cassius was told to march the Guard off again.

It was not the last orgy of this sort at the Palace and thereafter Caligula made the senators who had attended the show bring their wives and daughters to assist Agrippinilla

and Lesbia. But the problem of raising money was becoming acute again and Caligula decided to visit France and see what he could do there.

He first gathered an enormous number of troops, sending for detachments from all the regular regiments, and forming new regiments, and raising levies from every possible quarter. He marched out of Italy at the head of one hundred and fifty thousand men and increased them, in France, to a quarter of a million. The expense of arming and equipping this immense force fell on the cities through which he passed: and he commandeered the necessary food supplies from them too. Sometimes he went forward at a gallop and made the army march forty-eight hours or more on end to catch up with him, sometimes he went forward at the rate of only a mile or two a day, admiring the scenery from a sedan-chair carried on eight men's shoulders and frequently stopping to pick flowers.

He sent letters ahead ordering the presence at Lyons, where he proposed to concentrate his forces, of all officials in France and the Rhine provinces who were over the rank of captain. Among those who obeyed the summons was Gætulicus, one of my dear brother Germanicus's most valued officers, who had been in command of the four regiments of the Upper Province for the last few years. He was very popular among the troops because he kept up the tradition of mild punishments and of discipline based on love rather than on fear. He was popular with the regiments in the Lower Province too, commanded by his father-in-law Apronius—for Gætulicus had married a sister of that Apronia whom my brother-in-law Plautius was supposed to have thrown out of the window. At the fall of Sejanus he would have been put to death by Tiberius because he had promised his daughter in marriage to Sejanus's son, but he escaped by writing the Emperor a bold letter. He said that *so long as he was allowed to retain his command* his allegiance could be counted on, and so could that of the



troops. Tiberius wisely let him alone. But Caligula envied him his popularity and almost as soon as he arrived had him arrested.

Caligula had not invited me on this expedition, so I missed what followed and cannot write about it in detail. All I know is that Ganymede and Gætulicus were accused of conspiracy—Ganymede with designs on the monarchy, Gætulicus with abetting him, and that both were put to death without trial. Lesbia and Agrippinilla (the latter's husband had lately died of dropsy) were also supposed to be in the plot. They were banished to an island off the coast of Africa near Carthage. It was a very hot, very arid island where sponge-fishing was the only industry, and Caligula ordered them to learn the trade of diving for sponges, for he said that he could not afford to support them longer. But before being sent to their island they had a task laid on them: they had to walk to Rome, all the way from Lyons, under an armed escort, and take turns at carrying in their arms the urn in which Ganymede's ashes had been put. This was a punishment for their persistent adultery with Ganymede, as Caligula explained in a loftily styled letter he sent the Senate. He enlarged on his own great clemency in not putting them to death. Why, they had proved themselves worse than common prostitutes: no honest prostitute would have had the face to ask the prices they asked, and got, for their debaucheries!

I had no reason to feel sorry for my nieces. They were as bad as Caligula, in their way, and treated me very spitefully. When Agrippinilla's baby was born three years before she had asked Caligula to suggest a name for it. Caligula said, "Call it Claudius and it will be sure to turn out a beauty." Agrippinilla was so furious that she nearly struck Caligula; instead she turned quickly round and spat towards me—and then burst into tears. The baby was called Lucius Domitius.\* Lesbia was too proud to pay attention to me or acknowledge my presence in any way. If I

\* Afterwards the Emperor Nero.—R.G.

happened to meet her in a narrow passage she used to walk straight on down the middle without slackening her pace, making me squeeze against the wall. It was difficult for me to remember that they were the children of my dear brother and that I had promised Agrippina to do my very best to protect them.

I had the embarrassing duty assigned to me of going to France, at the head of an embassy of four ex-Consuls, to congratulate Caligula on his suppression of the conspiracy. This was my first visit to France since my infancy and I wished I was not making it. I had to take money from Calpurnia for travelling expenses, for my estate and home had not yet found a buyer, and I could not count on Caligula's being pleased to see me. I went by sea from Ostia, landing at Marseilles. It appears that after banishing my nieces Caligula had auctioned the jewellery and ornaments and clothes they had brought with them. These fetched such high prices that he also sold their slaves and then their freedmen, pretending that these were slaves too. The bids were made by rich provincials who wanted the glory of saying, "Yes, such and such belonged to the Emperor's sister. I bought it from him personally!" This gave Caligula a new idea. The old Palace where Livia had lived was now shut up. It was full of valuable furniture and pictures and relics of Augustus. Caligula sent for all this stuff to Rome and made me responsible for its safe and prompt arrival at Lyons. He wrote "Send it by road, not by sea. I have a quarrel on with Neptune." The letter arrived only the day before I sailed, so I put Pallas in charge of the job. The difficulty was that all the surplus horses and carts had already been commandeered for the transport of Caligula's army. But Caligula had given the order, and horses and conveyances had somehow to be found. Pallas went to the Consuls and showed them Caligula's orders. They were forced to commandeer public mail-coaches and bakers' vans and the horses that turned the corn-mills, which was a great inconvenience to the public.

So it happened that one evening in May just before sunset Caligula, sitting on the bridge at Lyons engaged in imaginary conversation with the local river-god saw me coming along the road in the distance. He recognized my sedan by the dice-board I have fitted across it: I beguile long journeys by throwing dice with myself. He called out angrily: "Hey, you sir, where are the carts? Why haven't you brought the carts."

A.D. 40 I called back: "Heaven bless your Majesty! The carts won't be here for a few days yet, I fear. They are coming by land, through Genoa. My colleagues and I have come by water."

"Then back by water you'll go, my man," he said. "Come here!"

When I reached the bridge I was pulled out of my sedan by two German soldiers and carried to the parapet above the middle arch, where they sat me with my back to the river. Caligula rushed forward and pushed me over. I turned two back-somersaults and fell what seemed like a thousand feet before I struck the water. I remember saying to myself: "Born at Lyons, died at Lyons!" The river Rhône is very cold, very deep and very swift. My heavy robe entangled my arms and legs, but somehow I managed to keep afloat, and to clamber ashore behind some boats about half a mile downstream, out of sight of the bridge. I am a much better swimmer than I am a walker: I am strong in the arms and being rather fat from not being able to take exercise and from liking my meals I float like a cork. By the way, Caligula couldn't swim a stroke.

He was surprised, a few minutes later, to see me come hobbling up the road, and laughed hugely at the stinking muddy mess I was in. "Where have you been, my dear Vulcan?" he called.

I had the answer pat:

I felt the Thunderer's might,  
Hurled headlong downward from th'etherial height.

Tost all the day in rapid circles round  
Nor till the sun descended touch'd the ground.  
Breathless I fell, in giddy motions lost;  
The Sinthians raised me on the Lemnian coast.

"For 'Lemnian' read 'Lyonian,'" I said. He was sitting on the parapet with my three fellow-envoys lying on the ground face-downwards in a row before him. He had his feet on the necks of two and his swordpoint balanced between the shoulders of the third, Lesbia's husband, who was sobbing for mercy. "Claudius," he groaned, hearing my voice, "beseech the Emperor to set us free: we only came to offer him our loving congratulations."

"I want carts, not congratulations," said Caligula.

It seemed as if Homer had written the passage from which I had just quoted on purpose for this occasion. I said to Lesbia's husband:

Be patient and obey.

Dear as you are, if Jove his arm extend  
I can but grieve, unable to defend.  
What soul so daring in your aid to move  
Or lift his hand against the might of Jove?

Caligula was delighted. He said to the three suppliants: "What are your lives worth to you? Fifty thousand gold pieces each?"

"Whatever you say, Cæsar," they answered faintly.

"Then pay poor Claudius that sum as soon as you get back to Rome. He's saved your lives by his ready tongue." So they were allowed to rise and Caligula made them sign a promise, then and there, to pay me one hundred and fifty thousand gold pieces in three month's time. I said to Caligula: "Most gracious Cæsar, your need is greater than mine. Will you accept one hundred thousand gold pieces from me, when they pay me, in gratitude for my own salvation? If you condescended to take that gift, I would still have fifty thousand left, which would enable me to pay my

initiation fee in full. I have worried a great deal about that debt."

He said, "Anything that I can do that will contribute to your peace of mind!" and called me his Golden Farthing.

So Homer saved me. But Caligula a few days later warned me not to quote Homer again. "He's a most over-rated author. I am going to have his poems called in and burned. Why shouldn't I put Plato's philosophical recommendations into practice? You know *The Republic*? An admirable piece of argument. Plato was for keeping all poets whatsoever out of his ideal state: he said that they were all liars, and so they are."

I asked: "Is your Sacred Majesty going to burn any other poets besides Homer?"

"Oh, indeed, yes. All the over-rated ones. Virgil for a start. He's a dull fellow. Tries to be a Homer and can't do it."

"And any historians?"

"Yes, Livy. Still duller. Tries to be a Virgil and can't do it."