

CHAPTER V

AT Rome we lived in the big house which had belonged to my grandfather and which he had left in his will to my grandmother. It was on the Palatine Hill, close to Augustus's palace and the temple of Apollo built by Augustus, where the library was. The Palatine Hill looked down on the Market Place. Under the steepest part of the cliff was the temple of the Twin Gods, Castor and Pollux. (This was the old temple, built of timber and sods, which sixteen years later Tiberius replaced, at his own expense, with a magnificent marble structure, the interior painted and gilded and furnished as sumptuously as a rich noblewoman's boudoir. My grandmother Livia made him do this to please Augustus, I may say. Tiberius was not religious-minded and very stingy with money.) It was healthier on that hill than down in the hollow by the river; most of the houses there belonged to senators. I was a very sickly child—"a very battleground of diseases", the doctors said—and perhaps only lived because the diseases could not agree as to which should have the honour of carrying me off. To begin with, I was born prematurely, at only seven months, and then my foster-nurse's milk disagreed with me, so that my skin broke out in an ugly rash, and then I had malaria, and measles which left me slightly deaf in one ear, and erysipelas, and colitis, and finally infantile paralysis which shortened my left leg so that I was condemned to a permanent limp. Because of one or other of these various illnesses I have all my life been so weak in the hams that to run or walk long distances has never been possible for me: a great deal of my travelling has had to be done in a sedan—often, after eating, in the pit of my stomach. It has been so chair. Then there is the appalling pain that catches me

bad that on two or three occasions, if my friends had not intervened, I would have plunged a carving-knife (which I madly snatched up) into the place of torment. I have heard it said that this pain, which they call "the cardiac passion", is worse than any other pain known to man except the strangury. Well, I must be thankful, I suppose, that I have never had the strangury.

It will be supposed that my mother Antonia, a beautiful and noble woman brought up to the strictest virtue by her mother Octavia, and the one passion of my father's life, would have taken the most loving care of me, her youngest child, and even made a particular favourite of me in pity for my misfortunes. But such was not the case. She did all for me that could be expected of her as a duty, but no more. She did not love me. No, she had a great aversion to me, not only because of my sickliness but also because she had had a most difficult pregnancy of me, and then a most painful delivery from which she barely escaped with her life and which left her more or less an invalid for years. My premature birth was due to a shock that she got at the feast given in honour of Augustus when he visited my father at Lyons to inaugurate the "Altar of Roma and Augustus" there: my father was Governor of the Three Provinces of France, and Lyons was his headquarters. A crazy Sicilian slave who was acting as waiter at the feast suddenly drew a dagger and flourished it in the air behind my father's neck. Only my mother saw this happening. She caught the slave's eye and had presence of mind enough to smile at him and shake her head in deprecation, signing to him to put the dagger back. While he hesitated two other waiters followed her glance and were in time to overpower and disarm him. Then she fainted and immediately her pains began. It may well be because of this that I have always had a morbid fear of assassination; for they say that a pre-natal shock can be inherited. But of course there is no real reason for any pre-natal influences to be mentioned. How many of the Imperial family have died a natural death?

Since I was an affectionate child my mother's attitude caused me much misery. I heard from my sister Livilla, a beautiful girl but cruel, vain and ambitious—in a word a typical Claudian of the bad variety—that my mother had called me “a human portent” and said that when I was born the Sibylline books should have been consulted. Also that Nature had begun but never finished me, throwing me aside in disgust as a hopeless start. Also that the ancients were wiser and nobler than ourselves: they exposed all weakly infants on a bare hillside for the good of the race. These may have been embroideries by Livilla on less severe remarks—for seven-months' children are very horrible objects—but I know that once when my mother grew angry on hearing that some senator had introduced a foolish motion in the House she burst out: “That man ought to be put out of the way! He's as stupid as a donkey—what am I saying? Donkeys are sensible beings by comparison—he's as stupid as . . . as . . . Heavens, he's as stupid as my son Claudius!”

Germanicus was her favourite, as he was everyone's favourite, but so far from envying him for the love and admiration that he won wherever he went I rejoiced on his behalf. Germanicus pitied me and did the most he could to make my life happier, and recommended me to my elders as a good-hearted child who would repay generous and careful treatment. Severity only frightened me, he would say, and made me more sickly than I need be. And he was right. The nervous tic of my hands, the nervous jerking of my head, my stammer, my queasy digestion, my constant dribbling at the mouth, were principally due to the terrors to which, in the name of discipline, I was subjected. When Germanicus stood up for me my mother used to laugh indulgently and say “Noble heart, find some better object for your overflow!” But my grandmother Livia's way of talking was: “Don't be a fool, Germanicus. If he reacts favourably to discipline, we shall treat him with the kindness he deserves. You're putting the cart before the horse.” My grandmother seldom spoke to me and when she did it

was contemptuously and without looking at me, mostly to say "Get out of this room, child, I want to be in it." If she had occasion to scold me she never did so by word of mouth but sent a short, cold note. For example: "It has come to the knowledge of the Lady Livia that the boy Claudius has been wasting his time mooning about the Apollo Library. Until he can profit from the elementary text-books provided for him by his tutors it is absurd for him to meddle with the serious works on the Library shelves. Moreover his fidgeting disturbs genuine students. This practice must cease."

As for Augustus, though he never treated me with calculated cruelty, he disliked having me in the same room with him as much as my grandmother did. He was extraordinarily fond of little boys (remaining to the end of his life an overgrown boy himself), but only of the sort that he called "fine manly little fellows", such as my brother Germanicus and his grandchildren, Gaius and Lucius, who were all extremely good-looking. There were a number of sons of confederate kings or chieftains, kept as hostages for their parents' good behaviour—from France, Germany, Parthia, North Africa, Syria—who were educated with his grandchildren and the sons of leading senators in the Boys' College; and he often came into the cloisters there to play at taws, or knucklebones, or tag. His chief favourites were little brown boys, the Moors and Parthians and Syrians: and those who could rattle away happily to him in boyish talk as if he were one of themselves. Only once did he try to master his repugnance to me and let me into a game of taws with his favourites: but it was so unnatural an effort that it made me more than usually nervous—and I stammered and shook like a mad thing. He never tried again. He hated dwarfs and cripples and deformities, saying that they brought bad luck and should be kept out of sight. Yet I could never find it in my heart to hate Augustus as I came to hate my grandmother, for his dislike of me was without malice and he did what he could to master it: and indeed I must have been a wretched little oddity, a disgrace to so strong and

magnificent a father and so fine and stately a mother. Augustus was a fine-looking man himself, though somewhat short, with curly fair hair that went grey only very late in his life, bright eyes, merry face and upright graceful carriage.

I remember once overhearing an elegiac epigram that he made about me, in Greek, for the benefit of Athenodorus, a Stoic philosopher, from Tarsus in Cilicia, whose simple serious advice he often asked. I was about seven years old and they came upon me by the carp-pool in the garden of my mother's house. I cannot remember the epigram exactly, but the sense of it was: "Antonia is old-fashioned: she does not buy a pet marmoset at great expense from an Eastern trader. And why? Because she breeds them herself." Athenodorus thought for a moment and replied severely in the same metre: "Antonia, so far from buying a pet marmoset from Eastern traders, does not even cosset and feed with sugar-plums the poor child of her noble husband." Augustus looked somewhat abashed. I should explain that neither he nor Athenodorus, to whom I had always been represented as a half-wit, guessed that I could understand what they were saying. So Athenodorus drew me towards him and said playfully in Latin: "And what does young Tiberius Claudius think about the matter?" I was sheltered from Augustus by Athenodorus's big body and somehow forgot my stammer. I said straight out, in Greek: "My mother Antonia does not pamper me, but she has let me learn Greek from someone who learned it directly from Apollo." All I meant was that I understood what they were saying. The person who had taught me Greek was a woman who had been a priestess of Apollo on one of the Greek islands but had been captured by pirates and sold to a brothel-keeper in Tyre. She had managed to escape, but was not permitted to be priestess again because she had been a prostitute. My mother Antonia, recognizing her gifts, took her into the family as a governess. This woman used to tell me that she had learned directly from Apollo, and I was merely quoting her: but as Apollo was the God of learning and

poetry my remark sounded far wittier than I intended. Augustus was startled and Athenodorus said: "Well spoken, little Claudius: marmosets don't understand a word of Greek, do they?" I answered: "No, and they have long tails, and steal apples from the table." However, when Augustus began eagerly questioning me, taking me from Athenodorus's arm, I grew self-conscious and stammered as badly as ever. But from thenceforth Athenodorus was my friend.

There is a story about Athenodorus and Augustus which does great credit to both. Athenodorus told Augustus one day that he did not take nearly enough precaution about admitting visitors to his presence: one day he would get a dagger in his vitals. Augustus replied that he was talking nonsense. The next day Augustus was told that his sister, the Lady Octavia, was outside and wished to greet him on the anniversary of their father's death. He gave orders for her immediate admittance. She was an incurable invalid when this happened—it was the year she died—and was always carried about in a covered sedan. When the sedan was brought in, the curtains parted and out sprang Athenodorus with a sword, which he pointed at Augustus's heart. Augustus, so far from being angry, thanked Athenodorus and confessed that he had been very wrong to treat his warning so casually.

One extraordinary event in my childhood I must not forget to record. One summer when I was just eight years old my mother, my brother Germanicus, my sister Livilla, and I were visiting my Aunt Julia in a beautiful country-house close to the sea at Antium. It was about six o'clock in the evening and we were out taking the cool breeze in a vineyard. Julia was not with us, but Tiberius's son, that Tiberius Drusus whom we afterwards always called "Castor", and Postumus and Agrippina, Julia's children, were in the party. Suddenly we heard a great screeching above us. We looked up and saw a number of eagles fighting. Feathers floated down. We tried to catch them. Germanicus and Castor

each caught one before it fell and stuck it in his hair. Castor had a small wing feather, but Germanicus a splendid one from the tail. Both were stained with blood. Spots of blood fell on Postumus's upturned face and on the dresses of Livilla and Agrippina. And then something dark dropped through the air. I do not know why I did so, but I put out a fold of my gown and caught it. It was a tiny wolf-cub, wounded and terrified. The eagles came swooping down to retrieve it, but I had it safe hidden and when we shouted and threw sticks they rose baffled, and flew screaming off. I was embarrassed. I didn't want the cub. Livilla grabbed at it, but my mother, who looked very grave, made her give it back to me. "It fell to Claudius," she said. "He must keep it."

She asked an old nobleman, a member of the College of Augurs, who was with us, "Tell me what this portends."

The old man answered, "How can I say? It may be of great significance or none."

"Don't be afraid. Say what it seems to mean to you."

"First send the children away," he said.

I do not know whether he gave her the interpretation which, when you have read my story, will be forced on you as the only possible one. All I know is that while we other children kept our distance—dear Germanicus had found another tail-feather for me, sticking in a hawthorn bush, and I was putting it proudly in my hair—Livilla crept up inquisitively behind a rose-hedge and overheard something. She interrupted, laughing noisily: "Wretched Rome, with *him* as her protector! I hope to God I'll be dead before then!"

The Augur turned on her and pointed with his finger. "Impudent girl," he said, "God will no doubt grant your wish in a way that you won't like!"

"You're going to be locked up in a room with nothing to eat, Child," said my mother. Those were ominous words too, now I come to recall them. Livilla was kept in bounds for the rest of her holidays. She revenged herself, on me, in a variety of ingeniously spiteful ways. But she could

not tell us what the Augur had said, because she had been bound with an oath by Vesta and our household gods never to refer to the portent either directly or in a round-about way, in the lifetime of anyone present. We were all made to take that oath. Since I have now for many years been the only one left alive of that party—my mother and the Augur, though so much older, surviving all the rest—I am no longer bound to silence. For some time after this I often caught my mother looking curiously at me, almost respectfully, but she treated me no better than before.

I was not allowed to go to the Boys' College, because the weakness of my legs would not let me take part in the gymnastic exercises which were a chief part of the education, and my illnesses had made me very backward in lessons, and my deafness and stammer were a handicap. So I was seldom in the company of boys of my own age and class, the sons of the household slaves being called in to play with me: two of these, Callon and Pallas, both Greeks, were later to be my secretaries, entrusted with affairs of the highest importance. Callon became the father of two other secretaries of mine, Narcissus and Polybius. I also spent much of my time with my mother's women, listening to their talk as they sat spinning or carding or weaving. Many of them, such as my governess, were women of liberal education and, I confess, I found more pleasure in their society than in that of almost any society of men in which I have since been placed: they were broadminded, shrewd, modest, and kindly.

My tutor I have already mentioned, Marcus Porcius Cato who was, in his own estimation at least, a living embodiment of that ancient Roman virtue which his ancestors had one after the other shown. He was always boasting of his ancestors, as stupid people do who are aware that they have done nothing themselves to boast about. He boasted particularly of Cato the Censor, who of all characters in Roman history is to me perhaps the most hateful, as having persistently championed the cause of "ancient virtue" and made it

identical in the popular mind with churlishness, pedantry and harshness. I was made to read Cato the Censor's self-glorifying works as text-books, and the account that he gave in one of them of his campaign in Spain, where he destroyed more towns than he had spent days in that country, rather disgusted me with his inhumanity than impressed me with his military skill or patriotism. The poet Virgil has said that the mission of the Roman is to rule: "To spare the conquered and with war the proud, To overbear." Cato overbore the proud, certainly, but less with actual warfare than with clever management of inter-tribal jealousies in Spain: he even employed assassins to remove redoubtable enemies. As for sparing the conquered, he put multitudes of unarmed men to the sword even when they unconditionally surrendered their cities, and he proudly records that many hundreds of Spaniards committed suicide, with all their families, rather than taste of Roman vengeance. Was it to be wondered that the tribes rose again as soon as they could get a few arms together, and that they have been a constant thorn in our side ever since? All that Cato wanted was plunder and a triumph: a triumph was not granted unless so-and-so many corpses—I think it was five thousand at this time—could be counted, and he was making sure that no one would challenge him, as he had himself jealously challenged rivals, for having pretended to a triumph on an inadequate harvest of dead.

Triumphs, by the way, have been a curse to Rome. How many unnecessary wars have been fought because generals wanted the glory of riding crowned through the streets of Rome with enemy captives led in chains behind them, and the spoils of war heaped on carnival wagons? Augustus realized this: on Agrippa's advice, he decreed that henceforth no general, unless a member of the Imperial family, should be awarded a public triumph. This decree, published in the year that I was born, read as though Augustus were jealous of his generals, for by that time he had finished with active campaigning himself and no members of his family were

old enough to win triumphs; but all it meant was that he did not wish the boundaries of the Empire enlarged any further, and that he reckoned that his generals would not provoke the frontier tribes to commit acts of war if they could not hope to be awarded triumphs by victory over them. None the less he allowed "triumphal ornaments"—an embroidered robe, a statue, a chaplet, and so on—to be awarded to those who would otherwise have earned a triumph; this should be a sufficient incentive to any good soldier to fight a necessary war. Triumphs, besides, are very bad for military discipline. Soldiers get drunk and out of hand and usually finish the day by breaking up the wine-shops and setting fire to the oil-shops and insulting the women and generally behaving as if Rome were the city they had conquered, not some miserable log-hut encampment in Germany or sand-burrowed village in Morocco. After a triumph celebrated by a nephew of mine, whom I shall soon be telling you about, four hundred soldiers and nearly four thousand private citizens lost their lives one way and another—five big blocks of tenements in the prostitutes' quarter of the City were burned to the ground and three hundred wine-shops sacked, besides any amount of other damage.

But I was on the subject of Cato the Censor. His manual of husbandry and household economy was made my spelling book and every time I stumbled over a word I used to get two blows; one on my left ear for my stupidity, and one on my right for insulting the noble Cato. I remember a passage in the book which summed up the mean-souled fellow very well: "A master of a household should sell his old oxen, and all the horned cattle that are of a delicate frame; all his sheep that are not hardy, their wool, their very pelts; he should sell his old wagons and his old instruments of husbandry; he should sell such of his slaves as are old and infirm and everything else that is worn out or useless." For myself, when I was living as a country gentleman on my little estate at Capua, I made a point of putting my worn-out beasts first

to light work and then to grass until old age seemed too much of a burden to them, when I had them knocked on the head. I never demeaned myself by selling them for a trifle to a countryman who would work them cruelly to their last gasp. As for my slaves, I have always treated them generously in sickness and health, youth and old age and expected the highest degree of devotion from them in return. I have seldom been disappointed, though when they have abused my generosity I have had no mercy on them. I have no doubt old Cato's slaves were always falling sick, with the hope of being sold to a more humane master, and I also think it likely that he got, on the whole, less honest work and service out of them than I get out of mine. It is foolish to treat slaves like cattle. They are more intelligent than cattle, capable besides of doing more damage in a week to one's property by wilful carelessness and stupidity than the entire price you have paid for them. Cato made a boast of never spending more than a few pounds on a slave: any evil-looking cross-eyed fellow that seemed to have good muscles and teeth would do. How on earth he managed to find buyers for these beauties when he had quite finished with them I cannot say. From what I know of the character of his descendant, who was supposed to resemble him closely in looks—sandy-haired, green-eyed, harsh-voiced and heavily built—and in character, I guess that he bullied his poor neighbours into taking all his cast-off stuff at the price of new.

My dear friend Postumus, who was a little less than two years older than myself—the truest friend, except Germanicus, that I have ever had—told me that he had read in a contemporary book that old Cato was a regular crook besides being a skinflint: he was guilty of some very sharp practice in the shipping trade, but avoided public disgrace by making one of his ex-slaves the nominal trader. As Censor, in charge of public morals, he did some mighty queer things: they were allegedly in the name of public decency but really, it seems, to satisfy his personal spites. On his own showing,

he expelled one man from the order of senators because he had been "wanting in Roman gravity"—he had kissed his wife in daylight in his daughter's presence! When challenged by a friend of the expelled man, another senator, as to the justice of his decision and asked whether he himself and his wife never embraced except during the marital act, Cato replied hotly: "Never!" "What, *never*?" "Well, a couple of years ago, to be frank with you, my wife happened to throw her arms around me during a thunderstorm which scared her, but fortunately nobody was about and I assure you it will be a long time before she does it again." "Oh," said the senator, pretending to misunderstand him, for Cato meant, I suppose, that he had given his wife a terrible lecture for her want of gravity, "I'm sorry about that. Some women aren't very affectionate with plain-looking husbands, however upright and virtuous they may be. But never mind, perhaps Jove will be good enough to thunder again soon."

Cato did not forgive that senator, who was a distant relative. A year later he was going through the roll of senators, as his duty as Censor was, asking each man in turn whether he was married. There was a law, which has since lapsed, that all senators should be honourably married. The turn came for his relative to be examined, and Cato asked him in the usual formula, which enjoined the senator to answer "in his confidence and honesty". "If you have a wife, in your confidence and honesty, answer!" Cato intoned in his raucous voice. The man felt a little foolish, because after joking about Cato's wife's affection for Cato, he had found that his own wife had so far lost her affection for himself that he was now forced to divorce her. So to show goodwill and turn the joke decently against himself he replied: "Yes, indeed, I *have* a wife, but she's not in my confidence any more, and I wouldn't give much for her honesty, either." Cato thereupon expelled him from the Order for irreverence.

And who brought the Punic Curse on Rome? That same old Cato who, whenever he was asked his opinion in the

Senate on any matter whatever, would end his speech with: "This is my opinion; and my further opinion is that Carthage should be destroyed: she is a menace to Rome." By harping incessantly on the menace of Carthage he brought about such popular nervousness that, as I have said, the Romans eventually violated their most solemn commitments and razed Carthage to the ground.

I have written about old Cato more than I intended, but it is to the point: he is bound up in my mind both with the ruin of Rome, for which he was just as responsible as the men whose "unmanly luxury," he said, "enervated the State," and with the memory of my unhappy childhood under that muleteer, his great-great-great-grandson. I am already an old man and my tutor has been dead these fifty years, yet my heart still swells with indignation and hatred when I think of him.

Germanicus stood up for me against my elders in a gentle persuasive way, but Postumus was a lion-like champion. He seemed not to care a fig for anyone. He even dared to speak out straight to my grandmother Livia herself. Augustus made a favourite of Postumus, so for a while Livia pretended to be amused at what she called his boyish impulsiveness. Postumus trusted her at first, being himself incapable of deceit. One day when I was twelve and he was fourteen he happened to be passing by the room where Cato was giving me my lessons. He heard the sound of blows and my cries for mercy and came bursting angrily in. "Stop beating him, at once!" he shouted.

Cato looked at him in scornful surprise and fetched me another blow that knocked me off my stool. Postumus said: "Those that can't beat the ass, beat the saddle." (That was a proverb at Rome.)

"Impudence, what do you mean?" roared Cato.

"I mean," said Postumus, "that you're revenging yourself on Claudius for what you consider a general conspiracy to keep you down. You're really too good for the job of tutoring him, eh?" Postumus was clever: he guessed that

this would make Cato angry enough to forget himself. And Cato rose to the bait, shouting out with a string of old-fashioned curses that in the days of his ancestor, whose memory this stammering imp was insulting, woe betide any child who failed in reverence to his elders; for they dealt out discipline with a heavy hand in those days. Whereas in these degenerate times the leading men of Rome gave any ignorant oafish lout (this was for Postumus) or any feeble-minded decrepit-limbed little whippersnapper (this was for me) full permission——

Postumus interrupted with a warning smile: "So I was right. The degenerate Augustus insults the great Censor by employing you in his degenerate family. I suppose you have told the Lady Livia just how you feel about things?"

Cato could have bitten off his tongue with vexation and alarm. If Livia should hear what he had said, that would be the end of him; he had hitherto always expressed the most profound gratitude for the honour of being entrusted with the education of her grandchild, not to mention the free return of the family estates—confiscated after the Battle of Philippi, where his father had died fighting against Augustus. Cato was wise enough or cowardly enough to take the hint, and after this my daily torments were considerably abated. Three or four months later, much to my delight, he ceased to be my tutor, on his appointment to the headmastership of the Boys' College. Postumus came under his tutelage there.

Postumus was immensely strong. At the age of not quite fourteen he could bend a bar of cold iron as thick as my thumb across his knee, and I have seen him walk around the playground with two boys on his shoulders, one on his back and one standing on each of his hands. He was not studious, but of an intellect far superior to Cato's, to say the least of it, and in his last two years at the College the boys elected him their leader. In all the school games he was "The King"—strange how long the word "king" has survived with schoolboys—and kept a stern discipline over his

fellows. Cato had to be very civil to Postumus if he wanted the other boys to do what he wanted; for they all took their cue from Postumus.

Cato was now required by Livia to write her out half-yearly reports on his pupils: she remarked that if she felt them to be of interest to Augustus she would communicate them to him. Cato understood from this that his reports were to be non-committal unless he had a hint from her to praise or censure any particular boy. Many marriages were arranged while the boys were still at the College, and a report might be useful to Livia as an argument for or against some contemplated match. Marriages of the nobility at Rome had to be approved by Augustus as High Pontiff and were for the most part dictated by Livia. One day Livia happened to visit the College cloisters, and there was Postumus in a chair issuing decrees as the King. Cato noticed that she frowned at the sight. He was emboldened to write in his next report: "With great unwillingness but in the interests of virtue and justice, I am compelled to report that the boy Agrippa Postumus is inclined to display a savage, domineering and intractable temper." After this Livia behaved to him so graciously that his next report was even stronger. Livia did not show the reports to Augustus but kept them in reserve, and Postumus himself had no knowledge of them.

Under Postumus's kingship I had the happiest two years of my youth, I may say of my life. He gave orders to the other boys that I was to be freely admitted to games in the cloisters, though not a member of the College, and that he would regard any incivility or injury to me as incivility or injury to himself. So I took part in whatever sports my health allowed and it was only when Augustus or Livia happened to come along that I slipped into the background. In place of Cato I now had good old Athenodorus for my tutor. I learned more from him in six months than I had learned from Cato in six years. Athenodorus never beat me and used by the greatest patience. He used to encourage me by

saying that my lameness should be a spur to my intelligence. Vulcan, the God of all clever craftsmen, was lame too. As for my stammer, Demosthenes the noblest orator of all time had been born with a stammer, but had corrected it by patience and concentration. Demosthenes had used the very method that he was now teaching me. For Athenodorus made me declaim with my mouth full of pebbles: in trying to overcome the obstruction of the pebbles I forgot about the stammer and then the pebbles were removed one at a time until none remained, and I found to my surprise that I could speak as well as anyone. But only in declamations. In ordinary conversation I still stammered badly. He made it a pleasant secret between himself and me that I could declaim so well. "One day, Cercopithecion, we shall surprise Augustus," he would say. "But wait a little longer." When he called me Cercopithecion ["little marmoset"], it was for affection, not scorn, and I was proud of the name. When I did badly he would shame me by rolling out, "Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus, remember who you are and what you are doing." With Postumus and Athenodorus and Germanicus as my friends I gradually began to win self-confidence.

Athenodorus told me, the very first day of his tutorship, that he proposed to teach me not facts which I could pick up anywhere for myself, but the proper presentation of facts. And this he did. One day, for example, he asked me, kindly enough, why I was so excited: I seemed A.D. 2 unable to concentrate on my task. I told him that I had just seen a huge draft of recruits parading on Mars Field under Augustus's inspection before being sent off to Germany, where war had recently broken out again. "Well," said Athenodorus, still in the same kindly voice, "since this is so much on your mind that you can't appreciate the beauties of Hesiod, Hesiod can wait until to-morrow. After all, he's waited seven hundred years or more, so he won't grudge us another day. And meanwhile, suppose you were to sit down and take your tablets and write me a

letter, a short account of all that you saw on Mars Field; as if I had been five years absent from Rome and you were sending me a letter across the sea, say to my home in Tarsus. That would keep your restless hands employed and be good practice too." So I gladly scribbled away on the wax, and then we read the letter through for faults of spelling and composition. I was forced to admit that I had told both too little and too much, and had also put my facts in the wrong order. The passage describing the lamentations of the mothers and sweethearts of the young soldiers, and how the crowd rushed to the bridgehead for a final cheer of the departing column, should have come last, not first. And I need not have mentioned that the cavalry had horses: people took that for granted. And I had twice put in the incident of Augustus's charger stumbling: once was enough if the horse only stumbled once. And what Postumus had told me, as we were going home, about the religious practices of the Jews, was interesting, but did not belong here because the recruits were Italians, not Jews. Besides, at Tarsus he would probably have more opportunities of studying Jewish customs than Postumus had at Rome. On the other hand I had not mentioned several things that he would have been interested to hear—how many recruits there were in the parade, how far advanced their military training was, to what garrison town they were being sent, whether they looked glad or sorry to go, what Augustus said to them in his speech.

Three days later Athenodorus made me write out a description of a brawl between a sailor and a clothes dealer which we had watched together that day as we were walking in the rag-market; and I did much better. He first applied this discipline to my writing, then to my declamations, and finally to my general conversation with him. He took endless pains with me, and gradually I grew less scatterbrained, for he never let any careless, irrelevant, or inexact phrase of mine pass without comment.

He tried to interest me in speculative philosophy, but

when he saw that I had no bent that way he did not force me to exceed the usual bounds of polite education in the subject. It was he who first inclined me to history. He had copies of the first twenty volumes of Livy's history of Rome, which he gave me to read as an example of lucid and agreeable writing. Livy's stories enchanted me and Athenodorus promised me that as soon as I had mastered my stammer I should meet Livy himself, who was a friend of his. He kept his word. Six months later he took me into the Apollo Library and introduced me to a bearded stooping man of about sixty with a yellowish complexion, a happy eye and a precise way of speaking, who greeted me cordially as the son of a father whom he had so much admired. Livy was at this time not quite half-way through his history, which was to be completed in one hundred and fifty volumes and to run from the earliest legendary times to the death of my father some twelve years previously. It was at this date that he had begun publishing his work, at the rate of five volumes a year, and he had now reached the date at which Julius Caesar was born. Livy congratulated me on having Athenodorus as my tutor. Athenodorus said that I well repaid the pains he spent on me; and then I told Livy what pleasure I had derived from reading his books since Athenodorus had recommended them to me as a model for writing. So everybody was pleased, especially Livy. "What! Are you to be a historian too, young man?" he asked. "I should like to be worthy of that honourable name," I replied, though I had indeed never seriously considered the matter. Then he suggested that I should write a life of my father, and offered to help me by referring me to the most reliable historical sources. I was much flattered and determined to start the book next day. But Livy said that writing was the historian's last task: first he had to gather his materials and sharpen his pen. Athenodorus would lend me his little sharp penknife, Livy joked.

Athenodorus was a stately old man with dark gentle eyes, a hooked nose and the most wonderful beard that surely ever

grew on human chin. It spread in waves down to his waist and was as white as a swan's wing. I do not make this as an idle poetical comparison for I am not the sort of historian who writes in pseudo-epic style. I mean that it was literally as white as a swan's wing. There were some tame swans on an artificial lake in the Gardens of Sallust, where Athenodorus and I once fed them with bread from a boat, and I remember noticing that his beard and their wings as he leaned over the side were of exactly the same colour. Athenodorus used to stroke his beard slowly and rhythmically as he talked, and told me once that it was this that made it grow so luxuriantly. He said that invisible seeds of fire streamed off from his fingers, which were food for the hairs. This was a typical Stoic joke at the expense of Epicurean speculative philosophy.

Mention of Athenodorus's beard reminds me of Sulpicius, who, when I was thirteen years old, was appointed by Livia as my special history-tutor. Sulpicius had, I think, the most wretched-looking beard I have ever seen: it was white, but the white of snow in the streets of Rome after a thaw—a dirty greyish-white streaked with yellow, and very ragged. He used to twist it in his fingers when he was worried and would even put the ends in his mouth and chew them. Livia chose him, I believe, because she thought him the most boring man in Rome and hoped by making him my tutor to discourage my historical ambitions; for she soon came to hear of them. Livia was right: Sulpicius had a genius for making the most interesting things seem utterly vapid and dead. But even Sulpicius's dryness could not turn me away from my work, and there was this about him, that he had a most exceptionally accurate memory for facts. If I ever wanted some out-of-the-way information, such for instance as the laws of succession to the chieftainship among one of the Alpine tribes against whom my father had fought, or the meaning and etymology of their outlandish battle-cry, Sulpicius would know what authority had treated of these points, in which book, and from which shelf of which case

in which room of which library they were to be obtained. He had no critical sense and wrote miserably, the facts choking each other, like flowers in a seed-bed that has not been thinned out. But he proved an invaluable assistant when later I learned to use him as such, instead of as a tutor; and he worked for me until his death at the age of eighty-seven, nearly thirty years later, his memory remaining unimpaired to the last, and his beard as discoloured and thin and disordered as ever.