

THE ANNALS



PUBLIUS CORNELIUS TACITUS

A Translation into English by

A. S. KLINE

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ABOUT THIS WORK

Tacitus' *Annals* set out to cover the history of the Roman Empire from the death of Augustus and the accession of Tiberius to the later part of Nero's reign. Sadly, large parts of his text are lost including his description of the whole of Caligula's reign and the early part of that of Claudius, but what remains gives us our most detailed picture of Imperial rule. As Tacitus' final and most mature work, the *Annals* exhibit his strong grasp of power politics and his lucid insight into imperial psychology. The deterioration of senatorial freedom and of the moral character of the aristocracy under Tiberius, whose reign starts well but ultimately descends into quasi-tyranny, is well-portrayed, and his detailed portrait of Tiberius is memorable. Tacitus throughout seeks to maintain an objective balance, basing his narrative on solid evidence, and documentary sources, yet also takes the opportunity to express his own views and feelings regarding the abuse of power, the corruption displayed by individuals, and the character faults which undermined Imperial rule, especially in his handling of Nero's reign.

BOOK I: I-XXX
TIBERIUS ACCEDES TO POWER



'Julius Caesar with the Laurel Crown'
History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p569, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK I:I A SUMMARY OF ROME'S POLITICAL HISTORY

In the beginning, the city of Rome was ruled by kings (from its founding in 753BC); freedom and the consulate were instituted by Lucius Brutus (consul in 509BC). Dictators held temporary sway; while the power of the Decemviri lasted less than two years (451BC), nor did the consular authority of the military tribunes endure (408-367BC).

Neither Cinna (consul 87-84BC) nor Sulla (dictator 82-79BC) dominated long, and Crassus (at Carrhae 53BC) and Pompey (at Pharsalia 48BC) swiftly yielded power to Caesar; Lepidus (36BC) and Antony (at Actium 31BC) their swords to Octavian, who under the name of prince, received a world weary of civil war beneath his imperial rule (as Augustus 27BC).

But while the successes and disasters of ancient Rome have been related by famous writers; and there was no lack of noble intellects to speak of the Augustan age, until the tide of adulation deterred them; reports of the actions attributed to Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero were distorted by fear while they lived, and by enduring hatred once they were dead.

Therefore, I plan to describe only a small part of Augustus' reign, the last, then the principate of Tiberius and the rest, without anger or partisanship, distanced as I am from such motives.

BOOK I:II OCTAVIAN'S ACCESSION

After the deaths of Brutus and Cassius had disarmed the people, with Sextus Pompeius crushed off Sicily (in the naval defeat off Pelorum, 36BC), with Lepidus discarded and Antony's life ended, the Julian faction itself would have been leaderless but for Octavian. Relinquishing his title of

triumvir, he professed himself a plain consul, content to wield only a tribune's authority in safeguarding the commons.

Seducing the military with gifts, the people with cheap grain, the world with the delights of peace, he gradually gained power, taking to himself the duties of the senate, the magistracy and the law, unopposed. The boldest had fallen in the field or been proscribed, the remaining nobility, raised to wealth and high office by their propensity for servitude, profiting from the turn of events, preferred security and their present situation to the dangers of the old order.

Nor did the provinces oppose this state of affairs, the power of the senate and people having been discredited by the quarrels among the great and the magistrates' avarice, there being no help from a legal system skewed by force, favouritism and in the end bribery.

BOOK I:III HIS CONSOLIDATION OF POWER AS AUGUSTUS

Furthermore, to consolidate his power, he honoured Marcus Claudius Marcellus, his nephew and still an adolescent, with the pontificate and curule aedileship; and Marcus Agrippa, of non-aristocratic origin but a good military man, with two successive consulates, selecting him as his son-in-law on the death of Marcellus (23BC).

His step-sons, Tiberius Nero and Claudius Drusus, were each titled Emperor even though his own line had direct descendants, for he had adopted the sons of Agrippa and Julia the Elder, Gaius and Lucius, into the house of the Caesars, and even during their minority had displayed, despite a show of reluctance, a burning desire to see them designated as consuls and titled the young princes.

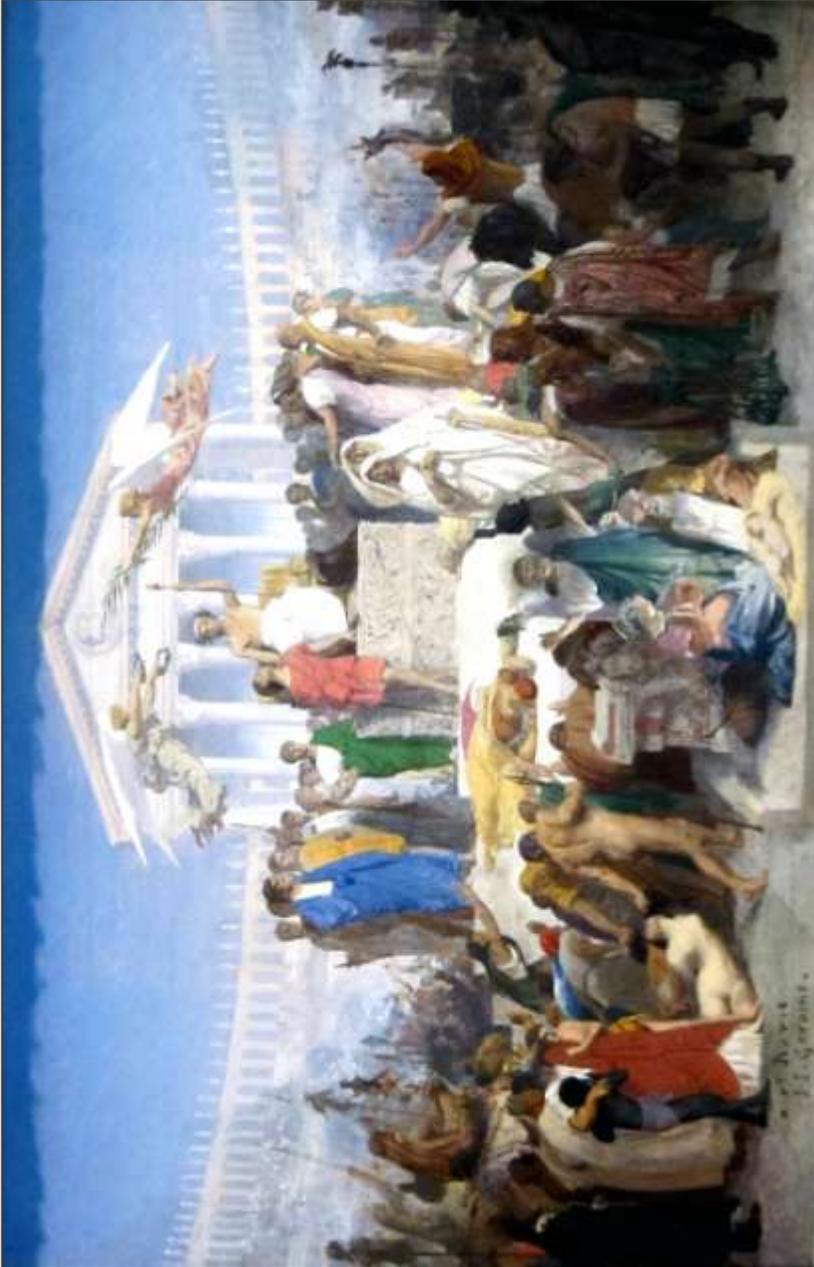
When Agrippa died (12BC), untimely fate or the guile of their stepmother Livia did away with Lucius and Gaius, Lucius on his way to the

army in Spain, Gaius when wounded and ill after campaigning in Armenia. Claudius Drusus was long dead; of the stepsons only Tiberius Nero survived, on him all depended. Adopted as son, imperial colleague, and consort with tribunician power, he was displayed to the armies, not covertly as before due to his mother Livia's diplomacy, but openly and with her encouragement.

For so tight a grip had she on the ageing Augustus, that he banished his one surviving grandson, Agrippa Postumus, to the island of Pianosa (Planasia). He, though indeed unskilled in the art of virtue, but stolidly proud of his physical strength, was guilty of no obvious scandal.

Nevertheless he appointed Germanicus, Drusus' son, to the command of eight legions on the Rhine, ordering Tiberius to adopt him, even though Tiberius had an adult son already (but only of the Claudian and not also the Julian line), as an additional safeguard.

The only war at the time was the campaign against the Germans, waged more to regain the reputation lost with Quintilius Varus and his men (three legions were destroyed at the Battle of the Teutoberg Forest, 9BC), than from a desire to extend the empire, or gain a worthy prize. At home, all was tranquil, officials held past titles; the younger generation were born after the victory at Actium (31BC), even the older generations were mostly born during the civil wars; very few who were left had witnessed the Republic.



'The Age of Augustus, the Birth of Christ'
Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, c1824 - 1904)
Wikimedia Commons

BOOK I:IV THE AGEING EMPEROR

Thus in this new form of the state nothing remained of the ancient and virtuous ways: all, abandoning the idea of equality, looked to the prince's authority, with no immediate misgivings, as long as Augustus, in his prime, sustained himself, his house and the peace.

But when his advancing years were aggravated by bodily sickness, and the end approached with its hopes of a new dawn, a few voices began, if in vain, to proclaim the blessings of liberty, though more feared war, while some desired it. By far the majority, however, spread derogatory thoughts about the likely successors: Agrippa, truculent and enraged by his humiliations, was through age and inexperience unequal to such a burden; Tiberius was mature in years and proven in warfare, but showed the old innate arrogance of the Claudians; and strong indications of a cruel nature emerged however much he repressed them.

He had been reared from infancy in the ruling house; consulates and triumphs had been showered on him in his youth: and even during his years as an exile in Rhodes, in apparent retirement, his thoughts centred only on his indignation, on dissimulation, and his hidden desires.

Add to this his mother with her woman's lack of self-control, and they would be slaves to the female, and a pair of youngsters also, who would, in the process, oppress the state and someday tear it apart.

BOOK I:V THE DEATH OF AUGUSTUS AND THE ACCESSION OF TIBERIUS

While these and like things were discussed, Augustus' health worsened and some suspected his wife of foul play. For a rumour had circulated that Augustus, a few months earlier and to the knowledge of

only a select few, had sailed for Pianosa, with Fabius Maximus his only companion, to visit Postumus; and that there the tears and signs of affection on both their parts brought the hope that the young man might yet return to his grandfather's house.

They said that Maximus had disclosed the visit to his wife Marcia, and Marcia told Livia. Augustus learned of this; and after Maximus' death, possibly by suicide, which followed closely, Marcia was heard, during the funeral, sobbing while reproaching herself for causing her husband's death.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Tiberius had scarce landed in Illyricum when he was recalled by an urgent letter from his mother; and it is not clear whether, on reaching Nola, he found Augustus dead or still breathing. For Livia had ringed the street and house with hostile guardsmen, cheerful news being disseminated until appropriate measures had been taken, when finally one and the same notice proclaimed that Augustus had died, and that Tiberius was in control of public affairs.

BOOK I:VI THE EXECUTION OF POSTUMUS

The first crime of the new principate was the murder of Postumus, whom the resolute centurion sent to despatch him found hard to kill, despite Postumus being surprised unarmed. Tiberius said nothing of the matter in the senate.

He pretended to an order of Augustus whereby, once that emperor himself had met his end, the tribune guarding Postumus was instructed to put the prisoner to death without delay. True, Augustus, with frequent and savage criticism of the youth's morals, had won senatorial sanction for his exile; but he was never hardened to the execution of his relatives, and it is scarcely credible that he would have brought about the death of his own grandson to consolidate the position of a stepson.

It is more likely that Tiberius and Livia, the former through fear, the latter due to a stepmother's hatred, hastened the killing of a young man they suspected and detested. To the centurion who brought the customary report that 'what had been ordered had been done', Tiberius replied that he himself had given no order, and the action taken would have to be accounted for in front of the senate.

When Sallustius Crispus, a party to the imperial secrets (he had sent the note to the tribune) heard of this, fearing he might be accused, and incurring risk whether he lied or told the truth, warned Livia not to make known the inner workings of the palace, the advice given by her friends, or the services performed by the military, and to ensure that Tiberius did not weaken the imperial power by referring everything to the senate: the situation of government was such that accounts only tallied if rendered by one person alone.

BOOK I:VII TIBERIUS CONSOLIDATES POWER

Yet, in Rome, consuls, senators, and knights were rushing into servitude. The more illustrious the person the greater their hypocrisy and haste, their expressions composed to reveal neither pleasure at the emperor's departure, nor gloom on his arrival, tears blended with joy, lament with adulation.

The consuls, Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius, were the first to swear allegiance to Tiberius Caesar, then, in their presence, Seius Strabo and Gaius Turranius, the former the prefect of the praetorian cohorts, the latter of the grain supply; finally the senators, soldiers and populace. For Tiberius effected everything via the consuls as in the old Republic, and as if the source of authority were ambiguous. Even his edict summoning the Fathers to the senate house was only issued with the force of his tribunician title, received from Augustus.

This edict was in few words and very moderate in tone: he intended to pay the last respects to his father, whose body he could not leave, the only function of the state he would himself exercise. Yet, at Augustus' death, he had assigned the passwords to the praetorian cohorts as emperor; he appointed the sentries, bodyguard, and the rest of the court; guards escorted him to the forum, and the curia. He sent despatches to the army as if the principate were his, showing no sign of hesitation, except when speaking in the senate.

His chief motive was fear, lest Germanicus, with his many legions, the support of the provinces, and his wondrous popularity with the people, might prefer to take power rather than anticipate it. He conceded to public opinion too, in wanting to seem one summoned to power and elected by the state, rather than worming his way there through a woman's intrigues and a senile act of adoption.

It was realised later that this feigned hesitancy was in order to gain insight into the inclinations of the nobility: since he was storing away words and glances of theirs, interpreted by him as crimes.

BOOK I:VIII AUGUSTUS' FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS DISCUSSED

Nothing was discussed at the first meeting of the senate but the funeral of Augustus, whose will, brought to them by the Vestal Virgins, named Tiberius and Livia as heirs. Livia was to be adopted into the Julian family and to take the Augustan name. As secondary legatees he had named his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and thirdly he had named the foremost citizens, despite loathing most of them, in an ostentatious bid for posterity's approval.

His bequests were not beyond the usual civic level, except that he left four hundred and thirty-five thousand gold pieces to the nation and the populace, ten gold pieces to every member of the praetorian guard, five to

each man of the city militia, and three to the legionaries and the members of the Roman cohorts.

The question of funeral honours was then debated; of which the two most significant were proposed by Asinius Gallus, that the funeral procession should pass beneath a triumphal archway, and by Lucius Arruntius, that before it should be borne plaques naming all the laws he had enacted, and all the peoples he had conquered.

In addition Valerius Messalla proposed that the oath of allegiance to Tiberius be renewed annually; interrogated by Tiberius as to whether his own feelings had prompted that suggestion, he replied that he had spoken spontaneously, and that he employed no one's judgment but his own when public affairs were in question, even if doing so might risk giving offence (this reply was the sole form of flattery left to him!)

The senators clamoured for the corpse to be carried to the funeral pyre on the shoulders of the Fathers. Tiberius, with haughty restraint, dismissed the idea, and warned the populace by edict not to repeat the excessive enthusiasm that had formerly disturbed the funeral of the divine Julius, by desiring that Augustus be cremated in the Forum and not on the Field of Mars at the resting place he had appointed.

On the day of the funeral, the soldiers were positioned as if on guard, and comprehensively mocked by those who had seen with their own eyes, or whose fathers had told them of, that day of a servitude still undigested and a freedom unsuccessfully reattempted, when the murder of Caesar the dictator seemed to some the worst of actions, and to others the finest: and now saw how, for an aged emperor long in power who had even ensured his heirs would be a force in public affairs, military protection was still needed to ensure a peaceful burial!

BOOK I:IX THE BENEFITS OF AUGUSTUS' RULE

Many then spoke of Augustus himself, mostly marvelling at idle coincidence, that the same day in the year should have seen his first assumption of authority and the last of his life (elected consul 19th August 43BC, died 19th August AD14); and that his life ended at Nola, in the same house and in the same room as his father Octavius. Even the number of his consulates was celebrated, in which he equalled the combined total of Valerius Corvus and Gaius Marius (thirteen); his tribunician powers continuous for thirty-seven years; his title of Imperator received twenty-one times; and other honours multiplied or new.

Among the circumspect however his career was praised in part and condemned in part. On the one hand filial respect and the demands of public affairs which found no place for the rule of law, had forced him to adopt the weapons of civil war, weapons which can neither be forged nor wielded in virtuous ways. Then he had overlooked much in Antony and in Lepidus while revenging himself on his adoptive father's murderers.

And when Lepidus grew old and was idle, when Antony was destroyed by his passions, the only remedy for a troubled nation was government by one man. Yet he rebuilt the state not through monarchy or dictatorship but under the title of First Citizen. The empire was now defended by the Ocean waves or distant rivers. The legions, the provinces, the fleets, the whole empire was interconnected; there were laws for the citizen, discipline among the allies; and Rome itself had been magnificently embellished. Very little had been carried out by force, and then only to ensure quiet.

BOOK I:X THE CRITICISM OF AUGUSTUS' RULE

Against this it was said that filial duty and the state of public affairs had been used as a pretext; rather it was from desire for power that he roused the veteran soldiers with payments, raised an army while still a youth and a private citizen, tempted away Antony's legions, and pretended allegiance to Pompey's side.

Then after usurping the symbols and authority of the praetorship, by senatorial decree, came the deaths of Pansa and Hirtius, whether at enemy hands, or in Pansa's case by poison applied to his wounds, or in Hirtius' case by his own soldiers with Augustus as the deceitful instigator of the crime. At any event, he had appropriated both their armies, extorted a consulate from the unwilling senate, and turned the forces he had accepted to defeat Antony against the state: and the proscription of citizens and assignment of land, were not acceptable even to those who carried them out.

True, Cassius and Brutus were sacrificed to a son's loathing of his father's murderers, though the right of the matter is that a private enmity should have yielded to the public will: but Pompey was betrayed by a pretence of peace (Misenum, 39BC), Lepidus by a false show of friendship. Then Antony, seduced by the treaties of Brindisi (40BC) and Taranto (37BC), and his marriage with Octavian's sister (Octavia the Younger, 40BC) paid with his life for a connection forged in deception.

Peace indeed followed, but a gory peace in truth: with the disasters encountered by Lollius (who lost a legion, 16BC), and Varus (who lost three at the Teutoberg Forest, AD9); and the executions of Varro Murena (23BC, for conspiracy), Egnatius Rufus (19BC, likewise) and Iullus Antonius (2BC, for adultery with Julia).

Nor were his domestic arrangements free from comment: the seduction of Tiberius Claudius Nero's wife (Livia), leaving the pontiffs with the ludicrous question as to whether with child (later the emperor Tiberius) in her womb but not yet born, she could legally marry; the debaucheries

and cruelties of Vedius Pollio; and lastly Livia herself, as a mother a bane to the state (by bearing Tiberius), as a stepmother a bane to the house of Caesars (by complicity in the deaths of Gaius and Lucius).

Little space was left for honouring the gods, it was said, since he wished to be worshipped himself in the temples, and in effigy as a godhead, by the flamens and priests.

Even in adopting Tiberius as his successor, the motive was neither affection nor care for the state, but because he had reflected on Tiberius' arrogance and cruelty, and sought glory for himself in comparison with one far worse. Indeed, a few years before, when requesting the Fathers to renew Tiberius' tribunician power, Augustus, though his speech was complimentary, let fall a few comments on Tiberius' character, appearance and way of life, by way of reproach and almost apology.

For the rest, his funeral being carried out as normal, he was decreed a temple and divine rites.

BOOK I:XI TIBERIUS FEIGNS DIFFIDENCE

All pleas were then directed at Tiberius. Yet he reflected aloud on the greatness of empire and his own diffidence: saying that only the mind of the deified Augustus was equal to such a burden: he had learned from his own experience, when called on by him to share his concerns, how arduous, how subject to fortune was the task of ruling a world. In consequence, in a state bolstered by the support of so many illustrious men, all should not defer to a single one: the duties of government were more easily executed by the joint efforts of many.

Such a speech was more dignified than convincing; and Tiberius, even in matters in which he did not conceal his thoughts, seemed always, by nature or habit, diffident and obscure; and now, in striving to hide his innermost feelings, he became more entangled than ever in uncertainty and ambiguity.

But the Fathers, whose sole fear was of seeming to understand him, lapsed into lament, tears and prayer: and while they stretched their arms towards the heavens, towards the statue of Augustus, towards Tiberius' own knees, he ordered a document (left by Augustus) to be brought out and read aloud. It contained a statement of the nation's resources, the strength of the citizens and allies when armed, the fleets, kingdoms and provinces, the tributes due and taxes, the payments to be made and the customary gifts.

All these were listed by Augustus in his own hand, and he added the advice, either through apprehension or jealousy of his own achievements, that the empire be restricted to its present borders.

BOOK I:XII ASINIUS GALLUS OFFENDS TIBERIUS

While the senate bowed in abject supplication, Tiberius chanced to say that, though unequal to the full weight of public affairs, whatever role he was assigned, he would undertake that charge. Then Asinius Gallus said: 'May I ask, Caesar, which public office you wish to be assigned to?'

Disconcerted by this unforeseen request, Tiberius was silent for a moment; then, collecting himself, he replied that it would not become his modesty to choose or evade any part of that from which he would prefer to be wholly excused. Gallus (interpreting Tiberius' expression as one of actual displeasure) continued, saying that Caesar was not being asked by his question to divide that which could not be separated, but that it might be known, on his own admission, that the body politic was a single being, needing to be governed by a single intelligence.

He then added words in praise of Augustus, urging Tiberius to recall his own victories and the outstanding contributions he had made, year after year, in peacetime. He failed however to soothe Tiberius' anger, being a man hated ever since his marriage to Vipsania, the daughter of Marcus

Agrippa, who had once been Tiberius' wife, and one who might harbour ambitions above his station, while possessing the spirit of his father, Asinius Pollio.

BOOK I:XIII FOLLOWED BY OTHERS

After that, Lucius Arrentius, in a speech not dissimilar to that of Gallus, gave equal offence, though in his case Tiberius held no previous grudge against him. But being rich, energetic, and of outstanding gifts and corresponding popularity, he was suspect. Indeed Augustus, in his last conversations, in speaking of who might hold power, those competent but uninterested, those who were willing but unequal to the task, and those both capable and desirous of it, commented that Manius Lepidus had the capacity but spurned the idea, Asinius Gallus was eager but inadequate, yet Lucius Arrentius he described as not unworthy and, should an opportunity arise, bold enough.

Some accounts have Gnaeus Piso for Arruntius, while agreeing on the first two; but all except Lepidus, were soon beset by various accusations engineered by Tiberius. Quintus Haterius and Mamercus Scaurus also troubled that suspicious mind, Haterius by asking: 'How long, Caesar, will you suffer the state to lack a head?' Scaurus by saying that as Tiberius had not employed his tribunician powers to veto the consuls' motion it was to be hoped the senate's prayers would not be in vain.

He immediately savaged Haterius; but passed over Scaurus, against whom his anger was more implacable, in silence. Tired at last of the general outcry, and individual appeals, he gradually yielded, not by acknowledging that he undertook the sovereignty himself, but by ceasing to refuse when entreated.

It is well-known that Haterius, on entering the palace to beg indulgence, threw himself down at the knees of the advancing Tiberius, and was almost slain by the guards when Tiberius stumbled, either inadvertently

or because he was impeded by the suppliant. Yet he was not softened even by the jeopardy in which so great a man had been placed, until Haterius appealed to Livia (Julia Augusta) and was shielded by her heartfelt requests.

BOOK I: XIV TIBERIUS' ATTITUDE TO HONOURING LIVIA

Livia (Julia Augusta) was much fawned upon by the senators, some calling her the parent others the mother of the nation, and a majority proposing that 'Son of Julia' be added to 'Tiberius' appellations. He, declaring that the honours awarded to women should be limited, and that the same moderation should be shown towards them in such matters as to himself (though he was filled with jealousy and regarded the elevation of women as a diminution of his own status), would not allow her even a lictor, and prohibited the dedication of an altar celebrating her adoption, and other such things.

Yet he sought pro-consular powers for Germanicus Caesar, and legates were sent to bestow them, so that he might be consoled for his grief at Augustus' death. That the same request was not made on behalf of Drusus the Younger was because he was consul designate and was present in the senate.

Tiberius nominated twelve candidates for the praetorship, the number inherited from Augustus; and when pressed by the senate to augment that number he bound himself, by oath, never to exceed it.

BOOK I: XV PRAETORS NO LONGER ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE

Now for the first time the election of praetors was transferred from the Campus to the senate; until that day, though the most important were chosen by will of the emperor, a few had remained in the hands of the Tribes. The loss of this right brought no complaint from the populace, except idle murmurs, and the senate, freed from the sordid need to buy or beg votes, were happy to administer the election. Tiberius recommended no more than four candidates, to be appointed without the possibility of rejection or competition.

Meanwhile, the plebeian tribunes sought to mount games at their own expense, which would be named for Augustus, and added to the calendar as the Augustalia. It was decreed however that the cost should be borne by the treasury, and while they might wear triumphal robes in the Circus, to be drawn by chariot was forbidden. Later the whole event was transferred to a praetor, the one who happened to have jurisdiction over lawsuits between citizens and foreigners.

BOOK I: XVI MUTINY IN PANNONIA

This was the state of affairs in the capital when a mutiny began among the Pannonian legions, for no fresh reason but simply that the change of emperors offered an opportunity for licensed anarchy and hopes of the rewards of civil conflict.

Three legions, stationed in summer quarters, were commanded by Junius Blaesus, who, hearing of Augustus' death and Tiberius's accession, suspended normal duties to allow for the mourning, and the following celebration. With this, the soldiers' devilry began; they became argumentative, gave the words of agitators a hearing, acquired a desire, in short, for luxury and ease, scorning discipline and effort.

There was one Percennius in camp, once a foreman behind the scenes in a theatre, now a common soldier, but with a ready tongue and experienced in the actor's art of stirring an audience. Gradually, in conversations at night, or in the twilight hours, he began to influence ignorant minds troubled about the conditions of service now Augustus was dead, and to unite the worst elements when the better had dispersed.

BOOK I:XVII PERCENNIUS WHIPS UP THE CROWD

When others shared in his sedition, and they were finally ready, he harangued them as to why they obeyed a handful of centurions and fewer tribunes, as though they were slaves. How would they ever dare to claim redress, if they dedicated their prayers and weapons to a new and not yet established prince? Enough evil had been done throughout their years of cowardice, which saw old warriors, many of whom had lost limbs, making their thirtieth or fortieth campaign. Even on discharge, their military service was not at an end, but camped beneath their own colours they endured the same labour under another name.

And if a man survived all these hazards, he was hauled off to the ends of the earth once more, to receive some piece of marshland, or barren hillside as his 'farm.' In fact soldiering was a profitless burden: ten coins of bronze a day was what body and soul were judged to be worth: with that they must buy clothes, weapons, canvas, and bribe the savage centurion for a brief respite. Yet, by the heavens, wounds and blows, harsh winters and troublesome summers, fierce wars and barren peace were theirs eternally.

There would be no lightening of the load until military service was determined by law, their pay a silver piece a day, sixteen years to put an end to duty, no further term of service under their own colours, and their gratuity to be paid in cash, in camp. Did the praetorian cohorts, who had two silver pieces a day, and went home again after their sixteen years, risk greater perils? They too had no objection to sentry-duty in Rome: yet they served among savage tribes, the enemy visible from their tents.

BOOK I:XVIII OUTBREAK OF MUTINY

The crowd roared their approval, roused by the various claims, these displaying the marks of the lash, those their grey hairs, most of them their threadbare clothing and naked flesh. In the end it drove them to such frenzy they proposed to unite the three legions in one. Thwarted by jealousy, since each sought the prize for his own legion, they chose another course, planting the three eagles and the cohort standards side by side. At the same time, they gathered turf to build a platform, to make the place more visible.

As they were labouring, Blaesus arrived, crying out against them, and dragging men back by force: 'Better to bathe your hands in my blood,' he shouted, 'less of a crime to kill your general than rebel against your emperor. Let me live among loyal legions, or my murder bring on their repentance!'

BOOK I:XIX BLAESUS ADDRESSES THE TROOPS

None the less the mound of turf kept growing, and was already chest-high before his firmness conquered and they abandoned the work. Blaesus then spoke persuasively, saying that mutiny and disturbance were not the best way of bringing their claims to the emperor's attention; such things had not been asked of their leaders by those who served before them, nor of the deified Augustus by themselves; and this was no time to add to a new emperor's burdens. Yet if they wished to claim in peacetime what not even the victors of the civil war had claimed, why oppose with force the path of duty, the rules of discipline? They should name representatives, he said, and give them their instructions in his presence.

They clamoured then for Blaesus' son, a tribune, to act as their legate and seek the discharge of all soldiers with over sixteen years' service; they

would issue the rest of their demands once the first had succeeded. The young man's departure brought a modicum of calm, the soldiers elated, as their general's son pleading the common cause showed clearly that pressure had exacted that which restraint would not have obtained.

BOOK I:XX THE MUTINY SPREADS TO NAUPORTUS (VRHNIKA, SLOVENIA)

Meanwhile, the companies sent to Nauportus, before the mutiny began, to work on the roads, bridges and other tasks, hearing of the disturbances in camp, tore down their ensigns, and ravaged the neighbouring villages and Nauportus itself, virtually a town.

The centurions resisted, to jeers and insults and ultimately blows, the main anger being directed against Aufidienus Rufus, the camp-prefect, who was dragged from his cart, loaded with baggage, and pushed to the head of the column amidst playful enquiries as to how he liked heavy loads and endless marches. For Rufus, long a private soldier, then a centurion, and only lately camp-prefect, had tried to return to the harsh discipline of the past, seasoned himself to work and toil, and as such all the more implacable.

BOOK I:XXI THE FRESH MUTINEERS ARRIVE IN CAMP

Their arrival in camp revived the mutiny, and overran the surrounding area. Blaesus ordered those of them most weighed down with plunder to be whipped and incarcerated, to terrify the rest; for he was still obeyed by the leading centurions and the best of the men. As the guilty were dragged away they struggled, grasped the bystanders' knees, called out the names of their particular friends, their company, their cohort, their legion, crying out that the same fate threatened them all.

At the same time, they heaped curses on their general, praying to heaven and the gods as witnesses, leaving out nothing which might arouse enmity or mercy, fear or anger. The mass of soldiers ran to their aid, forced the prison-block, unchained them and even recruited freed deserters and men on capital charges.

BOOK I:XXII VIBULENUS ROUSES THE MEN

Then the flames burned more fiercely, the mutiny found fresh leaders. And Vibulenus, a private in the ranks, was hoisted on the shoulders of the crowd before Blaesus' tribunal, and asked of that turbulent and attentive mass: 'You are they who have restored light and life to these innocent and wretched men, but who can restore my brother's life, and give him back to me?

He was sent to you by the army of Germany, in our common interest, and last night he was killed by Blaesus' gladiators, whom he keeps and arms to murder soldiers. Answer, Blaesus, where have you hurled his corpse? He to whom even the enemy would not grudge a grave?

Let them butcher me as well, when I shall have exhausted my grief in tears and embraces, but lay us both in the earth, we who died not for any crime but because we spoke of serving the legions.'

BOOK I:XXIII TURMOIL IN THE CAMP

He incited them further, weeping and striking at his face and chest, then he disengaged himself from the shoulders that supported him, and flung himself headlong at the feet of man after man, until he caused such consternation and aroused such anger, that one gang arrested Blaesus' gladiators, another the rest of his servants, while others flew off in search of the corpse.

Indeed, if it had not soon be evident that there was no corpse, and the servants denied the murder under torture, and in fact Vibulenus had never had a brother, they would have been close to killing their general. As it was, they drove out the tribunes and the camp prefect and plundered the fugitives' possessions.

A centurion, Lucilius, was slain, who had been nick-named 'Get-Another' by the camp wits, from his habit, as he broke one rod on a soldier's back, of shouting loudly for another, and then another. The rest of the centurions succeeded in hiding, one Julius Clemens being retained, whose quick wits the mutineers thought might be useful in presenting their demands.

And then the Fifteenth and Eighteenth legions were ready to cross swords with each other, over the execution of a centurion called Sirpicus, demanded by the Fifteenth, if the soldiers of the Ninth had not interceded with their entreaties, and threats when those were met with contempt.

BOOK I:XXIV TIBERIUS SENDS HIS SON DRUSUS THE YOUNGER TO PANNONIA

This drove Tiberius, reserved and secretive though he was whenever the news was worst, to send his son, Drusus the Younger, to Pannonia, with powerful citizens and two praetorian cohorts, but with no specific instructions, rather to take appropriate measures. Picked men gave the cohorts exceptional strength. A large troop of praetorian cavalry was added, and the finest of the Germans then forming the imperial bodyguard.

At the same time, Aelius Sejanus, commander of the praetorians with his father Strabo as colleague, who held great sway over Tiberius, was sent to guide the prince's actions, and alert the rest to risk and reward.

On his approach, the legions went out to meet him, as if out of duty, not with joy as customary, nor glittering with decorations, but squalid and unwashed and with looks that, seeming sorrowful, came closer to insolence.

BOOK I:XXV DRUSUS ADDRESSES THE MUTINEERS

The moment he entered, the sentries closed the gates, and ordered squads of armed men to hold fixed positions within the camp, while the rest, in a solid body, surrounded the tribunal. Drusus stood there, signalling with his hand for silence. The mutineers, glancing round frequently at their numbers, to a roar of truculent voices, turned back to look at Drusus and trembled. Vague murmurs, fierce cries, and sudden lulls, showed them, moved by their varying emotions, as both terrified and terrifying.

At last, during a moment of quiet, Drusus read his father's letter, in which he said that he had special regard for the bravest of legions, with whom he had endured so many campaigns; and that once the grief in his mind abated, he would place their claims before the appropriate senators, and that in the interim he had sent his son to enact without delay any reforms that could be instituted there and then; the rest must be reserved for the senate, which might be seen by them as equally free of neither favour nor harshness.

BOOK I:XXVI CLEMENS, THEIR SPOKESMAN, REPLIES

Their reply was that Clemens, the centurion, would present their demands in a speech. He began with their discharge from service after sixteen years, the premium to be paid for completed service, with pay set at a silver piece a day, and no veteran to be held to serve under the colours.

Drusus offered the pretext that authority lay with the senate and his father, but was interrupted by shouting: why was he there, if he could neither raise their pay nor ease their burdens, in short if he had no licence to do them good? Yet death and the lash, by heaven, were freely allowed! Tiberius used to parry the legions' requests by use of Augustus' name: now Drusus revived that old trick!

Would no one ever be visited upon them except these sons of the family? A wonderful thing indeed that the only matter the emperor referred to the senate was his soldier's pay! He might consult the senate then, when battles and executions were in question. Or was pay a matter delegated to the noble lords, while punishment went uncontrolled?

BOOK I:XXVII LENTULUS ATTACKED BY THE MUTINEERS

In the end they abandoned the tribunal, shaking their fists at any guardsman or member of Drusus' staff they happened upon, a fresh pretext for disorder and use of arms, their greatest anger being against Gnaeus Lentulus whom they thought, with his years and military reputation, to be hardening Drusus' heart, and to be the first to scorn such disgrace to the service.

Not long afterwards, they caught him leaving with Drusus, since he had smelt danger and was making for the winter quarters. Surrounding him, they asked where he was off to, the emperor, or their senate paymasters, so that he could work to the legions' disadvantage there too?

They closed in, then, and began to throw stones. Hit by a fragment, and bleeding, convinced he was about to be killed, he was saved by the arrival of Drusus' well-manned escort.

BOOK I:XXVIII A LUNAR ECLIPSE, DRUSUS ENDS THE MUTINY

A night of menace, about to erupt in blood, was relieved by fate, when the moon, its light waning, grew dark though the sky was cloudless. The soldiers, not understanding the reason, took it as a present omen, the

moon's eclipse a sign of their own struggles, which would yield a happy result if only the goddess's brilliance and clarity could be restored.

Thus the clanging of bronze, and a chorus of bugles and horns, rang out; and they rejoiced then mourned as, amidst now rising cloud, she seemed to brighten then fade, until sight of her was lost, and they thought her entombed in darkness. So open to superstition are the minds of men unnerved, they lamented the eternal hardships portended for themselves, and that the divine face had averted itself from their crimes.

Drusus, reflecting that this turn of events must be put to use, and wisdom should follow where fate had led the way, ordered a round of the tents. Clemens the centurion was summoned along with any other officer popular with the men for his qualities. These men joined the watch, the patrols, the sentries at the gates, offering hope and spreading fear: 'How long must we besiege our emperor's son? What will be the end of this mutiny? Are we to swear loyalty to Percennius and Vibulenus? Will Percennius and Vibulenus grant us our pay, and the land we earn? Are they to seize power over the Roman people, from the line of Nero and Drusus? Rather as the last to offend, should we not be the first indeed to repent? Things demanded by the many are slowest to be granted: personal favours are swiftly earned and swiftly guaranteed.'

Minds were changed by this and, suspicious of each other, the raw recruits dissociated themselves from the veterans, legion from legion. Then the love of duty quickly prevailed: they left the gates, and the standards brought together at the start of their mutiny were returned to their proper places.

BOOK I:XXIX THE RINGLEADERS EXECUTED

At daybreak, Drusus called an assembly; unskilled in oratory but with an inborn nobility he blamed them for their past actions, yet commended their present one. He rejected their intimidation and threats,

he said: but if he witnessed a return to duty, if he were to hear a note of supplication, he would write to his father so that being placated he might entertain their plea. Begging him to do so, they nominated young Blaesus as before, with a Roman knight on Drusus' staff, Lucius Aponius, and a leading centurion, Justus Catonius, to represent them before Tiberius.

There was then a conflict of opinion, with some officers wishing to wait for the representatives' return and for the troops to be treated with leniency in the meantime, while others wanted stronger remedies applied: a crowd, they said, was always extreme, never deterred unless terrified; once afraid, it could be ignored with impunity. While it was cowed by superstition, their general could add to the terror by removing the instigators of this mutiny.

Drusus had an innate tendency to show severity: Vibulenus and Percennius were summoned and their execution ordered. Most authorities say they were buried beneath the general's pavilion, others that the corpses were deposited outside the ramparts and left on view.

BOOK I:XXX THE REBELLIOUS LEGIONS RETURN TO WINTER CAMP

A search for the other ringleaders followed, and some wandering blindly from the camp were killed by the centurions or the praetorian troops: others were handed over by the men themselves as a pledge of loyalty.

The soldiers' ills had been increased by an early winter, with endless harsh rains, so they could not quit their tents, or meet together, and the standards could scarcely be saved from being snatched away by wind and flood.

There was lasting dread of divine anger, it was not for nothing they said that their impiety was marked by the dimming of the moon, and the roar of tempests: there was no relief from their miseries but to leave this sacrilegious and ill-fated camp and, absolved from guilt, return one and all to their winter quarters.

First the Eighth and then the Fifteenth legion departed; the men of the Ninth had clamoured to wait on Tiberius' reply, but soon, rendered desolate by the others' defection, they anticipated its imminent necessity, of their own accord.

And Drusus, without waiting for the representatives' return, seeing all quiet for the present, himself returned to Rome.

End of the Annals Book I: I-XXX

BOOK I: XXXI-LIV
GERMANICUS AT WAR IN GERMANY



'Julius Caesar, Museum of the Capitol'
History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p192, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK I:XXXI FRESH MUTINY IN GERMANY

At about that time, for the same reasons, the legions in Germany mutinied, in larger numbers and with greater violence, their hopes being high that Germanicus Caesar, unable to endure another's sovereignty, would embrace his legions' power, sweeping all before him.

There were two Roman armies on the Rhine's left bank: the army of Upper Germany under the leadership of Gaius Silius, that of Lower Germany in the charge of Aulus Caecina. Supreme command lay with Germanicus, then intent on a property census of the Gallic provinces. But while Silius' men watched, in doubt, the fate of a rebellion not of their making, the army of Lower Germany plunged into madness. It began with the Fifth and Twenty-First legions, after which the First and Twentieth were drawn in, as they were all stationed in the same summer camp on the Ubian frontier (near Cologne), in idleness or with the lightest of duties.

Thus, hearing of Augustus' death, the city-bred troops, who had recently been levied in Rome, used to their pleasures and intolerant of hardship, began to influence the untutored minds of the rest: the time had come, they said, when the veterans should seek a discharge long overdue, the younger soldiers more pay, and all should demand an end to their wretchedness, while taking their revenge for the centurions' savagery.

Theirs was no lone cry, no Percennius among the Pannonian legions, speaking to the anxious ears of soldiers who had other superior forces to consider, but a rebellion fuelled by many tongues and voices: in their hands lay Rome's destiny, they cried, theirs were the victories that enlarged the empire, it was in their name the emperors took power!

**BOOK I:XXXII THE REBELS CONSOLIDATE
THEIR POSITION**

Nor did their commander oppose them: indeed the crowd's frenzy robbed him of self-possession. The men, in sudden rage, rushed, swords drawn, at the centurions: they being the usual objects of the soldiers' hatred, and its first victims. Throwing them to the ground they thrashed them with whips, sixty lashes each, one for every centurion in the legion: then flung them, convulsed with pain and semi-conscious, over the ramparts or into the Rhine itself.

Septimius fled to the tribunal and threw himself at Caecina's feet, but his surrender was urged so insistently he was handed over for execution. Cassius Chaerea, then still young but fierce and courageous, and later remembered by posterity for his assassination of Caligula, cut a path with his sword through the armed men blocking his way. The tribunes and camp-prefect no longer held sway: the patrols and watches, and every other form of duty circumstances deemed necessary were distributed among the mutineers themselves.

Indeed, to a thoughtful observer of the military mind, the most profound sign of great and implacable disaffection was that nothing was effected by the impulse of a dissident few, but all were equally on fire, equally silent, with such steadiness and unanimity, they might be thought under unified command.

BOOK I:XXXIII GERMANICUS' LINEAGE

During this period, Germanicus, as we have said, was travelling through the Gallic provinces taking a property census, when news of Augustus's death reached him. Married to Augustus' granddaughter, Agrippina the Elder, by whom he had several children, and himself a grandson to Livia being the son of Tiberius' brother, Drusus the Elder, he was beset by a hidden antipathy to that grandmother and that uncle, from a motive that was all the stronger for being irrational.

The memory of Drusus the Elder was still fresh amongst the Roman people, and it was thought that if had held power liberty would have been restored; so that the same affection and hope was conferred on Germanicus. He was a youth courteous by nature and wondrously affable, far removed in manner from Tiberius' arrogance and secretiveness of word and look. Animosity among the womenfolk increased these family differences, since Livia had a stepmother's dislike of Agrippina, and Agrippina herself felt no less passionately, though her pure mind and marital devotion kept her rebellious spirit in check.

BOOK I:XXXIV HIS LOYALTY TO THE EMPIRE

Yet the nearer Germanicus came to the heights of ambition, the more devotedly he laboured in Tiberius' cause. He administered the oath of allegiance to his subordinates and the Belgic cities, and took the oath himself. Then, hearing news of disturbance among the legions, he set out in haste, and met them waiting outside the camp, their gaze fixed on the ground as if in penitence.

As soon as he entered, a chorus of complaints dinned in his ears. Some of the men seized his hand and pushed his fingers between their lips,

as if to kiss them, so he could feel their lack of teeth; others showed him limbs bowed with old age. When they stood back to hear him, as they were in disarray, he ordered them to assemble in companies: they however replied they could hear better as they were; he insisted they bring the standards forward, so that the cohorts at least might be distinguished: they slowly obeyed.

Then, beginning with a tribute to Augustus, he went on to speak of Tiberius' victories and triumphs, celebrating with the highest praise the laurels the emperor had won so handsomely at the head of these very legions. Next he extolled the unity of Italy, the loyalty of the Gallic provinces, the absence everywhere of turbulence and discord: all this being heard in silence or to quiet murmurs.

BOOK I:XXXV GERMANICUS ADDRESSES

THE MUTINEERS

But when he spoke of rebellion, asking where was their soldierly restraint, where was the discipline that formerly distinguished them, why had they driven out their tribunes and centurions, they bared their bodies to a man, reproaching him with their scars of battle and the marks of the lash. Then, in a confusion of voices, they charged him with their miserly wages, the price they had to pay for exemption, and the harshness of their labours, even naming the tasks: carving out ditches, raising ramparts, foraging, hauling timber and firewood, and whatever else the camp demanded, of necessity or to deprive them of rest.

The fiercest outcry rose from the veterans, who citing their thirty campaigns or more, begged reprieve from their weariness, that they not die of such labours, but an end be set to such service, and a retirement free of poverty be granted them. There were even some who demanded the legacy bequeathed to them by the divine Augustus, expressing their good-will to Germanicus; and demonstrating that they were ready to be his, if he should

wish for power. Then he relinquished the platform, swiftly indeed, as if he might be contaminated with their guilt.

They barred his way with their weapons, threatening him if he did not return; but he, shouting that he would rather choose death than disloyalty, snatching the sword from his side and raising it aloft would have buried it in his heart if those nearest had not forcefully held his arm. The remotest and most tightly packed section of the crowd and, though this is scarcely credible, certain individuals pressing close upon him, urged him to strike home; and a soldier, named Calusidius, even drew his own blade, claiming his was sharper.

But the act seemed cruel and evil-natured even to those madmen, and there was time enough for Germanicus' friends to hurry him to his quarters.

BOOK I:XXXVI HE UNWILLINGLY ACCEDES TO THEIR DEMANDS

Once there, proposals to remedy the soldiers' complaints were debated, since it was said that emissaries were being chosen to persuade the army of Upper Germany to the mutineers' cause; that Cologne, the Ubian capital, was targeted for destruction; and that once accustomed to pillage the mutineers would spread out to loot the Gallic provinces.

Added to that, the enemy, knowing of the insurrection, would invade if the Rhine bank were abandoned. Yet if the auxiliaries and allies were mobilised against the rebellious legions, civil war would ensue. Severity towards the men might have its dangers, but to indulge them would be criminal: whether all or nothing were conceded the state was equally at risk.

Therefore, after jointly pondering the matter, it was decided that documents should be written, in the emperor's name, granting a discharge after twenty years' service; releasing those who had served sixteen years to serve under their own colours with an exemption from all duties except repelling an enemy; and committing to pay over, and indeed double, the imperial legacy that they had claimed.

BOOK I:XXXVII THE TROOPS FORCE PAYMENT

The men, sensing that these documents had been improvised on the spot, demanded immediate action. The discharges were then enacted by the tribunes, though the payments were to be withheld till the men had reached their proper winter quarters. The Fifth and Twenty-first legions, however, refused to leave their summer camp until the money was paid from the travelling funds of Germanicus and his suite.

The legate, Caecina, then led the First and Twentieth legions back to Cologne, a shameful progress, the general's plundered coffers being flanked by the standards and eagles. Germanicus, meanwhile, set out for the army of Upper Germany, where he induced the Second, Thirteenth and Sixteenth legions to take the oath without delay; the Fourteenth showing some brief hesitation. Their payments and discharges were granted without being demanded.

BOOK I:XXXVIII MANIUS ENNIUS QUELLS A DISTURBANCE

But, among the Chauci, a reserve detachment, on garrison duty and drawn from the disaffected legions, began a fresh mutiny repressed for the moment by the execution of a couple of soldiers. Manius Ennius,

the camp-prefect, issued that order, to show a firmer example than by granting them trial.

The disorder spreading, he then fled, and upon being found, since his hiding-place proved inadequate, chose audacity rather than defence, saying that it was not their prefect they were assaulting but their general, Germanicus, and the emperor Tiberius. At the same moment, deterring them from opposing him, he snatched up the standard, turned to face the Rhine and, shouting that anyone who left the ranks would be taken for a deserter, led the men back to winter quarters, they being rebellious still, but venturing nothing.

BOOK I:XXXIX GERMANICUS UNDER PRESSURE

Meanwhile, a delegation from the senate attended on Germanicus, who had returned to Cologne, at the Altar of Augustus. Two legions, the First and the Twentieth were over-wintering there, along with the veterans recently discharged and now with their colours. Anxious and consumed with guilt, they feared that these emissaries had been sent on orders from the senate to render null and void the concessions extorted by rebellion.

The crowd, seeking someone to blame as usual however false the charge, accused Munatius Plancus, the ex-consul who led the delegation, of intention to impose a senate decree: and as night set in, they began to call for their standard, which was kept in Germanicus' quarters in the town. There was an assault on the gate, they forced the door and, dragging Germanicus from his bed, compelled him to hand over the standard on pain of death.

Not long after, as they roamed the streets, they came across the emissaries, who were hastening to join Germanicus having heard the disturbance. They heaped insults upon them, and were ready to murder them, especially Plancus, whose dignity precluded flight; nor could he seek

any refuge in extremity other than the quarters of the First legion. There he found sanctuary by embracing the standards and the eagle, and if Calpurnius, the eagle-bearer, had not shielded him from the height of violence, a legate of the Roman people, while in a Roman camp, would have stained the sacred altars with his blood, a crime almost unknown even among our enemies.

At last, at dawn, when the officers, the men, and the night's deeds were visible, Germanicus entered the camp, insisted that Plancus be conducted to him, and welcomed him onto the tribunal. Then denouncing their fatal madness, rekindled not by their own anger, he declared, but by the gods, he explained why the emissaries were there. He spoke, sadly and eloquently, about the rights of ambassadors, the grave and undeserved treatment of Plancus, and the deep dishonour incurred by the legion, and after reducing his hearers to stunned silence, if not acquiescence, he sent off the emissaries, guarded by the auxiliary cavalry.

BOOK I:XL AGRIPPINA IS PERSUADED BY GERMANICUS TO LEAVE CAMP

During these troubles, Germanicus was blamed by all for not marching to join the army of Upper Germany, where he would find, they claimed, obedience and assistance against the rebels: the discharges, pay and indulgent measures had done more than enough harm, or if he held his own life to be of no account why force his infant son and pregnant wife to remain amongst madmen who violated every law of decency? He should at least restore them to their grandfather, and the state!



'Agrippina and Germanicus'
Sir Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577 - 1640)
National Gallery of Art

He long delayed the decision, while Agrippina scornfully declared that as a scion of the divine Augustus she was equal to all danger. Finally, he embraced their son, together with herself, their child in her womb, and with many tears persuaded her to leave. A pitiful procession of women then set out, the general's wife in flight, her little son clasped to her heart, surrounded by the mournful wives of his friends, also torn from their husbands' arms; nor were those left behind any less saddened.

BOOK I: XLI THE TROOPS TRY TO INTERVENE

This gave the appearance not of a Caesar in his pomp, in his own camp, but of a scene in a captured city; the weeping and wailing attracting the ears and eyes of the soldiers themselves: who began to emerge from their tents. What was this sound of crying? Why such sadness? Here were honourable women, without a centurion to guard them, not a soldier, no sign of the usual escort for a general's wife: bound for the Treviri to be committed to the trust of foreigners. They were filled with shame and pity and the remembrance that her father was Agrippa, her grandfather Augustus, and her father-in-law Drusus the Elder, while she herself was famous for her fecundity and her shining chastity. Then there was her little son, born in camp and brought up among the tents of the legions, whom they, in the manner of soldiers, nicknamed Caligula (*Little Boot*) because he usually wore the *caliga*, or hob-nailed soldier's boot, to satisfy the men's whim.

But nothing roused them as much as their jealousy of the Treviri; they begged, they insisted, she must return to them, stay among them, they cried, some chasing after Agrippina, the majority returning to gather round Germanicus. He, surrounded as he was, his tears and indignation still fresh, addressed them as follows:

BOOK I:XLII GERMANICUS ADDRESSES THE REBELS

‘**N**ot my wife nor my son is dearer to me than father and country, but his own grandeur will protect my father, and our other armies imperial Rome. I would freely offer up my wife and children to death, for the sake of your glory, but now I am removing them from your madness, so that whatever wickedness it portends may be expiated by my blood alone, and that you should not prove more guilty still by murdering a great-grandson of Augustus, a daughter-in-law of Tiberius.

For what indeed, these past days, have you not dared or defiled? What name shall I give this gathering? Am I to call those soldiers, who with walls and weapons have beset a son of your emperor? Or citizens, those who have renounced the senate’s authority? The rights due even to an enemy, the sanctity due to emissaries, the laws of nations, all these you have violated.

The divine Julius quelled an army’s insurrection with a word, calling those who refused the oath *Quirites* (founder citizens of Rome). The legions at Actium shrank from Augustus’ face and aspect: I, though not yet their equal, nevertheless am of their line, and if it were merely the soldiers in Spain or Syria who disrespected me still it would be astounding and shameful, yet it is men of the First and the Twentieth, that Twentieth who received their standards from Tiberius himself, and you the First, who shared the battlefield with him, you, weighed down with prizes! Is this the singular gratitude with which you repay your leader?

Is this the news I must give my father, when he hears that all is well with the other provinces, that men he recruited, his own veterans, are not satisfied with early discharge and payment, that here centurions are killed, tribunes driven out, officers imprisoned, the camp, the river tainted with blood, and that I myself maintain precarious life among hostile men?’

BOOK I:XLIII HE QUENCHES THE REBELLION

‘**W**hy then, at our first meeting, did you snatch away the blade I readied to plunge into my own heart, O thoughtless friends? Kinder and more loving that man who offered me his sword. I should at least have died not yet aware of my soldiers’ deepest crimes; you might have chosen a leader who, letting my death go unpunished, would yet have avenged Varus and his three legions. For may the gods forbid that with the Belgians offering their services theirs should be the honour and glory of bolstering the name of Rome, in order to subdue the German people!

May your spirit, divine Augustus, received among the heavens, your image, Drusus my father, and the memory of you, be with these same soldiers of yours, now filled with a sense of shame and glory, erase the stain and turn our civil conflict to the destruction of our enemies!

And you yourselves, in whose hearts and faces I infer a change of mood, if you would restore its emissaries to the senate, your allegiance to the emperor, my wife and child to me, distance yourselves from the source of infection, single out the troublemakers: that will demonstrate repentance, that will form a bond of faith.’

BOOK I:XLIV THE LEGIONS ARE PURGED

They were reduced to suppliants by his words, and confessed the justice of his reproaches, begged him to punish the guilty, forgive their error, and lead them against the enemy; his wife must be recalled, and his son, the darling of the legions, must return, not be handed over as a hostage to the Gauls.

Germanicus replied that Agrippina’s presence must be excused, due to winter and her imminent confinement: his son would return; the rest they

must deal with themselves. Changed men, they rushed around and, throwing the most seditious in chains, then dragged them before the legate of the First legion, Gaius Caetronius, who meted out justice and punishment in the following manner.

The legionaries stood before the crowd with drawn swords: each defendant was displayed on the platform by a tribune; if they cried guilty, he was flung down and butchered. The men revelled in the slaughter, as if it absolved them; nor did Germanicus restrain them, the sentences being none of his, theirs the cruelty performed, and the odium. The veterans followed their example and not long after were posted to Raetia, on the pretext of defending the province from invasion by the Suevi, but actually to remove them from a camp no less darkened now by the savagery of punishment than the memory of guilt.

The centurions were then paraded. Each, on being indicated by Germanicus, gave his name, rank, and place of origin, the number of his campaigns, his achievements in battle, and his military honours if any. Where the tribunes and his legion bore witness to his commitment and integrity, he kept his post; where they jointly accused him of avarice or cruelty, he was dismissed the service.

BOOK I:XLV FURTHER MUTINY AT VETERA

This resolved the present situation, but no less a problem remained in the defiance exhibited by the Fifth and Twenty-first legions, wintering sixty miles away at the place known as Vetera. For they had been the first to mutiny: the worst atrocities had been the work of their hands; undaunted by their fellow-soldiers' punishment and unaffected by their repentance, their hostility remained.

Germanicus therefore organised the dispatch of vessels, auxiliaries, and weapons, down the Rhine, intent on force if his authority was flouted.

BOOK I:XLVI CONCERN IN ROME

Yet nothing was known in Rome of the events in Illyricum and beyond, until public news arrived of the mutiny among these legions of the armies of Germany, and the city, in fear, made the accusation against Tiberius that while he made a fool of the senate and the masses, both being weak and undefended, through his hypocritical hesitation, the troops were rebelling, and could not be restrained by the immature authority of a pair of lads. He ought to have gone himself and confronted the rebels with his imperial majesty. They would have yielded on seeing their emperor, a leader of great experience, and the supreme source of punishment or reward.

If Augustus, wearied by his years, was able to make many journeys into the German provinces, was Tiberius, flourishing with age, to sit about then, in the senate, cavilling at the senators' words? Enough of gazing at a servile Rome, he must bring calm to the soldiers' passions so that they might sue for peace.

BOOK I:XLVII TIBERIUS PREVARICATES

Unmoved by these comments, Tiberius was determined not to quit the centre of government and endanger himself and the empire. He was, indeed, troubled by the many and diverse issues involved: the army of Germany was the stronger, that of Pannonia nearer; the former was supported by Gallic resources, the latter threatened Italy: which then should be his personal priority? And what if those treated as of secondary importance were incensed by the slight?

Yet in the form of his sons they could be treated equally while preserving his own authority, which was even more imposing from a distance. At the same time, it was acceptable for the young princes to refer things to their father, and he might mitigate or weaken any resistance

offered to Germanicus or Drusus, while if the emperor were defied what recourse was possible?

However, he chose his entourage, prepared the equipment, and fitted out the ships as if he might depart at any moment, then delayed them on various pretexts, based on the winter weather or the weight of affairs, deceiving the most knowing at first, then the masses, and the provinces longest of all.

BOOK I:XLVIII CAECINA PREPARES TO QUENCH THE REBELLION AT VETERA

Meanwhile Germanicus, though he had concentrated his forces and was ready to take action against the rebels, thinking it best to give them more time to consider the recent example set them, sent a letter to Caecina saying that he would arrive in strength, and unless they anticipated him by executing the culprits he would put the men to death indiscriminately.

This, Caecina read privately to the eagle-bearers and standard-bearers, and the other most trustworthy men in the camp, exhorting them to save all from disgrace and themselves from death; since, while in peacetime cases were judged on their merit, when conflict threatened the innocent perished with the guilty.

They then approached the men they judged loyal, and finding the legions mostly obedient, they set a time, with their commander's blessing, for an armed assault on the worst elements, those most ready to mutiny. Then, the signal being given, they attacked the tents, and killed the unsuspecting victims, they alone knowing where the slaughter had begun and how it would end.

BOOK I:XLIX GERMANICUS REDIRECTS THE TROOPS' ANGER

Every previous civil action, of whatever period, differed from this one. Not in battle, or from opposing camps, but men who bedded down together, who ate together by day and slept side by side at night, took sides and hurled missiles. The cries, the wounds, the blood were evident, the origin unclear, chance ruled all.

And good men died too, for once the object of this fury was known the worst elements also took to arms. Neither general nor tribune were there to restrain the violence: licence was granted the mob to sate itself with vengeance. Germanicus, reaching the camp sometime later, weeping at the sight and calling it no remedy but a disaster, ordered the corpses burnt.

Even then, the desire invaded their savage spirits to attack the enemy in expiation of their madness; nothing else would placate their dead comrades' souls but that their own impious breasts be pierced by honourable wounds. Germanicus, harnessing this ardour of his troops, bridged the Rhine and sent twelve thousand legionaries across, with twenty-six auxiliary cohorts and eight cavalry divisions their discipline unaffected by the mutiny.

BOOK I:L AN ADVANCE ON THE MARSIAN VILLAGES

The Germans delighted in hovering nearby during this pause in hostilities, caused initially by the mourning for Augustus, and afterwards extended by rebellion. But, by a forced march, the Roman columns cut through the Caesian Forest and the demarcation line begun by Tiberius, pitching camp on that boundary, their front and rear protected by ramparts, and their flanks by felled trees.

What followed was a march through dark glades, and a debate as to which of two paths to follow, one short and well-travelled, the other difficult and untried, but because of that unwatched by the enemy. The longer route was taken, but with all speed: because the scouts had reported that the Germans held a festival that night, with games and a formal banquet. Caecina was ordered to advance with the lightly-armed cohorts and clear a passage through the woods: the legions followed after a short interval.

The night aided them with a clear starry sky, and they reached the Marsian villages which they surrounded with pickets, the enemy being abed or still lying beside the banqueting tables, free of care, and with not a sentry in sight. All was carelessness and disorder, without thought of war, and their peace itself the dull slackness found among drunkards.

BOOK I:LI GERMANICUS LAYS WASTE THE SURROUNDING AREA

To ravage more widely, Germanicus divided his ardent legionaries into four groups, and laid waste an area fifty miles across, with sword and flame. Neither age nor sex inspired pity, places sacred and secular were razed to the ground, most notably the tribal sanctuary known as Tanfana. Our troops escaped without a wound, slaughtering men who were half-asleep, unarmed and exposed.

This brought out the Bructeri, Tubantes and Usipetes, who occupied the forest glades by which the army must return. Their commander, hearing of this, advanced ready to march or fight. A cavalry detachment and ten auxiliary cohorts led the way, then the First legion, with the baggage train in the middle, the Twenty-first legion guarding the left flank, the Fifth guarding the right, while the Twentieth held the rear and the remaining allies followed.

But the enemy made no move until the whole column was extended throughout the woods, then, making a feint against the van and flanks, they attacked the rear in force. The lightly-armed cohorts were thrown into confusion by the mass of German warriors, until Germanicus, riding to the Twenty-first, cried in a loud voice that this was the moment to erase the stain of mutiny: let them charge, and swiftly turn shame to glory.

Their spirits aflame, they broke through the enemy at a blow, drove them into the open, and cut them down: at the same moment the forces ahead emerged from the forest and began fortifying camp. The route was quiet from that point, and the soldiers occupied their winter quarters, emboldened by their recent action and with the past forgotten.

BOOK I:LII TIBERIUS PRAISES GERMANICUS AND DRUSUS

For Tiberius, the news was welcome but disquieting: he was thankful the rebellion had been quelled, but troubled that Germanicus had earned the men's favour by handing out money and bringing forward their discharge. Nevertheless he spoke of what Germanicus had achieved before the senate, expanding on his virtues, but in too formal a manner for it to be thought his true feeling.

He praised Drusus, and his resolution of the problem in Illyricum, more briefly, but in a more earnest and truthful way. He extended all that Germanicus had granted his own forces to the Pannonian legions also.

BOOK I:LIII THE DEATHS OF JULIA THE ELDER AND SEMPRONIUS GRACCHUS

This same year (AD14) saw the death of Julia the Elder, whose shamelessness had previously led to her confinement by Augustus, her father, on the island of Pandateria (Ventotene), and then in the town of Rhegium (Reggio Calabria) on the Strait of Messina.

She was married to Tiberius while her sons Gaius and Lucius were alive, and despised him as inferior, and this alone was the secret reason for his retirement to Rhodes. Once emperor, he left her in exile and disgrace, destitute of hope after the execution of Agrippa Postumus her son, to die of poverty and illness, calculating that the length of her banishment would obscure the manner of her death.

His savagery towards Sempronius Gracchus, stemmed from a like motive. Gracchus was a man of noble family, quick wit, and perverse eloquence, who had seduced that same Julia while she was married to Marcus Agrippa. Nor did the affair end in mere seduction, for when she was pressed into marriage with Tiberius, the tenacious adulterer encouraged her defiance and hatred of her husband. A letter she had written to her father Augustus, with its abuse of Tiberius, was thought to have been composed by Gracchus.

As a result, he was removed to the Cercina (Kerkennah) islands, off Africa, where he endured fourteen years of exile. The soldiers, now sent to kill him, found him on the shore of a promontory, awaiting the worst. As they landed, he begged for time to write a letter, containing his last requests, to his wife Alliaria, then exposed his neck to the assassins. The firmness with which he met death was not unworthy of that Sempronian name his life had disgraced. Some say the soldiers were not sent from Rome, but by Lucius Asprenas, the proconsul of Africa, at Tiberius' instigation, who hoped in vain that the blame for the execution might fall on Asprenas.

BOOK I:LIV INAUGURATION OF THE AUGUSTALIS

The same year saw a new religious institution founded, by the addition of an order of Augustal priests, similar to the Titian order founded by Titus Tatius to preserve the Sabine rites. Twenty one members were selected by lot from among the leading citizens, and Tiberius, Drusus, Claudius and Germanicus were added. The corresponding Games, the Augustalis, now inaugurated, were marred by discord due to theatrical rivalries.

Augustus had countenanced such entertainments to humour Maecenas, who was madly enamoured of Bathyllus, nor did he dislike such things himself, and thought it courteous to involve himself with the pleasures of the masses. Tiberius had other views: but did not dare impose austerity, as yet, on a populace so long indulged.

End of the Annals Book I: XXXI-LIV

BOOK I: LV-LXXXI
TIBERIUS TIGHTENS HIS GRIP



'Hero with Helmet'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p773, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK I:LV GERMANICUS MOVES AGAINST THE CHATTI

Drusus Caesar and Gaius Norbanus being consuls (AD15), a triumph was granted to Germanicus, while still at the front. Though preparing to pursue it with the utmost vigour in the summer, he anticipated matters by a sudden raid in early spring against the Chatti. Now, hopes had risen that the enemy were divided between allegiance to Arminius (Hermann) and Segestes, the former noted for his perfidy towards us, the latter by his loyalty.

Arminius was a source of trouble in Germany, Segestes often warning that rebellion was in the offing, particularly at the time of the great banquet after which there was a call to arms, when he urged Varus to arrest Arminius, and himself, and the rest of the chieftains, so that with their leaders removed the tribes would venture nothing, while Varus would have time enough to distinguish the guilty from the innocent.

But Varus yielded to fate and the sword of Arminius. Segestes, though drawn into the conflict by the combined will of the tribes, remained at variance, private matters adding to the feud, since Arminius abducted his daughter who was pledged elsewhere and so became the hated son-in-law of a hostile father; what might have been agreed as a bond of affection between friends proving an incitement to hatred between enemies.

BOOK I:LVI HE DEFEATS THEM

So Germanicus, after handing over to Caecina four legions, five thousand auxiliaries, and a few detachments of Germans hastily levied from this side of the Rhine, himself commanding as many legions and twice the number of allied troops, built a fort on the remains of his father's previous defences on Mount Taunus, after which his well-prepared troops swept down on the Chatti.

Lucius Apronius was left with the task of constructing roads and bridges: since due to drought (a rare event in that climate) and the shallowness of the rivers, Germanicus had advanced without difficulty, while rainstorms and flooding were to be feared on their return. Indeed he came upon the Chatti so unexpectedly that those defenceless through age or gender were at once killed or captured. The warriors, who had crossed the Eder, resisted the Roman attempts to bridge the river. Then, driven back by slings and arrows, they tried in vain to sue for peace, a few defecting to join Germanicus, the rest, abandoning their villages and cantons, vanishing into the forest.

After setting fire to Mattium (the tribe's headquarters) and laying waste the open country, Germanicus turned back towards the Rhine, the enemy not choosing to harass the withdrawing army, their custom during an opponent's retreat, as a matter of strategy rather than through fear.

The Cherusci were inclined to aid the Chatti, but were deterred by Caecina's rapid deployments; and in a successful action he thwarted the Marsi who hazarded an engagement.

BOOK I:LVII GERMANICUS RESCUES SEGESTES AND HIS FAMILY

Not long afterwards, envoys arrived from Segestes, pleading for help against the violence of the tribesmen by whom he was besieged, Arminius being the most influential, since he urged war; for among the barbarians the readier a man is for action the more he gains their trust and preference when events are in play.

Segestes had included his son, Segimundus, among the envoys; though the latter's conscience troubled him. For, in the year when the German provinces rebelled, though he was a priest consecrated at the Altar in Cologne, he had torn off his sacred ribbons, and had fled to join the rebels.

Yet induced to hope for Roman clemency, he now brought his father's message, and being received with kindness was sent over under guard to the Gallic shore.

Germanicus thought it worthwhile to turn back, attack the besiegers, and extract Segestes and a large group of his relatives and dependants. They included various noblewomen, among them the daughter to Segestes who was also wife to Arminius, in whose courageous spirit there existed more of the husband than the father, she neither shedding tears nor voicing entreaties in defeat, but hands clasped tightly in the folds of her robes, reflecting on her near-term pregnancy.

Spoils from the disaster that overtook Varus were recovered, items that had been handed out to many of the very men now surrendering. Segestes was present at that time, a huge figure and undaunted, recalling for us the benefits of past alliance.

BOOK I:LVIII SEGESTES REASSERTS HIS LOYALTY TO ROME

He spoke in this manner: ‘This is not the first time I have shown my loyalty and constancy to the people of Rome. From the moment the divine Augustus made me a Roman citizen, I have chosen my friends and enemies in accord with your interests, not hating my own country (for the traitor is loathed even by those with whom he sides) but in truth because I thought one and the same thing would profit both Romans and Germans, and that peace was better than war.

Thus I brought charges against Arminius, to me the abductor of a daughter, to you the violator of a treaty, before the then commander of your forces, Varus. Thwarted by that general's dilatoriness, recourse to law proving inadequate, I begged him to imprison me, along with Arminius and his accomplices. Let that night bear witness, which I had rather had been my last! All that followed may be more easily deplored than defended: for

that matter, I have seen Arminius in chains and have suffered his followers' chains about me.

But now, at this our first meeting, I prefer former ties to new, calm to storm, not in hopes of reward, but to free myself from charges of disloyalty, and at the same time act as conciliator on behalf of the tribes of Germany, if they should seek penitence rather than perdition. I ask forgiveness for my son's youthful errors: I confess my daughter was brought here by events. It is for you to decide which should weigh most, that she has conceived by Arminius or that she was begotten by me.' Germanicus, in a generous reply, promised that his children and relatives would be unharmed, and offered him residence in the former province.

On returning with his army, Germanicus received the title of Emperor, at the prompting of Tiberius. Arminius' wife gave birth to a male child: the boy was raised in Ravenna, the humiliation he later endured I will relate in due course.

BOOK I:LIX ARMINIUS FOMENTS REBELLION

The news of Segestes' surrender and his favourable reception, once known, was received with optimism or disappointment according to whether the hearer was opposed to, or advocated the war. Arminius, violent enough by nature, was maddened by the capture of his wife, and the threat of servitude hanging over his unborn child. He rushed about among the Cherusci, demanding war against Segestes, war against Germanicus. He spared us no abuse: a noble father, a great commander, a brave army, such mighty forces to carry off one poor woman! Three legions, three generals had fallen to his sword; not by treason, nor against pregnant women did he wage war, but openly against armed men.

The Roman standards, hung high for the gods of their fathers, could yet be seen in the sacred groves of Germany. Let Segestes live on a conquered shore, let his son be priest once more to a mortal man: Germans

could never sufficiently atone for the sight of the toga, rods and axes between the Elbe and the Rhine. Other nations, ignorant of Roman domination, were unaware of the suffering imposed, the demands: let those who had rid themselves of both and seen Augustus, said to be a god, and his adopted son Tiberius depart in failure, fear no inexperienced youth, nor his rebellious army.

If they preferred their own land, parents and ancient customs to despotism and colonisation, let them follow Arminius to glory and liberty, rather than Segestes to servitude and shame!

BOOK I:LX GERMANICUS ATTACKS THE BRUCTERI

Not only the Cherusci were roused by this, but the neighbouring tribes also, while Arminius' uncle, Inguiomerus, long a man prestigious among the Romans, was drawn to join his faction. This caused Germanicus further concern; and lest war break out en masse he sent Caecina forward, with forty Roman cohorts, through the territory of the Bructeri to the River Ems in order to divide the enemy, while the prefect Pedo led his cavalry along the Frisian frontier. He himself sailed through the lakes, with four legions on board, so that cavalry, infantry and his fleet of vessels would meet simultaneously on the shores of the aforementioned river.

The Chauci, on promising auxiliary troops, were admitted to the ranks. Lucius Stertinius, sent forward by Germanicus, with his force of light-infantry routed the Bructeri who were oppressing them. During the killing and looting he recovered the eagle of the Nineteenth legion, lost with Varus.

From there, the army advanced to the borders of the Bructeri, wasting the country between the rivers Ems and Lippe, not far from the Teutoberg Forest, in which it was said the remains of Varus and his legions lay unburied.

BOOK I:LXI THE ARMY VISITS THE SITE OF VARUS' DISASTROUS DEFEAT

Germanicus was thus filled with desire to pay his last respects to the fallen and their leader, while the whole standing army were stirred to pity by the remembrance of their kin, their friends, and indeed the fortunes of war and human fate. With Caecina sent ahead to explore the hidden forested ravines, and to establish bridges and causeways over flooded marshes and treacherous levels, they marched through gloomy places foul to sight and memory.

Varus' initial camp, with its large extent and spacious headquarters testified to the labour of all his three legions; then the half-ruined rampart and shallow ditch revealed where the shattered remnant had taken cover: in the midst of the battlefield were bleached bones, scattered or in mounds, where the men had died fleeing or resisting. Beside them lay broken javelins and the limbs of horses, while human skulls were nailed to the surrounding trees.

In the nearby groves stood the savage altars at which the enemy had slaughtered the tribunes and leading centurions. Survivors of the disaster, who had escaped the battle or ensuing captivity, showed where the officers fell, where the eagles were taken, where Varus received his first wound, where he found death by a stroke from his own unfortunate hand; and the platform from which Arminius raved, amidst all the pits and pillories for his prisoners, mocking the eagles and standards.

**BOOK I: LXII GERMANICUS BURIES THE DEAD,
TIBERIUS DISAPPROVES**

Thus, in that place, six years after the disaster, a Roman army buried the bones of three legions, not knowing whether they consigned to earth the remains of stranger or kin, all, like friends, like blood-brothers, swelling in anger against the enemy, at once mourning and hating.

Germanicus laid the first piece of turf as the funeral mound was raised, paying a most heartfelt tribute to the dead, at one with the grief around him. Yet Tiberius, hearing of it, barely approved, either because he placed the worst interpretation on all Germanicus' actions, or because he believed that the sight of the unburied dead made an army reluctant to fight and more fearful of the enemy; and that an imperial commander, invested with the role of augur and dedicated to performing the most ancient religious ceremonies, should have avoided contact with all funeral rites.

BOOK I: LXIII THE ARMY WITHDRAWS TO THE RHINE

Yet Germanicus now pursued Arminius as he retreated into the wilds, and when the first opportunity arose ordered the cavalry to advance and clear the level ground occupied by the enemy. Arminius, advising his men to close up and fall back on the woods, suddenly wheeled about: then gave the signal for men hiding in the forest glades to break cover.

Our cavalry were thrown into confusion by this new front, and reserve cohorts were sent forward, but thrust back by the fleeing squadrons added to the consternation. They would have been driven into marshland, familiar to the enemy but fatal to strangers, if Germanicus had not advanced his legions and formed line of battle: this awed the enemy, and inspired the troops, and they parted with honours even.

Shortly, leading his army back to the Ems, Germanicus withdrew the legionaries by boat as they had come; while a section of cavalry was ordered to make for the Rhine along the northern coast. Caecina, who led his own force, though he was returning by a known route, was advised to cross the long causeway as quickly as possible, this being a narrow track through the marshy waste, raised in the past by Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the rest being a swamp with dense clinging mud, criss-crossed by streams.

The forest slopes round about rose gently from the levels, but were occupied now by Arminius whose swift march on back-roads had circumvented the Romans weighed down by baggage and equipment. Caecina, unsure how they were to refurbish the old damaged bridges while also holding off the enemy, decided to mark out a camp where they stood, so that some could start the work while the rest fought.

BOOK I: LXIV CAECINA HOLDS OFF THE CHERUSCI

The barbarians could only attempt to break through the line of defenders and reach the sappers by skirmishing, enveloping them and then attacking: the cries of the labourers and the combatants intermingled. Everything was equally against the Romans: the position, deep in the marshes; the ground too unstable for standing firm, too slippery for advancing; their bodies weighed down by armour; their inability amidst the waters to aim their javelins.

The Cherusci, on the other hand, used to fighting in the marshes, were long of limb, and wielded huge spears capable of wounding from a distance. Indeed not till night fell were the wavering legions freed from a losing battle. The Germans, indefatigable after their success, even now took no rest, diverting the flow of all the streams rising in the surrounding hills towards the levels, flooding the land, and drowning the work accomplished, doubling the soldiers' labours.

This was Caecina's fortieth year of service, as one of the led or now as leader, knowing the changeable nature of apparent good fortune and so unperturbed. Thus, considering his options, he could see no alternative but to force the enemy back into the forest while the wounded, with the heavier column, went forward; since between the hills and the marshes level ground extended, which allowed a tenuous line of battle.

The Fifth legion were delegated the right flank, the Twenty-first the left; the First were to lead the column, the Twentieth to oppose the pursuers.

BOOK I: LXV CAECINA'S FORCES ESCAPE THE MARSHES

It was a night of unrest for diverse reasons, with the barbarians, at their feasting, filling the low-lying valleys and echoing woods with victory chants and savage cries; while among the Romans there were weakly flickering fires, broken challenges, men lying here and there beside the ramparts or wandering among the tents, unsleeping but less than vigilant.

An ominous dream disturbed the general: for he saw Quintilius Varus, stained with blood, rise from the marshes, and heard the phantom calling as if summoning him, though he refused to obey and thrust it back with outstretched hand. Day broke, with the legions on the flanks deserting their post through fear or defiance, hastening to a piece of level ground they had taken, beyond the swampland. Arminius however, though free to attack, made no immediate move. But with the Roman baggage-train stuck in the rutted mud, and the soldiers around it in confusion, the line of standards broken and, as always at such times, with each man quick to follow his own direction slow to hear the command, he ordered the German attack, shouting: 'See there, Varus and his legions, trapped once more, destined for the same fate!'

With this, he and his chosen band cut through our lines, dealing the worst blows against our horses. They, slipping in their own blood and the

slime of the marshes, threw their riders, and scattering all obstacles trampled the fallen. The eagles elicited the greatest efforts, as it was nigh impossible to advance against a cloud of spears, or plant them in the muddy soil.

Caecina, trying to hold the line, fell with his horse under him, and would have been surrounded had the First legion not interposed. We benefited from the enemy's greed, they quitting the carnage to chase the spoils, and towards evening the legions struggled onto open and solid ground.

Nor was this the end of their misery. A rampart must be built and material sought, while lacking most of the tools with which to dig soil or cut turf; lacking tents for the companies, dressings for the wounded; dividing their rations soiled by dirt or blood, they lamented the fatal darkness, and the fear that but a day of life now remained to so many thousand men.

BOOK I: LXVI CAECINA STEMS THE PANIC

By chance, a stray horse, breaking its tether, frightened by the shouting, threw those it met into confusion. Such was the panic, it being thought the Germans had broken through, that there was a rush to the gates, the main gate being the principal objective, since it faced away from the enemy and was a safer escape route.

Caecina, satisfied the fear was groundless, but finding his authority, pleas, and even the use of force inadequate to resist the soldiers or restrain them, threw himself down across the gateway, and in the end respect barred their path since it led over the general's body, while the tribunes and centurions shouted that it was a false alarm.

BOOK I:LXVII HE ADDRESSES THE TROOPS

Gathering the troops together in front of his quarters, and ordering them to listen to him in silence, he warned them of the needs of the moment. Their only safety lay in force, but the tactic required discretion, and for them to stay behind the rampart till the enemy came near in hopes of carrying it by assault; then they must break out everywhere: and that move would carry them to the Rhine.

If they fled, more forests lay ahead, wider and deeper marshes, and a savage enemy; but in victory lay honour and glory. He reminded them of all that was dear at home, all the virtues of army life; saying nothing of their setbacks.

Then, beginning with his own, he assigned the officers' and tribunes' mounts to the bravest men, without favouritism, so that they might charge the enemy first, followed by the infantry.

BOOK I:LXVIII THE ROMANS WIN A VICTORY

The Germans were no less troubled, in their case by expectation, greed and the various pronouncements of their leaders. Arminius proposed to let the Romans depart, and then surround them again once they had left, in the impassable marshland; Inguiomerus proposed the more direct method, beloved of the barbarians, of encircling the rampart under arms: thus conquering the Romans more easily and taking more captives, with the spoils intact.

Thus at daybreak, they began filling the ditch, throwing in wooden hurdles, and climbing the edges of the rampart, on which stood a scattering of soldiers, almost petrified with terror. But as they clung to the defences a concatenation of horns and trumpets sounded the signal to arms, and with

a loud cry and a sudden charge the Roman cohorts poured down on the German rear, shouting that here were no trees or swamps, but a field with the gods in their favour.

The blast of trumpets and the glitter of weapons filled the enemy, who looked for a quick killing and a handful of lightly-armed defenders, with the more astonishment for it being unexpected, and they fell, as reckless in defeat as they were rapacious in victory. Arminius, unhurt, and Inguiomerus, seriously wounded, fled the field; the mass of their warriors met with slaughter, as long as the Romans' wrath and the light of day remained.

It was already dark when the legions returned, weary and bearing yet more wounds, and with provisions scarce as well, yet finding in victory all things: strength, healing, inner resources.

BOOK I: LXIX AGRIPPINA'S AUTHORITY TROUBLES TIBERIUS

Meanwhile rumours had spread that the army was surrounded, and a dangerous force of Germans were heading for Gaul. If Agrippina had not prevented the destruction of the Rhine bridge (at Vetera) there were those, in panic, who would have dared that shameful crossing. But it was a woman of great spirit who took the role of leader during that time; one who generously gave out clothing to the needy and dressings for the wounded.

Pliny the Elder, historian of the German Wars, claims that she stood at the bridgehead praising and thanking the returning legions. Her action affected Tiberius deeply: surely, he thought, such involvement was unnatural, nor did she seek the soldiers' favour simply against the enemy; nothing was left for an imperial commander to do if a woman inspected the troops, rallied them to the standard, seduced the men with her largesse, as if it were not ostentatious enough to parade Germanicus' son about, dressed

as a common soldier, and they demanding he be called by the name of Caesar Caligula!

Agrippina already held more power over the army than any officer or commander; a rebellion had been quelled by a married woman which his imperial authority had failed to suppress. Lucius Aelius Sejanus (his confidante and commander of the Praetorian Guard) inflamed and deepened his jealousy and, knowing Tiberius' ways, sowed the seeds of a lasting hatred, to be stored away and later find increase.

BOOK I:LXX PUBLIUS VITELLIUS STRUGGLES TO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE FLEET

Meanwhile, Germanicus handed command of the Second and Fourteenth legions to Publius Vitellius (uncle of the future Emperor), in order to lighten the vessels should they find shallow water ahead, or go aground at ebb-tide. Vitellius was to march them back by the land route, and at first had an uneventful journey, on dry ground or among gently rising tides; but shortly a northerly gale, coinciding with the equinox when the sea is most turbulent, wreaked havoc with the windblown column.

The land itself was submerged: sea, shore and plain wore the same aspect, nor could solid ground be distinguished from quagmire, depths from shallows. They were toppled by the waves, drawn down by the current; packhorses, their loads, and lifeless bodies floated by, or drove against them. The companies became entangled, now up to their chest, now up to their chins in water, driven apart or drowning, as the ground vanished under their feet. Cries of mutual encouragement were in vain against the flow; courage was indistinguishable from cowardice, wisdom from foolishness, forethought from chance: all were caught up in the same violence.

Vitellius finally won through to rising ground, leading his column after him. They spent the night without equipment, without campfires, for the most part naked and bruised, more wretched even than those whom the enemy surrounded: since the besieged faced an honourable death, they an inglorious end. Daylight revealed the land, and they pushed on to the river, which Germanicus' fleet had reached. The legions, whom vague reports had held to have drowned, then embarked, though there was doubt of their survival until Germanicus and his army were seen returning.

BOOK I:LXXI THE LOYAL PROVINCES MAKE REPARATION

By now, Lucius Stertinius, who had been sent forward to receive the surrender of Segimerus, Segestes' brother, had conducted him and his son to Cologne. Both were pardoned, Segimerus readily, his son with more reluctance, since it was said he had insulted Quintilius Varus' corpse.

As to the rest, the Gallic and Hispanic provinces, and Italy, competed in restoring the army's losses, offering arms, horses, gold, whatever was most available. Germanicus praised their eagerness, accepting only arms and horses towards the campaign, while remunerating the soldiers from his own resources.

He also visited the wounded, easing the memories of their trauma with a show of kindness, praising their individual actions, acknowledging their wounds, strengthening, here with hope, there with regard for glory, everywhere with his words and concern, their love for himself and for battle.

BOOK I:LXXII TIBERIUS TIGHTENS HIS GRIP

In that year (AD15), triumphal insignia were awarded to Aulus Caecina, Lucius Apronius, and Gaius Silius, for their achievements under Germanicus' command.

Tiberius refused the title Father of the Nation, often urged on him by the people and, despite a senate vote in favour, would not allow the taking of the oath validating the emperor's every action, saying that all human affairs were uncertain, and the more a man achieved the more hazardous his position.

Yet even so he failed to inspire belief in himself as a citizen among citizens, since he had resurrected the law against treason (*lex maiestatis*) which previously bore the same name but applied to a more restricted range of offences; betrayal of the army, inciting sedition among the masses, in short any official misdeed threatening the majesty of the Roman people: actions were denounced, words were immune.

Augustus was the first to recognize that the statute seemed to cover libel, prompted to do so by the impudence of Cassius Severus, the orator, who had defamed illustrious men and women in his scandalous writings. Then Tiberius, asked by the praetor Pompeius Macer whether a similar judgement could be returned under that same statute, replied 'that the law must take its course'. He too had been exasperated by certain notorious verses of unknown authorship satirizing his cruelty, his arrogance, and his disagreements with his mother, Livia.

BOOK I:LXXIII TIBERIUS INITIALLY AGAINST MISUSE OF THE TREASON LAWS

It is worth recalling the first of such charges, those brought against Falanius and Rubrius, two insignificant Roman knights, if only to show from what small beginnings, through the machinations of Tiberius, this wholly destructive measure crept upon us to our ruin, met a temporary check, then finally flared out, consuming all.

Falanius' accuser alleged that he had introduced a certain Cassius, who was a mime given to infamous practices, amongst the devotees of Augustus; they being maintained throughout the great houses as was usual for members of such fraternities; and that in auctioning off his gardens he had also included a statue of Augustus in the sale. Rubrius, in turn, was accused of violating Augustus' divinity by an act of perjury.

When Tiberius was apprised of this, he informed the consuls that his father's place in heaven had not been decreed so the honour might be used to ruin his fellow citizens. As for Cassius, the actor, with others of his ilk, often took part in the games his own mother, Livia, had dedicated to Augustus' memory; while it was no act of sacrilege if effigies of Augustus were included when a house or garden was sold, in the same manner as those of other gods.

Regarding the charge of perjury, it must be assessed exactly as if Jupiter's name had been taken in vain: an insult to the gods was for the gods to resolve.

**BOOK I:LXXIV THE CHARGES AGAINST
GRANIUS MARCELLUS**

Not long after this, Granius Marcellus, the governor of Bithynia, was charged with treason by his own financial officer, Caepio Crispinus, with the support of Cornelius Romanus Hispo. Caepio initiated a mode of behaviour which, from the troubles of that time and the audacity of human beings, soon gained adherents. At first poor and unknown, yet ambitious, gaining the favour of a cruel prince through his secret reports, he was soon a threat to the greatest, winning power from the one man but hated by all, and creating an example whose followers, rising from beggary to riches, from being scorned to feared, from the ruin of others at last contrived their own.

Thus he accused Marcellus of having sinister conversations regarding Tiberius, bound to be damning since the accuser highlighted the worst of the emperor's traits in indicting the defendant. Since these reflected the truth, their having been said was also eminently believable. Hispo added that a statue of Marcellus had been erected overtopping that of the Caesars, while the head of Augustus had been removed from another to make way for that of Tiberius.

All this so inflamed the emperor that, emerging from his taciturnity, he proclaimed that he too would vote, and openly and under oath, regarding the case, which obliged the rest to do the same. Even now there remained a vestige of dying liberty. 'When will *you* vote, Caesar?' queried Gnaeus Piso: 'If first, I shall have something to guide me; if last, I fear I may inadvertently disagree.' This troubled Tiberius and, showing how much he regretted his unguarded anger, he moved to acquit the defendant on the count of treason: further charges of extortion were referred to the board of justice.

BOOK I:LXXV TIBERIUS INTERFERES IN THE LEGAL PROCESS

Not satisfied with senate cases, Tiberius would attend the law courts, taking his seat at a corner of the platform so as not to deprive the praetor of his chair, and due to his presence many pleas against corruption and abuse of power were upheld. Yet while the interests of truth were satisfied, those of liberty were compromised.

On one occasion a senator, Aurelius Pius, his house having experienced subsidence due to construction of a roadway and aqueduct, asked the senate for compensation. When the treasury officials resisted this, Tiberius intervened and assigned Aurelius the value of his property, desirous of spending money in a good cause, a virtue he long retained even when shedding others.

When an ex-praetor, Propertius Celer, sought to be excused from senate duty to his poverty, satisfied that his means were limited, ten thousand gold pieces were bestowed on him. Others who were tempted to adopt a similar strategy, however, were ordered to take their case to the senate, since in his desire to appear strict he behaved harshly, even when he acted rightly.

As a result others preferred silence and poverty to its declaration and charity.

BOOK I:LXXVI DRUSUS THE YOUNGER SHOWS HIS BRUTALITY

That same year the Tiber, swollen by the rains, flooded the city levels; the retreat of the waters was accompanied by the collapse of buildings and extensive loss of life. Asinius Gallus therefore advised that the Sibylline

Books be consulted. Tiberius, as secretive with respect to the divine as the human, objected; while Ateius Capito and Lucius Arruntius were commanded to control the flow of the river.

Achaia and Macedonia protesting against the weight of taxation, it was decided to transfer them from proconsular to imperial authority for the time being.

Drusus the Younger presided at a gladiatorial show given in the name of his adopted brother Germanicus. Drusus showed an excessive delight in bloodshed however vile so alarming to the spectators that his father is said to have reprimanded him.

Why Tiberius absented himself from the event is variously justified: some said it was due to his dislike of crowds, others to his innate ill-humour and fear of comparison with Augustus who attended diligently. I cannot believe he deliberately granted his son an opportunity to display brutality and occasion the public's displeasure, though this too has been suggested.

BOOK I:LXXVII CONTROL OF THE THEATRES

The licence indulged in by the theatres the previous year, now erupted on a more serious scale, not only with deaths among the people, but also those of soldiers and a centurion, while a praetorian guards' officer was wounded when trying to repress insults levelled at the magistracy and arguments amongst the crowd.

There was a debate concerning this riotous behaviour in the senate, and proposals discussed to empower the praetors to use their whips on the actors. Haterius Agrippa, a tribune of the people, vetoed the move and was rebuked in a speech by Asinius Gallus, Tiberius remaining silent, by which means he allowed the senate a pretence of freedom. Yet the veto was sustained, on the grounds that the divine Augustus had once replied that actors were immune from the lash, and it would be wrong for Tiberius to infringe on his dictum.

Numerous decrees were passed to limit extravagance and counter the irresponsibility of patrons, the most notable being that no senator might enter the house of a mime artist, nor were Roman knights to escort them in public places or support them except in the theatre, while the praetors had the power to punish any licence among the spectators with banishment.

BOOK I:LXXVIII CANCELLATION OF THE MILITARY REFORMS

Permission for the Spanish people to erect a temple to Augustus at Tarragona (Tarraco) was granted, setting a precedent for all the provinces.

Popular opposition to the one per cent duty on sales at auction, instituted after the civil wars, elicited from Tiberius the response that the military pension fund depended on it, and at the same time the State was unequal to the associated burden unless veterans were not discharged before completing twenty years' service.

Thus the ill-conceived reforms granted during the recent mutinies, whereby a term of sixteen years had been conceded, were abolished as regards the future.

BOOK I:LXXIX DEBATE ON DIVERTING THE TIBER

Next a debate took place in the senate, led by Lucus Arruntius the Younger, and Gaius Ateius Capito, as to whether the inundations caused by the Tiber should be prevented by altering the river-courses and lakes by which it was fed. Deputations from the municipalities and colonies were also heard.



'The Tiber River with the Ponte Molle at Sunset'
Jan Asselijn (Dutch, c. 1610 - 1652)
National Gallery of Art

The Florentines begged that the Chiana (Clanis) not be diverted from its old bed into the Arno, which would be ruinous to them. The deputation from Terni (Interamna Nahartium) argued in a similar manner that the most fertile land in Italy would be lost if the Nera (Nar) should overflow, after being divided (as intended) into multiple channels. Nor was the deputation from Rieti (Reate) silent, pleading against the damming of the Veline Lake (Piediluco) at its outlet into the Nera, since it would flood the surrounding country. Nature, they said, had served the best interests of humanity in granting the rivers their outlets and channels, their sinks as well as their sources; and the rites of their ancestors should be respected, having dedicated sacrifices, groves and altars to the rivers of their homeland; besides they were, in short, unwilling that Tiber himself, robbed of his attendant streams, should flow less gloriously.

Whether the representations from the colonists, the difficulty involved in the work, or superstition prevailed, Piso's motion that 'nothing be altered' was upheld.

BOOK I:LXXX TIBERIUS' ATTITUDE TO PREFERMENT

Poppaeus Sabinus' governorship of Moesia was extended, Achaia and Macedonia being added. It was one of Tiberius' practices to prolong terms of command and, often as not, retain a man with the same army group or administrative unit till his death.

Various reasons for this are given: some say it was out of dislike for troublesome change that once decided a thing stood forever; other that he was jealous lest too many were preferred; while there are those who think that while he was shrewd by nature, he prevaricated when faced with a decision; he failed to seek out men of eminent virtue, yet on the other hand hated vice; fearing danger to himself from the best, a public scandal from the worst. This vacillation brought him, in the end, to the point where he gave command of provinces to men whom he never allowed to leave Rome.

**BOOK I:LXXXI HIS MANIPULATION OF THE
CONSULAR ELECTIONS**

Regarding the consular elections, from this first year of Tiberius' reign and onwards, I hardly dare to affirm anything, so diverse is the evidence not only from the historians but also from his own speeches.

Sometimes he withheld the names of the candidates yet described their origins, career and campaigns such that their identity was revealed; on other occasions, these details too were suppressed, the candidates being exhorted not to confuse the electorate by canvassing, he himself promising to show like caution.

Usually, he simply declared the number of those who had handed him their nominations, and that he had passed their names to the consuls; though others could still apply if they were confident of their worth and influence.

Plausibly worded, but in reality empty and underhand, the more his declarations were masked by a semblance of liberty, the more they led to a dangerous servitude.

End of the Annals Book I: LV-LXXXI

BOOK II: I-XXXII
GERMANICUS VICTORIOUS



'Marius'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p450, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK II:I THE SITUATION IN THE EAST

With the consulships of Statilius Sisenna and Lucius Scribonius Libo the Elder (AD16), came disturbances in the kingdoms and Roman provinces of the East, beginning at first among the Parthians, who having petitioned Rome and won acceptance that a king should rule them, had scorned the appointee as an alien, even though he was of the house of Arsaces. This was Vonones I, once sent by Phraates IV (his father) as a hostage to Augustus.

Though he had repelled Roman armies and their leaders, Phraates had shown all due respect to Augustus, and to effect closer ties of friendship had entrusted him with a number of his sons, less from fear of ourselves than from a lack of faith in his countrymen's loyalty.

BOOK II:II THE PARTHIANS REJECT VONONES I AS THEIR KING

After the murder of Phraates and his immediate successors, which were matters internal to Parthia, a deputation from the Parthian nobility arrived in Rome, to appoint Vonones, as Phraates' eldest son, as their king. Augustus considered this an honour to himself, and bestowed wealth on Vonones, while the barbarians accepted him with the joy they usually show a new monarch.

Feelings of shame soon followed, as they questioned their own degeneration: the Parthians had found a king in an alien country, one tainted by the enemy's ways; and now the kingdom of Arsaces was considered a Roman province, and treated as such. Where, they asked, was the glory earned by those who had killed Crassus, and ejected Antony, if a slave of Augustus, one who had tolerated all those years of servitude, was to rule Parthia?

Their contempt was deepened by the man's own behaviour: he being hostile to their way of life, rarely seen in the hunting field, slow to show any interest in horses; lounging about in a litter when passing through the towns; and disdainful of banqueting with his country's nobility. His retinue of Greeks brought him mockery too, and his habit of setting the royal seal on every household utensil. While his accessibility, and his ready kindness, virtues unknown to the Parthians, were held to be exotic vices; so that being equally foreign to their ways, good or bad he was hated.

BOOK II:III PRIOR HISTORY IN ARMENIA

Thus, Artabanus was called upon, a descendant of Arsaces by blood, who had been raised among the Scythian Dahae, and though routed in his first engagement, rallied his forces, and seized the kingdom (as Artabanus III).

The defeated Vonones found refuge in Armenia, between Parthian and Roman territory, at that time ungoverned and treacherous as a result of Antony's criminal actions. The latter had beguiled the late king, Artavasdes II, with a show of friendship, then decked him with chains, and finally handed him over (to Cleopatra VII) for execution.

Artavasdes' son, Artaxias II, hostile to us on account of his father, defended himself and his crown by virtue of Parthian strength, but following his assassination at the hands of his treacherous relatives, Augustus assigned Tigranes III to Armenia and he was installed in his kingship by Augustus' stepson, Tiberius. Tigranes' rule was short; as was that of his son (Tigranes IV) and daughter (Erato) joined, in the oriental manner, in matrimony as well as government.

BOOK II:IV VONONES REMOVED FROM ARMENIA

Next, Artavasdes III was imposed on the country, by order of Augustus, and ejected again not without discredit to us. Gaius Caesar was then delegated to settle Armenian affairs. He granted the Armenian crown to Ariobarzanes, a Mede by origin (he also ruled as Ariobarzanes II of Media Atropatene), who was welcomed by the Armenians for his good looks and noble qualities.

Ariobarzanes meeting an accidental death, his son was not long tolerated; and after experiencing government by the woman called Erato, who was shortly expelled, the weak and wavering people, masterless rather than free, accepted Vonones the fugitive as their king.

But when Artabanus threatened, since scant aid from the Armenians was likely, and since if we chose to defend Vonones in force, war with Parthia would ensue, the governor of Syria, Creticus Silanus, summoned Vonones, and placed him under restriction, leaving him only his title and his luxuries. Vonones' attempt to escape from this charade we will report in its proper place.

BOOK II:V GERMANICUS CONTINUES HIS CAMPAIGN IN GERMANY

However, the turbulence in the East was not unwelcome to Tiberius as a pretext for removing Germanicus from command of the legions with whom he was familiar and appointing him to fresh provinces where he would be simultaneously exposed to chance and deception. But the deeper the devotion of his men, and the greater his adoptive father's ill-will, the more intent was Germanicus on a swift victory, after re-consideration of his campaign strategy, given two years of bitter, if successful, warfare.

In line of battle on a level field the Germans had been beaten, while the forests, swamps, brief summer and early onset of winter were to their advantage; his own men were affected not so much by wounds as by the lengthy marches and the loss of weaponry; the Gallic provinces were tired of providing horses; and their long baggage train was subject to ambush, and hard to defend.

Yet if they penetrated from the sea, occupying the ground would be easy for them, and might go undetected by the enemy, while the campaign might commence earlier, and legions and supplies be conveyed together; the cavalry with their mounts could be carried intact from the estuaries upstream into the heart of Germany.

BOOK II:VI APPROACH BY WATER

To this end, he therefore sent Publius Vitellius (the Younger) and Gaius Antius to assess the Gallic tribute, while Silius and Caecina were charged with construction of the fleet. A thousand vessels were thought sufficient and speedily built, some were short craft narrow at fore and stern, wide in the beam, to ride the waves more easily; others were flat-bottomed to run aground without damage; still more had steering oars positioned at both ends, so as to make way in either direction as the bank of oars reversed their stroke. Many were decked to carry military engines, and equally useful for transporting horses and supplies. To manageable sails and swift oars, was added an appearance and threat of military readiness.

The Isle of Batavia was ordained as the meeting place, providing an easy landing, convenient for assembling the troops and sending them on campaign. For the Rhine, flowing seawards in a single channel past insignificant islets, divides in two, so to speak, at the Batavian frontier, retaining its name and force as it passes through Germany, until it joins the North Sea, while washing the Gallic lands in a wider gentler stream, known by the name of the Waal locally but soon changing its designation to the

River Meuse and flowing out through an immense estuary into that same North Sea.

BOOK II:VII GERMANICUS RESTORES THE ALTAR DEDICATED BY HIS FATHER

While the vessels were being assembled, Germanicus ordered his lieutenant Silius with a lightly-armed force to carry out a raid against the Chatti: he himself, on hearing that the fort situated near the River Lippe was under siege, led six legions to its relief. Due to a sudden worsening of the weather, Silius could do no more than carry off the wife and daughter of Arpus, chief of the Chatti, with a modest quantity of spoils, while the besiegers would not grant Germanicus an opportunity for battle, but melted away on news of his approach; though they demolished the funeral mound he had recently raised over Varus' legionaries, as well as the former altar set up by Drusus the Elder.

Germanicus restored the altar, and himself led a parade of his legionaries in honour of Drusus, his father; it was not thought proper to reconstruct the funeral mound. Also the whole tract of country between the fort, Aliso (probably at Elsen, near the confluence of the Lippe and Alme) and the Rhine, was strongly fortified, with fresh frontier posts and earthworks.

BOOK II:VIII GERMANICUS SAILS HIS FLEET TO THE RIVER EMS

The fleet having now arrived, supplies were sent forward, vessels assigned to the legionaries and allies, and Germanicus entered the Canal of Drusus, named after his father, to whom he prayed, by that

example and memorial to wisdom and effort, that he be pleased and willing to aid a like endeavour, then navigated the lakes (ancient Flevo) and ocean, voyaging successfully as far as the estuary of the Ems.

The fleet moored by the left bank, in the mouth of the river, erring only in failing to transport the troops upstream and disembark them on the right bank as intended, such that a number of days were lost in building bridges. The cavalry and legionaries crossed the estuary waters before high tide, intrepidly enough, but the auxiliaries at the end of the column and the Batavians there, while dashing into the waves to exhibit their swimming skills, found themselves in difficulties and a number drowned.

While making camp Germanicus heard of an uprising of the Angrivarii to his rear: Stertinius was instantly sent out with cavalry and light infantry to repay their treachery with fire and slaughter.

BOOK II:IX ARMINIUS AND HIS BROTHER FLAVUS MEET AT THE RIVER WESER

The River Weser lay between the Roman forces and those of the Cherusci. Arminius, with the rest of his chieftains, halted at the river-bank, seeking to establish whether Germanicus had arrived. On receiving the reply that he had, he asked to be allowed to speak to his brother, Flavius by name, who was serving in the Roman army, a man noted for his loyalty and for the loss of an eye due to a wound received some years before during Tiberius' command. This being granted, he went forward and was greeted by Arminius; who dismissing his own escort, demanded that the archers posted along our bank of the river be withdrawn also, and when they had retired he asked his brother about his facial disfigurement. On being told the location of the relevant battle, he inquired what reward Flavius had received. Flavius mentioned his increased pay, the torc and gold crown, and other military decorations; Arminius mocking the low price of servitude.



'The Roman general Drusus and the Germanic diviner'
Charles Rochussen (Dutch, 1814-1890
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK II:X THEY ARGUE ACROSS THE RIVER

They then began to differ, Flavius insisting on Rome's greatness, the power of the Caesars, the heavy cost to the vanquished, the ready clemency shown towards those who surrendered; their wives and children not even being treated as enemies: Arminius urging their country's rights, their ancient liberty, the authority of the gods of the German groves, and the example of their mother, who was his companion in prayer that Flavius would not choose to be a deserter and betrayer of his kith and kin, rather than their liberator.

This gradually descended into a quarrel, that not even the intervening river would have prevented from turning violent if Stertinius had not hastened to restrain Flavius who, filled with anger, was calling for his horse and weapons. On the opposite bank, the menacing figure of Arminius could be seen, threatening battle, with many loud interjections, in the Latin he had acquired as a leader of native auxiliaries in the camps of the Romans.

BOOK II:XI THE DEATH OF CHARIOVALDA LEADER OF THE BATAVIAN AUXILIARIES

The next day, the Germans formed line beyond the Weser. Germanicus, considering it poor tactics to risk his legions without well-defended bridgeheads, sent the cavalry across by a ford. Stertinius and one of the chief centurions, Aemilius, commanded, attacking at widely separate points to open up the enemy; the leader of the Batavians, Chariovalda, emerging where the current ran fiercest.

The Cherusci, pretending flight, drew him onto level ground surrounded by woods: then breaking out in force from every side, they confronted the Batavians, pursued those who retreated, and where they

rallied to form a circle overthrew them by main force with showers of missiles.

Chariovalda, after resisting the enemy's savagery for some time, exhorting his men to force their way en masse through their attackers while throwing himself into the thickest of the fight, fell, his horse beneath him, to a storm of spear-thrusts, with many of his noblemen around him: the remainder of his band were delivered from danger, by their own efforts, or the arrival of the cavalry led by Stertinus and Aemilius.

BOOK II:XII ARMINIUS PREPARES TO ATTACK

After crossing the Weser, Germanicus learnt from the mouth of a deserter that Arminius had chosen his ground for battle; and that other tribes had gathered in woods sacred to their Hercules, intending a night-attack on the camp. The informant seemed trustworthy, and they could see the light of fires, while scouts who ventured closer attested to hearing the neighing of horses and the murmur of a confused array.

Germanicus, with the decisive battle near, decided to test the spirits of his men, debating with himself how to ensure the test was genuine. Reports from tribunes and centurions were more often designed to please than accurate in themselves, freedmen were by nature servile, and friends prone to flattery, while if he called an assembly, there too, a few gave the lead while the rest merely applauded. He needed to know the soldiers' inward thoughts, their hopes and fears, expressed privately, in unguarded moments, over their rations.

**BOOK II:XIII GERMANICUS TAKES SOUNDINGS
ANONYMOUSLY BY NIGHT**

At nightfall, leaving his sanctum secretly and unbeknown to the sentries, with a single companion, a wild-beast's skin over his shoulders, he walked the alleys of the camp, standing beside tents, enjoying the fruits of his reputation, as some praised his nobility, others his bearing, most his patience and courtesy, all of the same mind whether joking or serious, confessing their readiness to show their gratitude in the field, and in the same moment slay these treacherous peace-breakers, in the name of glory and revenge.

During all this, one of the enemy, with a knowledge of the Latin tongue, galloped to the rampart, and in a loud voice offered, in the name of Arminius, wives, land and payment of a gold piece a day for the duration of the war to those who would desert.

The insult caused anger among the legionaries: let day come and battle be joined; they would seize the German land, and carry off those wives; the omen was welcome; the enemy's women and wealth were destined as their prize!

About the third watch, an attack was launched against the camp, but not a spear was thrown, the enemy finding the ramparts lined with men, and no precaution lacking.

**BOOK II:XIV GERMANICUS DREAMS, AND THEN
ADDRESSES HIS TROOPS**

That same night, brought Germanicus a welcome dream, in which he saw himself offering sacrifice and receiving a fresh and more beautiful garment from the hands of his grandmother, Livia, his own being spattered

with the victim's blood. Strengthened by the omen, the auspices being favourable, he called an assembly and explained what his experience suggested as appropriate to the imminent conflict: open ground was not the only kind favourable to Roman soldiers, but if they used sound judgement, woods and glades also. The huge shields of the barbarians and their immense spears were of less use among the tree-trunks and brushwood than the javelin, the short sword, and close-fitting armour.

The Germans struck thick and fast, seeking the face with their spear-points; they wore neither body-plate nor helmet, and rather than shields strengthened with metal and hide carried pieces of wickerwork or thin painted board. Only the front line wielded spears of a kind, the rest only shorter darts with hardened points. Again, their bodies, while grim enough to the eye and good for short-lived attacks, could not endure wounds. They would turn and flee without shame at the disgrace, without a thought for their leaders, fearful in adversity, and in victory without heed to divine or human law.

If the Romans, tired of road and seaway, desired an end, this battle would procure it; the Elbe was already nearer than the Rhine, and no warfare beyond; let them only grant him, treading in the footsteps of his father and uncle, victory in these same lands!

BOOK II: XV ARMINIUS ADDRESSES HIS MEN

This speech of Germanicus was followed by an outburst of military ardour, and the signal to engage was given. Nor did Arminius and the rest of the German chieftains omit to call their clans to witness that these were only the Romans of Varus' army, quickest to run, who had turned to mutiny rather than face battle: of whom part were showing, to a hostile enemy, their backs, scarred with wounds; part their limbs weakened by storm and tide; with the gods against them and without hope of success. True, they sought ships and pathless seas, to arrive unopposed, to flee

without pursuit: but when battle was joined, wind and oars would be no help to beaten men.

They only need remember Roman greed, cruelty, pride: what remained but their hold on liberty, and death before servitude!

BOOK II:XVI THE BATTLE OF IDISTAVISUS (BATTLE OF THE WESER RIVER)

So the chiefs led them down, roused and clamouring for battle, to the plain known as Idistavisus, lying between the River Weser and the hills which wind unevenly there, now yielding to the river bank, now lifting in some mountain spur. At the enemy's back rose the forest, its branches stretching skywards, with clear ground between the tree-trunks. The barbarian ranks occupied the level ground and the margin of the woods: the Cherusci alone were positioned on the hills, so as to charge down from above when the Romans engaged.

Our army advanced as follows: the Gallic and German auxiliaries in front, followed by archers on foot; then four legions with Germanicus, two praetorian cohorts, and the pick of the cavalry; then four more legions and the light infantry with mounted archers and the remainder of the allied cohorts. The troops were alert, and prepared so as to halt in battle array.

BOOK II:XVII THE ROMANS VICTORIOUS

On sighting the Cheruscan forces, whose courageous spirit led to their dashing forward, Germanicus ordered the flower of his cavalry to charge the enemy flank while Stertinius with the remaining squadrons rode to attack their rear, Germanicus himself being ready to provide support at

the right moment. During this time, his attention was drawn to the happiest of omens, a flight of eight eagles seen seeking and entering the woods. ‘On,’ he cried, ‘follow the birds of Rome, ever the divine spirits of the legions.’

The infantry line and the forward cavalry, charging simultaneously, broke through the enemy rear and flanks. Strange to relate, the two enemy columns fled in opposite directions, those who had held the forest margin rushing to open ground, those stationed in the plain towards the forest. Midway between the two, the Cherusci were being driven from the hills, among them the prominent figure of Arminius, striking, shouting, bleeding, as he tried to maintain the fight.

He had flung himself at our archers, and might have broken through there, had the Raetian, Vindelician and Gallic cohorts not raised their standards against him. Nevertheless, physical strength and his horse’s momentum carried him clear, his face being smeared with his own blood to avoid recognition. Some say that the Chauci, serving with the Roman auxiliaries, knew him and granted him passage. A like courage or deceit allowed Inguiomerus escape: the rest were slaughtered indiscriminately. Many too died attempting to swim the Weser, struck by spears or drowned by the force of the current, or later, overwhelmed by the weight of the crush, and the collapsing river-banks.

Some found shameful refuge by climbing the trees, until, while hiding in the branches, they were derisively shot down by the advancing archers, or were brought down by uprooting the trees.

BOOK II: XVIII THE VICTORY DEDICATED TO TIBERIUS

It was a magnificent victory, nor for us was it a bloody one. The enemy were massacred from the fifth hour of daylight to nightfall, and the ground was littered with corpses and weapons for a space of ten miles. Among the spoils were found the chains which, confident in the outcome, the enemy had brought for us Romans.

On the field of battle, the soldiers proclaimed Tiberius as Imperator, and raised a mound, planting weapons there, in the style of a victory memorial, with the names of the defeated clans inscribed below.

BOOK II: XIX THE GERMANS MOUNT A FURTHER OFFENSIVE

Wounds, grief and ruin affected the Germans far less than the resentment and anger this sight evoked. Those who had been prepared to leave their homes and migrate beyond the Elbe, chose to fight and rushed to arm. Commoners and noblemen, young and old, suddenly attacked the Roman line of march, and threw it into confusion.

Ultimately, they chose a position between a stream and the woods, centred on a narrow and sodden stretch of level ground; the woods also were encircled by deep marshland, except on one side where the Angrivarii had raised a broad earthwork separating them from the Cherusci.

Here their foot-soldiers stood: their cavalry being concealed in the glades nearby, so as to be behind the legions as they entered the woods.

BOOK II: XX BATTLE IN THE WOODS

Nothing of this escaped Germanicus: aware of their intent and their positions, overt or hidden, he turned his enemies' cunning to their own disadvantage. He assigned the cavalry and the plain to Seius Tubero, his legate; he positioned his infantrymen so that one group might enter the woods marching on a level track, while the other scaled the intervening earthwork: what was difficult he reserved for himself, the rest he left to his legates.

The group assigned to level ground broke through easily; those attacking the barrier, as if scaling a wall, suffered the weight of blows from above. Germanicus, sensing that the fight was unequal at close quarters, ordered the legionaries a little further back, the marksmen and slingers to hurl their missiles and rout the enemy. Javelins were thrown from the engines, and the more conspicuous the defenders the more numerous the wounds that felled them.

Germanicus, with the praetorian cohorts, was the first to lead the charge into the woods, once the rampart was captured. There the fight went head to head: the enemy had their back to the marshes, the Romans theirs to the river and the hills; for both, necessity lay in winning the field, hope in courage, salvation in victory.

BOOK II:XXI DECISIVE ROMAN VICTORY

The Germans showed no lack of spirit, but were overcome by the nature of the battle and their weapons, forced to a standing fight by their immense numbers, unable to thrust or retrieve their long spears in the confined spaces, or employ the momentum of their bodies by running at our men; while we, shields held tight to the chest, hands clasped on sword-hilts, thrusting at the barbarians' mighty limbs and bare heads, cut a path through the massed warriors.

Arminius was now less forceful, owing to the endless risks, or hampered by the recent wound he had incurred. Moreover, Inguiomerus, rushing about the battle-field, was deserted less by courage than by fortune. Germanicus, too, tearing off his helm so as to be more easily recognised, called on his men to press on with the killing: captives were useless, only the extermination of a tribe would end the war.

Finally, at close of day, he withdrew a legion from the field to start work on the camp: the rest satiating themselves with blood till nightfall. The cavalry engagement proved inconclusive.

BOOK II:XXII GERMANICUS CELEBRATES THEIR SUCCESS

After praising the victors in an address, Germanicus raised a pile of weapons with a proud legend, proclaiming that the army of Tiberius Caesar, having subdued the tribes between the Rhine and the Elbe, had dedicated that memorial to Mars, Jupiter and Augustus. He added nothing as regards himself, fearing jealousy or considering the knowledge of his exploits sufficient.

He instructed Stertinius, shortly, to make war on the Angrivarii, unless they had previously surrendered. As suppliants, resisting nothing, they were in fact granted every indulgence.

BOOK II:XXIII RETURN VOYAGE

However, as it was already midsummer, some of the legionaries were marched back to winter quarters by land, while Germanicus embarked the majority and sailed then down the River Ems to the North Sea.

Initially they met with a flat calm, resounding to the flapping of sails and the beating of oars, but soon hail slanted down from a mass of dark clouds, as the waves, raised by conflicting winds from every quarter, obscured the view and impeded the steering; while the soldiers, fearful, ignorant of the perils of the sea, by obstructing the sailors or providing ill-timed assistance harmed the exercise of their skills.

Then sky and sea yielded to a southerly, powered by immense trains of cloud rising from Germany's sodden land and deep rivers, rendered more intense by the cold from the neighbouring north, a storm which overtook and scattered the vessels over the open sea or among islands made dangerous by scattered rocks and hidden shoals.

These, with a little time and effort, were avoided, but when the tide changed and flowed with the wind, no anchor would hold nor could the inrushing waters be baled. Horses, pack-animals, baggage, even weapons were jettisoned to lighten the hulls, that leaked below decks and were overtopped by the waves.

BOOK II:XXIV THE FLEET SCATTERED

Just as the North Sea is more violent than other seas, and Germany's weather noted for its severity, so this disaster, facing hostile shores or an extent of water so vast and profound it is judged the last deep beyond all land, exceeded others in its abnormality and magnitude. Some of the ships sank, yet others were wrecked on remote islands, where, in the absence of all civilisation, the men died of starvation, except those able to live on the flesh of horses likewise driven ashore.

Germanicus' trireme alone reached the Chaucian coast. For many a day and night, on some cliff or headland, he berated himself for so ruinous an outcome, his friends barely able to prevent him seeking death in those same waves. At last, on a flowing tide with a following wind, the crippled vessels appeared, a rare few under oar, some with makeshift sails, or under tow from sturdier craft: and swiftly refitted they were sent to search the islands. Many were rescued through that act of forethought: many, ransomed from the interior, were returned by the Angrivarians whose loyalty had recently been confirmed; a few driven across to Britain were sent back by its chieftains.

Those who returned from distant parts told wondrous tales of powerful whirlwinds, unknown birds, sea-monsters, enigmatic forms part-human part-creature, things seen or believed real in a moment of terror.

BOOK II:XXV GERMANICUS REGAINS THE INITIATIVE

But though rumours of the fleet's loss led the Germans to hope for fresh conflict, they prompted Germanicus to ensure its suppression. He ordered Gaius Silius, with thirty thousand of the infantry and three thousand cavalry, to move against the Chatti, while he himself with a larger force attacked the Marsi, whose chieftain, Mallovendus, had recently surrendered himself, and now claimed that the eagle from one of Varus' legions was buried in a nearby grove, itself minimally defended.

A detachment was immediately sent to draw the enemy forward, while a second force encircled their rear and excavated the site; fortune attended both. Given this, Germanicus pushed on more readily into the interior, attacking and destroying an enemy that dared not engage, or whenever it resisted was routed, and, as prisoners attested, was never more demoralised.

Indeed the Romans were declared invincible, equal to all eventualities; forces who though their fleet was wrecked, their weapons lost, the shore littered with the bodies of their men and horses, had returned to the fight, as bravely, as fiercely and seemingly in greater numbers, than before.

BOOK II:XXVI TIBERIUS RECALLS GERMANICUS

The army was then led back to winter quarters, delighted at compensating for the disaster at sea with the overall success of their mission. Germanicus added to this by his generosity in making good whatever losses were claimed to have been incurred. There was no doubt also that their enemies were wavering and discussing moves towards peace, and that a further effort next summer might end the war.

But letters from Tiberius constantly urged Germanicus to return and enjoy the triumph decreed him: his successes and misfortunes already

sufficed. Great were his battles and achievements, yet he should also remember the cruel and heavy losses incurred by wind and wave, though through no fault of his leadership. He himself, Tiberius added, had been sent into Germany on nine occasions by the divine Augustus, achieving more by diplomacy than force: thus the Sugambrian surrender was achieved, thus the Suevi under King Maroboduus had been bound to keep the peace. The Cherusci and the other rebel tribes might be left to their internal conflicts, now that Roman vengeance was satisfied.

When Germanicus asked for another year to finish what was begun, Tiberius addressed his reluctance more forcefully, offering him a second consulate, the duties of which he would effect in person, at the same time adding that, if there must be further warfare, he might leave his brother Drusus that means to glory, since they had no other enemies at the time, and Drusus could neither pursue the title of Emperor nor win laurels except in Germany. Germanicus delayed no longer, though he was aware all this was a fiction, and that he was being denied through jealousy an honour properly his.

BOOK II:XXVII CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST LIBO

Around the same time, Libo Drusus, a member of the Scribonian family, was indicted for revolutionary activity. I shall describe the origin, process, and end of this matter, as it marked the first inception of a system that would eat away for many years at public affairs.

A senator, Firmius Catus, one of Libo's closest friends, had involved that thoughtless youth, who was susceptible to any inanity, in astrological forecasts, magical rites, and even the interpretation of dreams; while at the same time encouraging his luxurious style of living and accumulation of debt, by pointing out to him that Pompey was his great-grandfather; Scribonia, at one time consort to Augustus, his great-aunt; the Caesars his cousins, and his house filled with ancestral portraits; and by sharing his

wants and needs; thus accumulating the more evidence with which to entangle him.

BOOK II:XXVIII TIBERIUS ALLOWS THE EVIDENCE TO MOUNT

When he had found sufficient witnesses, and servants with a like knowledge, he asked for access to Tiberius, who had been advised by a Roman knight close to him, Vesularius Flaccus, of the defendant and the charge. Tiberius, while not rejecting the evidence, refused an audience: as their communication could be maintained through that same intermediary, Flaccus.

In the meantime Tiberius granted Libo a praetorship, inviting him to dinner, where Tiberius showed no sign of estrangement in his gaze, nor emotion in his speech (having buried his anger deep). While he might have curbed Libo's every word and action, he preferred to note them, until eventually, a certain Junius, persuaded by Libo to try raising the infernal shades with his spells, carried that information to Fulcinius Trio. Celebrated among the professional informers, Trio's genius was for feeding on ill rumour.

He immediately swooped on the accused, approached the consuls, and demanded a senate enquiry. The Fathers were moreover being called upon, he added, to consider a matter both grave and hideous.

BOOK II:XXIX LIBO BEGS INDULGENCE

Libo, meanwhile, went into mourning, and with an escort of noblewomen made a tour of the great houses, pleading with his wife's

relatives (the Sulpicii), begging them to speak against his indictment, but was refused everywhere on various pretexts, and with the same degree of alarm.

On the day the senate met, he was so exhausted by fear and anxiety, unless as some say he was feigning illness, that he was carried to the doors of the Curia in a litter, and leaning on his brother (Lucius Scribonius Libo, the Younger) extended his hands to Tiberius while raising his voice in supplication, Tiberius receiving him with unmoved countenance. The emperor then read out the indictment, and the names of the accusers, calmly, appearing neither to mitigate nor aggravate the charges.

BOOK II:XXX LIBO'S TRIAL

Besides Trio and Catus, Fonteius Agrippa and Gaius Vibius added their names to the accusation, and they disputed as to who should state the prosecution case, until Vibius announced that, since no one would concede and Libo was appearing without counsel, he would present the charges one by one.

He produced a woeful set of complaints, including the claim that Libo had consulted his seers as to whether he would acquire enough wealth to cover the Appian Way with coins as far as Brundisium (Brindisi). There was more in the same vein, stupid, vacuous, or if considered with greater sympathy, merely pitiful.

However, regarding one charge, the prosecution argued that a series of notations in Libo's hand, threatening or mysterious, had been appended to the names of the imperial family and various senators. The defendant denying the allegation, it was resolved that his servants, who might know of all this, be interrogated under torture. And because an old senate decree prohibited their questioning on a capital charge against their master, Tiberius, cunning inventor of new legalistic processes, ordered the slaves to be sold individually to an agent of the treasury, with the obvious purpose of

eliciting information about Libo from his servants, while preserving the integrity of the senate decree!

In the light of this, the accused asked for an adjournment to the following day, and left for home, after instructing his relative, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, to make a last appeal to the emperor.

BOOK II:XXXI LIBO COMMITS SUICIDE

The response was that he should petition the senate. Meanwhile his house was picketed by soldiers, stamping about the portico itself, so noisily and visibly that Libo, at the banquet he had arranged as his last indulgence, clutched at the hands of his servants in torment, pushing his sword at them, and calling out for someone to strike him.

But they, fleeing in fear, overturned the lamp beside the table, and he, now shadowed by death, struck twice at his innards, and collapsed groaning. His freedmen ran to him, and the soldiers witnessing this withdrew.

In the senate, the prosecution was however pursued with the same severity, Tiberius declaring on oath that, however guilty the defendant might have been, he would have petitioned for the man's life, had he not chosen to hasten his own death.

BOOK II:XXXII THE AFTERMATH OF LIBO'S TRIAL

Libo's possessions were divided among his accusers, and extraordinary praetorships were granted to those of senatorial rank. Then, Cotta Messalinus proposed that no effigy of Libo be allowed at the funeral processions of his descendants, and Gaius Lentulus that no member of the Scribonii should carry the surname Drusus.

At the suggestion of Pomponius Flaccus, a number of days of public thanksgiving were instituted. Further, votive offerings were to be made to Jupiter, Mars and Concord, and the thirteenth of September, the anniversary of Libo's suicide, was to be appointed a feast day, according to an act engineered by Lucius Piso, Asinius Gallus, Papius Mutilus, and Lucius Apronius; which decrees and sycophancy I have told of, in order to show how long this evil has existed in public life.

Other resolutions enacted by the senate commanded the expulsion from Italy of all astrologers and magicians, of whom one, Lucius Pituanus, was flung from the Tarpeian Rock, while another, Publius Marcius, was decapitated by the consuls outside the Esquiline Gate, at the sounding of a trumpet, according to ancient usage.

End of the Annals Book II: I-XXXII

BOOK II: XXXIII-LIV
TROUBLE IN THE EAST



'Genius of Mars'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p754, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK II:XXXIII THE SENATE DEBATE CONTROL OF LUXURY ITEMS

At the next session of the senate, Quintus Haterius, the ex-consul, and Octavius Fronto, a former praetor, spoke at length against the national indulgence in luxuries, and promoted a decree that table-ware for serving food should not be of solid gold, nor should silk clothing shame the male sex.

Fronto, since it was still customary for a senator to take the opportunity to promote his opinions if they were considered in the public interest, went further and demanded a limit to the use of silver, the amount of furniture, and the number of servants,.

Asinius Gallus spoke against the measure: saying that private wealth had grown with the expansion of empire, nor was this something new, but a most ancient process. Money meant one thing to the Fabricii, another to the Scipios; and all was relative to the wealth of the State. While the State was poor, our fellow-citizens lived in tiny cottages, once it achieved splendour, the individual also shone. Neither in servants, silver-plate, nor anything obtained for use did excess or moderation exist except in relation to the owner's fortune.

Senators and Knights were distinguished by their wealth, not because that rendered them different in kind from others, but so that those who enjoyed pride of place, rank and dignity should equally enjoy whatever accorded with peace of mind and bodily health, unless it were right that distinguished men, exposed to greater cares and wider risks, should be deprived of what solaced their cares and dangers.

Gallus, with this profession of vice in the guise of virtue, easily gained agreement from an audience of like-minded individuals. And Tiberius added that this was not a time for censorship, nor, if morals became lax, would there be any lack of reformers to correct them.

BOOK II:XXXIV LUCIUS PISO VERSUS URGULANIA

During the debate, Lucius Piso, announced, in a diatribe against bribery in the Forum, corruption among the judiciary, and the ravings of the advocates with their noisy threats of prosecution, that he was retiring and quitting the capital, to live in some far-off and sequestered rural location: he then left the Curia.

Tiberius was troubled, and having soothed Piso in gentle terms, induced Piso's relatives to prevent his departure by their influence and prayers. Piso soon gave no less a proof of his troublesome independence of spirit, by summoning to court Urgulania, whose friendship with Livia had set her above the law. Urgulania declined to attend and, scorning Piso, was carried to the palace, while he refused to withdraw, even though Livia complained that it was an outrage and an insult to herself.

Tiberius, thinking it courteous to humour his mother thus far, by saying that he would attend the praetorian court in support of Urgulania, set out from the palace, ordering his bodyguards to follow at a distance. The people crowded around to watch while he, with a composed countenance, by talking on a variety of topics, drew out the time and the journey, until, as Piso's relatives failed to dissuade him, Livia ordered the amount of the claim to be paid.

This terminated an incident which was not inglorious for Piso, and added to Tiberius' reputation. Urgulania, however, enjoyed such excessive influence regarding civil matters, that she disdained to appear as a witness in a trial brought before the senate: a praetor was sent to interview her at home, at a time when by ancient custom the Vestal Virgins were to be heard in the Forum and the courts of justice whenever *they* gave evidence.

BOOK II:XXXV DEBATE OVER ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE AND LAW-COURTS

Iwould have said nothing regarding that year's adjournment, if the divergent opinions of Gnaeus Piso and Asinius Gallus on the subject had not been noteworthy.

Though Tiberius had said that he himself would not be present, Piso judged that even more of a reason to proceed, in that it would be to the honour of the state for the senators and knights to be able to carry out their duties in the sovereign's absence.

Gallus, anticipated by Piso in this show of independence, argued that nothing transacted would be sufficiently illustrious or in accord with the dignity of the Roman people unless it was done in the presence and under the eyes of their emperor, and for that reason the petitioners from Italy and the in-comers from the provinces should attend on his presence.

Tiberius listened, and in silence, to the weighty arguments from both sides, but the adjournment was carried.

BOOK II:XXXVI DEBATE CONCERNING THE ELECTION OF MAGISTRATES

Another difference of opinion arose between Gallus and Tiberius. The former proposed that all the magistrates for a period of five years should be determined by election, and that legionary commanders performing such military service before becoming praetors should be designated praetors immediately, the emperor to nominate twelve candidates for each of the five years. There was little doubt that the proposal went deeper and was an attack on the emperor's prerogatives.

Tiberius, however, discussed it as if it would augment his powers: it would offend his sense of moderation, he said, to select and reject so many at a time. It was hard to avoid offence in choosing those for one year ahead, even though disappointment was offset by hope for the near future: how much odium would he incur then from those he rejected for five years or more?

And who could foresee for each appointee, over such a span of time, what would be their state of mind, family, or fortune? Men grew arrogant enough even in the year after nomination: what if they had five years to play at being honoured? In short it multiplied the number of magistrates by five, subverting the laws which had fixed the proper periods for eliciting a candidate's commitment and for seeking or enjoying preferment.

With this pleasing speech, delivered for the sake of appearances, Tiberius retained his hold on power.

BOOK II:XXXVII MARCUS HORTALUS APPLIES FOR FINANCIAL HELP

He helped several senators financially, so that it was all the more a source of wonder when he treated the petition of a young nobleman, Marcus Hortalus, who was clearly in difficult circumstances, in so high-handed a manner. Hortalus, the grandson of Hortensius the orator, had been induced to marry and raise a family by the divine Augustus' grant of ten thousand gold pieces, thus saving a famous house from extinction.

Now, standing, with his four sons, before the threshold of the Curia, in position to speak, he began in the following manner, now contemplating the portrait of Hortensius among the orators, since the senate was being held in the palace; now that of Augustus: 'Elected senators, I have not raised these children. whose number and youth you can see, of my own volition, but because the emperor so advised, and at the same time because my ancestors earned the right to a posterity.'

As far as I was concerned, I who in these changing times failed to inherit or attain, wealth, popularity, or eloquence, the hereditary possessions of our house, it was sufficient if my slender means neither shamed me nor afflicted another. I took a wife when my emperor so ordered. Behold the stock and scions of consul and dictator. I say this not to rouse envy, but to elicit sympathy.

In the goodness of time, Caesar, which is your time, they may be granted whatever honours you may bestow: meanwhile, save these great-grandsons of Quintus Hortensius, these foster-children of the divine Augustus, from poverty!

BOOK II:XXXVIII TIBERIUS OPPOSES THE PLEA

The senate's inclination to award the petition roused Tiberius to readier opposition, saying, in so many words; 'If every pauper starts turning up here, soliciting money for his offspring, not a single one of them will be satisfied, yet the state will be bankrupted. Surely, if our ancestors conceded that members might, when in a position to speak, wander somewhat from the subject to offer something to the public good, it was not so that we might add to our private interests or family fortunes, while rendering unpopular both the senate and its leader whether it grant or deny the request.

It is no petition, but a peremptory demand, one both untimely and unexpected, when a senator rises, in a session convened for other purposes, and urges the number and age of his children on the senate's goodwill, applies the same pressure by association to myself, and, so to speak, takes the treasury by storm, which if we exhaust it by favouritism it would be a crime to refill. The divine Augustus gave you the money, Hortalus, but not because he was compelled to do so, nor by that decision was it granted in perpetuity. Industry will languish and idleness thrive, if a man has nothing to hope or fear on his own account, and all cheerfully expect help from outside, useless to themselves and a burden on us.'

These words and the like, though heard with approval by those whose habit it is to praise all imperial speeches, honourable or dishonourable, were received by the majority in silence or with a suppressed murmur. Tiberius felt it; and after a short pause stated that Hortalus had his response: for the rest, if the senate thought it right, each of Hortalus' male children would be granted two thousand gold pieces.

While others expressed their thanks, Hortalus was silent, either through anxiety or maintaining the noble traditions of his ancestors even in these straitened circumstances. Nor was Tiberius sympathetic later, though the House of Hortensius sank further into ignominious poverty.

BOOK II:XXXIX CLEMENS THE IMPOSTER

In that same year (AD16), the state would have been plunged into discord and civil conflict, through the audacity of a solitary slave, if prompt measures had not been taken. A servant of Postumus Agrippa, Clemens by name, on hearing of Augustus' death, conceived the less than servile idea of heading for the island of Planasia (Pianosa), rescuing Agrippa by force or deceit, and carrying him off to the armies in Germany.

His daring was frustrated by the slowness of the cargo vessel, and as in the meantime Agrippa's execution had been carried out, he turned to the more ambitious and riskier scheme of stealing Agrippa's ashes and sailing for Cosa (Orbetello), on a promontory of the Etrurian coast, and hiding himself in some obscure place until his hair and beard had grown, he being of an age and appearance to pass for his dead master.

Then, through suitable sharers of his secret plans, it was reported that Agrippa was alive, at first in private conversations, as is the way with forbidden things, soon as a rumour current wherever there were fools ready to hear, or conversely amongst dangerous men eager for revolution. He himself visited towns at twilight, never seen in the open nor staying too long in one place, but as truth gains validity through time and openness,

falsehood rather through speed and ambiguity, he sought to leave the tale in his wake and arrive in advance of it.

BOOK II:XL THE DOWNFALL OF CLEMENS

Meanwhile, it was broadcast throughout Italy that, by the grace of the gods, Agrippa's life had been preserved, such being the belief in Rome; huge crowds were already celebrating his arrival at Ostia, as were clandestine gatherings in the capital, while Tiberius puzzled over this fraught dilemma, whether his soldiers should confine the slave, or whether this vain show of credulity should be allowed to vanish with the mere lapse of time.

At one moment reflecting that no measure was to be scorned, at another that not everything need be feared, he hovered between a sense of proportion and alarm. Finally he handed its resolution over to Sallustius Crispus, who chose two of his clients (who may have been soldiers, they say) and instructed them to approach the slave, in the guise of accomplices, offer him money, and promise him loyalty whatever the risk. They did as they were commanded.

Then, watching for a night when he was unguarded, and arriving with a sufficient force, they hauled him off to the palace, chained and gagged. On being questioned by Tiberius as to how he had become Agrippa, he is said to have replied: 'in the same way you became one of the Caesars.' He could not be persuaded to give away his allies, nor did Tiberius dare risk a public execution, ordering that he be killed in a deepest part of the palace, and the body secretly removed.

Even though many of the imperial household, along with knights and senators, were said to have supported the imposter with their wealth, and aided him with their counsel, there was no further investigation.



'Thusnelda at the Triumphal Entry of Germanicus into Rome'
Théodore Chassériau (French, 1819 - 1856)
The Met

BOOK II: XLI GERMANICUS IN TRIUMPH

At the close of the year, the following were dedicated: an arch near the Temple of Saturn to the recovery, under the leadership of Germanicus and the auspices of Tiberius, of two of the eagles lost with Varus; a temple to Fors Fortuna beside the Tiber, in the gardens which Julius Caesar the dictator bequeathed to the Roman people; and, at Bovillae, a sanctuary to the Julian line with a statue of the divine Augustus.

In the consulate of Gaius Caelius and Lucius Pomponius (AD17), on the twenty-sixth of May, Germanicus celebrated his triumph over the Cherusci, the Chatti, the Angrivarii, and the other tribes west of the Elbe. The procession included spoils and captives, and floats depicting the mountains, rivers and battles. The war, since he had been denied its completion, was deemed complete. The spectacle was enhanced for those watching by the noble figure of Germanicus himself, and the five children who filled his chariot.

But beneath it all lay a secret fear, in reflecting that the favour of the crowd had not brought his father Drusus happiness, that Marcellus, his uncle, had been snatched away in youth despite the ardent enthusiasm of the populace, and that the affections of the Roman people were brief and ill-fated.

BOOK II: XLII TROUBLE IN THE EAST

As for the rest, Tiberius granted three gold pieces a man to the populace, in Germanicus' name, and nominated him as his colleague in the consulship for the following year. This gained him no credit for genuine affection, however, and he decided to remove Germanicus from the scene in the guise of honouring him, manufacturing reasons or seizing on those chance offered.

King Archelaus had held power in Cappadocia for over fifty years, hated by Tiberius, since, during his time in Rhodes, Archelaus had shown him none of the usual attentions. This was not through arrogance, but on the advice of Augustus' intimates, since Gaius Caesar was in the ascendancy and had been sent to deal with affairs in the East, thus friendship with Tiberius was considered a risk.

When Tiberius achieved power, with the end of the direct line of Caesars, he lured Archelaus out of Cappadocia with a letter from Livia, who without hiding her son's dislike of him, offered him forgiveness if he were to make his petition in person. Neither suspecting treachery nor fearing the use of force, even if he believed it possible, he hastened to Rome; was received with unrelenting severity by the emperor, and shortly afterwards impeached by the senate.

Whether deliberately, or in the course of things, he ended his span of life, not due to the accusations which were contrived, but distress, combined with the weariness of age, and due to the strangeness, for royalty, of being treated there as a mere equal if not an inferior. His kingdom was re-designated a province, while Tiberius announced that its revenues allowed a reduction of the one percent sales tax, which he fixed for the future at half that level.

Around that time (in AD17), the deaths of two kings, Antiochus II of Commagene and Philopator II of Cilicia, troubled their nations, the majority in each desiring Roman rule, others a king of their own. Also the provinces of Syria and Judaea, weary of their burdens, were pleading for a reduction in the tribute.

BOOK II:XLIII GERMANICUS APPOINTED TO THE OVERSEAS PROVINCES

Tiberius therefore raised these events, and the situation in Armenia I mentioned above, with the senate, saying that the disturbances in the East could only be settled by the wisdom of a Germanicus: since his own powers were declining and those of Drusus were not yet ripe. Thus, by senate decree, Germanicus was assigned the overseas provinces, with absolute authority, wherever he went, over the officials appointed by lot or nominated by the emperor.

However, Tiberius, having removed Creticus Silanus from Syria, he being closely connected to Germanicus, whose eldest son, Nero, was betrothed to Silanus' daughter, had appointed Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, a man of violent temper, blind to all obedience, his arrogant nature derived from his father Piso (also named Gnaeus Calpurnius, consul in 23BC), who in the Civil War aided the resurgent factions in Africa against Caesar, later followed Brutus and Cassius, and on his return from exile being conceded, refused nomination for office until explicitly courted by Augustus with the offer of a consulate.

Besides inheriting the paternal character, the younger Piso was intoxicated with his wife Plancina's wealth and ancestry; scarcely yielding precedence to Tiberius, and considering the latter's children far beneath his consideration. He was in no doubt that he had been chosen for Syria to restrain Germanicus' ambitions. Certain people believed that he had secret instructions from Tiberius; while Livia, intent with a woman's jealousy on persecuting Agrippina, doubtless advised Plancina. For the court was divided and conflicted by a secret preference for Drusus or Germanicus.

Tiberius favoured Drusus, as issue of his own blood; while Germanicus, estranged from his uncle, was enhanced in the eyes of others and advantaged through the noble lineage of his mother (Antonia minor), Mark Antony being his grandfather, and Augustus his great-uncle. Drusus' great-grandfather, Pomponius Atticus, by contrast a plain Roman knight,

appeared to reflect no great credit upon the ancestral portraits of the Claudians. And then, Agrippina, Germanicus' consort, surpassed Drusus' wife, Livilla, in both reputation and fecundity.

Nevertheless, the step-brothers maintained a notable unity, unshaken by the differences among their relatives.

BOOK II:XLIV DRUSUS IN ILLYRICUM

Not long afterwards, Drusus was sent to Illyricum to gain military experience and win the army's favour, Tiberius also considering that a young man indulging in city excess was better off in camp, while he himself would feel more secure with both his sons commanding legions. However a Suebian request for help against the Cherusci formed the pretext. For now, with the Romans' departure and the absence of external threat, the tribes, jealous as ever of glory, turned their weapons against one another.

The strength of the two clans, and the courage of their leaders, was equal, but while the title of king rendered Maroboduus unpopular amongst the people, Arminius won favour as a champion of freedom.

BOOK II:XLV WAR BETWEEN THE GERMAN TRIBES

Thus, not only did Arminius' veterans, the Cherusci and their allies, take up arms, but even two Suebian tribes under Maroboduus' rule, the Semnones and Langobardi, defected to him. Their addition would have given him the edge, had not Inguiomerus with a band of retainers deserted to Maroboduus, for no other reason than that he scorned to obey his brother's young son, being both his senior and his uncle.

The lines of battle were drawn, with hope high on both sides, but not to the accompaniment of desultory attacks by scattered bands as customary among the Germans, for their long campaigns against us had taught them to follow the banners, strengthen their forces with reserves, and accept their leaders' orders.

So now, Arminius, on horseback, reviewed all his men and, as he reached them in turn, reminded them of the freedoms they had regained, the legions they had slaughtered, the spoils, and the spears stripped from the Romans which many yet bore in their hands; calling Maroboduus, in contrast, a turncoat, who without a battle to his name, had saved himself by hiding in the Hyrcanian Forest, then sought a treaty through embassies and gifts, a traitor to his country, a satellite of the Caesars, whom they must drive out with no less hostile a spirit than that in which they had killed Quintilius Varus. Let them but remember their struggles, whose outcome, with the final expulsion of the Romans, was proof enough as to which tribe possessed the mastery of warfare!

BOOK II:XLVI MAROBODUUS DEFEATED

Nor did Maroboduus fail to boast of himself and rail against the enemy, and embracing Inguiomerus declare him the person who embodied all the virtues of the Cherusci, whose counsels had gained whatever success had been won. The wretch Arminius, he cried, ignorant of affairs, had stolen another's glory, ensnaring three lost legions and a commander heedless of treachery, a disaster for Germany and shameful to its perpetrator, whose wife and son were even now enduring servitude.

But when he, Maroboduus, had been attacked by twelve legions under Tiberius, he had maintained the glory of Germany unimpaired, and the two sides had soon parted on equal terms; nor did he regret that it was now in their hands whether to choose war to the death with Rome, or a peace without bloodshed.

Fired by these speeches, the armies were inspired too with their own motives, the Cherusci and Langobardi fighting for their former glory and recent liberty, their opponents for greater domination. There was never a greater clash with such an uncertain outcome, the right wing on both sides being routed. A renewal of the fight was anticipated, but Maroboduus removed his camp to the hills. This was a signal of defeat, and gradually denuded of his forces by desertion, he fell back upon the Marcomani, while sending a deputation to Tiberius seeking help.

The reply came, that it was not fitting to invoke Roman arms against the Cherusci, when he, Maroboduus, had given Rome no aid against that very enemy. However, Drusus, as we have related, was sent there to establish peace.

BOOK II:XLVII EARTHQUAKE IN ASIA MINOR

In that same year (17AD), twelve major cities of Asia Minor collapsed, at night, in an earthquake, the degree of damage being greater than usually anticipated. Not even the common recourse in such events, a flight to open ground, was possible, since the cities were swallowed by yawning chasms. There are tales of huge mountains sinking, of plains seen raised aloft, and of a fiery glow among the ruins.

As the disaster was greatest among the inhabitants of Sardis, they attracted the most sympathy: for Tiberius promised them a hundred thousand gold pieces, and the suspension for five years of whatever was owed to the national or imperial treasuries.

The Magnesians of Sipylus were ranked second in terms of loss and recompense. Regarding the inhabitants of Temnos, Philadelphia (near Sardis), Aegeae (Yuntdagi Koseler, Turkey), Apollonia (east of Pergamum), and also those known as Mostenians (from Kepecic, Turkey) or Hyrcanian Macedonians, as well as the cities of Hierocaesarea (near Thyatira, Turkey), Myrina (Sandarlik, Turkey), Cyme (Nemrut Limani, Turkey), and Tmolus

(near Sardis), it was decided to exempt them from tribute for the same term and send a commissioner from the senate to view the situation in person and support the renewal efforts. Marcus Aetius, an ex-praetor, was chosen so as to avoid jealousy between the officials, Asia Minor being held by a consular governor, and any difficulties arising from that.

BOOK II:XLVIII TIBERIUS' HANDLING OF LEGACIES

Tiberius added to his great generosity on behalf of the state no less popular a display of private liberality. He transferred to Aemilius Lepidus the estate of Aemilia Musa, who died rich but intestate, which had been claimed by the imperial treasury, because she appeared to be a member of that House. Similarly, even though he was named as co-heir, he transferred to Marcus Servilius the legacy of a wealthy Roman knight, Pantuleius, on finding that Servilius had been included in an earlier, previously unsuspected, will. In both cases, he prefaced his decision with the remark that nobility required the aid of money.

He accepted no bequests except those earned through friendship: strangers, and those in dispute with others and thereby naming the emperor as heir, he kept far from him. Yet, just as he eased honourable poverty in regard to innocent men, he removed from the senate or accepted the resignations of the following men, spendthrifts rendered poor through their vices: Vibidius Virro, Marius Nepos, Appius Appianus, Cornelius Sulla, and Quintus Vitellius.



'A Vestal Virgin tending fire'
François Lemoyne (French, 1688-1737)
The Minneapolis Institute of Art

BOOK II:XLIX RE-DEDICATION OF CERTAIN TEMPLES

At this time, he re-dedicated certain temples destroyed by time or fire, whose restoration Augustus had initiated: that of Liber, Libera and Ceres (the Aventine Triad), close to the Circus Maximus, vowed long ago by Aulus Postumius the dictator (c496BC); another, on the same site, founded by Lucius and Marcus Publicus in their aedileship (c240BC), dedicated to Flora; and a shrine of Janus, in the vegetable market, built by Gaius Duilius, who first won success for the Roman cause at sea, beating the Carthaginians (off Mylae, 260BC), and earning himself a naval triumph.

The temple of Hope, was re-dedicated by Germanicus: this had been vowed by Aulus Atilius Calatinus during the same war.

BOOK II:L PROSECUTION OF APPULEIA VARILLA

Meanwhile use of the treason law spread. Even Appuleia Varilla, the great-granddaughter of Augustus' half-sister (Octavia the Elder), was summoned by an informer under the statute, charged with insulting, in scandalous conversation, the deified Augustus, as well as Tiberius and his mother, Livia, while her connection with the emperor had been sullied by adultery.

It was thought that her adultery was sufficiently covered by the Julian Laws (17BC), while Tiberius requested that a distinction be drawn regarding the treason charge, condemning her if she had said anything sacrilegious with regard to Augustus, while not wishing anything regarding himself to be the subject of enquiry.

Asked by the consul what he decreed concerning the comments Varilla was accused of making about his mother, he was silent; but at the next meeting of the senate he asked, in Livia's name also, that no one be incriminated by words spoken about her, whatever the circumstances.

After freeing Varilla from application of the treason law, indulgence was granted her regarding the graver penalty for adultery, Tiberius suggesting that, following ancestral precedent, she might be removed by her relatives beyond the two hundredth milestone. Her lover, Manlius, was banned from Italy and North Africa.

BOOK II:LI GERMANICUS AND DRUSUS VERSUS THE LAW

The appointment of a praetor to replace Vipstanus Gallus, whom death had taken, led to argument. Germanicus and Drusus, who were as yet still in Rome, favoured Haterius Agrippa, a relative of Germanicus. Against this, many relied on what the law decreed, that the number of a candidate's children should decide the matter.

Tiberius was delighted to see the senate forced to decide between his sons and the law. The law was indeed defeated, but not immediately and by only a few votes, in the very manner in which laws were defeated when they were still worth something.

BOOK II:LII WAR IN NORTH AFRICA

That same year, war broke out in North Africa, the enemy being commanded by Tacfarinas. He, a Numidian by nationality, who had served as an auxiliary in the Roman camp, had soon deserted, and first gathering a band of vagrants and brigands accustomed to theft, then organising them in the military manner into troops and companies, he was finally recognised as the leader not of an undisciplined mob but of the Musulamian people.

This powerful tribe, bordering the African desert, at that time still lacking an urban culture, took up arms and drew the neighbouring Moors

to join them: their leader being Mazippa. Their forces were kept apart, so that Tacfarinas could maintain a select group in camp, armed in the Roman manner, and train them in discipline and obedience, while Mazippa with a lightly-armed band spread terror, fire and slaughter.

They had already compelled the Cinithians, a not inconsiderable tribe, to the like, when Furius Camillus, proconsul of Africa, led his legion and the auxiliaries under standards, as one, against the enemy. It was a small force, considering the multitude of Numidians and Moors, but his greatest concern was that, through fear, the enemy might avoid battle; their hopes of victory however led them to defeat. Thus he positioned the legion in the centre, with light infantry and two squadrons of cavalry on the wings.

Nor did Tacfarinas decline to fight. The Numidians were routed, and after many years the name of Furius again won military honour. For since the days of Rome's deliverer (Marcus Furius Camillus, in 390BC) and his son, the laurels of command had passed to other houses; and the Furius Camillus of whom we are speaking had little experience of warfare.

Tiberius was therefore all the readier to celebrate his exploits before the senate, while the Fathers voted him triumphal insignia, all without risk considering Camillus' innate humility.

BOOK II:LIII GERMANICUS TRAVELS TO GREECE

The following year (AD18) Tiberius was consul for a third, Germanicus for a second time. But Germanicus entered into that office in the Achaian city of Nicopolis (Preveza, Greece), which he had reached via the Illyrian coast, after visiting his brother Drusus in Dalmatia.

He had endured a difficult passage of both the Adriatic and the Ionian seas, and therefore spent a few days refitting the fleet; at the same time viewing that gulf noted for the Battle of Actium and consecrated by Augustus with the spoils, as well as Antony's encampment, all of familial

significance to him, since Augustus, as I have said, was his great-uncle, Antony his grandfather, and before his eyes lay their great canvas of triumph and disaster.

From there he reached Athens, where he employed only a single lictor given our treaty with a city allied with us of old. The Greeks received him with most elaborate tributes, portraying the ancient actions and sayings of their people, by which they displayed dignity rather than mere adulation.

BOOK II: LIV GERMANICUS REACHES ASIA MINOR

From Athens he sailed to Euboea, then crossed to Lesbos, where Agrippina, in her last confinement, gave birth to a daughter, Julia. Reaching the coast of Asia Minor and the Thracian cities of Perinthus (Marmara Eriglisi, Turkey) and Byzantium (Istanbul), he entered the Bosphorus and the mouth of the Black Sea, desirous of viewing those ancient regions famous in legend, though equally bringing aid to provinces weary of maladministration and internal conflict.

On his return he sought to attend the sacred rites on the island of Samothrace, but was prevented from doing so by a northerly gale. Thus, after visiting Troy, its ancient remains a memorial to the mutability of fortune and the origins of Rome, he sailed south along the coast of Asian Minor and landed near Colophon (Degirmendere Fev, Turkey) to consult the oracle of Apollo Clarius.

The shrine harbours no prophetess, as at Delphi, but rather a male priest selected from certain families, and usually summoned from Miletus, who is told only the names and number of those consulting the oracle, and then descends into a cavern, drinks water from a hidden spring and, though generally ignorant of literature and poetry in particular, gives his response in regular verse regarding the matters each enquirer has in mind.

It is said that he prophesied Germanicus' early death, though in ambiguous terms, as is usual with oracles.

End of the Annals Book II: XXXIII-LIV

BOOK II: LV-LXXXVIII
THE DEATH OF GERMANICUS



'Security'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p756, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK II:LV GNAEUS CALPURNIUS PISO

Meanwhile, Gnaeus Piso, hurrying to initiate his schemes, alarmed the citizens of Athens by his tumultuous arrival, rebuking them in a savage oration and indirectly attacking Germanicus for honouring not the Athenians, lost long ago to disaster, but this rabble from every nation, with an excessive courtesy demeaning to the honour of Rome. For these, he cried, were the men who had allied themselves with Mithridates against Sulla (in 87BC) and with Antony against the divine Augustus (at Actium). He even reproached them with their ancient history, their losses against Macedonia, their violence against their own countrymen. He had his own cause for anger with the citizens, also, because they refused to hand over a certain Theophilus, judged guilty of forgery by the court of the Aeropagus.

He then caught up with Germanicus near the island of Rhodes, after sailing swiftly on the shorter course through the Cyclades, Germanicus being aware of Piso's invective against him. However Germanicus behaved with great generosity in sending triremes to help extricate Piso from danger, when a rising storm swept Piso's vessel towards the cliffs, and the death of this enemy could have been ascribed to chance. Yet Piso was not softened by his action, and unwilling to endure a moment's delay completed the voyage before Germanicus.

And after reaching the army in Syria, Piso's corrupt practices were so extensive that in the language of the lower orders he was known as the Father of the Legions, with his largesse, bribery, and indulgence towards the humblest private; his removal of the veteran centurions and stricter officers while replacing them with his own hangers-on or with the lowest of the low; and his endorsement of idleness in camp, revelry in the towns, and a licentious roving soldiery in the countryside.

Nor did his wife, Plancina, act within the bounds of female decorum, in attending cavalry exercises and infantry manoeuvres, while heaping abuse on Agrippina and Germanicus. Even some of the better troops showed an unfortunate readiness to obey her, since a veiled rumour was circulating to the effect that such behaviour was not unacceptable to the emperor.

Germanicus was aware of all this, yet his more immediate concern was to reach Armenia first.

BOOK II:LVI THE SITUATION IN ARMENIA

That nation has been unstable of old, by reason of both the character of its inhabitants and its geographical location, since though widely bordering on our provinces it also extends inland as far as the Medes, thus lying between two mighty powers and often at variance with them, in showing hatred towards Rome and envy towards Parthia.

At this time, it lacked a king, due to the removal of Vonones, but the national inclination was towards a son of the Pontic sovereign, Polemo, named Zeno, who from infancy had adopted Armenian dress and customs, winning both the nobles and the people to him by hunting, banqueting and whatever else those barbarians delight in.

Germanicus therefore set the royal regalia on his brow, before the approving noblemen and a gathered multitude, in the city of Artaxata (south of Artashat, Armenia). The nation reverently hailed him as King Artaxias III, his appellation derived from the name of the city's founder (Artaxias I). Cappadocia, by contrast, was reduced to a province, with Quintus Veranius as governor, and in order for Roman rule to appear milder a diminution of certain of the royal tributes. Quintus Servaeus was appointed to Commagene, transferred to praetorian control for the first time.

BOOK II:LVII PISO'S INSOLENCE

Successful and complete as Germanicus' resolution of the allied situation was, he nevertheless had no joy of it, through Piso's insolence. Commanded to lead a detachment of the legions into Armenia, either in person or in that of his son, Piso ignored both alternatives. He and Germanicus finally met at Cyrrhus (now in Syria, near the Turkish border), the winter-quarters of the Tenth legion, their faces expressionless, in Piso's case to mask anxiety, in that of Germanicus to deny any suggestion of threat, he, as I have said, being the more indulgent; though his friends exercised their skills in inflaming his resentment, stretching the truth, accumulating lies, and incriminating Plancina and her sons in various ways.

Summoning a few of his intimates, Germanicus at last opened the conversation, in the manner adopted by those whose anger is concealed, Piso replying with insolent ill-will, and they parted in open hatred. After this, Piso rarely appeared at Germanicus' tribunal, and when he did take his seat there it was with an obvious air of ill-minded dissent.

His voice was also heard at a banquet at the Nabatean court, when heavy gold crowns were presented to Germanicus and Agrippina, but lighter ones to Piso and the rest; to the effect that the dinner was being held for a son of the first citizen of Rome, not some son of the king of Parthia; and throwing his own crown aside, added much on the subject of luxury, a diatribe which Germanicus, however, tolerated despite Piso's acerbity.

BOOK II:LVIII AN EMBASSY FROM PARTHIA

Meanwhile, ambassadors had arrived from Artabanus III of Parthia. They had been sent to revive the friendship and treaty between the nations, and to communicate the king's wish for a fresh exchange of pledges, and that in honour of Germanicus he would meet him on the bank

of the Euphrates. In the interim he asked that Vonones I not be left in Syria to draw the tribal chieftains into conflict by communication with their neighbours.

To this Germanicus replied, with grandeur regarding the alliance between Rome and Parthia, and with dignity and modesty regarding the King's courtesy to himself in choosing the place of meeting. Vonones was sent off to Pompeiopolis (near Taskopru, Turkey), a maritime city in Cilicia. This was done not simply at Artabanus' request, but as an affront to Piso, to whom Vonones' friendship was highly acceptable, thanks to the many gifts and services with which Plancina had been flattered.

BOOK II:LXII

(SOURCE CHAPTERS LIX TO LXI REPOSITIONED AFTER LXVII)

DRUSUS ON CAMPAIGN

While that summer (18AD) Germanicus spent time in various provinces, Drusus won no little credit by tempting the Germans to renew their feud, and since Maroboduus' forces were already in disarray to force their destruction.

There was a young nobleman among the Gotones, named Catualda, driven into exile previously by Maroboduus, who being in a precarious position now dared revenge. He entered the lands of the Marcomani with a strong force, won over the tribal chieftains to his cause, and took the palace and fortress by storm.

There, ancient spoils of the Suebi were discovered, together with traders and camp-followers out of our Roman provinces, whom commercial privilege and later the desire for greater profit had drawn to migrate to enemy territory, until at length they had forgotten their own country.

BOOK II:LXIII THE FATES OF MAROBODUUS AND CATUALDA

Deserted on every side, Maroboduus had no other recourse than to imperial clemency. Crossing the Danube, where it forms the northern border of Noricum, he wrote to Tiberius, not as a refugee or a supplicant, but in recalling his former fortunes: since though many nations had summoned to them a king once so celebrated, he had preferred the friendship of Rome.

Tiberius replied that he might claim a safe and honoured residence in Italy if he remained there, but if his affairs dictated otherwise he might depart as securely as he had come. However, in the senate Tiberius stated that Philip had been no greater a threat to Athens, nor Pyrrhus or Antiochus to the Roman people. His speech is still extant, in which he expounded the chieftain's greatness, the violence of the people subject to him, his nearness as an enemy to Italy, and the measures he had taken to destroy him.

Maroboduus was indeed detained at Ravenna, whence his return as king was suggested as a possibility whenever the Suebi became restless: but in eighteen years he never left Italy, and grew old, his reputation greatly tarnished by too tenacious a love of life.

A similar downfall and refuge awaited Catualda. Driven out, not long afterwards, by the forces of the Hermunduri, under the leadership of their king, Vibilius, he was given safe haven and sent to the colony of Forum Julii (Fréjus, France), in Gallia Narbonensis.

Lest the barbarous followers of either might trouble the peace of the provinces if allowed to mix with the population, they were assigned a ruler, Vannius of the Quadi, and were settled beyond the Danube, between the rivers Marus (Morava, Moravia) and Cusus (Vah, Slovakia).

BOOK II:LXIV THE SITUATION IN THRACE

News being received, at that same time, that Germanicus had granted the Armenian throne to Artaxias, the Fathers decreed that both Germanicus and Drusus should enter Rome to an ovation. Arches with statues of the two Caesars were even raised on either side of the Temple of Mars the Avenger, though Tiberius was happier at having achieved peace through diplomacy than if he had ended the conflict through warfare.

Thus, he also exercised shrewdness in dealing with Rhescuporis II, King of Thrace. That whole country had been held by Rhoemetalces I, his brother, after whose death Augustus had conferred half of it on Rhescuporis II, and the other half on Rhoemetalces' son, Cotys VIII. By this division, the agricultural land, the towns, and the areas neighbouring on the Greek cities fell to Cotys; the uncultivated regions, with a warlike population, bordered by enemies, to Rhescuporis. Such indeed was the nature of their rulers also, Cotys being gentle and charming, the other fierce, greedy and intolerant of alliance.

Yet at first they acted in apparent harmony: until Rhescuporis violated the border, occupied land given to Cotys, and met resistance with force. This he did hesitantly under Augustus, whose reprisals, as architect of both kingdoms, if scorned, he greatly feared. But on certain news of the change of emperors, he sent warriors to plunder and demolished forts, a motive for war.

BOOK II:LXV COTYS DECEIVED BY TREACHERY

Nothing concerned Tiberius as much as that what had once been settled should not be disturbed. He delegated a centurion to notify the two kings that there must be no resort to arms; and Cotys immediately

dismissed the auxiliaries he had assembled. Rhescuporis, feigning good behaviour, suggested they meet together: their differences could be resolved by negotiation. There was little dispute about the time, place and conditions, since they conceded and accepted everything, the one through affability, the other deceit.

Rhescuporis organised a banquet in order, so he said, to ratify the treaty, but when its enjoyment had extended deep into the night, he clapped Cotys, made incautious by food and wine, in irons, who on comprehending the trickery appealed in vain to the sanctity of kingship, the gods of their house, and the bond of host and guest.

Rhescuporis, now the power in all Thrace, wrote to Tiberius that there had been treachery against himself, but that the traitor had been forestalled. At the same time, he strengthened his forces with fresh infantry and cavalry levies, on the pretext of waging war against the Bastarnae and Scythians. The reply Tiberius sent was temperate, saying that, if no mistake had been made, then Rhescuporis could trust to his innocence, but that neither the emperor nor the senate could distinguish the rights and wrongs of the case until they heard it: he should hand over Cotys, travel to Rome, and transfer to them the burden of ill-will that accusations incurred.

BOOK II: LXVI FLACCUS APPOINTED TO MOESIA

The propraetor of Moesia, Latinus Pandusa, sent the message to Thrace, along with a troop of soldiers to whom Cotys should be surrendered. Rhescuporis, torn between fear and anger, chose to be arraigned for committing rather than conceiving a crime, and ordered Cotys' execution, while pretending that his rival's death was self-inflicted.

Tiberius, however, once resolved never altered his methods, and on Pandusa's death, whom Rhescuporis had accused of hostility towards himself, he appointed Pomponius Flaccus as governor of Moesia, he being a veteran campaigner, friendly towards the king, and for that reason better placed to deceive him.

BOOK II:LXVII THE DOWNFALL OF RHESCUPORIS

Flaccus crossed to Thrace and, though hesitant as he reflected on the treacherous nature of his actions, induced Rhescuporis by dint of endless promises to enter the Roman defences. After being surrounded by guards, in strength, as if honouring his royalty, and threatened and persuaded by a surveillance the more obvious the more discreetly it was performed until he was brought finally to a recognition of the inevitable, the tribunes and centurions transported him to Rome.

Accused before the senate by Cotys' wife (Tryphaena), Rhescuporis was sentenced to be detained far from the kingdom. Thrace was divided between his son Rhoemetalces (later Rhoemetalces III), who was known to have opposed his father's stratagems, and the sons of Cotys; as the latter were not yet adults, they were placed under the guardianship of an ex-praetor, Trebellenus Rufus, who would oversee the kingdom during the interregnum, a parallel in former times being the despatch of Marcus Lepidus to Egypt as guardian to the sons of Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

Rhescuporis was sent off to Alexandria, and was killed there, while genuinely or fictitiously attempting flight.

BOOK II:LIX

(SOURCE CHAPTERS LIX LXI RE POSITIONED HERE)

GERMANICUS AT ALEXANDRIA

Marcus Silanus and Lucius Norbanus being consuls (AD19), Germanicus set out for Egypt to gain knowledge of its antiquities, though the pretext was concern for the province, and he did lower the price of corn by opening the state granaries, while adopting a style popular with the masses, walking about without guards, dressed like a Greek, his feet in sandals, in emulation of Publius Scipio Africanus, who is said to have done the same in Sicily while the Carthaginian war was still raging.

Tiberius criticised the mode of dress he had adopted, mildly, but rebuked him harshly for contravening the strictures of Augustus and entering Alexandria without the consent of his emperor. For Augustus, among the other discreet mechanisms of power, forbade senators or knights of higher rank from entering that country without permission, protecting Egypt from outside intervention, so that Italy could not be deprived of grain, whoever might contrive, with even the slightest of forces and against the mightiest of armies, to occupy the province by controlling the land and sea-roads.

BOOK II:LX GERMANICUS ON THE NILE

Unaware as yet of the disapproval his itinerary had provoked, Germanicus travelled up-river along the Nile, starting from the town of Canopus (east of Alexandria). Founded by the Spartans, it was named after the helmsman buried there, when Menelaus, returning to Greece, was driven by a storm into foreign waters along the Libyan coast.

From Canopus, Germanicus sailed to the next river-mouth, sacred to Heracles, born an Egyptian according to local accounts and the most ancient of that title, while others of later date and equal powers were subsumed under the name. Then he visited the vast ancient ruins of Egyptian Thebes (Luxor). On the shattered stones hieroglyphs remain, spelling out the tale of vanished power: and an ancient priest, on being commanded to interpret that language of his country, related that once seven hundred thousand men of military age inhabited that place, and with that force Ramesses II had conquered Libya, Ethiopia, the Medes and the Persians, the Bactrians and Scythians, and the lands where the Syrians, Armenians and their neighbours the Cappadocians live, until he held power from the Bithynian sea to the Lycian.

Still legible were the tribute lists of those peoples, the weight of gold and silver, the number of weapons and horses, the temple-gifts of ivory and

spices, with quantities of grain and every useful item paid by each nation, no less magnificent than that now levied by Parthian force or the power of Rome.

BOOK II:LXI HE SAILS UPRIVER TO ELEPHANTINE AND SYENE (ASWAN)

However, Germanicus also directed his attention to the other wonders of Thebes, the principal ones among these being the stone colossus of Memnon (Amenhotep III), which when touched by the rays of the sun emits a singing noise; the Pyramids, high as mountains among the almost impassable sand-dunes, raised in emulation by the Pharaohs' riches; the artificially excavated lake (Moeris, the modern Birket Quarun) which holds the overflow from the Nile; and elsewhere gorges narrow and profound, their depths beyond the soundings of the explorer.

He then sailed further upriver to Elephantine and Syene (Aswan), once the limit of our Roman power which now extends to the Red Sea.

BOOK II:LXVIII THE DEATH OF VONONES

About this time, Vonones I, whose banishment to Cilicia I have mentioned, tried to flee to Armenia, then to the Albani and Heniochi (tribes of the Caucasus) and the King of Scythia, his relative. Under the pretext of hunting, he left the coastal region of Cilicia for the pathless wooded ravines, and on a swift horse soon reached the River Pyramus (Ceyhan, Anatolia), where the local people had demolished the bridges on hearing of the king's escape, and the fords proved impassable.

He was therefore captured on the river bank, by Vibius Fronto. Not long afterwards a veteran, Remmius, previously appointed to guard the king, ran him through with his sword as if in anger, from which one might rather deduce that consciousness of guilt and fear of disclosure prompted Vonones' death.

BOOK II: LXIX GERMANICUS FALLS ILL AT ANTIOCH

On his way back from Egypt, Germanicus learned that all his orders to the legions and cities had been cancelled or reversed. Hence his weighty invective against Piso, whose attacks on Germanicus were no less acerbic. Piso then determined on quitting Syria, but was soon detained by Germanicus' falling ill. Hearing that he had rallied, and that the prayers for his recovery had been fulfilled, Piso had the sacrificial victims, the associated apparatus, and the festive crowds cleared from the streets of Antioch. He then left for Seleucia Pieria (Antioch's seaport, now Cevlik, Turkey) to await the outcome of the illness which had again attacked Germanicus.

The fierce onset of the disease was intensified by Germanicus' belief that Piso had poisoned him. Indeed excavation of the floor and walls revealed the remains of human bodies; lead tablets engraved with spells and incantations and Germanicus' name; half-burnt ashes smeared with blood; and other evil things by which it is believed the living may be despatched in thrall to the infernal powers, while at the same time emissaries sent by Piso were accused of seeking signs of deterioration.

BOOK II:LXX PISO AWAITS THE OUTCOME

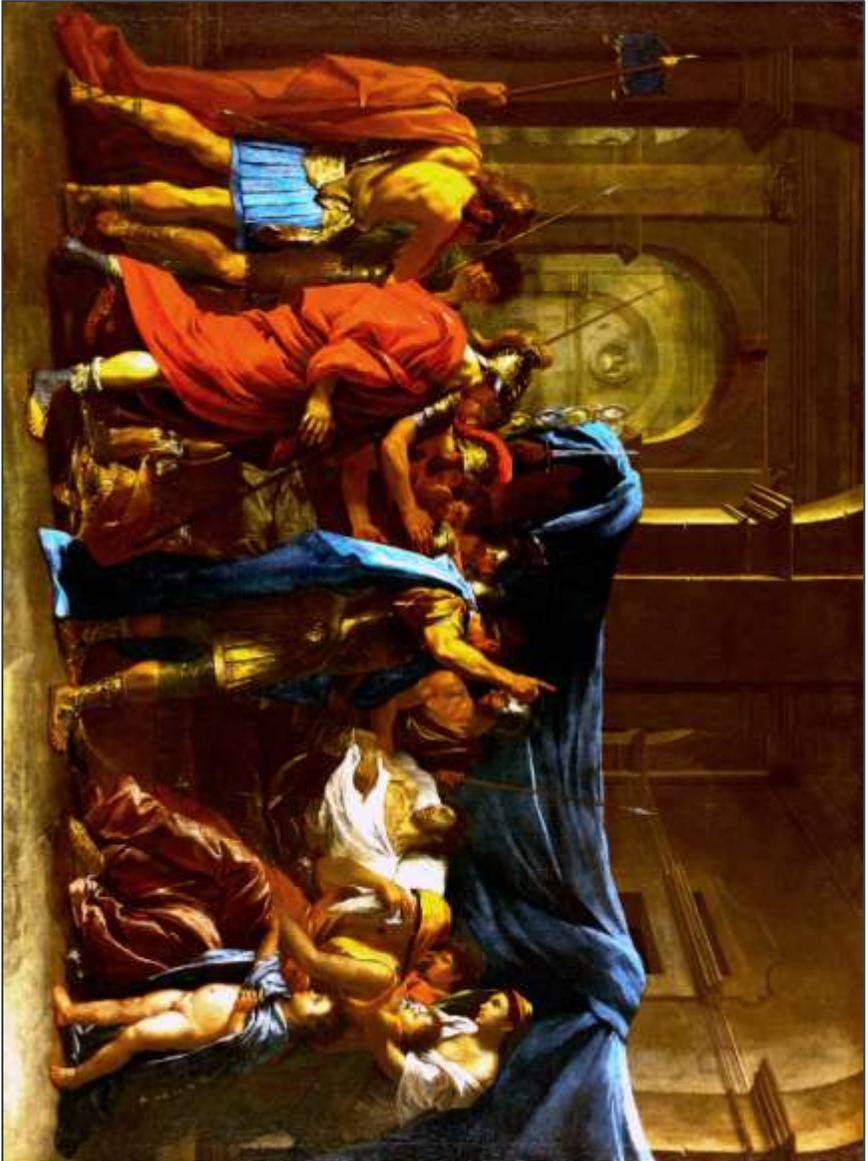
Germanicus heard all this with no less anger than fear. If his very doorway were under siege, if he must yield his last breath beneath his enemy's gaze, what future was left for his unhappy wife and infant children (Julia and Caligula)? Poison appearing too slow, the murderer might hasten, urgently, to take sole possession of the legions and the province: but Germanicus was not so far gone, nor should his killer enjoy the proceeds of crime.

Germanicus composed a letter to Piso renouncing all friendship: many add that he ordered Piso to quit the province. Without delay, Piso set sail, slowing his course so as to return the more readily if the death of Germanicus left Syria open to him.

BOOK II:LXXI GERMANICUS SPEAKS TO HIS FRIENDS

Germanicus' hopes rose for a while, but then, with his powers waning and the end near, he spoke to his gathered friends in this manner: 'If I, still young and dying before my time, were simply yielding to fate, I might have just grievance against the gods themselves for spiriting me away from parents, children, and my country. As it is, cut off in my prime by Piso's and Plancina's wickedness I entrust your hearts with my last wishes: tell my father and brother what agonies rent me, what treacheries encircled me, in ending the most wretched of lives with this vilest of deaths.

If any were moved while I lived by the hopes I inspired, by shared blood, even by envy for my lot, they should weep that I, the once happy survivor of so many wars, die by a woman's deceitful hand. You will have chance for complaint before the senate, and to invoke the law. A friend's first duty is not to follow the corpse with vain lament, but to remember their friend's requests and fulfil his commands.



'The Death of Germanicus'

Nicolas Poussin (French, 1594 - 1665)

The Minneapolis Institute of Art

Let strangers weep for Germanicus; you, if you loved me and not

merely my success, must avenge me. Show the god Augustus's granddaughter to the Roman people, she who was my wife also, display our six children to them. Pity will be with the accusers, and if some evil mandate for this is conjured by the accused, let men not believe or pardon them.'

His friends touched the dying man's right hand and swore that life itself must be abandoned sooner than their vengeance.

BOOK II:LXXII THE DEATH OF GERMANICUS

Then, turning towards his wife, he begged her, for the sake of his memory and the children they

shared, to lay aside her pride, humble her spirit before the winds of fate, and if she returned to Rome never to anger those stronger than herself by competing for power. These words he spoke openly, and others in private thought to suggest Tiberius as one to be feared.

Not long after this, he died, a cause of endless grief to the province and its neighbours. He was regretted even by foreign kings and nations so great had been his consideration for his allies, his clemency towards his enemies: while, honoured by those who saw and heard him and upholding the greatness and dignity of high fortune, he yet avoided arrogance or proving a cause of envy in others.



'Agrippina Landing at Brundisium
with the Ashes of Germanicus'
Benjamin West (American, 1738-1820)
The Yale University Art Gallery

BOOK II:LXXIII HIS FUNERAL

His funeral, without ostentation or display, was noted for the eulogies in his praise, and the recollections of his virtues. Indeed there were those who given his beauty, his youth, and the nature of his death, compared his fate with that of Alexander the Great, even in the very proximity of the locations where they perished. For both, nobly made, of high birth, and scarcely exceeding thirty years of age, died among those alien peoples, through the treachery of their own.

However, the Roman acted gently towards his friends, was modest in his pleasures, content with one sole wife and legitimate children, nor was he any the less a man of the sword, though he lacked the other's rashness, being prevented from enforcing the obedience of the German provinces despite his many victories. If he had been the sole arbiter of affairs, if he had held a king's title and authority, he would have surpassed the Macedonian in military glory as readily as he did in clemency, moderation and all other virtues.

Before cremation, his body was displayed in the forum of Antioch, the place designated for funeral rites. Whether it showed signs of poisoning was not clearly established; for the indications were variously interpreted; pity and a presumption of crime swaying the spectator towards Germanicus, or his predilections swaying him towards Piso.

BOOK II:LXXIV SENTIUS APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF SYRIA

There was then a discussion between the legates and other senators there, as to who should be given command of Syria. Though others put themselves forward to some degree, the decision at length lay between Vibius Marsus and Gnaeus Sentiuss, before Marsus conceded to the latter's seniority and keener sense of purpose.

At the request of Vitellius, Veranius and others, who had prepared charges and indictments as though a case had already been instigated, Sentius despatched to Rome an intimate of Plancina's named Martina, who was notorious throughout the province as a poisoner.

BOOK II:LXXV AGRIPPINA MOURNS, PISO REJOICES

Agrippina, though worn down by grief and ill physically yet nevertheless finding every delay in seeking vengeance intolerable, boarded ship with her children and Germanicus' ashes, amidst universal sympathy for a woman of regal nobility the glory of whose marriage had but recently met with a reverent and joyful gaze, now clasping to her breast the relics of the dead, uncertain of revenge, anxious on her own account, and unhappy in a fecundity that had granted such hostages to fortune.

Meanwhile Piso was intercepted, with news of Germanicus' death, at the island of Cos. Granting it excessive welcome, he slaughtered sacrificial victims and toured the temples, while immoderate as was his delight, Plancina, in mourning for the loss of a sister, showed even greater insolence by changing her dress to garments of joy.

BOOK II:LXXVI PISO CONSIDERS HIS COURSE OF ACTION

The centurions flocked to him advising of the legions' ready enthusiasm, and that he should return to a province wrongly stolen from him and now leaderless. Thus, at a meeting to consider what action should be taken, his son, Marcus, recommended that Piso hasten to Rome, saying that nothing he had done as yet was beyond expiation, nor were feeble suspicions or empty rumours anything to fear.

The disagreements with Germanicus might perhaps justify a degree of unpopularity. but not punishment; while forfeiting his province had satisfied his personal enemies. If he returned there and Sentius resisted him, civil war would ensue; nor would the centurions and their men stay loyal to his cause, since the memory, still fresh, of their commander, and their deep affection for the Caesars would prevail.

BOOK II:LXXVII DOMITIUS CELER PERSUADES PISO TO SEIZE SYRIA

Domitius Celer, one of his closest friends, argued against this, saying that Piso had better employ the opportunity; that he and not Sentius was governor of Syria; that he had been entrusted with the symbols of magistracy, the praetorian jurisdiction, the legions themselves. If an enemy attacked, who had a greater right to arm against them than he who had received a legate's powers and a personal mandate.

And then, a period of time should be left during which rumours would fade: innocence was all too often unequal to an initial unpopularity. Yet if he retained the army, and added to his strength, much that could not currently be foreseen might chance to turn out more favourably. 'Or,' he continued, 'should we hasten to land at the same time as the ashes of Germanicus, so that a grieving Agrippina and an ignorant mob can sweep you, at the first malicious rumour, unheard and undefended, to your ruin? You have Livia's ear, and Tiberius' favour, but only in private; and none must mourn Germanicus' death more ostentatiously than those whom it most delights.'

BOOK II:LXXVIII PISO HEADS BACK TO SYRIA

There was no great difficulty in persuading Piso, endlessly audacious, to this opinion; and in letters sent to Tiberius he accused Germanicus of arrogance and a love of luxury; while as for himself, he had been driven out, so as to make room for rebellion, but had returned to oversee the army with the same loyalty as he had shown previously. At the same time, he gave Domitius command of a trireme, ordering him to avoid the coastal strip and head for Syria, taking to the deeper waters while passing the islands.

He organised the deserters who flocked to him into companies, armed the ancillary personnel and, in crossing to the mainland with his fleet, intercepted a troop of fresh recruits bound for Syria. He also wrote to the minor royalty now ruling the Cilician principalities requesting auxiliary aid, while the younger Piso was scarcely less active in the preparations for war, though he had objected to a military action which he mistrusted.

BOOK II:LXXIX SENTIUS HOLDS THE PROVINCE AGAINST PISO

Thus, while coasting along the shores of Lycia and Pamphylia, they met with the squadron conveying Agrippina, the hostility on both sides being such that each initially cleared for action. Owing to their mutual caution the matter went no further than harsh words, during which Vibius Marsus called on Piso to sail to Rome and defend his actions there. Piso replied, sarcastically, that he would certainly attend if and when a praetor charged with investigating allegations of poison notified a date to both an accuser and an accused.

Meanwhile, Domitius had landed at the town of Laodicea in Syria (Latakia), seeking the winter quarters of the Sixth legion, which he considered the most suitable base for his planned coup, when he was forestalled by the legate, Pacuvius. Sentius revealed this to Piso in a letter, warning him not to employ his agents against the camp, nor make war against the province. Then he gathered those whom he knew cherished memories of Germanicus, or were opposed to his enemies, urging time and again the emperor's greatness and that the state was under attack, and lead out a powerful force prepared for battle.

BOOK II:LXXX PISO ATTEMPTS TO HOLD CELENDERIS IN CILICIA

Nor did Piso, even though his project was turning out badly, fail to take the safest course in the circumstances, by occupying a strongly defended fortress in Cilicia, named Celenderis (Aydincik, Turkey). For, adding the deserters, the recruits recently intercepted, and his own and Plancina's servants to the Cilician auxiliaries sent by the minor kings, he had organised them in legionary strength.

He called them to witness that he, Caesar's deputy, was being denied entry to the province granted him, not by the legions (at whose invitation indeed he had come) but by Sentius who hid a personal hatred behind false accusations. They must form line of battle, the soldiers would never fight once they saw Piso, whom they once called their father, and who if justice prevailed was the stronger or if weapons prevailed was far from powerless.

He then deployed his maniples in front of the fortress defences, on a steep and precipitous height, the rest of the position being defended by the sea. Against them were ranged the veterans and reserves: on the one side rugged troops; on the other rugged ground yet men without spirit, hope, not even spears other than rustic ones hastily made for this sudden emergency.

When it came to hand to hand fighting, the issue was only in doubt until the Roman cohorts climbed to level ground, when the Cilicians retreated to barricade themselves in the fortress.

BOOK II:LXXXI PISO ALLOWED SAFE-CONDUCT TO ROME

Meanwhile Piso attempted in vain to attack the fleet, which lay not far offshore; then on returning to the walls, now beating at his breast, now calling on individuals by name and shouting out the promise of reward, he tried to provoke the legions to mutiny: and indeed had roused one ensign of the Sixth to defect with his standard, when Sentius ordered the horns and trumpets sounded, material heaped for a mound, and the ladders raised; those readiest were to climb, the rest to hurl spears, stones and firebrands from the siege-engines.

At last, with Piso's resistance at an end, he begged permission to hand over his weapons and remain in the fortress while they consulted Tiberius regarding who should govern Syria. These terms were refused, the only concessions made being ships and a safe passage to Rome.

BOOK II:LXXXII NEWS OF GERMANICUS' DEATH RECEIVED IN ROME

Now, once the news of Germanicus' illness had spread throughout the capital, with every exaggeration for the worse that distance adds, there was grief, anger, and a storm of complaint. So this was why he had been exiled to the end of the earth, this was how Piso had secured a province, this was the outcome of Augustus' secret meetings with Plancina. What their elders also said of Germanicus' natural father, Drusus, was true,

that the democratic leanings of their 'sons' displease emperors, and both had been taken from them for no other reason than their intent to restore liberty and deal with the Roman people as equals under the law.

The news of his death so inflamed popular opinion, that even before the issuance of a magistrates' edictor a senate decree, business was suspended, the markets deserted, and houses barred. All was silence and sighs, with no care for display, and while no outward sign of mourning was absent the grief in their hearts was the more profound.

By chance, some traders who had left Syria while Germanicus yet lived gave a more favourable account of his health. It was readily believed, and just as readily broadcast: such that whoever met related what they had heard however vaguely, and that was passed on again with increasing expressions of joy.

They ran about the streets, and heaved open the temple doors; night adding to the credulity, while affirmation is readier in the darkness. Nor did Tiberius check these rumours, until they faded themselves in due time and the populace mourned what felt like a second bereavement.

BOOK II:LXXXIII THE HONOURS AWARDED HIM AFTER DEATH

Honours were devised and awarded to Germanicus, in proportion to the strength of the nation's affection and its powers of ingenuity: such as his name to be chanted in the Saliar Hymn; curule chairs with oak-leaf crowns to be set for him in places reserved for the Augustal priests; his effigy in ivory to precede the procession at the games in the Circus, and no flamen or augur to be ordained in his place except one of the Julian house.

Arches were constructed in Rome, on the left bank of the Rhine, and on Syrian Mount Amanus (the Nur Mountains, Turkey, possibly near the Syrian Gates), with an inscription noting his achievements, and that he had

died for his country. There was to be a sepulchre in Antioch (Epidaphne), where he had been cremated, and a cenotaph at the place nearby (Daphne) where his life had ended. The statues and locations where his cult was to be practised were too many to enumerate.

Regarding the proposal to grant him a portrait medallion, notable for its size and weight of gold, to be placed among those of the classic orators (in the Palatine Library), Tiberius declared that he would dedicate one himself, and of the same form and content as the rest since eloquence was not dictated by rank and it was enough of a distinction to be placed among the old masters.

The Equestrian order renamed their bank of seats in the theatre, which had been known as the Junior, after Germanicus, and decreed that in their review on the Fifteenth of July they should ride behind his portrait.

Many of these tokens of esteem survive: others were soon discontinued, or have vanished with the years.

BOOK II:LXXXIV THE BIRTH OF THE GEMELLI

While the public mourning was still fresh, Livilla, Germanicus' sister, the wife of Drusus the Younger, was delivered of twin sons. A rare happiness even in humble families, this brought Tiberius such pleasure that he could not help boasting to the Fathers that never before had such noble twins been born to so eminent a family: since he appropriated everything, even the products of chance, to his own glory.

But to the populace, at such a time, they brought further sorrow, as though these additions to the family of Drusus were a fresh blow to the house of Germanicus.

BOOK II:LXXXV RESTRICTIONS AND PROSCRIPTIONS

In that same year, the senate decreed a severe punishment for female licentiousness, no woman to derive profit from selling her body if her grandfather, father, or husband had been a Roman knight; for Vistilia, born of a praetorian family, had freely broadcast her debaucheries on the magistrates' list, the accepted custom among our ancestors, who thought that professing their shame sufficiently punished the immoral.

In view of his wife's manifest wrongdoing, her husband, Titidius Labeo, was then asked why he had not sought vengeance through the courts. On his giving as excuse that the sixty days granted for deliberation had not yet passed, it was judged that sufficient consideration had been given regarding Vistilia, and she was exiled to the island of Seriphos (Serifos, Greece).

There was a move, also, to banish the Egyptian and Jewish religions, and a senate edict decreed that four thousand descendants of freed slaves of appropriate age, who were infected with such superstitions, were to be shipped to Sardinia, to suppress the piracy there, it being cheap at the price if they succumbed to the foul climate; the rest were to quit Italy unless they renounced their profane rites before a given date.

BOOK II:LXXXVI SUCCESSION OF THE VESTAL VIRGIN

After this, Tiberius moved that a Vestal Virgin be appointed to replace Occia, who had presided in purity over the rituals of Vesta for fifty-seven years; and in doing so he thanked Fonteius Agrippa and Domitius Pollio who, out of public duty, had competed in nominating their own daughters.

Pollio's daughter was preferred, for no other reason than that her mother was still with her husband, while Agrippa's divorce had diminished the standing of his house. However, the rejected candidate was consoled by Tiberius' gift to her of ten thousand gold pieces.

BOOK II:LXXXVII TIBERIUS REJECTS PERSONAL HONOURS

When the masses protested at the horrendous cost of grain, Tiberius set the price to be paid by the buyer, and himself guaranteed to the seller two sesterces a measure. Nevertheless he would not, on that account, accept the title Father of the Country, though it had been offered previously; and severely rebuked those who termed him 'lord' and his work 'divine'. Hence speech became constrained and devious under a ruler who feared freedom and hated flattery.

BOOK II:LXXXVIII THE DEATH OF ARMINIUS

I discover, from the authors and senators of that time, that a letter was read in the senate from Adgandestrius, chief of the Chatti, promising to kill Arminius if poison were sent to effect that end; to which the response was that the Roman people did not revenge themselves on their enemies by deceit and in secret, but openly and armed. By which piece of virtue Tiberius equated himself with the commanders of old who refused and disclosed the offer to poison King Pyrrhus.

Arminius, with the Romans' withdrawal and Maroboduus' expulsion, aimed at kingship, in defiance of the popular love of freedom. Attacked in force, and battling it out with varying degrees of success, he fell at the

treacherous hands of his relatives. Without doubt Germany's great liberator, one who challenged the Roman nation, not in its infancy as had other captains and kings but in the flower of its glory, inconclusively in battle yet without defeat in the war, he had completed thirty-seven years, twelve of those in power, and is still sung of among the barbarian peoples, though he is unknown to Greek historians who only admire their own, and scarcely celebrated among us Romans who incurious as to our own day yet extol ancient times.

End of the Annals Book II: LV-LXXXVIII

BOOK III: I-XXXIV
THE TRIAL OF GNAEUS PISO



'Cleopatra'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People(p743, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK III:I AGRIPPINA ARRIVES AT BRINDISI

Without pause in sailing the wintry seas, Agrippina reached (AD20) the island of Corfu (Corcyra) opposite the Calabrian coast. There she spent some days composing her thoughts, being frantic with grief and unused to enduring it.

Meanwhile, hearing of her arrival, her closest friends and many of the officers who had served under Germanicus hurried to Brindisi (Brundisium), the nearest and safest landing place in Italy for the voyager. Many strangers, even, gathered from the neighbouring towns, some out of respect for the emperor and many others following their example.

On first sighting her flotilla in the roads, not only the harbour and sea-wall, but the city defences and roofs, all locations from which a good view was commanded, were crowded with mourners, questioning as to whether to greet her arrival in silence or with cries of emotion. Still unsure as to what the occasion required, they saw the vessels gradually approach, not with a flourish of oars as usual, but all sorrowfully composed.

As she came ashore with her two children, she with lowered gaze and clasping the funeral urn, they groaned as one, relatives and strangers, men and women alike, except that Agrippina's attendants, exhausted with endless grieving, were exceeded in their lamentations by the fresh mourners they met.

BOOK III:II GERMANICUS' ASHES ESCORTED TO ROME

Tiberius sent two praetorian cohorts to order that, in addition, the magistrates of Calabria, Apulia and Campania were to offer their last respects to the memory of his son. The urn with his ashes was therefore borne on the shoulders of tribunes and centurions; the unadorned

standards went before him, and the axes reversed; and whenever they passed through a colony the populace in mourning garb with the knights in their robes striped with purple burned vestments, perfumes and the customary funeral gifts, according to the wealth of the locality. Even those from distant towns met the procession, and sacrificed on altars erected to the departed spirit, witnessing to their grief with tears and wailing.

Drusus the Younger journeyed out to Terracina (Tarracina) with Germanicus' brother Claudius (the future emperor) and those of Germanicus' children who had remained at Rome. The consuls Marcus Valerius Messalla and Marcus Aurelius Cotta who had already begun their magistracy (AD20), the senators, and a large section of the populace filled the roadside, in scattered groups, weeping at will though showing no signs of adulation, since it was known to all that Tiberius could scarcely conceal his joy at Germanicus' death.

BOOK III:III ANTONIA'S NON-APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC

Tiberius and his mother Livia avoided public appearances, either considering it below their dignity to lament openly, or realising that if all eyes were to scrutinise their features too closely hypocrisy might be read there.

I cannot discover, either from the historians or the official journals, that Antonia Minor, Germanicus' mother, took any significant role in the ceremonies, though his other relatives by blood, in addition to Agrippina, Drusus the Younger, and Claudius, are listed by name. Perhaps her health prevented her, or overcome by grief her mind could not endure sights that witnessed to the magnitude of her loss, but I find it simpler to believe that Tiberius and Livia, who did not leave the palace, kept her with them, in order to set their mourning on a par, the grandmother and the uncle detained at home in accord with the mother's example.

BOOK III:IV GERMANICUS' ASHES INTERRED IN THE MAUSOLEUM OF AUGUSTUS

The day on which the remains were interred in the Mausoleum of Augustus was by turns made desolate by silence and troubled by tears; the streets of the city were full, the Field of Mars alight with torches. There soldiers in full armour, magistrates without their insignia, and citizens in their tribes cried out, too openly and readily for it to be believed that they had a thought for those in power, that the state lay in ruins, and no hope was left.

Nothing, however, wounded Tiberius more deeply than the blaze of enthusiasm for Agrippina among the populace, she whom they termed the glory of her country, the last of Augustus's bloodline, sole pattern of ancient virtue and, turning to heaven and the gods, prayed that her children survived to outlive their enemies.

BOOK III:V COMPLAINTS AS TO THE FUNERAL DISPLAY

There were those who missed the pomp of a state-funeral, and made a comparison with the honours and magnificence accorded by Augustus to Germanicus' father, Drusus the Elder. Indeed Augustus himself had journeyed as far as Pavia (Ticinum), in deepest winter, and never quitting the corpse was alongside it as it entered the capital. The bier had been surrounded with effigies of the Claudians and Livians; there was weeping in the Forum, praise from the Rostra, every tribute our ancestors devised or posterity had invented was heaped upon him; but to Germanicus had fallen not even the honours due to each and every nobleman.

Yes, the length of the journey was reason to cremate the body on foreign soil, and in whatever manner, but he should have been granted all the more tributes later, since chance had denied them at the outset. His

brother had not travelled a day to meet him, his uncle not even to the gate. Where were those customs of the ancients, an image at the head of the couch, erudite poems to departed virtue, the eulogies and tears or at least the pretence of sorrow?

BOOK III:VI TIBERIUS CALLS FOR RESTRAINT

All this Tiberius was aware of; and to suppress public comment he warned them by edict that many were the illustrious Romans who had died for their country, yet none of them had been glorified by such fervent longing. If restraint were observed, then it would be highly acceptable to himself and to all. For the same conduct did not become powerful princes and an imperial people as well as it did ordinary households and cities.

Mourning and the solace of grief had suited their sorrow at its inception; but now they must address their minds to firmness, banishing sorrow as the divine Julius had done after the loss of his only daughter (Julia), and the divine Augustus when robbed of his grandchildren (Gaius and Lucius).

There was scant need to quote examples to show how often the Roman people had calmly endured the destruction of armies, the death of generals, the utter extinction of noble families. Princes were mortal, the State eternal. Let them return to normal life, and since the Megalesian Games would soon be enacted (April 4th-10th), let them even resume their entertainments.

**BOOK III:VII OUTCRY AGAINST PISO,
THE DEATH OF MARTINA**

With the cessation of business at an end, there was a return to official duty, and Drusus the Younger set out for the armies of Illyricum. All spirits rose in expectation of taking vengeance on Piso, and many complained that he was, meanwhile, wandering the pleasant reaches of Asia and Achaia, allowing the evidence of his crimes to perish by sly and arrogant delay.

For news had arrived that Martina, the notorious poisoner sent to Rome, as I said, by Gnaeus Sentius, had suddenly met her death at Brindisi, a poisonous substance being found concealed in a knot of her hair but with no marks on the body suggesting suicide.

BOOK III:VIII PISO SENDS HIS SON TO TIBERIUS

But Piso, sending his son on to Rome with a message to mollify the emperor, had made his way to Drusus, whom he hoped to find less angered at his brother's death than warm towards himself at being freed from a rival. Tiberius, to display the impartiality of justice, received the young man courteously, with the liberality he was accustomed to show to the sons of noble families.

Drusus' answer to Piso himself, was that if the accusations were true his indignation would be greater than all others; but he preferred to think them false and unfounded, and Germanicus' death fatal to none. This was said openly, dispensing with all secrecy, and was no doubt spelled out by Tiberius, since the straightforward and good natured youth here employed all the artifice of maturity.

BOOK III:IX PISO AND PLANCINA TRAVEL TO ROME

Piso, having crossed the Adriatic and disembarked at Ancona, travelled through Picenum and took the Flaminian Road where he met up with a legion marching from Pannonia to Rome to join the Africa garrison in due course; an event which provoked gossip since he took care to display his presence to the soldiers both on the march and at the roadside.

From Narnia (Narni) he sailed down the Nar, either to avoid suspicion or with the inconsistent planning of a frightened man. He then descended the Tiber, adding to popular anger by docking his vessel at the Mausoleum of the Caesars, on the busy river-bank on a busy day, and proceeding onwards, himself with a column of clients, Plancina with a retinue of women, and all with smiling faces. Among further unpopular irritants were the festive decorations on his mansion, looming over the Forum, and a banquet with guests held with no concealment and in a crowded place.

BOOK III:X PISO PROSECUTED

The next day, Fulcinus Trio applied for a writ before the consuls, to prosecute Piso. Vitellius, Veranius and others of Germanicus' former suite argued against this on the basis that Trio had no role in the matter, and that they according to Germanicus' own instructions made no accusations but were simply eyewitnesses and could testify as to the facts. His right to lay an accusation being dismissed on that account, he received permission to lay charges regarding Piso' prior behaviour in office, and requested the case be brought before the emperor.

Even the defendant agreed to this, fearing the predispositions of the populace and the senators; while Tiberius he knew had the strength of mind to scorn rumour, and shared Livia's private knowledge. Besides, a single judge could more easily discern truth from mere imputations of

wrongdoing, while hatred and envy carry weight with a greater number. Tiberius was hardly unaware of the awkwardness of an enquiry, and the rumours concerning himself. Summoning a few close friends, he therefore heard the charges brought by the prosecution and the pleas made by the defence, himself, before referring the whole matter to the Senate.

BOOK III:XI PISO'S CASE BROUGHT BEFORE THE SENATE

In the interim, Drusus had returned from Illyricum, and the Fathers had granted him a minor triumph on arrival, to celebrate Maroboduus' submission and his own achievements during the previous summer, but postponing that honour he made his way into the city.

The defendant now sought as his advocates Lucius Arruntius, Publius Vinicius, Asinius Gallus, Marcellus Aeserninus and Sextus Pompeius. They declined on various pretexts, and Manius Lepidus, Lucius Piso, and Livincius Regulus offered their support, with the whole populace commenting on the fidelity of Germanicus' friends, the defendant's self-assurance, and whether Tiberius would really be able to suppress and contain his feelings.

Never had the people shown keener interest, nor allowed themselves such secretive murmuring or mistrustful silence regarding their emperor.

BOOK III:XII TIBERIUS' OPENING ADDRESS

On the day of the session, Tiberius gave a speech of studied moderation. Piso had been his father's legate and friend, and had been assigned to Germanicus by Tiberius himself, at the Senate's instigation, to administer affairs in the East. Whether Piso had merely exasperated the young prince with his obstinacy and contentiousness, and

then shown delight at his demise, or whether he had wickedly sought his death, they must consider with open minds: for if a legate had gone beyond the bounds of his office, and failed in deference towards his superior, and then had taken pleasure in the death and Tiberius' own grief, he would denounce him and banish him from his house, without employing imperial power; but if a crime were uncovered involving the death of any person whatsoever then indeed they must make proper requital to the children of Germanicus and to himself as parent.

At the same time, they should consider whether Piso's handling of the army had encouraged disorder and sedition, whether he had sought to curry favour with the men, had reclaimed the province by force, or were these false charges broadcast and exaggerated by his accusers, by whose excess of zeal he himself was rightly irritated. For what had been the purpose of stripping the corpse naked and exposing it to the common gaze, or spreading the report amongst foreigners that he been slain by poisoning, if that was as yet uncertain and required investigation?

'Of course I weep for my son and always will', he continued, 'but I would not hinder the defendant from offering every shred of evidence which might support his innocence, or reveal Germanicus to be guilty of injustice if that were the case, and I beg you not to accept an assertion of wrongdoing as proof of such, merely because the case is bound up with my own grief.

If blood relationship or a sense of loyalty renders you Piso's advocates, let each aid him in his hour of need with whatever eloquence and devotion he commands; and I exhort his accusers to exercise the same effort and constancy. This is the sole concession, above and beyond the usual legal framework, that we grant Germanicus, that the enquiry into his death be held in the Curia and not the Forum, and before the Senate and not the bench; let the rest of the proceedings show the like restraint. Let none pay regard to Drusus' tears nor my grief, nor anything imagined as seeming hostile to us.'

BOOK III:XIII THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION

Accordingly, two days was allocated for presenting the charges and, after a space of six days, the defence was to occupy a further three. Fulcinius then opened with an old and irrelevant account of Piso's ambitions and avarice as displayed in Spain; which allegations could do the defendant little harm if the more recent ones were refuted, nor would it gain him an acquittal if found guilty of the more serious ones.

Servaeus, Veranius and Vitellius followed, with like fervour, Vitellius with great eloquence, arguing that Piso, in his hatred of Germanicus and eagerness for change, had so corrupted the lower ranks, through his tolerance of indiscipline and the mistreatment of civilians, that the very worst of them called him the Father of the Legions; while on the contrary he had acted in a savage manner towards the best of them, especially Germanicus' friends and associates; ultimately murdering the prince himself, by the practice of magic and the use of poison; ungodly rites performed and sacrifices offered by Piso himself and by Plancina had followed and an armed attack against the State, and only Piso's defeat in battle had enabled him to be brought to trial.

BOOK III:XIV THE CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

The defence had conceded all but one of these charges, since his courting favour with the troops, abandoning the province to the acts of miscreants, and even insulting his commander could not be denied: only the accusation of poisoning appeared to have been rebutted, it being indeed insufficiently proven by his accusers who argued that, at dinner with Germanicus, Piso, who was seated higher up the table, himself added the substance to Germanicus' food.

It certainly seems absurd that he would have dared to do so among unfamiliar servants, with so many eyes on him, and in Germanicus' presence; while the defendant had suggested his own servants, and demanded that those at the banquet, be put to the question. However, for various reasons, his judges were implacable; Tiberius because Piso had made war on the province, the Senate because it never quite believed that Germanicus had died without foul play...and a request to examine the written correspondence was rejected as strongly by Tiberius as by Piso.

At that moment, a crowd was heard shouting, at the doors of the Senate, that they would not hesitate to use force if he evaded sentencing by the Fathers. They had already dragged his statues to the Gemonian Stairs, and were about to dismember him in effigy, when by imperial command the images were rescued and replaced.

Piso was placed in a litter and escorted to his house by a tribune of the praetorian guard, followed by conflicting rumours that the guard was either there for his safety or to ensure his death.

BOOK III:XV PISO'S LAST APPEARANCE AND HIS SUICIDE

Plancina, though equally hated, enjoyed greater favour; so that it was considered doubtful to what degree Tiberius would be allowed to move against her. While she herself, as long as there was hope of an intervention in Piso's case, promised to share his fate whatever the result, and be his companion in death if that was the outcome. But having obtained her pardon through Livia's personal intercession, she gradually distanced herself from her husband, employing an independent defence.

Realising this was fatal to him, the defendant was doubtful as to further effort, but exhorted to do so by his sons, he steeled himself and once more attended the Senate. Enduring renewed accusations, the senators' hostile cries, and fierce opposition on all sides, nothing terrified him more than the sight of Tiberius, without pity or anger, firmly closed to any access of feeling.

Piso was carried home, wrote for a little while, as if composing his defence for the following day, sealed the document, and handed it to his freedman; then gave the usual attention to his person. Finally, late at night, when his wife had left the bedroom, he ordered the door closed; and was found at first light, with his throat cut, and his sword lying on the floor.

BOOK III:XVI HIS LETTER ASKING LENIENCY FOR HIS SON GNAEUS

I remember hearing, from my seniors, that they had more than once seen a document in Piso's hands, whose contents he did not disclose, which his friends claimed was written by Tiberius and contained instructions regarding Germanicus, and that Piso had resolved to produce it before the Fathers, and lay the blame on Tiberius, but was persuaded to refrain from this by Sejanus' empty promises. Nor did they believe his death was self-inflicted, rather an assassin had been employed. I remain neutral on that point, but I felt it right not to conceal the tale told by those who were still alive in my youth.

With a sad expression on his face, Tiberius expressed his regret before the Senate at Piso's mode of death...and questioned Piso's son, Gnaeus, closely on how his father had spent his last day and night. Gnaeus acquitted himself well for the most part, with few indiscretions, and read out a plea written by Piso, to the following effect:

'Attacked by a hostile conspiracy, and a hatred born of false accusations, and in so far as there is no platform here for truth and innocence, Caesar, I swear before the immortal gods, that I have lived as one loyal towards you and in no way less dutiful towards your mother; I beg you both to care for my children, Gnaeus having had no involvement in my actions, since he has spent the whole time in Rome, while Marcus exhorted me not to return to Syria.

I wish indeed that I had yielded to my younger son, rather than him yielding to me. I pray therefore, most earnestly, that he, the innocent, may not be punished for my depravity. By my allegiance of forty-five years, by the consulate we held together (in 7BC), as one accepted by the deified Augustus, your father, and as your friend who after this request will ask no more, I beg the life of my unfortunate son.' Of Plancina, he wrote nothing.

BOOK III: XVII COTTA PROPOSES THE PUNISHMENT FOR PISO'S SONS

Tiberius then acquitted Marcus, the younger son, of waging civil war, since the son was under the father's orders and could not disobey. At the same time he expressed his sorrow for a noble house and the fate of the father, a sad one regardless of his merits or otherwise.

Pleading Livia's entreaties, he next spoke, in an embarrassed and shame-faced manner, in support of Plancina, regarding whom private criticism by decent people was growing ever warmer. 'It seems it is perfectly respectable, then,' they complained, 'for a grandmother to see and speak with her grandson's murderess, and protect her from the Senate! What the law extends to any citizen, is denied to Germanicus alone. Vitellius and Veranius employ their voices in lamenting Germanicus, Tiberius and Livia in defending Plancina. Why not then use these poisons and these arts, now so well proven, against Agrippina, against the children, so this delightful grandmother and uncle may sate themselves with the blood of the whole unfortunate house!'

Two days were spent on this shadow trial, with Tiberius urging Piso's sons to defend Plancina. And as the prosecutors and witnesses competed in their perorations with none to answer them, compassion rather than indignation began to win the day. First judgement was sought from the consul Aurelius Cotta (since, with Tiberius presiding, that official was the one who discharged the function) who proposed that the name Piso be

erased from the record and that half his property be appropriated, the remainder being granted to his elder son, Gnaeus, who must change his name; that Marcus, the younger son, being stripped of his rank and suffering a fine of fifty thousand gold pieces, be banished for ten years; and that Plancina, at Livia's request, be granted immunity.

BOOK III: XVIII TIBERIUS MITIGATES SENTENCE

Much of this sentence was reduced by the emperor: Piso's name should not be erased from the record, when those of Mark Antony who had waged war on his own country, and Iullus Antonius who had violated Augustus' hearth, remained. He saved Marcus Piso from ignominy, and granted him his inheritance, being proof enough, as I have often said, against financial temptation, and more lenient in the matter given his embarrassment at acquitting Plancina.

In the same vein, when Valerius Messalinus proposed raising a golden statue in the temple of Mars the Avenger, and Caecina Severus an altar to Vengeance, he rejected their suggestions, saying such things were dedicated after foreign victories, domestic ills should be veiled in sorrow. Messalinus added that Tiberius, Livia, Antonia, Agrippina and Drusus should be thanked for their actions in avenging Germanicus.

He omitted to mention Claudius. Indeed, after Lucius Asprenas openly questioned in the Senate whether the omission was deliberate, only then was the name of Claudius added. The more I reflect on past and present events, the more I am haunted by a sense of the ironic nature of all human affairs. For indeed, as regards reputation, respect or expectation all men were sooner destined for imperial power than that future emperor whom fate kept in the shadows.

BOOK III:XIX THE AFFAIR DIES DOWN

A few days afterwards, Tiberius was author of a Senate motion conferring priesthoods on Vitellius, Veranius and Servaeus, and promised Fulcinius his support as a candidate for office, though warning him lest impetuosity impaired his eloquence.

Thus ended the punishments regarding Germanicus' death, which not only among those who witnessed it but in times to follow was the source of endless rumour. Indeed the greatest events are enigmatic: some treat hearsay, whatever its nature, as solid evidence, while others change truth to its opposite, and posterity exaggerates both.

Drusus, who left the capital to resume his command, soon re-entered to an ovation. A few days later, his mother Vipsania died, the only one of Agrippa's adult offspring who ended peacefully: for the rest perished openly by the sword or, it is believed, by poison or starvation.

BOOK III:XX TACFARINAS RESUMES HOSTILITIES IN NORTH AFRICA

In that same year, Tacfarinas, whose defeat by Camillus the previous summer I have mentioned, renewed hostilities in North Africa, initially by scattered raids, too swift for reprisals, then by the destruction of villages and serious depredation; ultimately besieging a Roman cohort not far from the River Pagyda. Decrius, an energetic commander and experienced campaigner, oversaw the defence, and considered it shameful to be surrounded. After exhorting his men, he positioned his lines in front of the camp in order to deploy his force in the open.



'The Battle of Vercellae'
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Italian, 1696 - 1770)
The Met

His cohort being driven back in the first attack, he darted heedlessly among the missiles stemming the retreat, cursing the standard-bearers for allowing Roman soldiers to turn their backs on a bunch of raw recruits and deserters; at that time he received a blow, and though wounded in the eye, turned to face the enemy and continued to fight until he fell, abandoned by his men.

BOOK III:XXI THE NUMIDIANS DEFEATED

When Lucius Apronius, Camillus' successor, heard the news, he was more troubled by the disgrace to his own troops than by the enemy's success, and employing a rarely-used measure that recalled past times decimated the dishonoured cohort, drawing lots before flogging every tenth man to death.

So effective was this act of severity, that a company of veterans, not more than five hundred in number, routed that same force belonging to Tacfarinas when it attacked the garrison at a place named Thala (in Tunisia). During the fighting, Helvius Rufus, a private, earned the distinction of saving a Roman life, and was awarded the torques and the headless spear by Apronius. Tiberius added the civic crown (of oak-leaves), an action prompted by his regret at the omission rather than displeasure, the proconsul despite his powers not having granted the same.

Tacfarinas, with the Numidians discouraged and scorning siege warfare, opted for sporadic attacks, yielding when pressed then returning to harass the rear-guard. And, while these were the barbarian's tactics, he taunted the tired and ineffectual Romans with impunity. But when he turned to the coastal areas, burdened with plunder he was tied to static encampments, and Apronius Caesianus was sent out by his father, with cavalry and auxiliaries enhanced by the swiftest legionaries, and fought a successful battle against the Numidians, driving them into the desert.

**BOOK III:XXII LEPIDA ARRAIGNED ON
VARIOUS CHARGES**

At Rome, Lepida, who as well as the honour of being of the Aemilian family was a great grand-daughter of both Sulla and Pompey, was accused by her ex-husband, the rich and childless Publius Quirinius, of pretending to have previously given birth. Added to this were accusations of adultery, of poisoning, and of consulting astrologers concerning the line of Caesars (a treasonable offence), the defence being undertaken by her brother, Manius Aemilius Lepidus. Quirinius' behaviour had generated a degree of sympathy for the woman, despite her disgrace and her guilt, because of his continued hostility after their divorce.

It is difficult to discern Tiberius' thoughts on the matter, he so alternated and varied his displays of anger or clemency. First, he asked the Senate not to proceed with the treason charges, then he tricked Marcus Servilius, the ex-consul, and a number of other witnesses, into volunteering information about which they would rather have remained silent. At the same time, he had Lepida's servants, who were held in military custody, transferred to the consuls and prevented their being interrogated under torture on any matters pertinent to his family.

Again, he exempted his son, Drusus, as consul designate, from handing down the initial judgement; which was thought considerate by the rest, since it absolved others of the necessity of assenting, but by some was ascribed to his relentlessness: since in fact Drusus merely avoided any responsibility for condemning her.

BOOK III:XXIII LEPIDA BANISHED

During the Games, which had interrupted the trial, Lepida visited the Theatre of Pompey, with a number of noblewomen, where, lamenting and weeping and invoking her ancestors, including Pompey himself whom the building commemorated, whose statues they could see before them, she elicited so much compassion that the crowd shed tears while shouting fiercely in execration of Quirinius, to whose years and childlessness and most insignificant of houses might be sacrificed a woman once destined to be the wife of Lucius Caesar and daughter-in-law to Augustus.

But then, with the torture of her slaves, her guilt was confirmed, and Rubellius Blandus' verdict, by which she was 'denied fire and water'. Drusus supported her banishment, though others argued for leniency. It was later decided, as a concession to Scaurus who had fathered a son with her, that her estate not be confiscated. Only then did Tiberius reveal that he had learnt from Quirinius' own slaves of Lepida's attempt to poison her accuser.

BOOK III:XXIV DECIMUS SILANUS RETURNS FROM EXILE

There was solace for these mishaps to such illustrious houses (since with barely a pause the Calpurnians had lost Piso and the Aemilians Lepida) in the return of the exiled Decimus Silanus to the Julian family. His story is worth repeating.

As kind as fortune was to the divine Augustus in public affairs, it was less favourable at home, through the scandalous behaviour of Julia the Elder, his daughter, and Julia the Younger, his grand-daughter, whom he banished from Rome, while sentencing their adulterers to death or exile. For, by calling the common sin among both sexes sacrilege and treason, he

deviated from the clemency of the past, and from his own laws. Thus shall I record the fate of others, together with the rest of that age, if I achieve what I intend and expend my life in writing.

Decimus Silanus, the lover of Julia the Younger, Augustus' granddaughter, though subject to no greater severity than loss of imperial favour, accepted that a self-imposed exile was indicated, and only after Tiberius' accession did he dare to appeal to the Senate and the emperor through the influence of his brother, Marcus Silanus, distinguished for his noble excellence and eloquence. But when Marcus expressed his thanks openly to the senators, Tiberius replied that he also was pleased that Marcus' brother had returned from his foreign travels, and had the legal right to do so since he had not been banished by Senate decree or by the courts; and yet, he still felt all his father's displeasure regarding him, and Decimus' return did not cancel Augustus' wishes in the matter. Decimus remained at Rome thereafter, but without holding office.

BOOK III:XXV THE LAW AGAINST CELIBACY

It was then proposed that the *Lex Papia Poppaea* (AD9) be modified, this being the law that Augustus had enacted, late in his reign, following the earlier *Lex Julia* (18BC), to increase the penalties for celibacy, and swell the exchequer. It failed however to promote marriage and the raising of children, childlessness remaining prevalent.

On the other hand, there was an increase in those liable to prosecution, since every family was vulnerable to mischievous informers and once troubled by vice were now troubled by the courts. This prompts me to enter more deeply into the origins of the legal system and the process by which we arrived at our endless multitude and variety of laws.

BOOK III:XXVI THE ORIGINS OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Primitive humanity, not yet given to wilfulness in its passions, lived without sense of shame or sin, and so without punishment or coercion. Incentives were not required when virtue was sought by instinct: and where nothing contrary to decency was desired, nothing was prohibited by threats.

But once equality was dispensed with, and ambition and power overtook modesty and a sense of honour, tyranny ensued, and has remained perpetual among many peoples. A few, however, either from the very beginning or becoming weary of kingship, chose the rule of law.

The first examples were the simple creation of inexperienced minds, the most celebrated being devised by Minos in Crete, Lycurgus in Sparta, and later by Solon in Athens, his laws being more thoroughly considered and more numerous.

As for ourselves, after Romulus had ruled without curb, Numa bound the people to religion and the divine laws, while Tullius and Anco devised others. It was above all Servius Tullius who was an enactor of legislation which even kings were obliged to obey.

BOOK III:XXVII ROMAN LAW: TO POMPEY'S THIRD CONSULATE

After the expulsion of Tarquin, the people framed many laws to restrain the factions in the Senate, to defend their freedoms and establish harmony, the Decemvirs (forming the Commission of Ten Men) were created and the Twelve Tables were composed (450BC), incorporating whatever was most celebrated, the ultimate authority for what was just. For the laws enacted later, though sometimes aimed at the perpetrators of

wrongdoing, were more often exercises in power politics, based on conflict between the classes, to gain preferment unlawfully, banish distinguished men, or achieve some other evil end.

Hence our popular agitators, our Gracchi and Saturnini, and a Drusus bribing as widely as they in the name of the Senate (122BC); while our Italian allies were tempted by hope and taunted by veto. Not even war in Italy, soon turning to all-out civil war (91-88BC) could prevent extensive and conflicting legislation, until Sulla, as dictator (82BC), by changing or abolishing the older statutes and adding others, achieved stability but not for long, since the rogations of Lepidus (78BC) brought conflict, and not long after that the tribunes' licence to cause trouble as they pleased was restored (70BC, by Pompey and Crassus).

Now laws were enacted not only for national but for purely individual reasons, and the laws were most numerous when the state was most corrupt.

BOOK III:XXVIII ROMAN LAW: TO TIBERIUS AND AD20

Then came Pompey, in his third consulate (52BC), with that choice reformer of morals applying remedies more painful than the disease and subverting the very laws he enacted, so losing by the sword what he had held by the sword (48BC). Twenty years of endless conflict followed, without justice or morality; when the worst acted with impunity, and virtue was the road to ruin.

At last Augustus Caesar, in his seventh consulate (27BC), his power secure, abolished what the Triumvirate had enacted, and gave us laws to serve the peace and imperial rule. From that moment on, our bonds were tightened, spies were inflicted on us and, under the Papia-Poppaeian law, motivated by reward, such that if a man refused the privilege bestowed on a father of bequeathing his estate, the state as universal parent would fulfil the vacant role.

But they went too far, until Rome, Italy, every corner of the empire was under siege, and the position of many became untenable. A reign of terror threatened, at which point Tiberius appointed as remedy five ex-consuls, five ex-praetors and an equal number of plain senators, all chosen by lot, who by untying many of the legal knots gave a measure of relief for the present.

BOOK III:XXIX ELEVATION OF GERMANICUS' SON, NERO JULIUS

At about this time (AD20), Tiberius recommended Germanicus' son, Nero Julius Caesar Germanicus (not the later emperor) who had now reached manhood, to the Senate, seeking his release from service in minor office (as a potential member of the Vigintivirate) and allowing him to seek a quaestorship five years before the minimum legal age (the twenty-fifth year), which prompted scorn among his hearers.

He gave as his excuse that the same concessions had been granted to himself and his brother, at the request of Augustus. But even at that time, I imagine, some must have secretly ridiculed such a petition, despite the fact that the rule of the Caesars was still in its infancy, and previous ways of behaving were before men's eyes, and the bond between stepfather and stepsons weighs less than that between grandfather and grandson.

Nero Julius also received a pontificate and on the first day of his entry to the Forum, free food was distributed to the masses, who were delighted at witnessing Germanicus' offspring reach maturity. Their pleasure was enhanced by Nero Julius' marriage to Drusus' daughter Julia, though tempering the joy expressed at these events was their dislike for the nomination of Sejanus as the future father-in-law for Claudius's son (Claudius Drusus). It was judged that the nobility of the ruling family had been sullied in granting too great an honour to Sejanus who was suspected even then of overweening ambition.

BOOK III:XXX VOLUSIUS SATURNINUS AND SALLUSTIUS CRISPUS

At the end of that year, two illustrious Romans passed away, Lucius Volusius Saturninus and Sallustius Crispus. Volusius was of a distinguished line, that had never achieved more than the praestorship: he himself won it a consulate and, as well as acting on the commission which selected those knights fit for jury service, first accumulated the wealth that so invigorated his house.

Crispus, fathered by a member of the Equestrian order, was grandson to a sister of Gaius Sallustius (Sallust), that most brilliant of Roman historians who adopted him into his family and name. Thus, the road to high office was open to him but, rivalling Maecenas, he surpassed many who won triumphs or the consulate while never himself becoming a senator; his refinement and elegance contrasting with past manners, while his wealth and resources bordered on excess.

Yet beneath all this was a mental energy equal to great tasks, all the keener for concealment behind a display of somnolence and inertia. Such that, second to Maecenas while the latter lived, and later to none, the secrets of empire rested with him and he was even privy to the killing of Agrippa Postumus, though with advancing years he retained more the semblance than the reality of close friendship with the emperor. The same had befallen Maecenas, either because it is the fate of influence rarely to last forever, or because the moment comes when the one party has no more to give and the other has nothing left to desire.

BOOK III:XXXI TIBERIUS WITHDRAWS TO CAMPANIA

Tiberius' fourth consulate, and Drusus' second, followed (AD21), a noble combination of father and son, the same partnership three years earlier of Germanicus and Tiberius having been neither so pleasing to the uncle, nor so closely tied by blood.

At the start of the year, Tiberius withdrew to Campania, ostensibly to restore his health while contemplating a gradual and prolonged absence or perhaps to impel Drusus to carry out his official duty alone with his father away.

Indeed it so happened that a minor event, which developed into a serious quarrel, granted the prince a nascent popularity. Domitius Corbulo, who held the praetorship, complained about a young nobleman, Lucius Sulla, who had not yielded his seat to him at the gladiatorial show. Corbulo's age, the custom of the country, and the support of the older men spoke in his favour, while Mamercus Scaurus, Lucius Arruntius, and others of Sulla's friends exerted themselves on Sulla's behalf.

There was a verbal contest, the example of our ancestors' being quoted whereby youthful irreverence was met with weighty decrees, which lasted until Drusus spoke so as to calm tempers, and Corbulo received an apology from Mamercus, who as well as being Sulla's uncle and stepfather was the most fluent orator of his age.

This same Corbulo made an outcry about the many roads throughout Italy that were ruined or impassable, owing to fraud on the part of the maintenance gangs, and the disinterest of the appropriate magistrates. He willingly undertook the burden of restitution, but the result was considered not nearly as useful to the public as it was harmful to the many whose wealth and repute suffered through ruthless prosecution and the forced sale of their assets.

BOOK III:XXXII LEPIDUS APPOINTED TO THE GOVERNORSHIP OF ASIA MINOR

Not long after, the Senate learned, in a letter from Tiberius, that North Africa had again been troubled by an incursion of Tacfarinas' devising, and that the senators were asked to use their judgement in selecting a proconsul expert in military affairs, and with a physical constitution robust enough for the campaign.

Sextus Pompeius initiated the discussion by attacking Marcus Lepidus, while displaying his hatred of him, accusing him of being idle, useless, a disgrace to his ancestors, and deserving of being excluded even from selection for Asian Minor. The Senate rejected this, considering Lepidus to be retiring rather than idle, his means being limited, and that bearing nobility without reproach was a badge of honour rather than shame.

Lepidus was therefore sent to Asia Minor, while as regards North Africa it was agreed that Tiberius should decide who might receive the post.

BOOK III:XXXIII CAECINA SEVERUS PROPOSES WIVES BE BANNED FROM OFFICIAL POSTINGS

During the debate, Aulus Caecina Severus proposed that no magistrate entering provincial office should be accompanied by his wife, explaining at prior length that he had a pleasing marriage partner who had borne him six children yet he himself had observed in private what he now prescribed for public life, and though he had served for forty years in one province or another she had always been confined to Italy.

There was some point, he claimed, in the old consensus that women not be taken to allied states or into foreign lands: in the retinue of a married woman there were those who entertained luxury in peacetime or their fears

in wartime, such that a Roman march turned into something like an Oriental progress. Not only were they weak and unequal to hard work, but if allowed they turned harsh, ambitious, greedy for power. They strutted about among the men, held the centurions in the palm of their hands; recently a woman had even presided at military exercises, and the parade of the legions.

They might like to consider how often when a governor was accused of extortion, the bulk of the accusations were against the wife. The most dubious of provincials immediately attached themselves to her, she it was who handled business affairs and completed transactions. There were two to be cultivated, two courts, and the more violent and headstrong orders came from the women, whom once the Oppian and other laws constrained, but who, now liberated, ruled house, law-court and army.

BOOK III:XXXIV THE PROPOSAL REJECTED

A few listened to his speech with approval, most objected vociferously that there was no motion concerning the matter on the agenda, and that Caecina was no proper judge of such things. Valerius Messalinus, a son of Messala Corvinus and one in whom there existed some echo of his father's eloquence, replied that much of the severity of former times had been altered for the better and that was welcome; for indeed, Rome was no longer besieged by armies, as it once was, nor were the provinces hostile.

A few necessary concessions were granted to women, but not such as to embarrass their husband's houses, let alone our allies, the rest being shared with her spouse, and this caused no problem in peacetime. The latter must certainly be prepared to fight, but returning after his labours what was more fitting than a wife's solace? What if a few sank into greed and intrigue? Were the magistrates themselves not liable to many and various lapses? Yet were they not still sent out to govern provinces?

Husbands were often corrupted by their wives' depravities, was every bachelor then incorruptible? The Oppian laws were formerly agreed upon because in those days the republic required them, but afterwards it was beneficial to ease and relax them somewhat. It was wrong to call our own inertia by another title, for if the wife went beyond proper limits, it was the husband's fault. Moreover, it was unfair that a husband should be separated from the partner who shared in his success and failure, through the faults attributable to only one or two, while the naturally weaker sex was left exposed to its own excesses, and the desires of others. Marriage could hardly be kept intact by confining people: what would happen if it were to be suspended for years in the manner of a divorce? And whilst they were moving to check abuses elsewhere, they might wish to remember the scandalous goings-on in Rome!

Drusus then added a few comments regarding his own married life; for princes too often had to visit remote parts of the empire. Had not Augustus travelled many times to the East and West, with Livia as his companion? He had himself been in Illyricum, and if it was of benefit would go to other countries, yet not always with a calm mind if he were to be separated from the dearest of wives, the mother of the many children they shared.

Caecina's proposal was therefore rejected.

End of the Annals Book III: I-XXXIV

**BOOK III: XXXV-LV
REBELLION IN GAUL**



'Pallas of Velletri'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p630, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK III:XXXV BLAESUS NOMINATED TO NORTH AFRICA

At the next Senate session, Tiberius, after offering an oblique reproof to the Fathers, by letter, for referring a matter which was their total responsibility to their emperor, nominated Manius Lepidus and Junius Blaesus as alternative choices for the proconsulate of North Africa. Both were then given a hearing.

Lepidus earnestly excused himself, due to the state of his health, the age of his children, and his now marriageable daughter, while it was understood, though remained unsaid, that Blaesus, as Sejanus' uncle, was the stronger applicant.

Blaesus responded with an apparent refusal, but far less earnestly, and was encouraged to accept by a unanimous show of support.

BOOK III:XXXVI USE OF THE EMPEROR'S PORTRAIT TO CLAIM IMMUNITY

Next, a matter arose which had been the subject of much private complaint. It was a growing practice among the mob to freely incite hatred and abuse of decent citizens, while claiming immunity from prosecution by clasping hold of a statue of Tiberius. Patrons and owners lived in fear of their freedmen and even their slaves, if they raised voice or hand against them.

Accordingly, Gaius Cestius expressed the view that though emperors were the equivalent of deities, only rightful petitions were heard by the gods, and none should seek sanctuary in the Capitol or any other temple in order to further a crime. All law was abolished, its foundations uprooted, if Annia Rufilla, whom he had convicted in court of fraud, could abuse and

threaten him in the Forum, on the very steps of the Senate House, while he dare not invoke the law because of the effigy of the emperor with which she confronted him.

A clamour, spelling out similar, and sometimes more serious, occurrences arose around him, and there were calls to Drusus to exact exemplary punishment, until he finally commanded her to be summoned and, after sentencing, imprisoned in the public cells.

BOOK III:XXXVII DRUSUS GAINS CREDIT

Also, two Roman knights, Considius Aequus and Caelius Cursor, who had raised false charges of treason against the praetor Magius Caecilianus, were punished by Senate decree at the emperor's insistence.

In both the above cases, the result was credited to Drusus, his presence in Rome at gatherings and in conversation having a mitigating effect on his father's secret purposes. His very indulgences were far from unpopular: it being regarded as better for him to summon up buildings by day and banquets by night, than to live alone without pleasurable distractions, lost in gloomy vigil amid dark concerns.

BOOK III:XXXVIII DISTURBANCES IN THRACE

For neither Tiberius nor his informers grew weary. Thus, Ancharius Priscus accused Caesius Cordus, the proconsul of Crete and Cyrene, of extortion, adding the usual charge of treason which now accompanied every such accusation.

Antistius Vetus, a nobleman of Macedonia, having been acquitted of adultery, Tiberius reprimanded the judges and summoned him back to

stand trial for treason, as a troublemaker mixed up in Rhescuporis' scheming who had meditated war against us after the murder of Cotys. The accused was 'denied fire and water', his place of exile being specified as 'not too near Macedonia or Thrace'.

For Thrace, unused to our ways, was in a state of discord, power having been divided between Rhoemetalces II and Cotys' children, who as minors were under the tutelage of Trebellenus Rufus, he no less than Rhoemetalces being accused of allowing the injury to their countrymen to go unavenged.

Three powerful tribes, the Coelaetae, Odrysae and Dii, took up arms, under different leaders equally undistinguished by birth, a situation which prevented their uniting to wage serious warfare. One group caused havoc nearby, another crossed the Haemus mountains to raise the remote clans, while the best organised and most numerous besieged the king in the town of Philippopolis (Plovdiv, Bulgaria), re-founded by Philip II of Macedon.

BOOK III:XXXIX PUBLIUS VELLAEUS PACIFIES THRACE

On hearing of this, Publius Vellaeus (commanding the nearest military force) sent the light infantry and auxiliary cavalry against these roving bands who were after plunder or fresh recruits, while he himself led the strongest units to raise the siege.

All they attempted at once succeeded, the raiders were killed while dissent erupted among the besiegers, and the king opportunely vanished as the legion arrived. Neither engagement nor battle is a worthy term for an action where poorly-armed men and fugitives were massacred without a drop of Roman blood being shed.

BOOK III:XL REBELLION IN GAUL

In that same year (AD21), a rebellion began among the heavily indebted communities of the Gallic provinces, promoted most fiercely by Julius Florus of the Treviri, and Julius Sacrovir of the Aedui. Both were well-born, their ancestors having been awarded Roman citizenship at a time when such action was rare and purely the result of merit.

To their secret councils they admitted the boldest spirits and those for whom poverty and fear of prosecution made of crime a necessity, agreeing that Florus should rouse the Belgae, Sacrovir the neighbouring Gauls.

So, in public sessions and among the crowd, they spoke seditiously regarding the endless tribute demanded, the burden of interest, the cruelty and arrogance of the provincial governors, and the discord among the legions following the news of Germanicus' downfall. This was the perfect moment, they said, to regain their liberty, if their listeners would only consider their own strengths versus Italy's weaknesses; its urban unwarlike people, its armies only powerful because of the foreigners it enlisted.

BOOK III:XLI ACTION AGAINST THE REBELS

There was barely a community left in which the seeds of insurrection had failed to take hold; but the first uprising was among the Andecavi and the Turoni. Of these the Andecavi's rebellion was crushed by Acilius Aviola, the legate, who called on the services of a cohort on garrison duty at Lyon. The Turoni were quelled by Aviola again, with a legionary force sent from Lower Germany by Visellius Varro the legate, and supported by various Gallic chieftains who brought auxiliaries in order to mask their defection from Rome and then reveal it at a more favourable time for themselves.



'Scene from the Gallic Wars'
Théodore Chassériau (French, 1819 - 1856)
The Met

Sacrovir was visible urging them to fight for Rome, bare-headed to reveal his courage, though captives claimed he sought recognition to avoid being showered with spears. Tiberius, consulted on the matter, was dismissive of the evidence, and by his indecision prolonged the war.

BOOK III:XLII THE DEATH OF JULIUS FLORUS

Meanwhile Florus pursued his strategy, trying to entice a cavalry troop, enrolled at Treves and under our command and control, to initiate conflict by killing Roman businessmen; a few of the horsemen being seduced, but the majority staying loyal.

In addition to these few, a crowd of debtors and clients took up arms, and were heading for the forested area known as the Ardennes when the legions from Upper and Lower Germany, sent against them by Visellius and Gaius Silius respectively, advancing by separate routes, blocked their way.

Julius Indus, from the same area, at odds with Florus and all the more eager to be of use in the campaign, was sent ahead with crack troops, and dispersed the as yet disorganised rabble. Florus himself eluded pursuit by taking to various unsafe hiding-places, dying by his own hand on catching sight of the soldiers who commanded his every escape route.

Thus the uprising among the Treviri was ended.

BOOK III:XLIII SILIUS TAKES COMMAND AGAINST THE AEDUI

Among the Aedui, there was greater trouble, due to the greater resources of the area and its distance from any restraining force. Sacrovir occupied the tribal capital, Autun (Augustodunum), with his armed cohorts, aiming to enlist the support of those sons of the Gallic nobility who were pursuing their liberal studies there, and by that token their parents and relatives. At the same time, he distributed weapons, manufactured in secret, to the youths.

He had forty thousand followers, a fifth of them armed like legionaries the rest with hunting spears, knives and whatever other weapons belong to the chase. To these men were added slaves destined for the gladiatorial fights, clad in the full coats of mail customary in that nation. Such men are called *cruppelarii*, their armour unwieldy in inflicting blows, almost impenetrable when receiving them.

These forces steadily increased, the neighbouring districts not yet openly supportive but enthusiasm evident among individuals, while the Roman generals quarrelled, arguing over their separate claims to control the campaign.

Ultimately Visellius Varro, weakened by age, gave way to Silius the younger man.

BOOK III:XLIV THE VIEW FROM ROME

In Rome, it was said that not only the Treviri and Aedui had rebelled but all the sixty-four Gallic tribes, the Germans had joined their confederation, the Spaniards were wavering, and, as is the way with rumours, was all the more readily believed. The best grieved, concerned for

the State, but many, hating the present order and eager for change, rejoiced at their own danger, and cried out against Tiberius for spending time on the scribblings of informers in such troubled times: was Sacrovir likely to stand trial in the Senate for treason? Men had finally emerged who would halt those murderous letters by force! War was a welcome exchange for this miserable peace!

Tiberius' was all the calmer in his studied unconcern, altering neither his routine nor his manner, but acting in the usual way throughout, either from profound reticence, or because he knew the disturbances to be more contained and less serious than reported.

BOOK III:XLV SILIUS ADVANCES ON AUTUN

Meanwhile, Silius, advancing with two legions, sent forward auxiliary troops and sacked the villages of the Sequani, on the far frontier with the Aedui and their armed allies. He then marched at full speed on Autun, the standard-bearers competing with each other and even the common soldiers protesting against any pause for the usual respite or night halt; shouting only to see the enemy and be seen: that would be enough for victory.

At the twelfth milestone (from Autun) Sacrovir and his forces appeared to view on an open space of ground. His mail-clad troops formed the front line, his cohorts the wings, his less well-armed followers the rear. He himself, on a fine steed, amongst the chieftains, addressed them, reminding them of the Gauls' former victories, the reverses they had inflicted on the Romans: how beautiful their freedom if they won, how intolerable their servitude should they be beaten once more.

BOOK III:XLVI THE DEATH OF SACROVIR

His speech was brief and brought little joy: since the ranks of legionaries were drawing near, and his ill-disciplined provincials, unused to warfare, could scarcely credit their ears and eyes.

Silius, on the other hand, though expectation had left no need for exhortation, shouted out that it was almost an insult to his conquerors of Germany to be sent against these Gauls instead of a real enemy. 'Not long ago,' he cried, 'one cohort destroyed the rebellious Turoni, one cavalry troop the Treviri, and a few squadrons of our army the Sequani. The greater their wealth in gold, the more excessive their pleasures, the less warlike the Aedui: rout them but preserve the fugitives.'

There was a great clamour at this, the cavalry encircling the enemy, while the infantry charged their front. The flanks proved no obstacle, though the mail-clad troops caused a brief delay, their armour resisting javelin and sword: but the legionaries grasping pick and axe struck through iron and flesh as if demolishing a wall, while others with pole and pike downed the unmoving masses and left them lying, inert as the dead, making no effort to rise once more.

Sacrovir, with his most loyal men, first made for Autun, then, anxious to avoid surrender, to a villa nearby. There he died by his own hand, the others by mutual exchange of blows; the house, burnt above them, making a funeral pyre of all.

BOOK III:XLVII TIBERIUS ACKNOWLEDGES VICTORY

Now Tiberius at last wrote to the Senate announcing the beginning and end of the war, neither hiding nor embellishing the facts, but stating that the loyalty and courage of his generals, and his own strategy had sufficed.

At the same time he explained why neither he nor Drusus had left for the front, extolling the extent of empire, and how unfitting it would have been for the emperor to leave the capital, which ruled all, because of disturbances in a town or two. Now, not being driven to do so by anxiety, he would go and examine the matter in person, and seal the peace.

The senators decreed vows for his return, sacrifices and other honours. Only Cornelius Dolabella, trying to outdo the rest, took sycophancy to the point of absurdity, by proposing that Tiberius should enter the city from Campania to an ovation. A letter from Tiberius then followed, proclaiming that he was not so destitute of glory, having subdued some of the fiercest nations and received or rejected so many triumphs in his youth, that now in his riper years he should seek an empty honour in progressing through the suburbs.

BOOK III:XLVIII TIBERIUS COMMEMORATES SULPICIUS QUIRINUS

At around this time, Tiberius requested of the Senate that the death of Sulpicius Quirinius be marked by a public funeral. Quirinius, who hailed from the municipality of Lanuvium (Lanuvio) had no connection with the old patrician family of the Sulpicii, but as an energetic military man and eager servant he had won a consulate under the divine Augustus, and a little later the insignia of a triumph for capturing the Homonadensian strongholds in Cilicia, and was appointed Gaius Caesar's advisor in Armenia.

He was also attentive to Tiberius during the latter's time in Rhodes: as Tiberius now informed the Senate, praising Quirinius' good offices to himself, while criticising the memory of Marcus Lollius whom he condemned as the instigator of Gaius Caesar's perverse and argumentative attitude.

But the rest found little pleasure in recollecting Quirinius, given his intent, as I have mentioned, to ruin Lepida, and his vile abuse of power in old age.

BOOK III:XLIX ACCUSATIONS AGAINST CLUTORIUS PRISCUS

At the end of that year (AD21), a Roman knight, Clutorius Priscus, who after penning a celebrated poem bemoaning the death of Germanicus had been given a sum of money by Tiberius, was subject to accusations by an informer. It was said that during Drusus' illness he had claimed to have composed another poem which in the event of Drusus' death might attract an even greater reward.

Clutorius had boasted idly of this at Publius Petronius' house, in the presence of Petronius' mother-in-law Vitellia, and other noblewomen. When the informer appeared, the rest were terrified into giving evidence, Vitellia alone asserting that she had heard nothing. However the witnesses testifying to the fatal event were regarded as more credible, and the death penalty was invoked against the defendant, at the prompting of the consul designate, Haterius Agrippa.

BOOK III:L MANIUS LEPIDUS SPEAKS AGAINST THE SENTENCE

Manius Lepidus, opposing this, began in the following manner: 'If, Senators Elect, we consider only the single matter of that criminal utterance by which Clutorius Priscus sullied his own soul and the ears of men, no prison cell, no rope, not even a slave's crucifixion suffices for him. Yet if, though vice and crime are limitless, the sentence and the remedy

might be modified by the emperor's clemency, and your and your ancestors' precedents, and if there is a difference between stupidity and wickedness, between evil-speaking and evil-doing, there is the opportunity for a judgment which neither lets this man's sin go unpunished, nor leaves us dissatisfied by either the depth of our compassion or our harshness.

I have often heard our emperor complain when someone by suicide forestalled his leniency. Clutorius' life is still whole, the preserving of which presents no danger to the State, while the taking of it sets no great example. His literary efforts are as filled with foolishness as they are idle and transient; nor could anything grave and serious be feared in one who betrays his own shameless effusions to amuse not men but childish women. Banish him from Rome, sequester his goods, deny him "fire and water": that is what I propose, as the treason laws prescribe.'

BOOK III:LI THE EXECUTION OF PRISCUS

Only the ex-consul Rubellius Blandus agreed with Lepidus: the rest seconded Agrippa's judgement, Priscus being led to the cells and immediately executed. Tiberius, with a customary display of ambiguity, found fault with this action, in the Senate.

While he lauded the sense of duty of those who avenged so keenly an insult, however slight, to their head of State, he deprecated such hastiness in regard to a merely verbal offence. He praised Lepidus, but failed to blame Agrippa.

It was subsequently agreed that no Senate decree should become operative by being entered to the Treasury (at the Temple of Saturn) before the tenth day, and the life of a condemned prisoner should be spared until then.

Nevertheless, the Senate had no freedom to reverse sentence, nor was Tiberius any the more forgiving in the interim.

BOOK III:LII AD22: THE PROBLEM OF EXCESSIVE PRIVATE EXPENDITURE

There followed the consulate (AD22) of Gaius Sulpicius Galba and Decimus Haterius, a year of calm abroad, but concern at home that severe measures might be taken against the excessive private expenditure now rampant, the purchase of everything on which money could be squandered. It was the facilities for public wining and dining, a subject of endless gossip, rather than other more serious examples of lavishness the costs of which could mostly be hidden, that led to anxiety lest an emperor wedded to outdated frugality adopt harsher strictures.

For when Gaius Bibulus raised the issue his fellow aediles agreed that the rules against excessive consumption were being ignored, and the daily increase in prices of essentials could not be checked by any easy remedy, and the Senate when consulted passed the whole matter on to the emperor. Yet Tiberius after repeated consideration as to whether such widespread excesses could be curbed, and whether doing so now might prove a greater public evil, and what loss of dignity might be caused by a law that could not be enforced, or if enforced might bring scandal and disgrace on his noblest subjects, in the end composed a letter to the Senate, along these lines:

BOOK III:LIII TIBERIUS ADDRESSES THE ISSUE

‘Perhaps on other matters, Senators Elect, it is more expedient to raise and discuss in my presence any public issue on which I am to comment; but in this matter it is better my gaze is elsewhere, lest through your noticing the anxious looks of any member who might be charged with shameful excess, I myself might see and surprise them, so to speak.

If those active individuals, the aediles, had taken me into their confidence beforehand, perhaps I might have persuaded them to ignore long-matured and entrenched failings rather than pursue them and reveal openly an offence we are powerless to combat. But they have done their duty, such that I desire every magistrate as thorough in theirs.

For myself, it is neither right for me to remain silent nor helpful for me to speak out, since I fulfil the role neither of aedile, praetor nor consul. Something nobler and more extensive is required of an emperor; yet while everyone takes credit, rightly, for success, when all are in error one alone bears the blame. What then should I try to prohibit first, in retreating to a past way of life? The endless extent of our villas? The number and diversity of our slaves? Our masses of gold and silver? Our miraculous bronzes and paintings? The promiscuous attire of both men and women, and those feminine extravagances by which our wealth passes to foreign and hostile countries?

BOOK III:LIV HE DECLINES TO INTERVENE

I am not unaware that these things are condemned at dinner-parties and gatherings, amid demands that some limit be set; but let a law be passed and punishment decreed, and those same voices will cry that the State is under threat, that the end of all magnificence is at hand, that no man is innocent of this crime. Yet old, enduring bodily ills can only be checked by harsh and bitter remedies: a sick and feverish mind, both corrupted and corrupting, needs cures no less severe than the passions which inflamed it.

All the laws created by our ancestors, all those the divine Augustus decreed, are lost; some to oblivion; some, to our greater shame, through contempt; granting excess its freedom. For if you desire something not as yet forbidden, you fear lest it may be; but once you have crossed the line with impunity, you are beyond fear or shame. Why was moderation once

the rule? Because everyone controlled themselves; because we were citizens of a single city; nor were those temptations present even when we ruled Italy. By foreign conquest we learned to squander others' wealth, by those at home our own.

What a small matter this which the aediles warn about! How trivial, it must be thought, if you look around you! Yet no one mentions, by Hercules, that Italy requires foreign imports, that the survival of the Roman people depends daily on the vagaries of wind and tide. If the provincial harvest ever failed to supplement that of our own landowners, our slaves and fields, no doubt our parks and villas would sustain us! That, Senators Elect, is what troubles your emperor; that is the issue which if neglected, will sink the State.

The remedy for other matters lies with each of us: out of shame, let us change for the better; the poor among us from necessity, the rich from satiety. Or if the magistrate exists who can promise sufficient energy and harshness in dealing with the matter, I will grant him my praise and confess my burdens lightened, yet if he is keen to denounce such failings and then, after reaping the glory, make trouble which he leaves to me, then, believe me, Senators Elect, neither am I eager to seek criticism. I undertake matters grievous and often iniquitous, for the sake of the State, but when they are idle, useless and of benefit neither to you nor myself, I rightly beg to be excused.'

BOOK III:LV TACITUS REFLECTS ON THE OUTCOME

When Tiberius' letter had been given a hearing, the aediles were exempted from any such task, and in fact the luxurious banquets which had been indulged in at lavish expense throughout the century between the naval battle at Actium (31BC) and the conflict that brought Servius Galba to power (AD68) gradually fell out of fashion. It is interesting to seek out the causes of that change.

Once, rich families or those of illustrious distinction were ruined by a passion for magnificence. For it was still acceptable to court or be courted by the people, our allies and dependent royalty, such that the greater the wealth, residence and appurtenances the more illustrious a man's reputation and clients.

After an age of savage executions, when great fame meant death, the survivors chose a wiser path. At the same time, newcomers from the municipalities, colonies, and even the provinces were frequently appointed to the Senate, and brought with them their own fashion of plain-living, and though many reached an affluent old age through effort or good luck their previous attitude persisted. Yet the chief proponent of a stricter morality was Vespasian, himself of the old style regarding dress and table.

Hence, respect for the emperor, and the love of emulation, proved stronger than laws and punishment. Or perhaps there is something akin to a natural cycle in all things, such that as the seasons rotate, so does our manner of living. Nor was everything better in the past, our own age too has seen many noble and artistic achievements, that posterity might well imitate. May this true competition between ourselves and our ancestors long continue.

End of the Annals Book III: XXXV-LV

BOOK III: LVI-LXXVI
THE DECLINE OF THE SENATE



'Venus of Milo'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p786, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK III:LVI TIBERIUS SEEKS TRIBUNICIAN POWER FOR DRUSUS

Yet Tiberius, having prevented a rush of fresh accusations and so acquired a reputation for restraint, now sent a letter to the Senate seeking tribunician power for Drusus. This title for the highest honour was invented by Augustus, who not wishing to be styled king or dictator, still wished to be addressed as the pre-eminent authority.

Later he chose Marcus Agrippa as his partner in power, and after Agrippa's death Tiberius, lest the succession be in doubt. Thus he thought to quench the misplaced hopes of others; at the same time he had confidence in Tiberius' self-restraint and his own greatness.

Following this precedent, Tiberius now advanced Drusus to the highest honour, though when Germanicus was alive he had treated both equally. Yet, beginning his letter with a prayer to the gods to aid his plans for the public good, he spoke briefly of the young man's virtues, free of any exaggeration, saying that Drusus had a wife and three children and was at an age when Tiberius himself had been summoned by the divine Augustus to undertake the same role. Nor was Drusus being admitted in haste to share his work, but only after eight years of tried experience, repressing rebellions and winning wars, after a triumph and two consulates, such that the task of leadership was a familiar one.

BOOK III:LVII THE SENATE IMMEDIATELY GRANTS THE SAME

The senators had anticipated the request; so their sycophancy was all the readier. Their decrees however went no further than statues of the emperor and his son, altars to the gods, temples, arches and other customary honours, except for that of Marcus Silanus who sought to slight

the consulship and enhance the leadership by proposing that the inscriptions on public and private monuments, recording their date, should not only show the names of the consuls but also those exercising tribunician powers.

Yet Quintus Haterius, who suggested that the resolutions made that day be mounted in letters of gold in the Senate House, was ridiculed as an old man who would gain nothing from his shameless flattery save infamy.

BOOK III:LVIII SERVIUS MALUGINENSIS SEEKS THE GOVERNORSHIP OF ASIA MINOR

During this time, Junius Blaesus' governorship of North Africa having been extended, Servius Maluginensis, the High Priest of Jupiter (the Flamen Dialis), demanded that Asia Minor be allotted to himself, saying that it was a common misconception that the priests of Jove were not allowed to leave Italy, and his situation was no different to that of the priests of Mars or Quirinus: if they could govern provinces why was it forbidden for the priest of Jupiter to do so?

Nothing of this was dictated by tradition, he claimed, nor was there anything to be found in the Books of Ceremonies. The pontiffs had often performed the rites of Jove when the Flamen was unable to do so through sickness or public duties. For seventy-two years after the date (87BC) when Cornelius Merula took his own life, no one replaced him, yet the rites were not interrupted. If so many years could intervene without a new creation and with no harm done to religion, how much the more readily might he absent himself for twelve months of proconsular rule?

No doubt, he concluded, personal rivalries were once so great that visiting the provinces was forbidden by the pontiffs: now by the grace of the gods, the Head of the High Priests was also the Head of State, and not subject therefore to jealousy, hatred or personal considerations.

BOOK III:LIX DRUSUS EVADES THE CELEBRATIONS PROPOSED

Since Lentulus, the augur, and various others spoke against this, it was decided to await the judgement of the High Pontiff, Tiberius, himself. He postponed investigation of the Flamen's rights, but modified the celebrations decreed regarding Drusus' tribunician powers, while specifically denouncing that extravagant proposal involving gold lettering so contrary to Roman custom.

A letter was also read, from Drusus, which though attempting modesty was considered arrogant in the extreme. 'So it has come to this,' they said, 'that a mere youth, blessed with such an honour, cannot move himself to wait on Rome's gods, set foot in the Senate, or even take the auspices on his native soil. Of course! War or hostile terrain must have prevented him, while traversing the lakes and shores of Campania! Is this what the ruler of the human race has taught him, this the first lesson he learns from his father's wise counsel? An ageing emperor might well evade the sight of his fellow citizens, pleading the weariness of his years and the labours he has performed: what impedes Drusus but arrogance!'

BOOK III:LX TIBERIUS MOVES AGAINST THE GREEK CITIES PROVIDING ASYLUM

Nevertheless, Tiberius, though consolidating the power of the leadership, granted the Senate a shadow of its past authority, by submitting the claims from its provinces to the deliberations of its members. Throughout the Greek cities there was a growing licence and impunity in establishing rights of asylum; indeed their temples were full of the most troublesome slaves; the very same refuge was granted a debtor evading his creditors as a man suspected of a capital offence; nor had any

power proved strong enough to quell sedition amongst a people who housed human infamy and divine worship under the same roof.

It was therefore decided that the relevant communities should send deputations with their charters to Rome. A few dropped their false claims of their own accord; many relied on ancient superstition or their services to the Roman people. It made a fine spectacle, that day on which the Senate examined grants made by their predecessors, pacts with allies, even the decrees of kings whose power pre-dated that of Rome along with the very sanctions of their deities, at liberty to alter or confirm them as of old.

BOOK III:LXI THE DEPUTATION FROM THE EPHESIANS

The Ephesians were the first to appear, declaring that Apollo and Diana were not, as commonly believed, born on Delos: there being a river, the Cenchrius (Kenchrios), and a sacred grove Ortygia, in Ephesus, where Latona, at full term, grasping an olive tree which still grew there, gave birth to her divine offspring. The grove was rendered inviolable by divine injunction, and there Apollo, after killing the Cyclops, had himself escaped Jove's anger.

Later Father Liber (Dionysus), as the victor in war, pardoned the suppliant Amazons who gathered about the altar. The sanctity of the shrine had, with Hercules' consent, been enhanced when he held power in Lydia, nor had the right to sanctuary been diminished under the Persians: nor later by the Macedonians, nor lastly by themselves.

BOOK III:LXII FURTHER DEPUTATIONS

The Magnesians, following next, relied on the rulings of Lucius Scipio and Lucius Sulla, who after defeating Antiochus (190BC) and Mithridates (88BC) respectively, had recognised the courage and loyalty of Magnesia by declaring the shrine of Leucophryne Diana an inviolable refuge.

Aphrodisias (Geyre, Turkey) and Stratonicea (Eskihisar, Turkey) produced decrees: in the former case that of Julius Caesar, as dictator, marking their early service to his cause, and in the latter a more recent decree of the divine Augustus, commemorating their constancy to the people of Rome during that same Parthian incursion (40BC). Aphrodisias kept the rites of Venus however, Stratonicea those of Jupiter and Diana Trivia.

The claim by Hierocaesarea (Beyova, Turkey) was of greater antiquity, a shrine of the Persian Diana (Anahita) dedicated when Cyrus reigned (died 530BC); and Perpenna, Isauricus and other named generals were mentioned, who had granted equivalent rights of sanctuary not only in the temple itself, but for two miles around.

The Cypriots counted three shrines, the oldest erected by their founder Aerias to Paphian Venus, the later ones by his son Amathus to Amathusian Venus, and by Teucer, exiled by his angry father Telamon, to Jupiter of Salamis.

BOOK III:LXIII THE SENATE FINDINGS

The deputations from other states were also heard. Regarding these, the senators, weary of the details and a tendency towards dispute, empowered the consuls to investigate the rights claimed, and if any defect was involved to refer the whole matter back to the Senate. The Consuls reported that, in addition to those I have listed, there was a genuine right of asylum in the sanctuary of Aesculapius at Pergamum (Bergama, Turkey). The other claimants relied on matters whose origins were obscured by time.

For Smyrna referred to an oracle of Apollo, by whose orders they had erected a temple to Venus Stratonice; and Tenos a prophecy of the same which commanded the consecration of a statue and shrine to Neptune. Sardis claimed a more recent grant by the victorious Alexander, Milos depended to no lesser extent on Darius; the divine object of worship being Diana in the one case, Apollo in the other. The Cretans even petitioned on behalf of a statue of the deified Augustus.

The Senate passed a number of decrees which while full of respect nevertheless set limits, and the applicants were ordered to set up the appropriate bronze plaques in their sanctuaries, as a solemn memorandum and a warning not to indulge in intrigue behind the cloak of religion.

BOOK III:LXIV TIBERIUS AND LIVIA

At about the same time, Livia experienced a serious illness which rendered it necessary for the emperor to hasten a return to Rome, the harmonious relationship between mother and son being as yet genuine, or at least their mutual resentment being hidden. For not long before, Livia had placed Tiberius' name below her own in the inscription on a statue of the divine Augustus near the Theatre of Marcellus, and Tiberius, regarding

her action, so it was thought, as an insult to his imperial majesty nevertheless concealed his feelings, hiding the weight of his displeasure.

Consequently, at the present time, the Senate ordered prayers for her to the gods and a Great Games, to be given by the priestly colleges of the Pontiffs, the Augurs and the Fifteen, assisted by that of the Seven together with the Augustal Fraternities. Lucius Apronius proposed that the Fetial priests should also preside at the Games, but Tiberius opposed this, distinguishing the rights of the various priesthoods, citing precedents, and claiming that the Fetials had never been accorded such honours, while the Augustals would be there only because their priesthood was specifically dedicated to the House for which prayers were being offered.

BOOK III:LXV THE DECLINE OF THE SENATE

I do not intend to describe any Senate decree unless it is noted for its merit or remarkable for its lack of shame, since I consider the first duty of history is that virtue should not be silenced, and that those evil in word and deed should fear posterity and ill-repute.

As for that age, it was so infected and tainted by sycophancy, that not only the leaders of society, who had to hide their distinction in blind obedience, but the consular senators, many of the ex-praetors, and even the senators lacking full rights, competed in making the most excessive and repulsive proposals.

Tradition claims that Tiberius, on leaving the Senate House, used to utter words in Greek which translated ran: 'Oh, men made for slavery!' Even he, it seems, who had no great love for the liberty of the individual was growing weary of such grovelling compliancy in his public servants.

BOOK III: LXVI NAKED AMBITION

Thus, little by little, they descended from dishonour to savagery. The pro-consul of Asia Minor, Gaius Silanus, accused of extortion by the provinces, was attacked by Mamercus Scaurus, the ex-consul; Junius Otho, the praetor; and Brutteditius Niger, the aedile; who jointly accused him of violating Augustus' divinity (by perjury) and scorning Tiberius' majesty.

Mamercus made a great play of ancient precedent, namely the indictments of Lucius Cotta by Scipio Africanus (c129BC), Servius Galba by Cato the Censor (149BC), and of Publius Rutilius by Marcus Scaurus (116BC). Such, indeed, were the crimes avenged by Scipio, Cato and that Scaurus, great-grandfather of Mamercus, a living reproach to his ancestors whom he dishonoured by his infamous action.

Junius Otho's old profession was to run a grammar school: made a senator through Sejanus' influence, he dishonoured even the obscurity of his origins with his impudence and audacity.

Brutteditius, filled with honest virtues and bound, if he kept to the right road, for glory was spurred on his way by undue haste, which goaded him to outrun first his equals, then his superiors, and ultimately his own hopes; a failing ruinous to many, even among the virtuous, who, scorning the slow and sure, rush forward, prematurely, to their doom.

BOOK III: LXVII THE TRIAL OF GAIUS SILANUS

The number of Silanus' accusers grew, with the addition of Gellius Publicola, his quaestor, and Marcus Paconius, his legate. No doubt was felt that the defendant was guilty of the charges of extortion and fraud; but many factors at play would have endangered even the innocent, since over and above the hostile senators, the most eloquent advocates of Asia

Minor were selected to prosecute the charge, while the lone defendant, ignorant of court oratory, replied, in that state of fear for oneself which affects even the professionally eloquent, since Tiberius showed no mercy by word, or look, or by his assiduity in an interrogation which one was not allowed to reject or evade, and where often an admission was made, lest the questioner grew frustrated.

Furthermore, to allow the interrogation of Silanus' slaves under torture, they were formally transferred to an agent of the treasury. And lest a relative might support the man in his hour of need, charges of treason were added, compelling the inevitable silence.

Silanus therefore requested a few days respite, and abandoned his defence, hazarding a letter to Tiberius, in which he mingled reproach with plea.

BOOK III:LXVIII PISO DEMANDS SILANUS BE EXILED

So that the verdict he intended in Silanus' case might seem justified by precedent, Tiberius ordered the accusation to be read aloud in which the divine Augustus had indicted Messala Volesus, the former pro-consul of Asia Minor (cAD12), together with the Senate judgement against him. He then asked Lucius Piso to pronounce sentence.

After a long introduction concerning the emperor's clemency, Piso declared that Silanus should be 'denied fire and water', by being relegated to the island of Gyarus (Gyaros, Greece). The other members concurred, except for Gnaeus Lentulus, who said that the assets of Silanus inherited from his mother, should be treated separately, since she was born of the House of Atia (that of Augustus' mother), and they should be transferred to Silanus' son, Tiberius agreeing.

**BOOK III:LXIX DOLABELLA PROPOSES
ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION**

But Cornelius Dolabella, taking sycophancy a stage further, proposed, after attacking Silanus' moral character, that no one whose life was a disgrace and veiled in scandal should be allotted a province, the emperor being the final judge. For crimes were punished by law, he said, but how much kinder to the individual, and to the province, to pre-empt wrongdoing.

Tiberius spoke against the measure, saying that it is true he knew what was being said about Silanus, but judgement should not be based on rumour. Many a man, appointed to the provinces, had acted in a manner contrary to the hopes or fears concerning him: some were inspired to virtue by their status, others proved foolish. It was not possible for the emperor to know everything through his own power of comprehension, nor helpful for him to be influenced by others' intrigues.

Indeed, he continued, the law concerned itself with prior fact, because the future was uncertain. Thus their predecessors had decreed that punishment should only follow where a crime had already taken place, nor should they overturn what had been invented wisely and always observed thereafter. Emperors had enough burdens, enough powers: as powers increased rights diminished, and where action at law was possible the emperor should not be called upon.

The rarer such attempts to court popular favour were on Tiberius' lips, the more pleasurably they were received. And, being moderate and circumspect when not roused to anger on his own behalf, he added that Gyarus was harsh and uncivilised: out of consideration for the Junian House and a man once their peer they might consider the island of Cythnus (Kythnos, Greece) instead. This would be acceptable also to Silanus' sister, Torquata, a Vestal possessed of the saintliness of former times.

BOOK III:LXX CAPITO DEFENDS THE RIGHTS OF THE SENATE

Sometime later, an audience was granted the Cyreneans, and Caesius Cordus (the pro-consul of Crete and Cyrene), having been arraigned by Ancharius Priscus, was convicted of extortion.

Also, a Roman knight, Lucius Ennius was accused of treason, on the grounds that he had turned a silver statue of the emperor into plate for common household use. Tiberius refused to let the case go to trial, under open protest from Ateius Capito. In a show of freedom, Capito claimed that the right of judgement should not be snatched from the Senate, nor should so severe an offence go unpunished: let the emperor be lenient as regards the personal slight, but injury to the State should not be tolerated.

Tiberius understood there was more to this than had been said, and upheld his veto. Capito was in deep disgrace since, expert as he was in religious and secular law, he was held to have tarnished the State's lustre as well as that of his fine personal qualities.

BOOK III:LXXI POINTS OF RELIGION

There was then a discussion of a religious nature, regarding which temple should house the offering the Knights had vowed, to Equestrian Fortune, for Livia's recovery: for though there were many shrine to Fortune in the city, none bore that designation. The finding was that since there was such a temple at Antium (Anzio), and since all religious rites in the towns of Italy, along with all temples and divine images were subject to the jurisdiction and authority of Rome, the offering should therefore be sited at Antium.

Points of religion being under consideration, Tiberius produced his response, previously deferred, to the Flamen Dialis, Servius Maluginensis. He uttered a pontifical decree, to the effect that the Flamen Dialis, if in ill-health, might absent himself from Rome for more than two nights, at the discretion of the Supreme Pontiff, but not on days when public sacrifice was being made, nor more often than twice a year: which ruling made during Augustus' reign clearly showed the Dialis could not be granted a year's absence to pursue a provincial governorship. A precedent set by Lucius Metellus as Supreme Pontiff was also mentioned, he having prevented the departure of Aulus Postumius, the then Flamen of Mars (242BC).

Asia Minor was therefore allotted to whomever of consular rank was next in line to Maluginensis.

BOOK III:LXXII PUBLIC WORKS

At about the same time, Marcus Lepidus asked permission of the Senate to strengthen and decorate, at his own expense, the Basilica of Paulus, a monument of the Aemilian House. There was still a tradition of public munificence, nor had Augustus prevented a Taurus, Philippus or Balbus from devoting the spoils of war or their excess wealth to the ornamentation of the capital and the glory of posterity. Now, following their example, Lepidus, though of modest fortune, restored the evidence of his ancestors' virtues.

The rebuilding of Pompey's Theatre however, destroyed by a chance fire, was undertaken by Tiberius, none of the family being equal to its restoration, though the inscription with Pompey's name remained. In doing so, he showered praise on Sejanus, for restricting so disastrous an event to the one building, due to his vigilance and effort; and the Senate voted a statue of Sejanus to be erected in the Theatre of Pompey.

Not long afterwards, when awarding the triumphal insignia to Junius Blaesus, proconsul of North Africa, Tiberius said that he was doing so to honour Sejanus, as Blaesus' uncle.

BOOK III:LXXIII EVENTS IN NORTH AFRICA

Yet Blaesus' actions were worthy of such distinction, since Tacfarinas, despite many setbacks, and now recruiting fresh forces from deepest Africa, proved so arrogant that he sent ambassadors to Tiberius demanding a voluntary settlement of territory on himself and his army while posing the threat of endless war.

No other insult to himself or the Roman people brought Tiberius more grief than that a deserter and brigand should act the part of a hostile nation. Not even Spartacus, after defeating so many consular armies, with an unavenged Italy ablaze and the republic faltering in its major conflicts with Sertorius and Mithridates, not even he was granted a negotiated settlement. And now, with the Roman people at their point of greatest glory, was this robber Tacfarinas to be rewarded with peace and land concessions?

He handed the matter to Blaesus: who was to capture the leader by any means possible while leading the rest to believe they might lay down their weapons without penalty. And many surrendered under this amnesty. Tacfarinas' stratagems were soon countered by methods of warfare not unlike his own.



'The Capture of Carthage'
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Italian, 1696 - 1770)
The Met

BOOK III:LXXIV BLAESUS CALMS NORTH AFRICA

Three expeditions, involving separate attack columns, were set in motion, since the Africans unequal in military strength but better at predatory raiding, operated in multiple groups, attacking then vanishing, while always attempting to engineer an ambush. Of these columns, Cornelius Scipio, the legate, moved to prevent the enemy plundering the Lepitanians to the east and then taking refuge among the Garamantians; Blaesus the Younger led his own force to stop the villages around Cirta (later Constantine) to the west, from being attacked with impunity; while the commander himself, Blaesus the Elder, with picked troops, held the centre, securing strategic sites with forts and encampments, rendering the area restrictive and perilous to the enemy. Wherever they turned, the Africans found some section of the Roman troops to their front, side or rear; and many of the enemy were by these means killed or surrounded.

Next, Blaesus parcelled out his three columns into smaller detachments, headed by centurions of proven courage. Nor, when summer was over, did he withdraw his forces, as was the custom, to winter quarters in the old province (around Carthage and Tripoli), but organised his fortifications as though for imminent war, and using lightly-armed men familiar with the desert drove Tacfarinas from village to village, until after capturing the renegade's brother he ended his campaign, returning too soon however as regards the province's security, since he left behind an enemy capable of reigniting trouble.

Nevertheless, Tiberius treated it as a complete success, and honoured Blaesus with the privilege of being saluted as Emperor, by his legions, the ancient tribute to generals who after a fine campaign were so acclaimed by their joyful and impulsive troops. There were multiple generals so titled at any one time, though equal to, not above, the rest. Augustus even granted the honour to a few, and now Tiberius to Blaesus, the last of these.

BOOK III:LXXV THE PASSING OF SALONINUS AND CAPITO

In this year (AD22), two illustrious individuals died. The one was Asinius Saloninus, the grandson of Marcus Agrippa and Asinius Pollio, a half-brother to Drusus, and the intended husband of a granddaughter of Tiberius.

The other, Ateius Capito, whom I have mentioned previously, had won a pre-eminent position in public affairs through his legal expertise, yet his grandfather was a mere centurion under Sulla, his father a praetor. Augustus had hastened his consulship, so that the dignity of that office might raise him above Antistius Labeo an outstanding member of the same profession.

For the age produced these two fine ornaments of peacetime at the same moment; but while Labeo was the more celebrated among the public for his genuine independence, Capito's compliance was more welcome to his masters. The former, remaining a praetor, won respect for that injustice, the latter, attaining a consulship, incurred hatred for the success which was begrudged him.

BOOK III:LXXVI THE DEATH OF TERTULLA

Junia Tertia (Tertulla) also saw her last day, sixty-four years after the battle of Philippi, she being a half-niece to Cato the Younger, a half-sister to Marcus Brutus, and the widow of Gaius Cassius.

Her last will and testament was much discussed by the people, since in apportioning out her vast wealth, it named every noble person except Tiberius. The omission was accepted without demur, and he offered no objection to her funeral ceremony, including the eulogy from the Rostra with the other solemnities.

The portraits of twenty illustrious families were borne before her, the Manlii, the Quinctii and other equally noble names. But Brutus and Cassius shone the brightest, by the very fact that their likenesses were unseen.

End of the Annals Book III: LVI-LXXVI

BOOK IV: I-XXXIII
THE RISE OF SEJANUS, THE DEATH OF DRUSUS



'Pompey'

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BOOK IV:I THE ORIGINS OF AELIUS SEJANUS

The consulate of Gaius Asinius and Gaius Antistius seemed destined, for Tiberius, to deliver a ninth year of public order and domestic prosperity (since he counted the death of Germanicus amongst his blessings) when fate brought sudden turbulence, revealing him as a tyrant or at least a force for tyranny. The origin and cause were to be found in Aelius Sejanus, prefect of the praetorian guard, whose influence I have mentioned before: now I will speak of his beginnings, character, and the criminal actions by which he set out to gain power.

Born at Volsinii (Bolsena), his father being Scius Strabo, a Roman knight, Sejanus was in early youth a follower of Gaius Caesar, grandson of the divine Augustus, and was rumoured to have sold his virtue to that wealthy lover of excess Apicius. He soon captured Tiberius, by his various arts, such that the man who was an enigma to others proved open and unreserved with Sejanus alone, yet it was achieved not so much by his own ingenuity (since he was ultimately defeated by those very arts) than by divine anger against the Roman State, to whose corresponding misfortune he rose and fell.

Physically he could endure hard work, mentally he was audacious; hiding his role, to incriminate others; at once fawning and insolent; a figure outwardly modest, within possessed by the desire for absolute power, which sometimes prompted him to bribery and excess, but more often to an effort and vigilance no less harmful for being adapted so often to the winning of a throne.

BOOK IV:II SEJANUS BUILDS HIS FORCES

Sejanus added to the prefect's power, which was previously constrained, by gathering in one encampment the cohorts dispersed throughout

Rome, so that they might receive their orders simultaneously, and gain confidence from their numbers, strength, and visibility, while generating fear in others. He justified this by claiming that troops when dispersed became unruly; that if an emergency occurred help was more effective when they were concentrated; and that discipline could be maintained if their camp was at some distance from the city's attractions.

Their quarters complete, he gradually made his presence felt among the soldiers, meeting and greeting them by name; by the same token he himself selected the centurions and tribunes. Nor did he fail to tempt the senators with the honours and governorships available to his supporters, while Tiberius, was ready and willing to praise this 'partner in his labours' not only in conversation, but also to the Senate and people, and allowed statues of Sejanus to be honoured in the theatres, forums, and at legionary headquarters.

BOOK IV:III SEJANUS AND LIVILLA (CLAUDIA LIVIA JULIA)

Yet an Imperial House filled with Caesars, namely Tiberius himself, an adult son (Drusus the Younger), and maturing grandsons (Nero Julius, Drusus Julius, Caligula, and the Gemelli), gave his ambitions pause, since a determined attack on all of them simultaneously was risky, while guile favoured an interval between treacherous actions. He decided to proceed yet more secretly beginning with Drusus the Younger, against whom he bore fresh resentment. For Drusus, impatient of rivals, and excitable of spirit, had raised his hand against Sejanus during a chance encounter and, when he responded, had struck him in the face.

On considering every possibility, it seemed easiest to make use of Drusus' wife, Livilla (Claudia Livia Julia), Germanicus' sister, an ugly child in her youth, but later of outstanding beauty. Playing the hot lover, he drew her into adultery, and then after the first sinful encounter (a woman who

has once put aside shame will thereafter refuse nothing) he brought her to dreams of marriage, of partnership in power, and so to the murder of her husband.

Livilla, grand-niece to Augustus, daughter-in-law to Tiberius, the mother of Drusus' children, dishonoured herself, her ancestors, and her offspring, with a small-town adulterer, so exchanging for a virtuous present the expectations of an uncertain and criminal future. Eudemus, friend and physician to Livilla, was in the know, his role a pretext for frequent private meetings. Sejanus closed his doors to his wife Apicata, who had borne him three children, to allay his mistress' suspicions. But the magnitude of their deceit brought anxieties, postponements, and an occasional divergence of views.

BOOK IV:IV TIBERIUS REVIEWS THE STATE OF THE MILITARY

Meanwhile, at the start of the year, Drusus Julius, the son of Germanicus, had assumed the adult toga, the Senate repeating the compliments decreed to his brother, Nero Julius. Tiberius then spoke, praising his own son, Drusus the Younger, highly, for showing the benevolence of a father towards his brother Germanicus' family. For Drusus, hard though it is for power and harmony to exist together, was held to be equable towards, or at least not hostile to, the lads.

Then the old, oft-repeated pretence of a planned trip to the provinces was discussed. The emperor gave his excuses, the multitude of (disaffected) veterans and the (unpopular) requirement for conscripts to supplement the forces, since there was a lack of volunteers for service, and even when there were sufficient the old discipline and bravery was absent, those who enlisted of their own free will being beggars and vagrants.

He briefly covered the list of legions, and the provinces they protected, a subject which I think I should also pursue, involving the Roman forces then under arms, the allied kings, and the narrower extent of our empire at that time.

BOOK IV:V THE ALLOCATION OF ROMAN FORCES IN AD23

Italy was defended, in eastern and western waters, by the fleets based at Misenum (Miseno) and Ravenna, respectively, and the adjoining coast of Gaul by a flotilla of war-vessels, captured by Augustus (Octavian) at the battle of Actium, and transferred with a full complement of oarsmen to Forum Julii (Fréjus).

Our main strength, however, was on the Rhine, eight legions equally ready to relieve the German provinces or Gaul, while three legions held the recently-subdued (19BC) Spanish provinces.

King Juba II (of Numidia) had received Mauretania as a gift from the people of Rome. Two legions held the rest of North Africa, and the same number held Egypt. Then from Egypt's north-eastern boundary to the Euphrates, four legions covered the immense extent of those lands, while on the north-western borders the Albanian (Azerbaijan), Iberian (Georgia) and other kingdoms were protected from enemy forces by the might of Rome.

Thrace was held by Rhoemetalces II and the sons of Cotys VIII; the banks of the Danube by two legions in Pannonia and two in Moesia, with two more located in Dalmatia to the rear of these, near enough to be called upon if Italy requested emergency aid.

However, Rome had its own troops, nine praetorian and three urban cohorts, customarily recruited from Etruria and Umbria, ancient Latium, and the oldest Roman colonies. And at appropriate provincial locations there were allied warships, cavalry and auxiliary cohorts, in strength not much inferior to these: difficult to keep track of, since they were moved hither and thither, increasing or sometimes diminishing in numbers, according to the needs of the moment.

BOOK IV:VI THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN AD23

It would be appropriate, I think, to review the other offices of State, and how they were run, up to this point, since the year (AD23) saw a change for the worse in Tiberius' rule.

Firstly then, public matters, and in exceptional cases private ones, were brought before the Senate, for discussion by the leading members, any lapse into sycophancy being curtailed by the emperor himself. In bestowing honours, he bore in mind the nobility of a man's ancestors, military distinction, and outstanding civic ability, so that it was quite clear no better choice could be made. The consulate, the praetorship still made a show, and the powers even of the minor magistrates were exercised; while the laws, apart from cases of treason, were properly applied.

Next, the corn-distribution and the tax revenues along with other public income were handled by companies of Roman knights. His own affairs Tiberius entrusted to proven individuals, sometimes outside the nobility, based on their reputation; and once appointed, men held office, almost indefinitely, many growing old in such service.

The people were, indeed, troubled with the high cost of food, but none of the blame for that lay with the emperor: he spared neither effort nor expense in countering the effects of poor harvests and turbulent seas. And he ensured that the provinces were not troubled by fresh burdens, and that those which existed were imposed without greed or excessive severity by the magistrates: physical violence and the forfeiture of assets were done away with.

His holdings of land in Italy were few, his number of slaves limited, his household run by a small number of freedmen; and any arbitration required between himself and private citizens was decided in court and according to the law.

BOOK IV:VII DRUSUS DISAPPROVES OF SEJANUS

All this Tiberius still observed, not indeed with a courteous manner, but in a brusque and often terrifying fashion, until it was overturned by the death of Drusus the Younger: for it held while his son lived, since Sejanus, as yet in the infancy of his power, wished to be known for his wise counsel, and feared vengeance from one who failed to conceal his hatred and complained endlessly that with the succession assured an outsider was nevertheless called upon to assist in governing.

And how long, asked the complainant, before helper became colleague? The first steps towards power are arduous: but once made, followers and servants gather round. Now an encampment had been laid out, according to the prefect's wishes; the guards were at his command; his portrait had appeared in Pompey's Theatre; his grandsons would be of the House of the Drusi: restraint was to be prayed for beyond that, in the hope that he might rest content.

Such views Drusus proclaimed, often and to many a hearer, while even his private thoughts were betrayed by his adulterous wife.

BOOK IV:VIII DRUSUS MURDERED BY POISONING

Sejanus, therefore, judging the moment ripe, settled upon a poison that worked so slowly as to simulate a chance infection. This concoction was administered to Drusus by the eunuch Lygdus, as was only determined some eight years later. Tiberius continued to attend the Senate, moreover, throughout the illness, either confident of his son's recovery or to show his strength of mind.

He continued to do so even when Drusus was dead but not yet interred. The consuls having seated themselves on the ordinary benches as a sign of mourning, he suggested they resume their place in the seats of

honour, and as the senators continued to shed tears he suppressed their lamentation, and encouraged them with a formal speech.

Even he was not unaware, he said, that he might be criticised for appearing before the Senate with a grief so fresh: mourners were often unable to bear their own relatives' condolences, could scarcely bear the sight of day, nor were they to be condemned as lacking in fortitude: yet he himself sought greater solace in embracing affairs of state.

Saddened as he was, by Livia's extreme old age, his own declining years and his grandsons' immaturity as yet, he nevertheless asked that Germanicus' elder sons (Nero Julius and Drusus Julius) be introduced. The consuls exited, spoke reassuringly to the youths, brought them in and stood them beside Tiberius.

Clasping their arms, he said; 'Senators Elect, their father lost, I gave them into their uncle Drusus' care, and begged him, though he had children of his own, to treat them as his own flesh and blood, educate them, and shape them after himself and for posterity. Now Drusus is taken from us, I direct my request towards you, in the sight of your country and the gods: protect these great-grandchildren of Augustus, born of illustrious ancestors, guide them, perform your duty and my own. Nero Julius and Drusus Julius, these shall be your parents. Your birth determines that your fate, for good or ill, concerns the State.'

BOOK IV:IX THE FUNERAL OF DRUSUS

All this was heard amidst copious tears, then prayers for future happiness; and if he had only set a limit to his oratory, he would have filled the minds of his audience with sympathy and pride: but by reverting to his usual comments, idle and so often ridiculed, concerning the restoration of the Republic with the consuls or others taking the reins, he destroyed the credibility even of that which was true and honourable in his speech.

The same honours were decreed for Drusus the Younger as those for Germanicus, with the further additions that sycophancy normally loves to grant the second time around. The most notable feature of the funeral procession was the long line of ancestral images to be seen, from Aeneas, the origin of the Julian line, through all the Alban kings, Romulus the founder of Rome, and the Sabine nobility, to Appius Claudius Sabinus (consul 495BC, founder of the Claudian line) and the rest of the Claudian House.

BOOK IV:X A RUMOUR CONCERNING DRUSUS' DEATH

In relating the death of Drusus, I have given the version recorded by most authors, and of those the most trustworthy: but I should not omit a rumour current at the time, so strong indeed that it has not yet faded. It claims that Sejanus, after seducing Livilla to his wicked ways, attached himself also to the eunuch Lygdus, whose age and looks endeared him to his master, Drusus, and placed him among the latter's foremost servants.

Then, it is said, once the conspirators had agreed a place and time to administer the poison, he carried his audacity to the point of ascribing the plot to Drusus, warning Tiberius privately that Drusus aimed to poison him, and to avoid the first cup offered when dining with his son.

Deceived by the lie, the tales goes, the ageing emperor, on seating himself at the banquet, took the drink and passed it to Drusus. He, as a young man would, drank deep, unknowingly creating the suspicion that, from fear and shame, he had condemned himself to a fate intended for his father.

BOOK IV:XI TACITUS REJECTS THE ORAL TRADITION

The commonly repeated tale above, supported by no firm evidence, may be swiftly refuted. What man of even moderate prudence, let alone Tiberius with his vast experience, would inflict death on his son without a hearing, and that by his own hand, while denying all chance of repentance? Why not torture the servant who delivered the poisoned chalice, search out his prompter, and employ, in short, the customary delay and reluctance Tiberius showed even to strangers, in the case of an only son, never before charged with any crime?

Yet since Sejanus was held to be the source of all evil, and Tiberius held him in extreme affection while others hated them both, the monstrous and fantastic was readily believed, rumour being never so wild as at the death of princes. And then the stages in the crime had been betrayed by Apicata, Sejanus' wife, and revealed by Eudemus and Lygdus under torture. Nor was a single historian found so hostile as to charge Tiberius with the crime, though all else was being uncovered and exaggerated.

My own motive for recording and refuting this tale it in order to reject, with this one striking example, the unreliability of oral tradition, and to ask those, into whose hands my work might fall, not to prefer, in their eagerness, some widely-held yet incredible story to truth uncorrupted by myth.

BOOK IV:XII SEJANUS WORKS TO DISCREDIT AGRIPPINA

Nevertheless, while Tiberius praised his son from the Rostra, the Senate and people of Rome assumed the dress and accent of mourning more as a matter of pretence than out of willingness, and secretly rejoiced at the revival of the House of Germanicus. This growing support and Agrippina's barely-hidden maternal hopes hastened its downfall.

For when Sejanus found that no vengeance was sought on those who had brought about Drusus' death, that it was indeed unlamented by the public, he grew more daring in wickedness, and succeeding in his first venture, now debated with himself as to the best means of destroying Germanicus' sons, whose succession seemed certain.

I was impossible to use poison against the three of them, since they were more than well protected and Agrippina's integrity was unassailable. He therefore attacked her for her insolence, and by playing on Livia's former animosity towards her, and Livilla's recent guilty involvement, induced them to denounce her to Tiberius, as a woman over-proud of her offspring, high in public favour, and covetous of the crown.

Also, Livilla worked to further the estrangement between an old woman, naturally anxious to retain her power, and her grandson's widow, employing covert spies, among whom was Julius Postumus, one of her grandmother's intimates due to his adulterous connection with Mutilia Prisca, and therefore suited to her scheming, since Prisca had great influence over Livia's thoughts. Agrippina's closest friends too were seduced by scurrilous gossip into provoking her excitable spirit.

BOOK IV:XIII TIBERIUS CONDUCTS STATE BUSINESS

Meanwhile, Tiberius, without pause in his attention to public affairs, found solace in his labours, dealing with legal cases at home, and petitions from the provinces. At his prompting, the Senate decreed that the towns of Cibyra (Golhisar, Turkey) in Asia Minor and Aegium (Aegio, Greece) in Achaia, damaged by earthquake, would be excused paying tribute for a period of three years.

Also, Vibius Serenus, the proconsul of lower Spain (Hispania Ulterior), was convicted of State violence and was deported, due to his aggressive nature, to the Aegean island of Amorgus (Amorgos, Greece). Carsidius Sacerdos, accused of aiding an enemy, Tacfarinas, by supplying grain, was acquitted, as was Gaius Gracchus on a similar charge.

Gaius Gracchus, when an infant, had been taken to share his father Sempronius' exile on the island of Cercina (Kerkennah, off Tunisia). There, as an adult, among exiles and ignorant of the liberal arts, he maintained a precarious living by trading with North Africa and Sicily: yet had still failed to evade the hazard of a great name. And if Aelius Lamia and Lucius Apronius, who had governed North Africa, had not proclaimed his innocence, he would have been dragged down by the notoriety of his unfortunate house and his father's disaster.

BOOK IV:XIV RELIGIOUS ASYLUM, AND EXPULSION OF THE ACTORS FROM ITALY

This year (AD23) also saw delegations from two Greek communities seeking confirmation of their ancient rights of asylum, the Samians in the Temple of Juno, the Coans in that of Aesculapius.

The Samian case depended on a decree of the Amphictyonic Council, the primary court of justice for all matters in the days when the Greeks founded colonies in Asia Minor and ruled the coast. The Coans had no less ancient a claim, the place gaining additional merit for having sheltered Roman citizens in the temple of Aesculapius, at a time (88BC) when they were being slaughtered throughout the islands and townships of Asia Minor, at the instigation of King Mithridates.

Then, after many and varied complaints in vain from the praetors, Tiberius, eventually raised the question of the licence indulged in by actors: they often incited sedition in public, and debauchery in private: the old Oscan farces, light-hearted amusements for the masses, had reached such heights of virulence and indecency, he claimed, that the authority of the Senate was needed to repress them. The actors were consequently expelled from Italy.

BOOK IV:XV THE TRIAL OF LUCILIUS CAPITO

This same year (AD23) also brought the emperor further grief, in the death of one (Tiberius Claudius Gemellus) of the twin sons of Drusus, and no less in the death of his friend Lucilius Longus, his comrade in both sad and joyful times, and the only member of the Senate to have shared his retirement to Rhodes (6BC-AD2). Hence a censor's funeral, despite his being of modest birth, and his statue in the Forum of Augustus, erected at public expense, and decreed by the senators by whom all matters were still discussed.

So much so that Lucilius Capito, the procurator of Asia Minor, was obliged to plead cause before them, having been accused by the province, the emperor strongly asserting that Capito held no authority except over the slaves and revenues of the imperial estates, and that if he had usurped the governor's powers and employed military force, he had flouted Tiberius' orders: thus the provincials must be heard.

The defendant was therefore condemned according to the evidence presented. For this judgement, and the punishment accorded Gaius Silanus the previous year, the cities of Asia Minor decreed a temple to Tiberius, Livia, and the Senate. Permission to build was granted, and Nero Julius expressed thanks in the matter, to the senators and his grandfather Tiberius, a pleasing moment for his listeners, whose memory of Germanicus was fresh enough for them to imagine it was his features they saw, his voice they heard. And the youth indeed possessed a modesty and beauty worthy of a prince all the dearer for the danger in which he stood, given Sejanus' notorious hatred of him.

BOOK IV:XVI THE APPOINTMENT OF THE FLAMEN OF JUPITER (FLAMEN DIALIS)

At about the same time, Tiberius raised the matter of the appointment of the Flamen Dialis to succeed the late Servius Maluginensis, while also proposing new legislation, since, by an outdated custom, three patricians, born of parents wedded in the most solemn manner (*confarreatio*) had to be jointly nominated, of whom only one was selected, yet there were not, as there once had been, sufficient candidates now that the old neglected marriage ritual was adhered to by very few families.

He referred to several reasons for this, the principal one being the disinterest in it shown by both men and women, adding that there was a deliberate avoidance of the difficulties of the ceremony itself, and a parental dislike of the fact that the man granted the priesthood and the woman passing into a flamen's legal control were no longer under paternal jurisdiction.

Therefore, a senate decree or special legislation was required, in the same manner that Augustus had modified several aspects of hoary antiquity to suit present usage. It was then decided, after considering issues of religion, to make no changes in the stipulations for selection to the flamenship: however, a law was instituted, by which the wife of the Flamen Dialis though subject to her husband's authority in sacred matters should otherwise be entitled to the same rights as other women.

Maluginensis' son was duly elected in place of his father. And to enhance the dignity of the offices of religion, and encourage the readier performance of the rituals, twenty thousand gold pieces were voted to the Vestal Virgin Cornelia, who took the place of Scantia, while Livia, on visiting the theatre, was to occupy a place among the Vestals.

BOOK IV:XVII TENSIONS REGARDING THE POSSIBLE SUCCESSION

In the consulate of Cornelius Cethegus and Visellius Varro (AD24) the pontiffs and, following their example, the priests, while offering prayers for the health of the emperor, also commended Nero Julius and Drusus Julius to the same gods, not so much out of love for the princes as from sycophancy, the absence or excess of which is equally dangerous in a corrupt society. For Tiberius, never reconciled to the house of Germanicus, now found it insufferable that a pair of youths should command the respect due to his years.

Summoning the pontiffs, he enquired whether this addition was due to Agrippina's entreaties, or her threats. The pontiffs, despite their refusal to acknowledge either, were only mildly admonished, since most of them were either his relatives or leading citizens. However, he gave warning in the Senate that no one should prompt arrogance in impressionable young minds with such premature honours. Indeed, Sejanus was urging him to action, claiming that the state was divided as in a civil war: there were those who declared themselves of Agrippina's party, and if nothing was done, there would be others; nor was there an alternative to the growing discord but the destruction of one or more of the most energetic of them.

BOOK IV:XVIII SEJANUS ATTACKS GAIUS SILIUS AND TITIUS SABINUS

For this reason, he launched attacks on Gaius Silius and Titius Sabinus. Their previous friendship with Germanicus was fatal to both, and because Silius had commanded a major army for seven years, earned his triumphal insignia (AD15) in Germany, and proved victorious in the war with Sacrovir (AD21), the greater the impact of his fall and the wider the resulting anxiety would spread among others.

Many thought that Silius' indiscretions had added to his offence, he having boasted immodestly that his troops had maintained discipline while others rushed to mutiny, and that Tiberius could not have held the throne if his legions too had shown a desire for revolution. Tiberius considered his position threatened by such statements, and unequal to the claim made upon it. For services are welcome inasmuch as it seems possible to repay them: go far beyond that and hatred not gratitude is the return.

BOOK IV:XIX SILIUS AND HIS WIFE SOSIA GALLA CONDEMNED

Silius was married to Sosia Galla, who was disliked by Tiberius because of her affection for Agrippina. It was decided they should both be accused and an attack on Sabinus delayed. Varro the consul was let loose, who on the pretext of continuing his father's feud gratified Sejanus' ill-intent though dishonouring himself.

Silius asked for a brief adjournment until his accuser relinquished the consulate, but Tiberius refused, saying that it was quite in order for magistrates to impeach private citizens: nor should there be any constraint on the consul's rights, on whose vigilance they depended 'to keep the republic from harm'. It was typical of Tiberius to cloak his new-found wickedness with a phrase of our ancestors.

Thus, with great solemnity, as if Silius were being dealt with lawfully, or Varro was a consul of that thing, a republic, the Senate was convened. With the defendant silent, or in offering a defence not hiding whose resentment it was that oppressed him, the charges were presented: his long-hidden complicity in Sacrovir's rebellion, a victory stained by avarice, and his wife's involvement. There was little doubt that the extortion charges held, but the whole proceeding was pursued under the treason laws, and Silius pre-empted the guilty verdict by suicide.

BOOK IV:XX SOSIA EXILED

However, his estate was not exempted. Though nothing was refunded to the provincial tax-payers, none of whom lodged a claim, the Augustan bounty paid was recovered, and the demands of the treasury itemised. This was the first time Tiberius showed himself so diligent in the matter of another's property.

Sosia was driven into exile at the instigation of Asinius Gallus, who suggested that half the estate was confiscated, while the rest was given to her children. Opposing this, Manius Lepidus proposed that one quarter be assigned to the prosecutors, according to law, the rest to go to the children.

This Lepidus, I understand, was, for his times, a man of gravity and wisdom: since he often modified the sycophantic harshness of others for the better. Nor did he lack discretion, since he still retained influence and favour with Tiberius to an equal degree.

From this, I am driven to wonder whether the inclinations and antipathies of princes towards each of us are determined by destiny and our situation at birth, or whether something is left to our own will, and that between pure defiance and vile servility we might find a path free of danger or obsequiousness.

But Messalinus Cotta, with no less distinguished a lineage, yet a very different character, proposed a senate decree proclaiming that a magistrate even though innocent himself and knowing nothing of his wife's guilt should be punished for her wrongdoings in the provinces as if they were his own.

BOOK IV:XXI CHARGES AGAINST CALPURNIUS PISO AND CASSIUS SEVERUS

The next charge involved Calpurnius Piso, a man of noble birth and courageous, since, as I have said, he announced in the Senate his retirement from Rome to avoid the gangs of informers and, scorning Livia's power, had dared to drag Urgulania before the courts, having her summoned from the imperial palace.

At the time, Tiberius treated the matter with civility: but, brooding over his anger, while the initial force of the offence lessened, the memory remained strong. Quintus Granius charged Piso with words spoken in private against the emperor's majesty, adding that Piso kept poisonous substances in his house, and had worn a sword on entering the Senate House. The last charge was dropped as being too outrageous to be true; he was arraigned for prosecution on the other two, which were greatly elaborated, and was spared the trial by opting for suicide.

There was the matter also of the exiled Cassius Severus, of base origins and dubious life but a powerful orator, who had made so many enemies he was relegated to Crete by verdict of the Senate. There too, by acting in a similar manner, he stirred so many hatreds past and present he was stripped of his possessions, 'denied fire and water', and consigned to the rocky island of Seriphos (Serifos, Greece), there to grow old.

BOOK IV:XXII PLAUTIUS SILVANUS MURDERS HIS WIFE APRONIA

Around this time, Plautius Silvanus the praetor, for reasons unknown, threw his wife from a window, and when brought by his father-in-law, Lucius Apronius, before Tiberius gave a confused reply to the effect that he had been soundly asleep and had no knowledge of what had occurred, but thought that his wife must have committed suicide.

Tiberius, without hesitation, went to the house and viewed the bedroom, in which evidence of force employed and resistance made was visible. He referred the matter to the Senate but with a trial date appointed, Urgulania, Silvanus' grandmother, sent her grandson a dagger, which was taken as a hint from the emperor, given Urgulania's friendship with Livia.

The defendant, after a vain attempt with the weapon, had his arteries opened. His first wife, Numantina, who had been charged with driving her ex-husband insane by the use of drugs and sorcery, was shortly afterwards judged innocent.

BOOK IV:XXIII THE SITUATION IN NORTH AFRICA

This year (AD24) finally freed the Roman people from the lengthy war with the Numidian Tacfarinas. For the generals leading the earlier campaigns against him, once they thought their actions sufficient for the grant of triumphal insignia, had ceased to harry the enemy. There were now three laurelled statues (of Camillus, Apronius and Blaesus) adorning the city, yet Tacfarinas was still ravaging North Africa, reinforced by the Moors, who during the neglectful youth of Juba II's son Ptolemy exchanged warfare for subservience to the rule of royal freedmen.

The king of the Garamantes acted as partner in Tacfarinas' predations and receiver of his plunder, not deploying an army but sending lightly armed warriors, whose numbers were magnified by distance; and every indigent man, and wild character, rushed to join him, the more readily since Tiberius, following Blaesus' success, had ordered the Ninth legion transferred elsewhere as though hostilities in North Africa had ended, nor had Publius Dolabella dared to retain it, he being proconsul for the year but more fearful of the emperor's orders than the fortunes of war.

BOOK IV:XXIV DOLABELLA MOVES AGAINST TACFARINAS

So, Tacfarinas, after spreading the rumour that other tribes aimed to destroy Roman power and for that reason the Romans were withdrawing gradually from North Africa, while those who remained might be isolated if all who preferred liberty to servitude opposed them, added to his strength, set up camp, and besieged the town of Thubuscum (Tubusuptu, Algeria).

But Dolabella, gathering all available forces, because of the Numidians' fear of the name of Rome and inability to withstand an infantry line, raised the siege at his first advance and fortified the exposed points. At the same time, he beheaded those Musulamian chieftains who attempted to desert.

Then, because several campaigns against Tacfarinas had shown that a nomadic enemy could not be pursued by heavily-armed troops in a single body, he summoned King Ptolemy and his people, and organised four columns, commanded by legates or tribunes, and bands of raiders with select Moorish leaders, while he himself acted as strategic advisor to them all.

BOOK IV:XXV THE DEATH OF TACFARINAS

Shortly afterwards, news came that the Numidians had pitched camp and taken up position near a half-ruined fort, named Auzea (Sour El-Ghozlane, Algeria) which they had at some time previously set alight. They were confident of their position since it was surrounded by large groves of trees.

The light-infantry and cavalry, ignorant of their destination, were sent forward in racing columns. As dawn broke, with fierce shouts and a blast of trumpets they came upon the half-wakened barbarians while the Numidian horse were still tethered or roaming the scattered pastures. The Roman infantry were in close order, the cavalry massed, and every provision made for battle, while the enemy, by contrast, taken by surprise, unarmed, in disarray, and lacking a response, were dragged like cattle to the slaughter, taken and killed.

The Roman soldiers, filled with the memory of past efforts to bring to long-sought battle this elusive foe, wrought, every man of them, a bloody revenge. The word was spread to the maniples to seek out Tacfarinas, well-known from so many engagements: there being no rest from war till that leader was dead.

Tacfarinas, with his retinue slain around him, his son already in chains, and the Romans flooding in from all sides, ran upon the spears, escaping captivity by a death which did not go unavenged, and this brought an end to hostilities.

BOOK IV:XXVI DOLABELLA DENIED TRIUMPHAL INSIGNIA

Tiberius refused the triumphal honours Dolabella sought, as a gesture towards Sejanus lest praise for the latter's uncle, Blaesus, faded. But that did nothing to embellish Blaesus, and the denial of honours added to Dolabella's glory: since with a smaller army he had won a reputation by taking important prisoners, killing their leader, and ending the war.

He was attended also, a rare sight in Rome, by a Garamantian delegation, whom that people, stunned by the death of Tacfarinas, and conscious of their errors, had sent to offer redress to the Roman people.

As the campaign had proven Ptolemy to be an ally, a traditional style of honour was revived, whereby a senator was sent to present the ancient Senate gifts to him, an ivory sceptre and the embroidered toga, and greet him as king, ally, and friend.

BOOK IV:XXVII A SLAVE REVOLT

That same summer, an incipient slave rebellion throughout Italy was by chance aborted. The author of the revolt was Titus Curtisius, once a soldier in a praetorian cohort, Initially at clandestine meetings in Brundisium (Brindisi) and the surrounding towns, and then by openly displayed manifestos, he had called on the fierce rural slaves from the outlying pastures to seek their freedom, when a gift of providence, three biremes destined for the defence of cargo vessels, arrived.

Cutius Lupus, the quaestor, was also in the area, who by ancient custom had been assigned the trackways: he then commandeered a group of marines and vigorously uprooted the conspiracy at its inception. Staius, the tribune sent hurriedly by Tiberius, with a sizeable force, dragged the leader and his more audacious followers to Rome, where there was already trepidation at the rapidly growing multitude of slaves while the free-born populace dwindled by the day.

BOOK IV:XXVIII A SON ACCUSES HIS FATHER

In that same consulate, a dreadful example of wretchedness and savagery arose, when a son as prosecutor, father as defendant, appeared before the Senate, both bearing the name of Vibius Serenus (the father having been proconsul of Hispania Ulterior). The latter, dragged out of exile, filthy and squalid and now in chains, faced condemnation by his son, a most

elegant youth, with a ready countenance, who spoke of treasonous plots against the emperor, and emissaries of war sent into Gaul, adding that funds had been provided by the ex-praetor, Caecilius Cornutus, who weighed down by anxiety, and with this accusation implying ruin, hastened to commit suicide.

But the defendant, his spirit unbroken, facing his son, shook his chains and replied by summoning the gods in vengeance, crying out that as for himself they might return him to his exile, where he might live far from such evil manners, and as for his son let retribution find him when it would. He insisted that Cornutus had been innocent, made fearful without cause; and that would be easily evidenced if the others were named: for he had certainly not contemplated rebellion and the murder of an emperor with only a single ally.

BOOK IV:XXIX TIBERIUS RELENTLESS

The son then named Gnaeus Lentulus and Seius Tubero, to the emperor's great embarrassment, since two prominent citizens, close friends to himself, Lentulus far gone in years, Tubero in failing health, were charged with armed affray and troubling the peace of the State. However, these two were promptly exonerated.

In the case of the father, his slaves were tortured, which proved unhelpful to the son, who tormented by his conscience and fearful of mass hostility that threatened him with prison, the Tarpeian Rock, or the parricide's fate (of being thrown into the sea sewn in a sack with a dog, cockerel, viper and ape) fled the city.

But, dragged back from Ravenna, he was forced to continue the prosecution, Tiberius not concealing his former hatred of the exile; for Serenus, after the sentencing of Libo, had written to the emperor complaining that his efforts had gone unrewarded, ending on too defiant a note to strike safely with a proud and easily offended recipient.

Tiberius now returned to that matter, eight years later, invoking various offences during the intervening period, even though the firmness of the slaves under torture had seemingly thwarted him.

BOOK IV:XXX TIBERIUS SUPPORTS THE INFORMERS

When views were expressed that Serenus should be punished according to ancient custom, Tiberius interceded to restrain the hatred expressed. He also rejected Asinius Gallus' proposal of confinement on the island of Gyarus (Gyaros, Greece) or Donusa (Donoussa, Greece), reminding him that both islands lacked fresh water, and that if you grant life you must also grant the means to live. The elder Serenus was therefore returned to Amorgus.

And because Cornutus had died by his own hand, it was proposed that the accuser's reward should be forfeited if a defendant charged with treason took his own life before the completion of his trial. They were proceeding to a vote, when Tiberius, with greater asperity and frankness than was his custom, complained on behalf of the accusers, that the law would be rendered null and void, the State on the verge of destruction: it were better to abolish the rule of justice than remove its guardians.

So, the informers, a tribe of men invented for the nation's ruin, never sufficiently restrained even by penalties, were now lured on by rewards.



'Emperor Tiberius'
Joos Gietleughen (Dutch, 1559)
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK IV:XXXI THE CONTRASTING SIDES OF TIBERIUS' NATURE

This pattern of gloomy events was interrupted by a relatively optimistic one, when Tiberius showed mercy to Gaius Cominius, a Roman knight convicted of a poetical satire on himself, yielding to the pleas of Cominius' brother, who was a senator.

This action of Tiberius aroused all the more wonder that seeing the kinder road, and that his reputation was improved by showing clemency, he preferred the harsher one. Nor did he err through thoughtlessness; nor is it anything but obvious when an emperor's actions are praised with sincerity as opposed to a feigned enthusiasm. And indeed, he to whom oratory was alien and speech seemingly a struggle was all the more prompt and eloquent when he was merciful.

However, when Publius Suillius Rufus, formerly Germanicus' quaestor, was sentenced to banishment from Italy charged with corrupt legal practices, Tiberius moved, and with such vigour that he even swore on oath that the interests of the State required it, that Suillius be deported to an island. Criticised severely at the time, his decision accrued praise on Suillius' later return, when the man was seen by the following generation, all-powerful and venal under Claudius, exploiting that emperor's friendship, and never for the better.

The same mode of exile was to be inflicted on Firmius Catus, a member of the Senate, for falsely accusing his sister of the crime of treason. It was Catus, as I have said previously, who drew Libo into a trap and then ruined him with the evidence. Tiberius, remembering that service, though offering other reasons, saved Catus from exile, though not objecting to his expulsion from the Senate.

**BOOK IV:XXXII NOT ALL HISTORY IS FILLED
WITH GLORIOUS EVENTS**

Many of the events I have related and have yet to relate may perhaps seem trivial and not worth the mention; I am not unaware of that, but my annals in no way compare with the works of those authors who recorded the ancient history of the Roman people. They told, and freely digressed regarding, immense wars, the storming of cities, the downfall and capture of kings, or if they turned to matters at home, conflicts between consul and tribune, land laws and corn laws, the quarrels between the masses and the aristocracy.

Mine is a narrow and inglorious labour; for what I speak of was an age of unbroken or barely-troubled peace, dull events in Rome, and an emperor indifferent to the expansion of empire. Yet it may not be without benefit to investigate things, slight at first sight, which often set in motion great happenings.

BOOK IV:XXXIII MODERN AND ANCIENT TIMES

For every nation or city-state is governed by the people, the aristocracy, or certain individuals: a government chosen from among these yet united is of a form easier to praise than bring about, or if brought into being it can scarcely be long-lasting.

Thus, when formerly the masses proved strong, or alternatively the nobility held power, it was necessary to know, on the one hand, the nature of the populace and how to control its influence, while on the other hand, those who knew by heart the inmost character of the senate and the aristocracy were thought the shrewdest and wisest of their age. So also, regarding this changed situation, where the Roman State is nothing other than one-man rule, it may serve a purpose to collect and relate these things.

For few discern right from wrong, the expedient from the ruinous; the majority learn from others' experience.

Yet while such matters bring profit, they are poor in entertainment. For the location of peoples, the vicissitudes of battle, leaders dying gloriously, such things hold the reader and excite the mind: while I tell of brutal instructions, continual accusation, treacherous friendships, innocence destroyed, of many causes leading to the same ends, everywhere a sameness and satiety of things.

And then, ancient authors have few detractors, and it is no matter whether you praise with more enthusiasm Roman or Carthaginian arms: yet many descendants of those subjected to punishment or disgrace in Tiberius' reign, are still alive. And even if the families themselves are extinct, you will nevertheless find those who, from likeness of character, consider the wrongdoings of others a reproach aimed at themselves. Even glory and virtue create enemies, in revealing their opposites by too sharp a contrast. But I will return to my labours.

End of the Annals Book IV: I-XXXIII

BOOK IV: XXXIV-LVIII
TIBERIUS RETIRES FROM ROME



'Nemesis in the Vatican'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p778, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK IV:XXXIV THE PROSECUTION OF CREMUTIUS CORDUS

With the consulate of Cornelius Cossus and Asinius Agrippa (AD25) came the trial of Cremutius Cordus on the new and previously unheard of charge of publishing a history that praised Marcus Brutus and described Gaius Cassius as the last of the Romans.

The accusers were Satrius Secundus and Pinarius Natta, followers of Sejanus. That fact was ruinous to the defendant, that and Tiberius' frowning face as he heard the defence, which Cremutius, resolving to end his own life, began in this manner: 'Senators Elect, my words have been condemned: I being innocent indeed as regards my actions. Yet they do not even refer to the emperor or his father, whom the treason laws address.

It is said that I praised Brutus and Cassius, whose deeds have been recorded by many, and of whom none have made mention without granting them honour. Titus Livy, with the highest reputation for truthfulness and eloquence, heaped such praise on Gnaeus Pompey that Augustus called him "the Pompeian"; yet it did not impair their friendship. Not once does he term Metellus Scipio or Lucius Afranius or that same Cassius or Brutus, brigands and parricides, the language now used, but time and again treats them as distinguished and heroic.

The writings of Asinius Pollio record their illustrious history; Messalla Corvinus praises his commander, Cassius: and both Pollio and Corvinus lived lives of wealth and honour. When Marcus Cicero praised Cato to the skies in his book, what did Caesar do but reply with a written oration, as though before the judges? Antony's letters, Brutus' speeches contain accusations, against Augustus, false though they may be yet bitter in the extreme; the poems of Marcus Furius Bibaculus, and of Catullus, which we read are crammed full of insults to the Caesars: yet the deified Julius, the divine Augustus themselves accepted it, and left them alone, whether due more to their restraint or their wisdom it is hard to say.

For things ignored are soon forgotten: if they rouse anger, that is seen as recognition.’

BOOK IV:XXXV CREMUTIUS COMMITS SUICIDE

‘I omit the Greeks, among whom not only liberty but even licence went unpunished; or if a man responded he took revenge for words with words. But what was absolutely free and without censure, was to write of those whom death had placed beyond influence or hatred, and publish those writings.

Are Brutus and Cassius still armed and in the field at Philippi? Am I inciting the people by oratory to indulge in civil war? Or is it not the fact that seventy years after their removal from the scene, just as they are known by their statues which even the victor himself did not obliterate, so a partial memory of them survives in our writings? Posterity pays every man his due; nor if my conviction follows, will there be lacking those who may remember, not only Brutus and Cassius, but even I myself.’

Cremutius then exited the Senate House, and afterwards committed suicide by refusing sustenance. The Senate ordered the aediles to burn his writings, yet they survived, being hidden and re-published. Which grants us all the more freedom to deride the foolishness of those who think the present has the power to destroy the story of itself for succeeding ages. On the contrary, the authority of the talented grows by persecution, nor have foreign kings, or those who employ a like savagery, done more than bring disgrace to themselves and glory to the former.

BOOK IV:XXXVI PROSECUTIONS GALORE

Moreover, the year saw such a rash of prosecutions, that during the Latin Festival when Drusus Julius, as urban prefect, mounted the tribunal to inaugurate his period of office, he was even approached by Calpurnius Salvianus with a suit against Sextus Marius: which elicited a public rebuke from Tiberius and led to Salvianus' exile.

Also the community of Cyzicus (Erdek, Turkey) was charged with neglecting the rites of the divine Augustus, added to which was the crime of showing violence to Roman citizens. As a result they lost the freedom they had earned in the war with Mithidrates, when the town was besieged (74BC) and they repulsed the king as much by their own steadfastness as the protection afforded them by Lucullus.

Yet Fonteius Capito, who had held the proconsulship of Asia Minor, was acquitted, it being shown that the case against him was a fiction concocted by Vibius Serenus. Not that it harmed Serenus, however, who was rendered all the more secure by public odium, since the informer ever ready to strike was treated as if sacrosanct: it was the insignificant and lightly-defended who were burdened with punishment.

BOOK IV:XXXVII PROPOSAL TO ERECT A SHRINE TO TIBERIUS AND LIVIA

At about this time, south-west Spain (Hispania ulterior) sent a mission to the Senate asking to follow the example of Asia Minor by erecting a shrine to Tiberius and his mother Livia.

On this occasion, Tiberius, studiously disdainful of honours for himself, and convinced that an answer was needed to the gossip charging him with descent into vanity, began his speech in the following manner:

‘Senators Elect, I know that many see it as inconsistent in myself to refuse, given that I offered no opposition recently to the same request from the cities of Asia Minor. Therefore, I shall give a defence of my previous silence, and my guideline for the future.

Since the divine Augustus did not forbid the erection of a temple at Pergamum (29BC), dedicated to himself and the city of Rome, and since I myself treat his every word and action as having the force of law, I followed that example he had previously approved, because to the worship of myself was attached reverence for the Senate.

However though accepting the honour once might be excused, to be venerated in the image of a deity throughout all the provinces would show vanity, and pride. Also the honour shown to Augustus will soon evaporate, if it is debased by indiscriminate exhibitions of flattery.’

BOOK IV:XXXVIII TIBERIUS’ REJECTION OF DIVINE HONOURS

‘**F**or myself, Senators Elect, I call on you to witness, and I wish posterity to remember, that I am merely mortal, and perform a human role, and consider it sufficient to fill the highest office; for they will do justice enough and more to my memory, if they believe me worthy of my lineage, careful of your interests, steadfast in dangerous times, and unafraid of showing displeasure if it is for the public good.

Those are my temples, in your thoughts, those are my truest and most enduring likenesses. For the ones made of stone, should posterity’s judgement prove adverse, are scorned as mere sepulchres. Therefore I pray to our allies, citizens and the gods themselves: to the gods that they grant me, till the end of my life, a quiet mind and wise in the laws, human and divine; to humankind that, whenever I vanish, praise and kindly recollections may attach themselves to my actions and the tales associated with my name.’

And from then onward, even in private conversation, he persisted in a harsh rejection of such religious honours, which rejection some interpreted as modesty, many as diffidence, and a few as degeneracy of spirit. They argued that the most virtuous desire the highest place: thus Hercules and Dionysus among the Greeks, Quirinus among ourselves, were added to the divine pantheon. Better to be an Augustus, and cherish hopes; since all else comes instantly to princes, but for one thing they must work insatiably, to live favourably in memory; while to scorn fame is to disparage virtue.

BOOK IV:XXXIX SEJANUS SEEKS MARRIAGE WITH LIVILLA

Meanwhile Sejanus, made foolish by his great good fortune, and roused moreover by passion for a woman, Livilla now demanding the promised marriage, composed a petition to Tiberius, it being then the practice to address him in writing whenever he was at Rome. This was the form the petition took: owing to the benevolence of the emperor's father Augustus, and then so many kind opinions expressed by Tiberius, he, Sejanus, had become accustomed to submitting his hopes and prayers as readily to the emperor's ears as to those of the gods. He had never asked for the splendours of office: he would rather have done sentry-duty and laboured like the humblest soldier, to ensure the emperor's safety.

And yet what a supreme height he had achieved, to be thought worthy of an alliance with a Caesar: this had awakened his hopes. And since he had heard that Augustus, when disposing of his daughter Julia, had considered even Roman knights to be of some account, then if a husband was sought for Livilla, Tiberius might bear in mind a friend whose only benefit from such a union would be the glory.

He did not seek to lay aside the duties imposed on him: it was enough, in his estimation, if his household was more strongly equipped to counter Agrippina's unjustified displeasure, and that for his children's sake; for, as

to himself, whatever the term of years he might fulfil under such a prince, that would be life enough for him and more.

BOOK IV:XL TIBERIUS TREATS THE REQUEST WITH COOLNESS

To this Tiberius replied praising Sejanus' devotion, touched lightly on his own benevolence towards him, while seeking time to reflect fully on the matter, adding: other men's plans were made in regard to themselves, embodying whatever they thought was to their advantage; the task of emperors was otherwise, since their principal actions must take account of public opinion.

Therefore, he would not have recourse to the answer that readily suggested itself, that Livilla was free to choose whether to marry again after Drusus, or be content with her own house; and that to consult her mother and grandmother was more proper. He would respond more straightforwardly, firstly with regard to Agrippina's hostility, which would blaze far more fiercely if Livilla's marriage were to divide the House of Caesar into two warring parties. Even as things were, there were eruptions of female jealousy, and the discord upset his grandchildren: what then if such a marriage were to increase the feuding? 'Indeed, Sejanus,' he continued, 'you are deluded if you think you can hold your present rank and that Livilla, who was wed to Gaius Caesar and then Drusus, will accept growing old beside a Roman knight.'

Even if I agreed, do you believe it will be acceptable to those who witnessed her brother, her father, and our ancestors holding the highest office? You may wish, yourself, to remain in your current position: but those magistrates and notables who force themselves on you, without your wish, to consult you on all and sundry, do not hide their view that you long ago surpassed the heights of the equestrian order and the manner of friendship accepted by my father, and through envy of you they censure myself also.

Indeed, Augustus did consider bestowing his daughter on a Roman knight. Astounding, by Hercules, that distracted by every care, and given the immense distinction that would accrue to whomever he raise above his peers by so great an alliance, he yet still spoke of Gaius Proculeius and a few other such men, noted for the tranquility of their existence, and not at all involved in State affairs. But if we are to be influenced by Augustus' consideration of that option, how much more relevant it seems that he that he later chose Marcus Agrippa for her, and then myself!

I have avoided replying obscurely, for friendship's sake: moreover I shall not thwart your or Livilla's intentions. I will resist speaking, for the present, of matters I have in mind, in which you and I might act together: so much however I will say, that no rank is too exalted for you to be unworthy of it, given your virtues and your devotion to myself, and at the appropriate time, either in the Senate or by public address, I shall not remain silent.'

BOOK IV: XLI SEJANUS SEEKS TO HAVE TIBERIUS RETIRE FROM ROME

In reply, Sejanus, now fearful not for the marriage but deeper issues, deprecated suspicions unspoken, the chatter of the crowd, and the attacks of the envious. Yet lest he weakened his power by shutting out those who flocked to his door, or by receiving them hand his detractors an advantage, he turned to this idea, to persuade Tiberius to spend his time in some pleasant location far from Rome.

For he foresaw many benefits: access would be his to command, and letters he could largely control since they were carried by his soldiers; Tiberius, already in his declining years and weakened by solitude, would soon be all the more ready to hand over the offices of empire, while his own unpopularity would lessen, with the end of his crowded receptions, and the reality of his power would grow by ceasing such inanities.

Gradually, therefore, he began to decry the burden of the city, its fretful populace, the streams of petitioners, while extolling the virtues of peace and solitude, free of tedium and conflict, where one's greatest attention could be directed to the highest things.

BOOK IV:XLII THE TRIAL OF VOTIENUS MONTANUS

And by chance, the trial at that time of Votienus Montanus, who was a man both talented and popular, forced Tiberius, who was wavering, to recognise that he must avoid the Senate House, and the host of voices openly assailing him, often with bitter truths. For during his indictment of Votienus, for speaking insultingly of Tiberius, his witness, Aemilius a military man, was so anxious to provide proof that he repeated the words in full and though surrounded by cries of protest struggled on manfully.

Tiberius heard these reproaches, whereby he was attacked in private, and such was the shock that he proclaimed he would refute them immediately or during the hearing, his disturbance of mind only being calmed by his friends' entreaties and a universal show of adulation. Votienus himself suffered the penalty for treason.

Tiberius having been accused of inclemency towards defendants now showed all the more tenacity in his sentencing. Aquilia, indicted for adultery with Varius Ligus, he punished by exile, even though Lentulus Gaetulicus, the consul designate, had only found her guilty under the Julian Law; and he removed Apidius Merula from the list of senators, because he had not sworn his allegiance to the acts of the divine Augustus.

BOOK IV:XLIII VARIOUS PETITIONS

Next, an audience was granted to deputations from Lacedaemon and Messene, regarding their rights over the shrine of Diana Limnatis (Volymnos, near Artemisia, Greece), which the Lacedaemonians asserted as having been consecrated by their ancestors on their own land, according to historical record and poetic song, but had been taken from them by force of arms, during their war with Philip of Macedon, and later returned to them by a decision of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

The Messenians, in reply, referred back to the old division of the Peloponnese between the descendants of Hercules, saying that the Denthaliatæ district (on the western slopes of Taygetus) on which the sanctuary stood, had been yielded to their king; and inscriptions cut in the rock and on ancient bronze, were still extant. And if the poets and the annals were summoned as witnesses, theirs were the richer and more numerous; nor had Philip invoked merely force, but also the truth of the matter: the same judgement was reached by King Antigonus of Macedonia (in c221BC) and Mummius the Roman general; such was the verdict also of the state of Miletus when asked to arbitrate (135BC), and of Atidius Geminus, governor of Achaia. The decision was awarded to Messene.

The Segestans, also, requested restoration of the time-worn shrine of Venus on Mount Eryx (Sicily) recalling the familiar tale of its origin (Aeneid V:759) and thus delighting Tiberius. As a relation he willingly accepted the task.

Next, a petition from Massilia (Marseille) was considered, and approved on the example set by Publius Rutilius, whereby Rutilius, banished by law (92BC), had been granted citizenship of Smyrna. On the basis of this, the exile Vulcaciæ Moschus, having been admitted likewise, bequeathed his worldly goods to their state, as his adopted country.



'Columns of the Temple of Neptune at Paestum'
Constantin Hansen (Danish, 1804 - 1880)
The Met

BOOK IV:XLIV THE DEATHS OF LENTULUS, DOMITIUS AND ANTONIUS

There died, this year, the noble warriors, Gnaeus Lentulus and Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus.

Lentulus, besides his consulate and the triumphal honours gained against the Getae, was famed for a poverty steadfastly endured followed by great riches innocently acquired and employed with restraint.

Domitius was distinguished for a father who commanded at sea in the Civil War, until he joined Antony's faction, and later that of Augustus (Octavian). His grandfather had fallen in the ranks of the nobles at Pharsalia. He himself was chosen to marry Antonia the Elder, Octavia's daughter, and after crossing the Elbe with his army penetrated deeper into Germany than anyone before him, and achieved triumphal insignia for his exploit.

Lucius Antonius died also, he of noble but unfortunate birth. For not yet adolescent when Iullus Antonius, his father, was punished with death for adultery with Julia the Elder, Augustus banished Lucius, grandson of his sister Octavia the Younger, to Marseilles, where exile could be cloaked in the guise of study. Yet Lucius received an honourable funeral, and his bones were laid to rest in the tomb of the Octavii, by Senate decree.

BOOK IV:XLV THE ASSASSINATION OF LUCIUS PISO IN NORTH-EAST SPAIN

During the same consulships, a dreadful crime was committed in north-eastern Spain (Hispania Tarroconensis) by a member of the rural tribe of the Terrestines. Launching a sudden attack on the governor of the province, Lucius Piso, who was travelling with a lack of caution

attributable to the current state of peace, he struck him dead with a single blow: then, after fleeing swiftly on horseback, the man later turned the animal loose on reaching wooded country and eluded chase in the rugged and pathless wilds.

He did not long evade capture: the horse was found and led round the neighbouring villagers till its ownership was established. On being taken, and tortured to ascertain his co-conspirators, he shouted out in his native tongue that they might question him in vain; his partners might stand and look on; force could deal no pain great enough to extract the truth.

And indeed, the next day, when he was dragged again to the torture, he struggled free of his captors and dashed his head against a rock, dying instantly. Still, it was thought that Piso was victim to a plot concocted by the Terrestines, since public funds had been stolen and Piso was demanding repayment too insistently for the barbarians to tolerate.

BOOK IV:XLVI POPPAEUS SABINUS AWARDED TRIUMPHAL INSIGNIA – AD26

In the consulships of Lentulus Gaetulicus and Gaius Calvisius, triumphal insignia were awarded to Poppaeus Sabinus, for suppressing Thracian tribes, dwellers in the mountains, barbarous and so all the more bold in action. The motive of their uprising, beyond it simply being in their nature, was that they scorned to endure the military levies and devote all their strength to our service. Indeed they usually only obeyed their kings of their own free will, or if they sent warriors, were led by their own chieftains and fought only against neighbouring tribes.

And then there was a rumour doing the rounds that the tribes were to be broken up, transported to distant countries and dispersed among other peoples. Yet before taking to arms, they sent a deputation to reiterate their friendship and loyalty, which would be as before if new burdens were not imposed on them: while if they were proclaimed a conquered race of slaves,

they had warriors and swords and spirits ready to seek freedom or death. Pointing out their rocky fastnesses, and the placing of their wives and parents there, they threatened a difficult, arduous and bloody war.

BOOK IV:XLVII HOW SABINUS COUNTERED THE THRACIAN REBELS

Sabinus, however, offered a bland response, till he could gather his forces, but once Pomponius Labeo had arrived from Moesia with a legion, and King Rhoemetalces II had brought up his native auxiliaries, whose allegiance had not altered, Sabinus added them to his existing men and moved against the enemy, who were concentrated now in the wooded gorges. Some, more bold, showed themselves on the open hillsides, from which the Roman general, advancing his forward line, drove them without difficulty, though refuge was so near that little barbarian blood was spilt.

After swiftly fortifying a camp on the spot, Sabinus, with a strong body of men, occupied a narrow unbroken mountain ridge running to the nearest native stronghold, which was held by a large force of armed men and irregulars. At the same time, he sent a picked band of bowmen to deal with the bolder characters who were leaping about, chanting and dancing their ceremonial dances, according to the custom of those tribes. The archers dealt wounds thick and fast, and with impunity, as long as they operated from a distance: but advancing closer they were troubled by a sudden attack and relied on the support of a Sugambrian cohort, whom the Roman general had positioned nearby, its men being alive to danger, and making no less savage a noise, given their own chanting and clashing of weapons.

BOOK IV:XLVIII AN ENEMY ATTACK

The Roman camp was then re-established nearer the enemy, and our Thracian allies, whom I mentioned earlier, were left to man the previous defences. They had licence to lay waste, burn, and plunder, so long as their ravages were limited to daylight, and they spent the hours of night, secure and vigilant, in camp. This was adhered to initially: but then enriched by their haul, and indulging in pleasure, they abandoned their posts for wild banquets or to sprawl in drunken sleep.

The enemy, therefore, who were aware of their neglect of duty organised two columns, one to attack the plunderers, the other as a diversion to threaten the Roman camp, not in hope of capturing it, but so that, amidst the clamour and the missiles, every man, intent on his own predicament, might be deaf to the sound of the primary assault. Moreover darkness was chosen for the onslaught, to increase the panic.

But the attempt on the legion's defences was easily repelled; though our Thracian auxiliaries were terrified by the sudden incursion, some being positioned adjacent to our ramparts, the majority scattered beyond, and were slaughtered the more ruthlessly, being branded as deserters and traitors armed to enslave themselves and their country.

BOOK IV:XLIX SABINUS LAYS SIEGE TO THE THRACIANS

The next day, Sabinus paraded his troops on the plain, to see if the barbarians, elated by the night's success, might venture to give battle. But after they failed to descend from their stronghold or the adjoining hills, he began a siege based on the defences he had, opportunely, already built; first constructing a ditch and parapet with a circumference of four miles; then gradually contracting his siege lines and reducing the enclosed space in order to deny the enemy water and forage, while raising the ramparts from

which stones, spears and burning brands could be hurled at the now accessible foe.

But nothing demoralised the enemy as much as thirst, one remaining spring having to serve for a vast multitude of fighters and non-combatants; while at the same time their horses and cattle, penned up with them, as is the way with barbarians, were dying for lack of fodder; and beside them lay human corpses, dead of their wounds or thirst; everything polluted by blood, stench and infection.

BOOK IV:L DISCORD AMONG THE THRACIANS

The final evil adding to their confusion was internal discord, some arguing for surrender, others for mutual destruction and death; while others again argued against death without vengeance, championing a last sortie. Not only the troops differed in their views. Indeed one of their leaders, Dinis, advanced in age, and through experience long familiar with the power employed but also the clemency shown by Rome, urged them to lay down their weapons, their last recourse in adversity, and entrusted himself, his wife, and his children to the superior force. He was followed by those rendered defenceless by age or gender, and whoever valued life more than glory.

But the young warriors were drawn to Tarsa or Turesis, both committed to dying as free men. Tarsa, calling for a swift death, ending hope and fear alike, showed the way by plunging his sword into his own chest, and there was no lack of those who chose the same fate. Turesis, though, and his followers waited for nightfall, a fact of which our general was aware, and so our outposts were manned by stronger forces.

Night fell bringing heavy rain, and the enemy's wild shouts followed by deathly silence troubled the besiegers, as Sabinus went about exhorting his men not to give the enemy an opportunity because of this confusing noise or feigned quiet; each should perform his role, without change of position, or hurling of missiles at false targets.

BOOK IV:LI TURESIS DEFEATED

Meanwhile the barbarian troops running forward, now hurled stones, fire-hardened stakes, and oak branches, at the ramparts, now filled the moat with brushwood, hurdles and lifeless corpses, while some with pre-fabricated bridges and ladders advanced against the turrets, grasping them, tearing them away, and struggling hand to hand with the defenders. Our soldiers dashed them down with their spears, repulsed them with their shield-bosses, hurling javelins from the walls with masses of heavy stone.

On our side lay hope of victory, and the greater shame if we yielded, on theirs the knowledge that this was a last chance for survival, many with wives and mothers nearby, their laments echoing in their ears.

Night cloaking the bravery of some, the fear in others; random blows, sudden wounds; the indistinguishability of friend and foe; the cries echoed by the mountain ravines as if at their backs, such that all was confusion, led some of the Romans to abandon their positions, thinking them taken; though only a few of the enemy penetrated in fact.

At first light, the rest, their bravest either dead or disabled, were driven back to their stronghold on the heights, where they were compelled to surrender. The neighbouring areas were occupied with the agreement of the inhabitants: the remainder were spared subjugation by attack or siege by the premature arrival of the usual savage winter among the Haemus mountains.

BOOK IV:LII THE TRIAL OF CLAUDIA PULCHRA

In Rome, meanwhile, the imperial house had been stirred by the first of a series of events that led to Agrippina's downfall, when Claudia Pulchra, her second cousin, was put on trial, Domitius Afer being her accuser. Fresh from a praetorship, of modest reputation but hastening to achieve fame by

any means, he accused her of lewd behaviour, adultery with Furnius, and the preparation of poisons and charms against the emperor.

Agrippina, fierce as ever, and roused by the threat to her cousin, hurried to Tiberius at the moment he chanced to be sacrificing at the altar to his father, Augustus, which prompted the reproach from her that he should not, at the same moment, offer victims to the deified Augustus while persecuting his descendants. That divine spirit, she said, had not been turned to dumb stone: she, his true image, blood of his celestial line, knew of her danger, and had adopted mourning dress.

It was futile, she continued, to make Pulchra a pretext, the sole cause of whose ruin was that she had foolishly chosen to cultivate herself, Agrippina, while forgetful of Sosia's fate, who was exiled for the same offence.

Her words produced one of the rare outbursts from that reticent spirit. Tiberius, seizing hold of her, admonished her in a line of Greek: did she think herself injured, simply because she might not reign supreme? Pulchra and Furnius were condemned.

Domitius Afer was added to the ranks of the great orators, his genius was recognised, and Tiberius' endorsement followed, asserting him to be eloquent by right of nature. Later, whether conducting the prosecution or arguing for the defence he was indeed noted more for eloquence than morals, though old age robbed him of much of that eloquence, his mind gone, yet leaving him incapable of silence.

BOOK IV:LIII AGRIPPINA ASKS TIBERIUS TO HELP HER MARRY AGAIN

But Agrippina, obstinate in her anger and suffering from physical illness, when visited by the Emperor, shed tears in silence for many moments, then began with reproaches and requests: he should put an end

to her solitude, grant her a husband; she was still young enough, and the virtuous had no solace but in marriage; there were many in Rome who would wed with a scion of Augustus, the widow of Germanicus and mother of his children.

But Tiberius, not unaware of her motive in all this, and unwilling to show fear or displeasure, left her without an answer, despite her insistence.

This incident, not related by the historians, I found in the memoirs of her daughter, Agrippina the Younger, mother of the emperor Nero, who recorded her life and the events involving her family, for posterity.

BOOK IV:LIV AGRIPPINA WARY OF BEING POISONED

Sejanus, moreover, she grieving still and unwitting, further unnerved her by sending his agents, to warn her, in the guise of friendship, that she might be poisoned, and to avoid her father-in-law's table. But she, a stranger to pretence, seated at dinner next to Tiberius, her features and voice under strict control, touched none of the food until, by chance or prior information, Tiberius noticed, and to test her more keenly, praising the fruit before him, passed it to his daughter-in-law with his own hand.

This added to Agrippina's suspicions, and she handed it to her servants without tasting it. Nevertheless, Tiberius did not comment publicly, but turning to his mother, Livia, remarked that it would hardly seem strange if he decided to treat that woman more severely who suspected him of poisoning her. Hence the rumour that her death was intended, and that since the emperor feared to effect it openly, a remote location was sought to perpetrate the deed.

BOOK IV:LV DEBATE REGARDING THE LOCATION OF A TEMPLE TO TIBERIUS IN ASIA MINOR

Tiberius, in order to avert criticism, frequented the Senate, and listened for several days to the emissaries from Asia Minor debating which of their cities should host his temple. Eleven cities competed for the honour, with equal ambition but disparate resources. With little distinction between them, each argued their nation's antiquity, and their eagerness to support Rome during the wars with Perseus (168BC), Aristonicus (129BC) and various other kings.

Now, Hypaepa (Gunluce, Turkey) and Tralles (Aydin, Turkey), Laodicea (on the Lycus: Denizli, Turkey) and Magnesia (on the Maeander: Tekin, Turkey) were passed over as unequal to the task. Even Ilium (Hisarlik, Turkey), though it recalled Troy, the parent of Rome, held no significance except its glorious past.

There was some hesitation when Halicarnassus (Bodrum, Turkey) argued that no earthquake had troubled it for twelve hundred years, and that the foundations of the temple would be on solid rock. Pergamum (Bergama, Turkey) arguing against itself that there was a shrine to Augustus sited there, was thought to have been sufficiently honoured.

Ephesus (Selcuk, Turkey) and Miletus (Balat, Turkey) were considered to be already preoccupied with the worship of Diana and Apollo respectively. The deliberations centred therefore on Sardis (Sart, Turkey) and Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey).

The Sardians read out a decree linking them by blood to the Etruscans: since Lydus and Tyrrhenus, sons of King Atys, had divided the nation, Lydus retaining the land of his fathers, Tyrrhenus being given the task of founding a new colony; and the two leaders gave their names to their territories in Asia Minor (Lydia) and Italy (Tyrrhenia) respectively. Lydia added further to its power, by sending colonists to that peninsula which later took its name from Pelops (the Peloponnese). They also mentioned letters from Roman generals, treaties signed with us during the

Macedonian War, their copious rivers, temperate climate, and the richness of the surrounding country.

BOOK IV:LVI SMYRNA IS PREFERRED

The emissaries from Smyrna, though also recalling their city's antiquity, founded by Tantalus, the offspring of Jupiter, or by Theseus, himself of divine stock, or by one of the Amazons, continued by stating the facts in which they placed most confidence: their services to the Roman people, whom they had supported with naval forces, not only in foreign conflicts but also those suffered by Italy; and their primacy in erecting a temple dedicated to the city of Rome, when Marcus Porcius was consul (195BC) when the strength of the Roman people was indeed great though not yet at its zenith, for Carthage still stood, and the kings of Asia Minor were powerful.

They also proffered the testimony of Sulla, that with his army in extreme danger due to the severe winter and their lack of gear, as soon as the situation was publicly proclaimed in Smyrna, all who heard stripped the clothes from their bodies and sent them to the legions.

The Senate therefore judged in favour of Smyrna. Vibius Marsus then proposed that a supernumerary legate be assigned to Manius Lepidus, to whom that province was allocated, in order to be responsible for the temple. And since Lepidus modestly declined to make the selection, Valerius Naso, chosen by lot from among the praetors, was sent there.

BOOK IV:LVII TIBERIUS RETIRES FROM ROME

Meanwhile, according to a plan long meditated yet often deferred, Tiberius finally departed for Campania, ostensibly to consecrate a temple at Capua to Jupiter, and a shrine at Nola to Augustus, but actually resolved to settle far from Rome.

As to the reason for his retirement, though I follow most historians in attributing it to Sejanus' wiles, I am often induced to consider, given that he continued for six years after Sejanus' execution in like isolation, whether it was actually his own doing, in order to seek concealment for the cruelty and lust his actions might reveal.

There are also those who think that in his old age he had become ashamed of his appearance: since he was very thin and stooping, with a scalp devoid of hair, and an ulcerous face often covered with plasters, while he had acquired the habit, when in seclusion at Rhodes, of avoiding company and proving secretive about his pleasures.

It is also said Livia's temper drove him to exile, he being intolerant of her sharing power though unable to sever ties with her, since his own power had been received as a gift from her. For Augustus was hesitant as to whether he should place Germanicus, his sister Octavia's grandson who was universally praised, at the head of Roman affairs, but persuaded by the pleas of his wife Livia, he adopted Tiberius (into his family the Julii), while Germanicus was in turn adopted by Tiberius. This Livia constantly reminded Tiberius of, while demanding he repay her.

BOOK IV:LVIII HIS SELF-EXILE

He departed with a small retinue, one senator, Cocceius Nerva, he being a legal expert and former consul; and one Roman knight, in

addition to Sejanus, of the higher rank, Curtius Atticus; the rest being men of letters, mostly Greeks, by whose conversation he might be entertained.

Those knowledgeable in astrology declared, from the aspects of the planets, that Tiberius had left Rome never to return. This was a fatal judgement to many who concluded, and openly asserted, that his death was imminent, since they failed to foresee the unbelievable reality that he would absent himself from his native city, intentionally, for eleven years. It was soon to be revealed how limited and misleading is the realm of science, and in what darkneses the truth lies hidden, since only his non-return to Rome proved accurate: the rest showed lack of insight, for in the surrounding countryside, on the neighbouring beaches, often beneath the city walls themselves, he reached extreme old age.

End of the Annals Book IV: XXXIV-LVIII

BOOK IV: LIX-LXXV
SEJANUS IN CONTROL



'Aphrodite'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p778, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK IV:LIX A ROCK-FALL NEAR FONDI

It so happened, at that time, that a serious accident involving Tiberius encouraged these idle speculations and gave him further justification for faith in Sejanus' steadfast friendship. They were at a villa known as the Grotto, on the Gulf of Terracina, below the hills of Fondi, dining in a natural cavern. A sudden rock-fall at its mouth buried a number of his servants, leading to total panic and the flight of those who had been enjoying the banquet.

Sejanus, on his hands and knees, shielded Tiberius' face, and supported the falling stones, such being the attitude in which he was discovered by the soldiers who ran to their assistance. This increased his influence and, given that he had shown no concern for himself, trust was placed in his advice, however deadly it might prove.

Regarding the house of Germanicus, Sejanus assumed the role of judge, enlisting those who would act the part of accusers; Nero Julius, the next in line, being the focus of their attacks. Though Nero Julius was a modest youth, nevertheless he too often forgot what the present time demanded, while his freedmen and followers, eager to gain power, goaded him into displays of pride and self-confidence, advising him that this was what the people of Rome desired and the military longed for, while Sejanus, who at present took advantage of an old man's forbearance and a young man's diffidence, would not dare to oppose him.

BOOK IV:LX SEJANUS PLOTS AGAINST THE HOUSE OF GERMANICUS

To all this Nero Julius listened without a thought of doing wrong, but now and then insolent and unconsidered comments emerged from him, and as these were taken up by the spies around him and augmented in

the retelling, no opportunity to refute them being granted him, various other reasons for concern began to appear. At one time some man would avoid meeting him, other men returned his salutation but immediately turned away, many broke off attempts at conversation, while any followers of Sejanus about stopped to jeer.

Indeed, Tiberius himself met him with a frown or a hypocritical smile on his face: no matter if the young man spoke or was silent, there was guilt in silence, or in speaking. Not even the night hours were safe, since his every moment of wakefulness or sleep, his every sigh, was revealed by his wife to her mother Livilla, and by Livilla to Sejanus; who had won Nero's brother Drusus Julius to his faction, holding out to him the prospect of imperial supremacy, once he had dealt with his elder and now weaker brother.

Over and above the desire for power, and an antipathy common between brothers, Drusus' savage nature was inflamed with envy, since their mother Agrippina favoured Nero. Yet Sejanus was not so warm towards Drusus that he neglected, even regarding him also, to sow the seed of his future ruin, aware of that rashness which left him the more exposed to deception.

BOOK IV:LXI THE DEATHS OF ASINIUS AGRIPPA AND QUINTUS HATERIUS

At the close of that year (AD26) two notable individuals died, Asinius Agrippa, of an ancestry (that of Marcus Agrippa and Asinius Pollio) noted for its honour rather than its antiquity, of which his life proved worthy; and Quintus Haterius, of a senatorial family, celebrated in his lifetime for eloquence, though the memory of his talents is scarcely so well retained. Indeed he succeeded through his energy rather than his attention to detail; and while the considerations and efforts of others may subsequently have grown in value, that melodious fluency Haterius possessed has vanished with himself.

BOOK IV:LXII COLLAPSE OF THE WOODEN AMPHITHEATRE AT FIDENAE

In the consulate of Marcus Licinius and Lucius Calpurnius (AD27), an unexpected disaster, beginning and ending in an instant, caused casualties as numerous as those in a major war. For a freedman named Atilius erecting a wooden amphitheatre at Fidenae, to house a gladiatorial contest, failed to establish it on solid enough ground, or secure the superstructure with strong enough fixings, due to his designing the project not to display his abundant wealth or to court favour with his townsmen, but merely for sordid gain.

Those eager for such things and, with Tiberius in power, strangers to such amusements, flocked to the place, men and women of all ages, the crowd all the greater as the town was nearby, which was why the toll was heavier, the structure, packed full when it collapsed, falling inward and spilling outward, dragging down and overwhelming a mass of human beings intent on the spectacle or standing round.

And indeed, as fate would have it, those who had met death in the first moment of tragedy escaped the torment of those, more to be pitied, whose shattered bodies life had not yet deserted; who during the daylight hours recognised their wives or children by sight, at night by their wailing and grieving. The news brought others, lamenting here a brother, there parents or some relation. Even those whose friends or relatives were away for some reason, were fearful; and while the names of those whom disaster had struck remained as yet unknown, anxiety was widespread.

BOOK IV:LXIII THE AFTERMATH

When the debris began to be removed, they rushed to kiss and embrace the dead; even disputing cases where the features were

unrecognisable but form or age led to errors of identification. Fifty thousand people were injured or crushed to death in the disaster; and by senate decree, no one with resources of less than a thousand gold pieces was to mount a gladiatorial show in future, and no amphitheatre might be built except on tried and solid ground.

Atilius was driven into exile. It must be said, however, that after the accident, the great houses opened their doors, dressings and medical aid were supplied, and throughout those days however sad her aspect, Rome followed the practice of the ancients who after a great battle relieved the wounded with generosity and care.

BOOK IV:LXIV FIRE ON THE CAELIAN HILL

That disaster had not yet faded from memory, when a violent fire unduly affected the city, by destroying the Caelian Hill district. That this was a deadly year and that everything was opposed to the emperor's decision to absent himself from Rome, was repeated by those, who, as the masses will, ascribed evil intent to matters of chance.

But Tiberius countered this by issuing compensation according to loss. Thanks were returned, in the Senate by the nobility, in the streets by public opinion, since he had aided, through his generosity, and without the influence of his relatives or seeking to gain favour, even those unknown to him and unable to be summoned.

Proposals were then advanced that the Caelian Hill should in future be called the Augustan since, while all around was ablaze, a bust of Tiberius in the house of the senator Junius was the only thing left untouched. This had once happened to a statue of Claudia Quinta which twice escaped the effects of fire, a statue which our ancestors had dedicated to the shrine of the Mother of the Gods (Cybele). The Claudians were sacrosanct and acceptable to the powers above, and additional respect should be shown the site where the gods granted such honour to the emperor.



'Cottage on Fire at Night'
Joseph Wright of Derby (British, 1734 - 1797)
Yale Center for British Art

BOOK IV:LXV HISTORY OF THE SITE

It may not be out of place to relate that the hill was anciently named the Querquetulanus, from the density and rich growth of oak trees there, and was only called the Caelian after Caeles Vibenna, an Etruscan leader who supplied auxiliaries to us, he receiving the site from Tarquinius Priscus or as the gift of some other of our kings: for the historians disagree on the matter.

The rest is not in doubt, that this large force settled in the plain also, with the neighbourhood of the forum, Tuscan Street taking its name from theirs.

BOOK IV:LXVI QUINTILIUS VARUS DENOUNCED

But though the disaster mentioned was relieved through the good-will of the nobility and the generosity of the emperor, the power of the informers grew without remedy, greater and more vicious each day.

Quintilius Varus, a wealthy relation of Tiberius, was attacked by the same Domitius Afer who had obtained the conviction of Varus' mother, Claudia Pulchra. It was hardly a surprise that, long impoverished and making ill use of his recent bounty, he was preparing further crimes, but it was astounding that Publius Dolabella appeared as his partner in denunciation, since, given his illustrious ancestry and his connection to Varus, he was about to attack his own noble status and his own cousin.

However, the Senate stood firm, and decided to await the emperor, the only respite available, for the moment, from imminent misfortune.

BOOK IV:LXVII TIBERIUS RETIRES TO CAPRI

But Tiberius, after dedicating temples in Campania, still continuing in his loathing for the townships, colonies and all things in mainland Italy, even though he had warned the public not to invade his privacy and the local citizens were prevented from doing so by stationing troops there, took himself off to the island of Capri, which is separated by three miles of water from the tip of the Sorrentine peninsula.

I would imagine that its isolation was its main attraction for him, since its coastline is without harbours and provides scant shelter for even small vessels, nor could anyone land without being seen by the sentries. The winter temperatures are mild, due to the mountain chain which blocks the cold winds; its summers catch the western breeze and are pleasantly embraced by the open sea. The island overlooked the most beautiful of bays until the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (AD79) changed the face of the landscape.

Tradition has it that the area was colonised by Greece, and that Capri was inhabited by the Teleboans. But Tiberius now occupied it with his twelve imposing and individually named villas. Previously preoccupied with matters of state, he was now equally intent on hidden pleasures in an idleness filled with evil. For those suspicions and mindless beliefs of his persisted, which Sejanus had habitually encouraged, even in Rome, and now more actively fostered.

The plotting against Agrippina and Nero Julius was no longer hidden. Soldiers were appointed to record, as if for the annals, their messages and movements, both open and covert. Moreover agents contrived to advise the pair to seek refuge with the armies in Germany, or to clasp hold of the statue of the divine Augustus, at a moment when the forum was most crowded, and call on the Senate and people for help. And since they scorned these actions, the accusation was made that such was at least their intention.

**BOOK IV:LXVIII THE DOWNFALL OF
TITIUS SABINUS – AD28**

With the consulate of Junius Silanus and Silius Nerva (AD28) the new year began badly, the illustrious Roman knight, Titius Sabinus, being dragged off to prison, due to his previous friendship with Germanicus: since he had in no way ceased to honour the dead man's widow and children, visiting them at home, befriending them in public, the only one of so great a multitude of former followers to do so, and thereby praised by the virtuous and an offence to their enemies.

He was attacked by Latinius Latiaris, Porcius Cato, Petilius Rufus, and Marcus Opsius, ex-praetors greedy for the consulate, a post to which there was no admittance except through Sejanus; while Sejanus' goodwill could only be achieved through wrongdoing.

It was agreed between them that Latiaris, who was involved with Sabinus over some minor matter, should set the trap, the rest being present as witnesses, and that afterwards the accusation should be laid. Latiaris, therefore, began the conversation with casual remarks, then praised Sabinus' constancy, in not abandoning in its affliction, as others had, the house to which he had been a friend in its prosperity. At the same time he spoke of Germanicus in honourable terms and of Agrippina with pity.

When Sabinus shed tears and uttered complaints, showing the usual human weakness in times of calamity, Latiaris grew more daring, reproaching Sejanus for his viciousness, pride and ambition. Even Tiberius was not spared abuse, and with this conversation, filled with so much that was forbidden, the impression was given of intimate friendship. Now Sabinus began to seek out Latiaris, visiting him at home, and bringing his troubles there, as if to the most faithful of companions.

BOOK IV:LXIX SABINUS ENSNARED

The plotters I have mentioned now discussed the means of granting these things a wider audience. For the meeting-place needed the appearance of solitude, and placed behind doors there was every chance of being detected by sight or sound or some other source of casual suspicion. Three senators hid between the roof and ceiling, a hiding place as disgraceful as the deceit was shameful, and applied their ears to the holes and cracks.

Meanwhile, Latiaris had come across Sabinus in the street and, on the pretext of communicating the latest news, dragged him home and into his private chamber, where Latiaris plied him with horrors past and present and to come. Sabinus responded in a similar manner, only at greater length, emotion once having found an outlet being more difficult to repress.

The accusations were then levied in a letter to the emperor, in which the conspirators revealed the stages of their deceit and coincidentally their own dishonour. The anxiety and fear of the citizens, hidden from their own family, had never been greater; meetings, conversation, the ear of friend or stranger, all were similarly avoided; even dumb and inanimate things, the very roofs and walls were eyed circumspectly.

BOOK IV:LXX TIBERIUS CONDEMNS HIM

But in a letter, read aloud on the first of January, Tiberius, after the prayers for the new year, turned to the matter of Sabinus, accusing him of corrupting several of his freedmen and plotting against himself, and openly demanded vengeance, which was readily decreed, and the condemned man was hauled away, crying out as loudly as he could, shrouded as he was in his cloak and with a noose around his neck, that such was the year's inauguration, such the victim sacrificed to Sejanus.

Wherever he turned his eyes, wherever his voice sounded, desolation followed, with an exodus from street and forum. And whenever anyone retraced their steps and showed themselves once more, they were afraid of their very fear itself. For what day was free of persecution, they reflected, if the rope and chains were in evidence at a time when custom demands the avoidance of so much as an ominous word?

Tiberius, they thought, had not courted such odium from lack of foresight, rather it was deliberately planned, so none might believe the new magistrates were precluded from consecrating prisons in the same manner as they dealt with the consecration of shrines and altars.

A second letter followed the first, expressing the emperor's thanks that they had punished a man dangerous to the country, adding that his own life was at risk, and he suspected treachery on the part of his enemies; he mentioned no names, but there was little doubt that those of Agrippina and Nero Julius were intended.

BOOK IV:LXXI THE DEATH OF JULIA THE YOUNGER

If I had not decided to cover events under their appropriate year, I would have wished to anticipate and record here the deaths of Latinus, Opsius and the rest of the instigators of this disgraceful action, those who died after Caligula's accession but also those who died while Tiberius was still alive. Though not wishing to see the servants of his wrongdoing overthrown by others Tiberius often wearied of them, and when fresh labourers of the selfsame ilk appeared he ousted the old and tiresome ones. However, these and other judgements on the guilty I reserve for their proper place.

At this time, Asinius Gallus, to whose children Agrippina was aunt, asked that the emperor should reveal his fears to the Senate and allow them to be dispersed. Tiberius loved none of his virtues, as he saw them, as much as his ability to dissemble, hence the irritation with which he responded to

this attempt to disclose what he chose to conceal. But Sejanus smoothed the matter over, not from love of Gallus, but so as to wait on the emperor's deliberations, knowing that slow as he was in pondering an issue, once he acted ruthless deeds followed swiftly on the heels of ominous words.

At about this time, Julia the Younger died, who after conviction for adultery had been sentenced by her grandfather Augustus and deported to the island of Trimerus (in the Isole Tremiti archipelago) off the coast of Apulia. There she endured twenty years of exile, sustained by Livia's resources; Livia who worked against her step-children covertly while they flourished, yet showed compassion openly for them in their ruin.

BOOK IV:LXXII REVOLT OF THE FRISIANS

In that same year, the Frisian tribe, on the far bank of the Rhine, broke the peace, due more to our greed than their resistance to obedience. Given their limited resources, Drusus had levied a modest tribute, comprising ox-hides for military use. No one had paid any attention to the size or strength required of these, until a chief centurion, Olennius, appointed to govern the Frisians, specified giant auroch hides as the standard to be applied.

This demand, onerous to anyone, was less tolerable still among the Germans, whose wild forests yield huge creatures, but whose domesticated beasts are small in size. First their cattle, then their fields, then their wives and children passed into servitude.

Hence arose anger and complaint, and when no relief was given, they resorted to arms. Those soldiers supervising the tribute were seized and nailed to the gibbet. Olennius anticipated his danger by flight, taking refuge in a fort, named Flevum (Velsen, Netherlands), where a significant force of Romans and allies guarded the North Sea coast.

BOOK IV:LXXIII ROMAN LOSSES

As soon as this became known to Lucius Apronius, the governor of Lower Germany, he called for detachments of legionaries from the Upper Province, and a picked body of allied horse and foot, and transported both forces together down the Rhine into Frisian territory, where the siege of the fortress had been lifted and the rebels had departed to defend their own lands.

He then built causeways and bridges across the neighbouring estuaries to allow the transport of his heavily armed troops. And a ford having been discovered in the meantime, he ordered the Canninefates' cavalry and all the German infantry serving with us to work their way behind the enemy rear, who being then in line of battle repelled the auxiliary squadrons and the legionary cavalry sent to their aid.

Now three light cohorts, then a further two, and finally, after some time, the rest of the allied horse were sent in: enough troops if launched at once but, arriving at intervals, far from steadying the scattered men the movement caused them to be carried away in the fugitives' panic. Apronius placed the last of his auxiliaries under the command of Cethegus Labeo, legate of the Fifth legion, and he, dangerously threatened by the insecurity of his position, sent messengers begging for the support of the legions.

The men of the Fifth outstripped the rest, repelled the enemy in a sharp encounter, and rescued the cohorts and cavalry exhausted from their wounds. The Roman general attempted no revenge, nor did he bury his dead, though many a tribune, prefect and leading centurion had fallen. It was later learnt from deserters that nine hundred Romans, who had fought on till the next day, had been killed in the grove, they called Baduhenna's, and a further four hundred, occupying the villa of Cruptorix, who was once in our pay, fearing treachery, had fallen to each other's swords.

BOOK IV:LXXIV TIBERIUS AND SEJANUS SCORN TO VISIT ROME

The Frisian name was then famous throughout Germany, while Tiberius hid our losses rather than entrust the military strategy to anyone else. The Senate too showed no interest in an embarrassing episode on the fringes of empire: since anxieties nearer home filled their minds, for which a remedy was found in mere sycophancy. Thus, while they were being consulted on diverse matters, they voted an altar to Mercy, and one to Friendship, with statues of Tiberius and Sejanus on either side, accompanied by a host of petitions requesting the pair to grant, with urgency, the opportunity for audience.

Neither of them however came down to Rome or even the outskirts of Rome: it was considered sufficient for them to leave their island and be seen on the nearby coast of Campania. There the senators went, with the knights and a large section of the populace, their anxieties focused on Sejanus, to whom access was now more difficult, and effected only by bribery and collaboration in his plans.

It was evident to all that his insolence increased at the sight of this atrocious servility openly displayed; indeed in Rome it is usual to scurry around, and the size of the city renders it uncertain what anyone is about. But here scattered about the shore or the plain, they endured, day and night alike, the regard or disdain of his officials, until that too was denied them, and they returned to Rome, those whom he had failed to honour with word or look, in a state of trepidation; those few overshadowed by the deadly issue of his unhappy friendship, fatally cheerful.

BOOK IV:LXXV AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER'S MARRIAGE

As for other matters, Tiberius after personally bestowing Agrippina the Younger, the daughter of Germanicus, and his own granddaughter by adoption, on Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, ordered the marriage to be celebrated in Rome. In Domitius he had chosen a man who, above and beyond the antiquity of his line, was a blood-relative of the Caesars, boasting Octavia the Younger as his grandmother and, through her, Augustus as his great-uncle.

End of the Annals Book IV: LIX-LXXV

BOOK V: I-XI (FRAGMENT)
THE FALL OF SEJANUS



'Hebe'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p778, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
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BOOK V:I THE DEATH OF LIVIA (JULIA AUGUSTA)

In the consulate of Rubellius and Fufius (AD29), both surnamed Geminus, occurred the death of Livia, in extreme old age, she being of the highest nobility through her Claudian ancestry and her adoption into the Livian and Julian houses. Her first marriage was to Tiberius Nero, by whom she had her surviving children. Exiled in the Perusian War (40BC), he had returned to Rome after the peace deal (the Pact of Misenum) between Sextus Pompeius and the Second Triumvirate.

Thereafter Augustus (Octavian), taken with her beauty, took her from her husband, she perhaps being not unwilling, in such haste that he introduced her to his home while she was pregnant not even allowing time for her confinement. After this she had no surviving issue, but the marriage of Agrippina (Augustus' granddaughter) to Germanicus (Livia's grandson) created a blood-connection to Augustus, such that they shared the resultant great-grandchildren.

She was of the old school in domestic virtue, though her friendships went beyond what the women of those times would have approved. A headstrong mother, she was an accommodating wife, well suited to handle her husband's virtues and her son's hypocrisies.

Her funeral was modest, her last testament long rendered null and void. Her great grandson, Gaius Caesar, soon to achieve power (as the emperor Caligula), delivered her eulogy from the rostra.

BOOK V:II TIBERIUS NEGLECTS TO PAY HIS LAST RESPECTS TO HER

But Tiberius, without the least change in his pleasant mode of life, excused himself, by letter, on the grounds of matters of state, from

paying his last respects to his mother and, in the guise of modesty, reduced the lavish tributes decreed by the Senate in her memory, very few being retained, adding that she was not to be awarded divine honours, such being her own wish.

And indeed in a section of this very letter, he decried the friendships entered into by women, an indirect censure of the consul Fufius, who had flourished thanks to Livia's favour, had an aptitude for attracting the notice of women, and was witty likewise, with a habit for ridiculing Tiberius in sharp pleasantries which are long remembered by the powerful.

BOOK V:III TIBERIUS INCREASES HIS TYRANNY

Moreover, abrupt and oppressive tyranny now followed: for while Livia was still breathing she provided some recourse, for obedience to his mother was long-established with Tiberius, nor did Sejanus dare to question her authority as a parent. Yet now, as if loosed from restraint, they broke free, and a letter the public believed had been brought to Rome earlier but suppressed by Livia was sent, denouncing Agrippina and Nero Julius; it being broadcast not long after her death.

The wording was calculatedly harsh: though Tiberius accused his grandson not of planning armed revolution but of love affairs with young men and of lewdness. He did not dare to invent such charges against his daughter-in-law, but criticised her arrogant language and contumacious spirit, the Senate listening, in profound and fearful silence, until a few whose hopes lay not in honesty (even public misfortune being taken by certain individuals as an occasion for currying favour) demanded a motion be put, Cotta Messalinus being most prompt to offer a fierce opinion.

Yet among other leading men and especially the magistrates there was some trepidation: and indeed Tiberius, though hostile in his display of invective, had left the outcome ambiguous.

BOOK V:IV IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST AGRIPPINA THWARTED

There was a certain Junius Rusticus in the Senate, selected by Tiberius to record the senators' decrees, and therefore credited with insight into the emperor's thinking. By some fatal impulse (since he had never before shown any indication of courage) or through a mistake in perception which blinded him to imminent, yet made him fearful of uncertain, danger, Rusticus joined with the doubters in warning the consuls not to table the matter; he argued that the slightest thing may affect the most serious issue, and that the extinction of the house of Germanicus might one day cause the old man regret.

At the same time, a crowd surrounded the Senate House, carrying images of Agrippina and Nero Julius, and cheering for Tiberius, cried out that the letter was false and that intentions shown against what was his own house were against his wishes. Thus nothing disastrous was perpetrated that day. Also fictitious attacks against Sejanus were even circulated in the name of the consuls, many critics exercising their extravagant wit anonymously and therefore all the more insolently.

This incensed Sejanus further and provided material for fresh charges: the emperor's sorrow had been put to scorn by the Senate, the masses were in rebellion, he claimed. Already, disloyal speeches were given a hearing, incendiary decrees by the senators were being read: what was left but for them to take up the sword, and select their leaders and emperors from among those they followed, whose images adorned their banners?



'Sejanus Sentenced to Death'

Jan Caspar Philips, after Hubert François Gravelot,
1736 - 1775

The Rijksmuseum

BOOK V:V TIBERIUS DECIDES THE OUTCOME

So Tiberius, after repeating the scandalous charges against his grandson and daughter-in-law, and rebuking the people by edict, complained to the Senate that the imperial majesty had been publicly ridiculed through the delusions of a single senator, and demanded that the whole matter, as yet undecided, be left in his hands.

Without further discussion, they proceeded to announce not the final sentence (since that was forbidden them) but the readiness for the vengeance they were prevented, in accordance with the emperor's command, from endorsing ...

BOOK V: *TRANSLATOR'S NOTE,* *THE MISSING PORTION OF THE TEXT*

The remainder of Book V (and possibly a renumbered opening to Book VI) likely contained a narrative around the events listed below.

AD29. The trial and condemnation of Agrippina and Nero Julius, she being banished to Pandateria (Ventotene), he to Pontia (Ponza). Drusus Julius marries Aemilia Lepida.

AD30. Asinius Gallus condemned. Drusus Julius immured in a dungeon of the Palatium. Sejanus in full control.

AD31. Sejanus consul with Tiberius. Death of Drusus Julius. Sejanus falls under suspicion, and is overthrown by Tiberius, acting from Capri through his agents. Sejanus and Sejanus' eldest son Strabo executed. Sejanus' wife Apicata testifies that Drusus the Younger had been poisoned by his wife Livilla acting with Sejanus. Livilla is executed.

Book V is here concluded in the following sections, and Book VI is then taken as opening at the beginning of AD32.

BOOK V:VI SPEECH OF ONE OF SEJANUS' ALLIES (UNNAMED)

...**F**orty-four speeches were delivered on the subject, a few out of fear, the majority out of habit...

‘...which I thought might contribute to my own disgrace or hatred of Sejanus. Fortune’s wheel has turned, and he who accepted Sejanus as his consular colleague and prospective son-in-law, absolves himself, while the rest, who fawned on him in dishonour, in their wickedness now attack him. Which is more wretched, to be accused of friendship or to accuse a friend, I shall not attempt to decide.

I shall neither satisfy the cruelty nor rely on the mercy of any man, but free and approved of by my own self, I will anticipate my sentence. You, I entreat to preserve my memory with as much joy as sorrow, and to add my name to those who escaped by an illustrious end from public injustice.’

BOOK V:VII HIS DEATH

He then spent part of the day detaining or dismissing his guests, according as each wished to speak with him or depart, and while a crowd were still present and all eyes were fixed on his intrepid features believing that some time remained before the end, he fell on the sword concealed in a fold of his gown.

Tiberius heaped neither accusations nor abuse upon the dead man, though he had once accused Blaesus of many foul things.

BOOK V:VIII THE FATES OF PUBLIUS VITELLIUS AND POMPONIUS SECUNDUS

Next came accusations against Publius Vitellius and Pomponius Secundus, the former charged with offering up the keys of the treasury, of which he was prefect, along with the military fund, to the revolutionary cause; the latter charged, by the ex-praetor Considius, of harbouring his friend Aelius Gallus, who had hidden in Pomponius' garden as his safest sanctuary after the execution of Sejanus. Their only resource in time of danger was in the constancy of their brothers, who stood surety for them.

Later, after endless adjournments, Vitellius, wearied in spirit, weighed down by a mixture of hope and fear, asked for a letter-knife, as if to undertake business, then nicked an artery and so ended his life.

Yet Pomponius, of refined character and notable talent, by treating adversity and good-fortune alike, out-lived Tiberius.

BOOK V:IX THE EXECUTION OF SEJANUS' REMAINING CHILDREN

It was subsequently decided that Sejanus' remaining children should be executed, though the mass anger had abated and the majority had been placated by the previous deaths. They were therefore carried off to prison, the boy (Capito Aelianus) aware of his fate, the girl (Junilla) so innocent that she kept asking what she had done wrong and where they were taking

her, that she would not do it again and surely could be punished with a trivial beating.

Historians of the time say that as it was thought to be unheard-of for capital punishment to be inflicted on a virgin, she was violated by the executioner, the noose beside her; both children were then strangled and their young bodies thrown down the Gemonian Stairs.

BOOK V:X THE FALSE DRUSUS

At about that very time, Asia Minor and Achaia were troubled by a rumour, more potent than lasting, that Drusus Julius, the son of Germanicus, had been seen in the Cyclades and not long afterwards on the mainland. There was in fact a youth of like age, whom some of the emperor's freedmen feigned to recognise. Through the deceit practised by these followers, the ignorant were attracted to him by the famous name, and the Greek readiness for anything new and strange.

For the story invented, and immediately believed, was that he had escaped from custody and was heading for the armies loyal to his father's memory, intending to invade Egypt or Syria. Now rallying the young, now raising public enthusiasm for his cause, he was already elated by initial success and filled with vain hope, when news of the matter reached Poppaeus Sabinus, who was preoccupied with Macedonia but also responsible for Achaia.

Determined to run down this tale, whether true or false, hastening by the Gulf of Toroneos and the Thermaic Gulf, he soon left in his wake the Aegean island of Euboea, Piraeus on the Attic coast, then the Corinthian shore and the narrows of the Isthmus; and reached the Roman colony of Nicopolis (near Preveza, Greece) via the Ionian Sea.

There, he found that the youth, when interrogated further as to his identity, asserted that he was the son of Marcus Silanus, and that as many of

his followers had slipped away he had boarded a ship said to be bound for Italy. Sabinus wrote to Tiberius, but I have no further information as to the origins or end of the matter.

BOOK V:XI DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CONSULS

At the close of the year, a long-established discord between the consuls erupted. For Fulcinius Trio, always ready for a quarrel and experienced in the law-courts, censured Publius Regulus for his dilatoriness in seizing Sejanus' agents. Regulus, retaining his self-control except under direct provocation, not only countered his colleague, but called for an inquiry as to his involvement in the conspiracy. Many of the senators begged them to lay aside an enmity bound to end in disaster, but they remained hostile and threatening to one another until they left office.

End of the Annals Book V: I-XI

BOOK VI: I-XXX
TIBERIUS INCREASINGLY DESPOTIC



'Charioteer'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p204, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
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BOOK VI:I TIBERIUS' DEGENERATE BEHAVIOUR

Gnaeus Domitius and Camillus Scribonianus having already entered on their consulships (AD32), Tiberius, crossing the strait between Capri and Sorrento, coasted along the shores of Campania, uncertain perhaps whether or not to enter the capital, or feigning a visit after deciding against one.

After frequent landings in its neighbourhood and a visit to the Gardens by the Tiber, he returned to his rocky isle and the solitude of the waves, himself shamed by his own wickedness and lust, whose unquenchable fires so inflamed him that, like some royal despot, he stained the children of the free-born with his lechery.

Beauty and physical charms were by no means his only incitements to desire, sometimes it was a boy's modesty or his noble lineage. And now the terms *sellarii* and *spintriae* were coined, names previously unknown, one derived from a vile position they adopted, the other from their elasticity in submitting. Slaves were sent out to proposition the willing with gifts, or terrify the reluctant with menaces, and if a parent or relative refused compliance, they resorted to force, abduction, and the satisfaction of their own lusts, regarding their captives.

BOOK VI:II TOGONIUS' SECURITY PROPOSAL

Meanwhile, in Rome, severe measures were spoken of regarding Livilla's statues and her memory, as though her crimes were only recently discovered and not punished long before, while Sejanus' property was to be released by the treasury then appropriated by the imperial estate, as though the two differed. Men of the rank of Scipio, Cassius and Silanus were speaking in support of these proposals, in similar or slightly altered terms and with great earnestness, when Togonius Gallus inserted his insignificant name among the great, only to be heard with derision.

For Togonius asked that senators be chosen, twenty of whom, drawn by lot and armed with weapons, were to defend the emperor's safety whenever he entered the Senate House. He had indeed been taken in by Tiberius' letter, which demanded the support of one of the consuls, that he might travel safely from Capri to Rome.

However, Tiberius, as usual blending the laughable and the serious, expressed thanks for the senators' goodwill, while asking who were to be excluded and who selected, whether they were chosen forever or their places were to be taken by others now and then, and whether they were to be men who had been previously honoured or youngsters, private individuals or public officials. And what sort of a figure would they cut, taking up arms on the threshold of the Senate? Nor did he hold his life worth the price, he added, if it had to be protected by weapons.

This reply, temperate in its opposition to Togonius, argued only for the deletion of the proposal.

BOOK VI:III ACTION AGAINST JUNIUS GALLIO AND SEXTIUS PACONIANUS

However, Junius Gallio, who had argued that praetorians leaving active service should gain the right to a theatre seat in the fourteen rows reserved for knights, was fiercely rebuked, as if Tiberius were addressing him to his face, for concerning himself with soldiers who had no right to accept any orders but their commander's, nor any reward except from their commander. The divine Augustus, he said, had certainly never considered this invention of Gallio's; or was he some follower of Sejanus seeking to sow discord and sedition, driving simple souls, on the pretext of rewarding them, to a breach of military discipline?

Such was Gallio's prize for premeditated fawning: expulsion from the Senate, then all Italy; and because it was claimed he could easily endure exile in his chosen island of Lesbos, which was both civilised and pleasant, he was dragged back to Rome to be detained in the magistrates' houses.

In the same letter, Tiberius lashed out at the former praetor, Sextius Paconianus, to the Senate's great delight, he being audacious, of wicked intent, prying into all men's secrets, and earlier chosen by Sejanus to help prepare his plot against Gaius Caesar. After which declaration, their long-nurtured hatred erupted, and the supreme penalty would have been decreed if he had not offered to turn State witness.

BOOK VI:IV ACCUSATIONS FROM PACONIANUS AND HATERIUS

When indeed he began to speak of Latinius Latiaris, the accuser and his victim, equally detested, provided the most delightful spectacle. Latiaris, as I have said, had formerly taken the lead in ensnaring Titus Sabinus, and was now the first to atone for the latter's punishment.

In the midst of this, Haterius Agrippa mounted an attack on the previous year's consuls, asking why after pursuing accusations against each other they were now silent; they had forged a bond of fear and guilty conscience between themselves, yet the senators could not stay silent concerning what they had heard.

Regulus replied that he was biding his time as regards revenge, and would pursue the matter in the emperor's presence; Trio, that a rivalry between colleagues and any discordant words that had been let fall, were best forgotten. Agrippa insisting, Sanquinius Maximus, of consular rank, begged the Senate not to add to the emperor's cares by searching for fresh annoyance: it was sufficient for he himself to provide the remedy. This bought Regulus safety, and Trio a respite from ruin.

Haterius was hated all the more since, though enervated by sleep or by a libidinous wakefulness and, due to his lethargy, fearless however extreme the emperor's viciousness, he still plotted, between gluttony and lethargy, the downfall of illustrious men.

BOOK VI:V COTTA MESSALINUS INDICTED

Now, at the first opportunity, Cotta Messalinus, source of the most savage proposals and therefore of inveterate hatred, was indicted for having said, on many occasions, that Gaius Caesar's masculinity was in doubt and, on dining with the priests on Livia's birthday, for calling it not much of a funeral offering; and for letting fall the comment, while he was complaining of the influence exercised by Manius Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius, with whom he was in financial dispute, that: 'the Senate will favour them in the matter, but my little Tiberius will favour me.'

Convicted on all charges, by the leading citizens, as they pressed for sentencing he appealed to Tiberius. A letter shortly arrived, in which the emperor, putting forward a form of defence, recalled the origin of his friendship with Cotta, and commended his many services to him, and requested that comments taken awry, and the banter of convivial chatter, not be used to adduce guilt.

BOOK VI:VI TACITUS, ON GUILTY CONSCIENCE

The opening of Tiberius' letter was considered of note; since he began with these words: 'May the gods and goddesses consume me, more so even than I feel myself to be consumed day by day, if I know what I should write to you, Senators Elect, or in what manner to write, or what not to write of all this, and at this time...'. So surely had his shameful deeds returned to torment him.

Nor was it in vain, that Socrates, the wisest of philosophers, affirmed, as was his custom, that if the minds of tyrants could be revealed wounds and lacerations would be seen, since as the body is scarred by the lash so is the human spirit by cruelty, lust and evil intent.

Indeed, neither circumstance nor seclusion could prevent Tiberius himself from witnessing to the torment in his heart, and his own punishment.

BOOK VI:VII FURTHER ACCUSATIONS

The Senators were then empowered in the case of Gaius Caecilianus, the senator who had disclosed most of the evidence against Cotta, agreeing that he should receive the same penalty as Aruseius and Sanquinius, the accusers of Lucius Arruntius. No greater honour ever accrued to Cotta who, though undoubtedly noble, was impoverished by his prodigality and shamed by his vices, since the revenge appointed set him equal to Arruntius, a man of the highest character.

Next the cases of Quintus Servaeus and Minucius Thermus were brought. Servaeus was an ex-praetor, once a companion of Germanicus, Minucius of equestrian rank, both owing to only a limited friendship with Sejanus, which gained them greater sympathy. But Tiberius, countering by denouncing them as ringleaders in crime, then ordered the senator Gaius Cestius to repeat in the House information he had provided to his emperor, and Cestius undertook the prosecution.

It was the deadliest aspect of that age, that even leading senators acted as the basest of informers, some openly, many more in secret. Nor was any distinction made between outsider and relative, friend and stranger, recent events or the distant past: since to speak on any matter, whether in the Forum or at a dinner party, might result in accusation, with all hastening to take the lead and mark out his victim, sometimes in their own defence, but more often infected as if by a contagious disease.

Indeed, Minucius and Servaeus, on being convicted, turned informer. The same fate then overtook Julius Africanus, from the Gallic territory of the Santones, and Seius Quadratus whose origins I have not discovered. Nor am I unaware of the fact that the trials and tribulations of many men

are neglected by the historians, wearied by the wealth of material or fearful that what they themselves found excessively gloomy might be found equally loathsome by their readers. Much has fallen to me that is worthy of record, though disregarded by others.

BOOK VI:VIII MARCUS TERENCE DEFENDS PAST ACTIONS

For example, at the moment when others falsely denied their friendship with Sejanus, Marcus Terentius, a Roman knight, being so accused, dared to embrace the subject in an address to the Senate, as follows: 'In my situation', he began, 'it might be more expedient to deny the charge than to endorse it; but, whatever the outcome, I confess that I was both Sejanus' friend and sought to be so, and was delighted when I received his friendship.

I knew him as my father's colleague, in command of the praetorian cohorts, and later undertaking both civil and military duties. His relatives by blood and marriage were blessed with honours; so that whoever was close to Sejanus was more deserving of the emperor's friendship: while his enemies were subject to fear and inconsequence.

I offer up no one but myself as an example: all who were ignorant of his ultimate ambition, I defend solely at my own risk. For indeed it was not Sejanus of Vulsinii (Bolsena), whose favour we courted, but that member of the Claudian and Julian houses into which he had won entry through his alliances; your prospective son-in-law Caesar, your colleague as consul, your agent in State affairs.

It is not for us to determine whom you should exalt and why: the gods have given you supreme judgement in such matters, to us is left the honour of obeying. Moreover, we see what is before our eyes, he who receives wealth and rank from you, he who has the most power to aid or harm us, and none can deny such was Sejanus. To seek to know what our emperor

chooses to hide, what private plans he may have, is unlawful and dangerous: nor would the seeker be sure to discover them.

Senators Elect, consider Sejanus sixteen years of service, not his final end. We even paid respect to Satrius and Pomponius; it was considered acceptable to be known also to his freedmen and janitors. What follows? Should mine be a defence open indiscriminately to anyone? On the contrary let there be a clear dividing line. Let treason against the State, death-plots against the emperor, be punished: but Caesar, let the end of friendship and office absolve yourself and ourselves alike.'

BOOK VI:IX YET MORE INDICTMENTS

The strength of his speech, and that someone had been found who would say what all were thinking, made so great an impression that his accusers, whose previous wrongdoings were now taken into account, were punished with exile or death.

A letter from Tiberius now followed, regarding the ex-praetor Sextus Vistilius whom, as a close friend of his brother Drusus, he had transferred to his own staff. The cause of his displeasure with Vistilius was either the latter's libellous claims of Gaius Caesar's immorality, or some fictitious story believed by Tiberius.

Excluded, on this account, from the emperor's entourage, Vistilius, after attempting to slash his wrists despite his senile grip, bound up the wounds and in a written plea begged for pardon. Receiving a harsh reply, he then re-opened his veins. A wave of indictments of men from illustrious families and highest standing, on treason charges, then followed; of Annius Pollio and Appius Silanus together with Mamercus Scaurus and Calvisius Sabinus, while Vinicianus was accused together with his father Pollio.

The senators were beginning to tremble (for who was free of connection by marriage or friendship with this raft of famous men) when

Celsus, tribune of the urban cohort, now among the accusers, saved Appius and Calvisius from trial. Tiberius delayed the cases of Pollio, Vinicianus and Scaurus for investigation by himself and the Senate, with certain ominous comments in relation to Scaurus.

BOOK VI:X THE PURGE CONTINUES

Even women were not free of danger. Since they could not be accused of aspiring to State position, they were charged with shedding tears; so Vitia, the aged mother of Fufius Geminus, was executed for weeping over the execution of her son.

Such were the events in the Senate, and things were no different at the emperor's tribunal, where Vesularius Flaccus and Julius Marinus were hurried to their death, friends of old of Tiberius, who had followed him to Rhodes and were inseparable from him in Capri: Vesularius had been his go-between in the plot against Libo; Marinus had participated with Sejanus' in the accusations against Curtius Atticus. Thus there was all the more joy when it was learned that those precedents had recoiled on their exponents.

At about the same time, Lucius Piso, the pontiff (a rare office for so famous a man), died naturally, one who was never the willing author of anything servile, and whatever the demands necessity made on him still, wisely, a moderating influence. His father, as I have mentioned, had been censor; he had reached his eightieth year; and had earned, in Thrace, the honour of a triumph.

But his main distinction was the judgement with which he exercised the authority, only recently made permanent, of Urban Prefect, all the more impressive in that compliance with his rulings was a novelty.

BOOK VI:XI THE POWERS OF THE URBAN PREFECT

Now formerly, when the kings or later the magistrates were absent from home, in order to avoid leaving the city without a competent authority, an official was chosen to preside temporarily over the courts and handle emergencies; and it is said that Denter Romulius was so appointed by Romulus, and later Numa Marcius by Tullus Hostilius, and Spurius Lucretius by Tarquinius Superbus.

Then the right to appoint passed to the consuls; though a shadow of the past remains when a prefect takes on the consular functions at the Latin Festival. Again, during the civil wars, Augustus nominated Cilnius Maecenas of the equestrian order to oversee Rome and Italy. Then, on achieving power, the population being large and legal remedy slow to obtain, he appointed an ex-consul to keep the slaves, along with those citizens who were bold and troublesome unless threatened with force, under control.

Messalla Corvinus was the first to receive such powers, and lose them after a few days through incapacity to exercise them. Then, Statilius Taurus supported the role well, despite advanced age, and finally, Lucius Piso, who well-proven, consistently, over twenty years, was now honoured with a public funeral by Senate decree.

BOOK VI:XII REGARDING THE SIBYLLINE BOOKS

A proposal regarding an addition to the Sibylline Books was now tabled, by the plebeian tribune Quintilianus. Caninius Gallus, a member of the College of the Fifteen, claimed that it should be included among the rest of the prophetic verses, and demanded a decision from the Senate. This having been agreed without division, Tiberius sent a letter in which he reproached the tribune in mild terms, his youth, he added,

explaining his ignorance of ancient custom. He criticised Gallus for his anticipation of the College's decision, despite his knowledge of religious theory and practice, and before the customary reading of the verses and evaluation by the Masters had been undertaken, on uncertain authority and before a thinly attended Senate.

He reminded him also, that given the many empty verses circulated under the celebrated name, Augustus ordained a day before which candidate works were to be delivered to the Urban Prefect, private ownership of them being forbidden. This had been the decision also of our ancestors, after the burning of the Capitol during the civil conflicts (83BC), when the verses of the Sibyl, or Sibyls plural, were gathered together from Samos, Ilium, Erythrae (Cesme), and even from North Africa, Sicily, and the Greek colonies in Italy; the priests being given the task of determining, as far as humanly possible, what was genuine.

So, in this case also, the writings in question were submitted to investigation by the College of the Fifteen.

BOOK VI:XIII PROBLEMS WITH THE CORN SUPPLY

In the same consulate, the heavy price of corn almost caused a rebellion, and for several days in the theatre urgent demands were made, with a freedom not usually displayed towards the emperor. Troubled by this, Tiberius reproached the magistrates and senators for not exerting the State's authority over the public. He added that he was importing corn from various provinces on a much larger scale than Augustus had.

The Senate therefore decided on measures as severe as in ancient times in order to restrain the mob, while the consuls' edict proved no less drastic. Tiberius' ensuing silence on the matter was not taken, as he had expected, as a mark of trust in them, but as a display of pride.

BOOK VI:XIV CONSPIRACY CHARGES

At the year's end, the Roman knights, Geminius, Celsus, and Pompeius were executed on charges of conspiracy; of whom Geminius, prodigal in expenditure and effeminate in his way of life, was a friend of Sejanus, but to no serious purpose. Also the tribune Julius Celsus managed to slacken his chain in prison, and by looping it over his head and pulling tight broke his own neck.

Rubrius Fabatus, though, was simply placed under surveillance, on the grounds that despairing of affairs in Rome he intended to throw himself on the mercy of the Parthians. He was indeed discovered near the Strait of Sicily, and when dragged back to Rome by a centurion could give no plausible reason for his distant peregrination. However he remained safe and sound, more through his case being forgotten than out of clemency.

BOOK VI:XV GERMANICUS' DAUGHTERS MARRIED – AD33

In the consulate of Servius Galba (the future emperor) and Lucius Sulla, Tiberius, after long consideration as to whom his adoptive granddaughters, the daughters of Germanicus, with their ages advancing, should wed, chose Lucius Cassius for Drusilla, and Marcus Vinicius for Julia Livilla. Vinicius was of small-town origins: born at Cales (Calvi Risorta), with a father and grandfather of consular rank but otherwise of an Equestrian family, he was a mild character of polished eloquence. Cassius was of a plebeian though ancient and honourable Roman house, brought up with strict paternal discipline, commendable for his good nature rather than his industry. Tiberius wrote to the Senate regarding the betrothals, with a brief eulogy of the young men.

Then, giving various extremely vague reasons for his absence from Rome, he turned to the weightier subject of the enmity he incurred on behalf of the State, and requested that the prefect, Macro, and a few tribunes and centurions should accompany him whenever he visited the Senate House. However, though the Senate passed a wide-ranging decree without reservation as to the composition or size of his escort, he never approached the roofs of Rome, far less the debating chamber, but by many a winding way circled around yet avoided his native city.

BOOK VI:XVI ACTION AGAINST USURY

Meanwhile, a host of informers set upon those who added to their wealth through the interest on loans in contravention of a law established by Julius Caesar, the dictator, stipulating the terms under which money could be lent or property held in Italy, a measure previously dropped when public good became disregarded in favour of private gain.

Indeed, the evil of usury is endemic in Rome, an endless cause of discord and sedition, and attempts were made to repress it even in ancient and less corrupt times. The first attempt (450BC) was a ruling in the Twelve Tables that the rate of interest, hitherto set at the whim of the rich, should not exceed eight and a third percent annually; later (347BC) a tribunician bill lowered that by half; and eventually loans were banned. Multiple plebiscites were enacted against their fraudulent use, which was endlessly stifled only to reappear again by way of wondrous devices.

But now, the praetor Gracchus, under whose jurisdiction it fell, was forced by the very number of individuals implicated to refer the matter to the Senate, while the anxious senators (since none of them were quite free of guilt) sought pardon of the emperor. It was granted and the following period of a year and a half was conceded for the settling of accounts in accordance with the legal provision.

BOOK VI:XVII PROBLEMS WITH THE MONEY-SUPPLY

The result was a lack of ready money, since not only were all these loans redeemed simultaneously, but also the cash realised after the host of convictions at trial, from the consequent sales of forfeited estates, was locked away in the senatorial or imperial treasuries.

The Senate therefore directed that every creditor was to invest two thirds of his interest-bearing capital in landed property in Italy, the debtor to immediately repay that part of his loan. But the creditors demanded full repayment, and the debtors could not refuse without loss of honour. So initially there was a deal of scurrying about with pleas for more time, then a hum of activity in the praetor's court, and what had been devised as a remedy, the buying of land for cash, began by operating adversely, since the lenders had called in all their capital to cover such purchases.

As heavy selling of estates had resulted in lower land prices, those most in debt found difficulty in fully realising their assets at sale, and many were bankrupted. This destruction of households threatened rank and reputation, until Tiberius distributed a million gold pieces to the State banks, whereupon interest-free loans for three years were made available to those who secured their loan with double the value in land.

Credit therefore revived, and gradually private lenders also were found. However, as usual with such matters, the purchase of land was not carried out according to the original Senate decree, a ready inception meeting an indifferent end.

BOOK VI:XVIII EXECUTION, EXILE, SUICIDE

Now the previous anxieties returned with the indictment of Considius Proculo for treason. While celebrating his birthday all unsuspecting,

he was dragged off to the Senate House, condemned, and executed in an instant.

His sister, Sancia, was exiled, 'denied fire and water', her accuser being Quintus Pomponius. Of restless character, he gave as his excuse for his involvement in this way, in this and other cases, that by currying favour with the emperor he could alleviate the danger to his brother Pomponius Secundus.

Pompeia Macrina was also sentenced to exile. Her husband Argolicus and her father-in-law Laco, high-ranking men of Achaia, had been ruined by the emperor. Her father, an illustrious Roman knight, and her brother an ex-praetor, also faced with indictment, committed suicide. Their crime was that Pompeia's great-grandfather, Theophanes of Mytilene had been a close friend of Pompey, and that after Theophanes' death Greek sycophancy had honoured him with deification.

BOOK VI:XIX THE DEATH OF SEXTUS MARIUS AND VICIOUS SLAUGHTER

After these, Sextus Marius, the wealthiest man in Spain, was charged with incest with his daughter and thrown from the Tarpeian Rock. And lest there be any doubt that his vast riches had caused his ruin, Tiberius appropriated his gold and copper mines, forfeit to the State, as his own.

Spurred on by these executions, he gave orders for all those held in custody charged with being Sejanus' accomplices to be killed. A confused and extensive mass of corpses resulted, of every age and gender, the famous and the unknown, scattered about or heaped together. Nor were relatives or friends allowed to stand close, weep over them, or even view them for too long, rather a cordon of guards, attentive to the time granted them for mourning, escorted the putrefying bodies which were dragged to the Tiber, to float or drift ashore with none allowed to touch them or commit them to the pyre.



'Emperor Galba'
Johann Friedrich Leonard, after Paulus Moreelse,
1643 - 1680
The Rijksmuseum

The forces of terror had destroyed the rites of common humanity, and compassion was further denied with each advance of cruelty.

BOOK VI:XX REGARDING CALIGULA, AND A PROPHECY CONCERNING GALBA

At about this time, Caligula, who had accompanied his grandfather Tiberius to Capri, married Junia Claudilla, the daughter of Marcus Silanus.

Caligula's monstrous character was masked by a sly reticence, not a word escaping him on his mother Agrippina's punishment nor the fate of his brothers. Whatever mood Tiberius assumed each day, he adopted the same, his comments hardly differing. Hence the epigram coined later by his stepfather, the orator Passienus, that there was never a finer slave in the world, nor a worse master.

I should not omit Tiberius' prophetic remark concerning Servius Galba, then consul. He had summoned him, sounded his thoughts on a variety of subjects, and finally addressed him in Greek thus: 'You too, Galba, will one day taste power,' a prophecy of the latter's belated and brief reign based on Tiberius' knowledge of the Chaldean art, which he gained during his retirement in Rhodes, when instructed by Thrasyllus, whose expertise he had proved as follows.

BOOK VI:XXI THRASYLLUS' ORACULAR SKILLS TESTED

For all such consultations, Tiberius employed the highest point of his villa, and the confidential services of a single freedman. This illiterate, but solidly built guide preceded the astrologer whose skills Tiberius wished

to test along a trackless precipice (for the villa overlooked the cliffs), and, if any suspicion arose of incompetence or deceit, in returning he would hurl the candidate into the sea below, lest he betray any secrets.

Thrasyllus, having been led there by the same stony route, and having impressed his inquisitive host by cleverly predicting the latter's future reign, was asked if he had cast his own horoscope, regarding what the year would bring, and the nature of this day. Considering the positions and aspects of the planets, which he had drawn up, at first gave Thrasyllus pause, then he appeared to tremble, and the more he investigated the greater and greater seemed his trepidation, finally he exclaimed, between wonderment and alarm, that an uncertain, perhaps the ultimate danger threatened him.

Tiberius promptly embraced him, congratulating him on divining and hence escaping disaster; accepted, on this account, the prophecies he had made; and retained him among his closest companions.

BOOK VI:XXII TACITUS: ON CHANCE, CHOICE AND FATE

For myself, when I listen to such things as these, my judgement wavers, as to whether mortal life is governed by fate and immutable necessity or by chance. Indeed you will find that the wisest of the ancients, and the followers of their schools, are in disagreement. Many of them are of the opinion that the gods are concerned neither with our origin nor our end, nor with humankind at all; such that the virtuous experience many sorrows, while wrongdoers experience as many pleasures.

Others, on the contrary, think that there is indeed a harmony in events, but emanating not from the wanderings of the planets, but in truth from the origins and the web of natural causation; yet they leave us free to choose in life, though once a choice is made the immediate future is determined. Nor are good and evil what the crowd thinks: for many are happy, who seem to live at the mercy of adverse circumstances, while many others are miserable despite their vast wealth, wherever, that is, the former

steadfastly endure fortune's blows, or the latter employ their prosperity unwisely.

But the majority believe mortals are not free, that their future is determined from the outset, though the train of events may prove a prophecy false, due to those who are filled with deceit speaking of things about which they are ignorant: thus an art is discredited, for which clear evidence has been claimed, in ancient times and our own. Indeed, I shall relate the prediction regarding Nero's reign, made by the son of this very Thrasyllus, but in its proper place, since I do not wish to stray too far from my plan.

BOOK VI:XXIII THE DEATHS OF ASINIUS GALLUS AND DRUSUS JULIUS

In the same consulate, the death of Asinius Gallus became known. There seemed no doubt that he died of starvation, but whether voluntarily or by compulsion was considered uncertain. Tiberius, consulted as to whether burial should be allowed, showed no embarrassment in granting permission, nor in going out of his way to deplore the circumstances which had prevented the accused being convicted in his presence: there had been insufficient time it seems, despite the passing of three years, for this aged consul, father of so many consular sons, to face trial!

Drusus Julius was the next to die, surviving for the last eight days of his life by the wretched recourse of chewing the stuffing of his mattress for sustenance.

It had been claimed that Macro had been entrusted, if Sejanus took up arms, with extracting the young man from custody (he was imprisoned beneath the Palace) and installing him as popular leader. Later, since a rumour spread that Tiberius was about to forge a reconciliation with his daughter-in-law, Agrippina, and this grandson, Drusus Julius, the emperor chose cruelty over repentance.

BOOK VI:XXIV DRUSUS' CURSE

Indeed, he even attacked the dead youth, accusing him of vices of the flesh, of being a threat to his House, and an enemy of the State; and ordered the daily prison-register of Drusus Julius' actions and statements to be read aloud, which was regarded as the final atrocity. That he had been guarded for so many years by men who recorded his looks, groans, even his slightest murmur, and that his grandfather could bear to hear all, read all, and reveal it in public, seemed scarcely credible if it were not that the reports, produced by the centurion Attius and the freedman Didymus, exhibited the names of the slaves who had struck or threatened Drusus Julius, whenever he tried to leave his room.

Attius had even added his own remarks, full of brutality, as if they were to his credit, along with the dying words of his prisoner, who as if in delirium began crying out on Tiberius, as his murderer and then, since hope of life was gone, laid a precise and formal curse upon him: namely, that just as he, Tiberius, would, in the end, have brought about the deaths of his daughter-in-law Agrippina, his brother Drusus' son Germanicus, his own grandsons Nero Julius and Drusus Julius, and all their House, so would he, Tiberius, pay the penalty owed to his name, his ancestral line, and his posterity.

The senators did indeed interrupt the reading, in a show of horror: but in reality they were filled with terror and amazement, that Tiberius, once so cunning and cautious in the concealment of his crimes, was now so confident that he could, as it were, dissolve his palace walls to reveal his grandson exposed to a centurion's lash and the blows of slaves, and begging in vain for the last necessities of life.

BOOK VI:XXV THE DEATH OF AGRIPPINA

This tragedy had not yet ceased its effects, when news of Agrippina was circulated. I believe that after Sejanus' death she had lived sustained by hope, and that then, with no easing of her cruel circumstances, she had starved herself to death; unless it was that food was denied her, so as to give the appearance, once dead, that she had done so.

What is certain is that Tiberius was ablaze with vile slanders, accusing her of lewdness and adultery with Asinius Gallus, whose death, he claimed, had led her to tire of life. Yet Agrippina, impatient of the level, and greedy for power, he claimed, had foregone feminine frailty for masculine ambition. She had died, he added, on the very day of the very month on which, two years earlier (AD31), Sejanus had paid for his crimes, a fact that should be committed to memory, yet, he stated almost with pride, in her case she had neither been strangled nor thrown down the Gemonian Stairs.

For this token of mercy thanks were returned by the Senate, and it was decreed that an offering should be consecrated to Jupiter, in all future years, on the eighteenth of October, the day that both the guilty parties had met their end.

BOOK VI:XXVI THE DEATHS OF COCCEIUS NERVA AND PLANCINA

Not long afterwards, Cocceius Nerva, an adherent of the emperor, knowledgeable in all matters of religious and civil law, his position unassailable, his health unimpaired, made the decision to die. Tiberius on hearing of this, sat down with him to inquire as to his reasons, progressing to entreaty, and finally confessing that it would weigh on his conscience and harm his reputation, if his closest friend were to flee life without a reason.

Declining all discussion of the matter, Nerva continued to abstain from food. It was said, by those who knew his thoughts, that with his closer view of the State's ills, fearful of the future and angered by the present, he chose an honourable end while still whole and unthreatened.

And now Agrippina's destruction brought down Plancina, barely credible though that might seem. Once married to Gnaeus Piso, and openly celebrating Germanicus' death, Plancina had been saved, when Piso fell, by Livia's intervention, and not less so by Agrippina's hatred towards her. With the end of both the source of favour, and that of enmity, justice prevailed; arrested on charges familiar to all, she paid, by her own hand, the penalty not so much undeserved as overdue.

BOOK VI:XXVII THE DEATHS OF AELIUS LAMIA AND MANIUS LEPIDUS

Julia Livia, the daughter of Drusus the Younger, and widow of Nero Julius, now married beneath her, into the house of Rubellius Blandus, whose grandfather, a Roman knight from Tibur (Tivoli), was still remembered by many; a marriage which was a source of deep regret and contributed to the many griefs of a sorrowful realm.

At the close of the year, the death of Aelius Lamia was marked by a censorian funeral. His release, belatedly, from a token governorship of Syria, had been followed by his appointment as Urban Prefect (AD32). He was of noble birth, and vigorous in old age; and had gained an added dignity from the withholding of his provincial role. Yet, on the death of Pomponius Flaccus, the next governor of Syria, a letter from Tiberius was read, complaining that every illustrious individual fit to command an army refused to undertake his proper duty, and such was his need he was reduced to entreaty, in the hope that some ex-consul or other might be driven to accept the province, forgetting Arruntius, who was now detained in Rome for a further year, to avoid him taking up his post in Spain.

In this same year (AD33), Manius Lepidus died, of whose temperance and wisdom I have spoken enough in the previous books. Nor does his nobility require much proof: indeed, the Aemilian House has been prolific of men of civic virtue, and even those of the family of wayward character acted their part with brilliance.

BOOK VI:XXVIII TACITUS: REGARDING THE PHOENIX

During the consulate of Paulus Fabius and Lucius Vitellius (AD34), the phoenix bird visited Egypt, after a cycle of many generations, and presented the learned in that country and Greece with the subject of much discussion, regarding this strange event. I will present the points on which they concur, and a larger number that are questionable yet not too absurd for consideration.

The creature is sacred to the Sun, and those who have depicted its form agree that it differs from other birds in the shape of its head and the variegation of its feathers: as to its life-span accounts differ. The accepted number is five hundred years, but there are those who assert it visits at intervals of one thousand four hundred and sixty-one years (the Sothic cycle), and that three previous phoenix birds had arrived in the city known as Heliopolis (Ayn Shams, Cairo), with a dense flight of other birds attracted by the novelty of their appearance, during the reigns of Sesosis (Sesostris, Senusret I), Amasis (Ahmose II), and Ptolemy III of the Macedonian dynasty (reigned 246-222BC). Yet though the ancient sources are confusing with regard to the matter, there were less than two hundred and fifty years between Ptolemy and Tiberius, hence the view that this later phoenix was spurious and not from Arabia, and pursuing none of the habits affirmed by tradition.

For, so it is said, when the number of its years is complete, and death is approaching, it builds a nest in its own country, pouring out its life-force there, from which its successor rises, whose first task on reaching maturity

is to inter its predecessor, not after any random fashion, but once equal to the task having lifted a mass of myrrh and proved itself by a long flight, it grasps its father's body, transports it to the altar of the Sun, and consigns it to the flames.

These details are unverified and augmented by fable, but there is no disagreement as to the bird's being seen at various times in Egypt.

BOOK VI:XXIX THE SUICIDES OF POMPONIUS LABEO AND MAMERCUS SCAURUS

Meanwhile at Rome, continuous carnage prevailed. Pomponius Labeo, whose governorship of Moesia I mentioned, opened his veins and bled to death; his wife Paxaea following his example. Fear of the executioner, it was, that rendered this mode of suicide acceptable, and the fact that a condemned man's estate was forfeit, and burial denied, while those who passed sentence on themselves were rewarded for their readiness to do so, their body being interred and their last wishes respected.

Tiberius, however, explained in a letter to the Senate that though it had been our ancestors' custom when they severed a friendship to forbid the offender their house and thereby end amicable relations, and though he had reverted to that practice in this matter also, Labeo, who had been pursued for maladministration of his province and other crimes, while wrapping his guilt in ill-will towards Tiberius himself had terrified his wife, groundlessly, who even if guilty was still in no danger.

Next Mamercus Scaurus was again impeached, who though noted for his ancestry and his talent as an advocate, led a shameful life. He was ruined not by his friendship with Sejanus, but by an agent of destruction no less powerful, his hatred of Macro. The latter practised the same deceits as himself but concealed them better, and had laid information against Scaurus, regarding a tragedy the accused had written, highlighting a few verses which might seem aimed at Tiberius.

The charges actually laid however, by the accusers Servilius and Cornelius, were of adultery with Livilla and being addicted to magic rites. Scaurus forestalled his conviction, in a manner worthy of his ancestors the Aemilii, encouraged to do so by his wife Sextia, who both urged the act and joined him in death.

BOOK VI:XXX THE ACCUSERS PUNISHED

Nevertheless, those making accusations met with punishment, in circumstances dictated. So, Servilius and Cornelius, notorious for ruining Scaurus, were banished to the islands, ‘denied fire and water’, having accepted a bribe from Varius Ligus for dropping charges.

So too, Abudius Ruso, a former aedile, while threatening prosecution of Lentulus Gaetulicus, under whom he commanded a legion, on the grounds that Gaetulicus had promised his daughter to Sejanus’ son, was himself condemned and expelled from Rome.

At that time, Gaetulicus was in charge of the legions in Upper Germany, and was held in great affection by them, for his broad clemency and his avoidance of extreme measures, and was not unwelcome to the neighbouring army in Lower Germany, thanks to his father-in-law Lucius Apronius being legate there. Hence the firm tradition that he dared to send a letter to Tiberius, pointing out that his relationship with Sejanus was not begun on his own account, but followed advice given by Tiberius; he was, he knew, as capable of being deceived as Tiberius had been, and therefore the identical mistake should not be treated as free of wrongdoing in the one case, but ruinous in others. His own loyalty was intact and, if it were not insidiously attacked, would remain so. He would not accept replacement by a successor as anything other than an indication that he was marked out for death. A kind of treaty might be struck, however, by which the emperor might have authority over all else, while he retained his province.

This account, though remarkable, drew credibility from the fact that along among Sejanus' associates Gaetulicus remained unharmed, and in high favour, Tiberius being aware that he himself was the object of public disapproval, that his life was nearing its end, and his own position depended more on public opinion than real strength.

End of the Annals Book VI: I-XXX

BOOK VI: XXXI-LI
THE DEATH OF TIBERIUS, CALIGULA ACCEDES



'Victory from the Vatican'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p238, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK VI:XXXI A DELEGATION FROM PARTHIA

In the consulate of Gaius Cestius and Marcus Servilius (AD35), a number of Parthian noblemen arrived in Rome, without the knowledge of their king, Artabanus III. He, loyal to the Romans and acting fairly towards his subjects whilst still having Germanicus to fear, later adopted an attitude of pride towards ourselves and cruelty towards them.

Made confident by the successful campaigns he had waged against the surrounding nations and despising the elderly Tiberius as incapable of harm, he coveted Armenia, on which, after the death of Artaxias III he had imposed his eldest son Arsaces, adding insult to injury by sending for the treasure which Vonones I had abandoned in Syria and Cilicia. At the same time, out of vanity, he uttered boasts and threats regarding the old limits of the Persian and Macedonian empires, and his intention to invade the lands held first by Cyrus and then by Alexander the Great.

The most influential sponsor, however, of the secret delegation was Sinnaces, a man of noted ancestry and equivalent wealth, seconded by the eunuch Abdus, whose affliction among the barbarians brings not contempt but power. They, and the other leading individuals whom they enlisted, demanded that, as they could not be ruled by one of the scions of the Arsacidae, many of whom had been killed by Artabanus while others were not yet adult, they be granted Phraates, the son of Phraates IV: only a name and ratification by a willing emperor was needed, so that a true Arsacid might be seen on the banks of the Euphrates.

BOOK VI:XXXII TIBERIUS SPONSORS PHRAATES THEN TIRIDATES

It was Tiberius' wish also and, still fixed on managing foreign affairs through strategy and cunning, and without recourse to arms, he

prepared and equipped this Phraates to mount his father's throne. Meanwhile Artabanus had caught wind of the plot against him, he being constrained by fear and then as suddenly inflamed by his desire for revenge. To barbarians delay appears servile, instant action an attribute of kings: yet expediency prevailed, in that Abdus was summoned to a banquet, in a show of friendship, then incapacitated by a slow poison, while Sinnaces was detained by dissimulation and gifts, as well as matters of business.

Meanwhile in Syria, Phraates, having renounced Roman ways, to which he had become accustomed over the years, in order to practise Parthian living, being unequal to the customs of his native land was carried off by disease. Yet Tiberius continued with his plans, finding a rival for Artabanus in Tiridates who shared the same blood, and choosing Mithridates of Iberia (eastern Georgia) to rule Armenia, while reconciling him to his brother Pharasmanes I who held power in their native country. Tiberius also gave command of all his projects in the East to Lucius Vitellius.

I am not unaware that Vitellius had a sinister reputation in Rome, and is remembered for many a disgraceful action, yet as a governor of provinces he behaved with old-fashioned virtue. Once returned home, fearful of Caligula and later an intimate friend of Claudius, he reverted to a vile servility, an example to posterity of the shameless flatterer, his beginning inferior to his end, the promise of youth lost in the scandals of age.

BOOK VI:XXXIII CONFLICT IN ARMENIA

Now Mithridates, the superior leader, by force and deceit, induced Pharasmanes to support his campaign, and agents of corruption were engaged who tempted Arsaces' servants with a weight of gold, to commit murder. Simultaneously, a strong Iberian contingent invaded Armenia and gained control of the city of Artaxata (Artashat).

As soon as Artabanus heard the news, he readied his son Orodes to take revenge, granting him command of the Parthian troops, and sending men to hire auxiliaries. Pharasmanes responded by aligning himself with Caucasian Albania, and summoning the Sarmatians, whose wand-bearers, according to national custom, accepted the gifts of both armies and enlisted on both sides.

The Iberians, however, masters of the key locations, swiftly poured their Sarmatian allies into Armenia through the Caspian Gate (Pass of Darial), while those advancing to aid the Parthians were easily thwarted, since the other inland passes had been closed by the enemy, and the only one (Pass of Derbent) remaining between the sea and the extremity of the Caucasus Mountains, was impassable in summer, as the shallows are flooded by the force of the Etesian winds. In winter the waves are repulsed by the southerlies and this driving-back of the waters leaves the shore clear.

BOOK VI:XXXIV PHARASMANES DEPLOYS HIS ARMY

Orodes, therefore, lacked the presence of his allies, while Pharasmanes, strengthened by his auxiliaries, began challenging him to battle and, as he withdrew, advancing on his encampments and denying his horses pasture. He often encircled the enemy, his outposts placed as if laying siege, until the Parthians, unaccustomed to such insolence, surrounded the king and demanded battle.

Their sole strength lay in their mounted warriors: Pharasmanes was also effective with his infantry since, living in a mountainous region, the Iberians and Albanians were trained for greater toughness and endurance. It is said they originated in Thessaly, in the days when Jason, following Medea's departure with their children, later revisited the vacant palace of Aetes, and an empty Colchis. Many of their titles, and the oracle of Phrixus celebrate him; nor do they offer rams in sacrifice, believing that Phrixus was carried by that creature, whether the animal itself or a ship with such a figurehead.

When the battle lines were drawn on either side, and the Parthian spoke of his empire of the East, and the brilliance of the Arcasids, compared with the obscure Iberian and his mercenaries, Pharasmanes, in speaking to his troops, pointed to their being free from Persian domination, to the honour of victory being greater the higher they aimed, the danger and disgrace if they turned their backs; and at the same time to his own bristling lines, in contrast to the Median ranks in their gold attire, here true men, there the prize.

BOOK VI:XXXV THE PARTHIANS DEFEATED

Amongst the Sarmatians, however, there was no single leader's speech: each roused the others not to let mounted bowmen decide the battle: better to prevent it by a charge and hand to hand fighting. In consequence the encounters were various in nature, since the Parthians, used to pursuing or fleeing with equal skill, broke formation and sought room for their arrows, while the Sarmatians, neglecting their shorter-range bows, rode forward with cavalry-pike and long-sword. Now advance and retreat alternated, in the manner of a cavalry action, now with bodies locked together and steel clashing, driving onwards or being driven.

Then the Albanians and Iberians came to grips with their enemies, unseating them, and placing them in twofold danger, attacked by the men on horseback, and with the infantry dealing wounds closely, on the ground below. Meanwhile, Pharasmanes and Orodes were supporting the attackers, or aiding the waverers. Conspicuous figures, they recognised one another, gave a shout and charged, accompanied by an exchange of javelins, Pharasmanes, the more threatening, inflicting a wound through his opponent's helmet. He failed to repeat the blow, his horse carrying him onward, while the wounded prince was shielded by the bravest of his guards. Nevertheless, a false report of his death sowed panic among the Parthians, and they conceded defeat.

BOOK VI:XXXVI ARTABANUS ULTIMATELY FLEES

Artabanus soon sought revenge with the full weight of his empire. The Iberians, with their knowledge of the terrain, had the better of the conflict, yet Artabanus would not have withdrawn had not Vitellius engendered the fear in him of a war with Rome, by gathering the legions and circulating a rumour that he was about to invade Mesopotamia. Armenia was then abandoned, and Artabanus' power overthrown, Vitellius inciting the desertion by his subjects of a king merciless in peace and fatally unlucky in war.

Sinnaces, therefore, whom I mentioned earlier as hostile to the king, induced his father, Abdagaeses, to defect, along with others knowledgeable as to his purpose, and now readier for action due to the series of disasters. There was a gradual inflow of men whose subservience had been due more to fear than goodwill, and whose spirits had risen at the discovery of effective leadership.

Nothing now was left Artabanus but his foreign bodyguards, exiled from their homes and families, who neither understood virtue, nor cared about doing harm, but were paid and fed as agents of crime. Gathering them to him, he swiftly fled to a remote region adjoining Scythia; hoping to find allies, since he was connected by marriage to the Hyrcanians and Carmanians; and that in the interim the Parthians, favouring the absent and fickle where those present are concerned, might turn to regretting him.

BOOK VI:XXXVII VITELLIUS INSTALLS TIRIDATES AS KING

Now that Artabanus was in flight, and the minds of the people were set on a new ruler, Vitellius advised Tiridates to seize the moment, and himself led the legions and auxiliary forces to the banks of the

Euphrates. While the Roman made the national offering (the *suovetaurilia*, of a boar a ram and a bull) to Mars, and the Parthian readied a sacrificial horse to placate the river-god, the locals announced that the Euphrates was rising sharply of its own accord, without any downpour of rain, and that simultaneously the whitening foam was winding itself in loops, each like the band of a Persian diadem, auspicious of a venture crowned with success. Others gave a more skilful interpretation, that the initial results would be fortunate but not lasting, since though the omens of earth or sky were more likely to prove certain, the river, fluid by nature, revealed its prophecies only to sweep them away.

Now, a bridge of boats having been built, and the army having crossed, the first arrival in camp was Ornospades with several thousand cavalry. Once an exile, and a not unsuccessful aid to Tiberius in ending the Dalmatic War (AD9), he had been granted Roman citizenship, later regaining the friendship of his king, and high in his favour as the governor of those plains between the famed waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and hence called Mesopotamia.

Not long afterwards, Sinnaces' troops reinforced those of Tiridates, and Abdagaeses, the mainstay of his cause, added the riches and appurtenances of the crown. Vitellius, considering a display of Roman arms enough, advised Tiridates to remember the glorious deeds of his grandfather Phraates and his foster-father Tiberius, and warned the nobles to remain obedient to the king, and to retain their respect for Rome, and their own honour and good faith. He then returned to Syria with his legions.

BOOK VI:XXXVIII THE DEATHS OF TRIO, MARCIANUS AND GRATIANUS

I have combined the events of two summers in order to allow the mind some respite from domestic ills; for though three years had passed since

Sejanus' execution, neither time, prayers, nor satiety, which often pacify others, could soften Tiberius or indeed prevent him punishing doubtful or half-forgotten crimes as if they were the most serious and recent of all.

Fulcinius Trio was alarmed by this, and instead of passively awaiting the accusers' attacks, he drew up his last testament listing the many atrocities perpetrated by Macro and the emperor's head freedmen, and taunted Tiberius with his waning mental powers and his prolonged absence as if he were exiled. Tiberius ordered this passage to be read aloud, one which the heirs would have had suppressed, to demonstrate his tolerance of others' freedom, and indifference to his own poor reputation. Or perhaps he had been unaware for many a year of Sejanus' crimes, and now preferred they be broadcast, in whatever form of words, and let the truth, which flattery stifles, at least be made known.

At this time also, the senator Granius Marcianus, who was accused of treason by Gaius Gracchus, took his own life, while the ex-praetor Tarius Gratianus was condemned to death under the same law.

BOOK VI:XXXIX THE DEATHS OF RUFUS, PACONIANUS, AND SABINUS

The fates of Trebellenus Rufus and Sextius Paconianus were no different, Trebellenus dying by his own hand, while Paconianus was strangled in his prison cell for the verses he had composed there regarding his emperor.

Tiberius received the news, not from a distance, by messenger and across the dividing waters, as previously, but beneath the walls of Rome, where, that day or the following, he could write his replies to the consuls and almost witness the blood flowing through the houses of his victims, or over his executioners' hands.

At the close of the year, Poppaeus Sabinus breathed his last. Of humble origin, he attained the consulate and triumphal honours through his friendship with emperors, and governed the major provinces for twenty-four years, not due to exceptional ability, but simply because he was up to the job, no more.

BOOK VI:XL A TRAIL OF SLAUGHTER AND SUICIDE

In the year when Quintus Plautius and Sextus Papinius were consuls (AD36), the destruction was too commonplace for Lucius Arruntius' pardon to be noted, or the executions of others to register as atrocities, yet there was a scene in the Senate House itself that caused terror, when the Roman knight Vibulenus Agrippa, at the end of his accusers' peroration, drew a vial of poison from the folds of his gown, swallowed it, and dying was swiftly hauled off to gaol by the lictors, then strangled with a halter though he had ceased to breathe.

Not even Tigranes IV, once ruler of Armenia and now arraigned, was saved from the fate of Roman citizens, despite his royal title, while the consular Gaius Galba (elder brother of the future emperor) with the two Blaesi, died by their own hand. Galba had been denied the chance of a province after an ominous letter from Tiberius: the Blaesi, destined to receive priesthoods while their House was intact, had been barred from them once the blow fell, and as a presage of their fate, well-understood and therefore acted upon, Tiberius assigned the vacant positions to others.

So too Aemilia Lepida, who married Drusus Julius, and after persecuting her husband with a host of false accusations went unpunished, as long as her father Marcus Lepidus was alive: later she was accused by the informers of adultery with a slave: there being no question of her guilt, she therefore waived her defence, and ended her own life.

BOOK VI: XLI CAPPADOCIA AND PARTHIA

At about this time, the Cietae, a Cilician tribe subject to Archelaus of Cappadocia, being compelled, after our fashion, to carry out a property census and submit to tribute, withdrew to the heights of the Taurus Mountains, and given the nature of the terrain defended themselves well against the feeble forces of the king, until the legate Marcus Trebellius, sent by Vitellius from his province of Syria, with four thousand legionaries and a select group of auxiliaries, surrounded with siege-works the two hills occupied by the barbarians (the lesser known as Cadra, the other Davara) and forced them to surrender, the adventurous at the point of a sword, the rest through thirst.

Meanwhile Tiridates, the Parthians agreeing, took possession of Nicephorium (Ar-Raqqa, Syria), Anthemusias (Birejik, Turkey) and the other cities founded from Macedonia bearing Greek names, together with the Parthian towns of Halus and Artemita. Joy was unconfined, since Artabanus, raised in Scythia, had been execrated for his cruelty, while there were hopes that Tiridates' character had been enhanced by Roman culture.

BOOK VI: XLII TIRIDATES II CROWNED

The greatest adulation was displayed by the powerful city-state of Seleucia on the Tigris, defended by walls, never descending to savagery, but retaining the memory of its founder Seleucus I Nicator. Three hundred members, chosen for their wealth or wisdom, form their senate; the populace has separate powers. As long as they act in unison, the Parthian is scorned: when they differ, each summons help against its rival, and called upon to rescue a part the alien battens on the whole.

This had most recently occurred during the reign of Artabanus, who for his own benefit had surrendered the people to the power of the

aristocracy: for that of the people is akin to liberty, while that of a minority is closer to the arbitrary nature of monarchy. The citizens now celebrated the arrival of Tiridates with the honour paid to kings of old, along with those wider innovations of recent times; at the same time they poured abuse on Artabanus, as an Arcasid on the mother's side, but otherwise ignoble.

Tiridates entrusted the government of Seleucia to the people. Then, while debating as to which day he should set to assume sovereignty, he received letters from Phraates and Hiero, governors of the most important districts, seeking a brief delay. It was decided to wait for the presence of these two powerful individuals, and in the meantime the seat of government was moved to Ctesiphon (opposite Seleucia across the Tigris). However as they postponed their arrival from day to day, the commander-in-chief, in the traditional manner, and before an approving crowd, set the royal diadem on Tiridates' brow.

BOOK VI:XLIII FATAL DELAY

Had Tiridates immediately advanced into the interior, and against the remaining tribes, he might have overcome the doubts of those who hesitated, and they would have ceded all to him: but by laying siege to the fort which held Artabanus' funds and his harem, he gave time for allegiances to dissolve. For Phraates and Hiero, with others who had not been present on the day chosen for Tiridates' assumption of the crown, had deserted to Artabanus, some through fear, others through envy of Abdageses, who now ruled both the court and this newly-crowned king.

Artabanus himself was found in Hyrcania, covered in filth, and winning each day's sustenance with bow and arrows. Terrified at first that treachery might be intended, at which point the assurance was given that he was to be restored to his throne, he naturally asked what had brought about this sudden change. Hiero now inveighed against Tiridates' youth and

inexperience, saying that power was held not by an Arcasid, but by an empty name, a foreign effeminate, one unfit for war, and that power lay in the hands of Abdagaeses.

BOOK VI:XLIV TIRIDATES FORCED TO FLEE TO SYRIA

The former monarch realised that if false in their professions of affection they were not so in their hatreds. Only delaying to gather auxiliary troops in Scythia, he marched swiftly anticipating his enemy's plans, and his friends' remorse; retaining his filthy apparel to attract the sympathy of the masses. Neither prayer nor deceit, nothing at all, was omitted that might sway the doubting or encourage the resolute.

He was already approaching the outskirts of Seleucia with a considerable force, while Tiridates, unnerved by news of Artabanus and his arrival in person, wavered in council between counter-attack and delay. Those desiring battle and a swift resolution argued that their disparate and travel-weary foes had not, as yet, coalesced in spirit, into a loyal whole, traitors and recent enemies as they were to the man they now favoured once more.

Abdagaeses, in contrast, advised a return to Mesopotamia, where beyond the Tigris they might rouse the Armenians and Elymaeans and others in their rear, and along with their allied forces and any the Romans sent, might try their fortune. His view prevailed, as the greater authority lay with Abdagaeses and Tiridates had no appetite for risk. However, their departure was something of a flight and with the Nabatean tribes taking the lead the rest left for their homes, or Artabanus' camp, until Tiridates with a few followers eventually retraced his steps to Syria, freeing all from the disgrace of appearing traitors.

BOOK VI:XLV THE AVENTINE FIRE

In that same year (AD36) Rome was afflicted with a great fire, which destroyed part of the Circus Maximus, below the Aventine, and the buildings on the Aventine itself; which disaster Tiberius turned to his own credit by paying the price of the mansions and tenements destroyed. A million gold pieces were involved in this munificent outlay, all the more welcome to the people given that he was cautious in building on his account, and even regarding public works only two were erected, his Temple of Augustus, and the stage of Pompey's Theatre, and in both cases he was too disdainful of popularity or too old to bother dedicating them on completion.

Four husbands of Tiberius' grand-daughters were appointed to assess the claimants' losses: namely, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus (who had married Agrippina the Younger), Lucius Cassius Longinus (Julia Drusilla), Marcus Vinicius (Julia Livilla), and Gaius Rubellius Blandus (Julia Livia). The name of Publius Petronius was added by the consuls. Also honours were ingeniously invented and awarded to the emperor, though it was uncertain which he accepted or rejected, since the end of his life was near.

BOOK VI:XLVI THE MATTER OF THE SUCCESSION

For not long afterwards, the last consuls of Tiberius' reign, Gnaeus Acerronius and Gaius Petronius took office (AD37). By now Macro's power was excessive, who never neglectful of Caligula's favour now courted it daily, and after the death of Caligula's wife, Junia Claudilla, he had forced his own wife Ennia to mislead the youth with a pretence of love, and bind him with a promise of marriage. Caligula made no objection, while he could glimpse power; since excitable though his character was he had still acquired, almost without knowing, the hypocrisy learnt at his grandfather's side.

This Tiberius knew, and he hesitated, initially, therefore as to the succession, in considering each of his grandchildren. Of these, Tiberius Gemellus, son of Drusus the Younger, was the closest to him by blood and affection, but had not yet reached manhood. Caligula, Germanicus' son, possessed the vigour of manhood, yet also the support of the masses, to his grandfather a cause of dislike. Even Claudius, Germanicus' brother, of mature years and with a love for the arts, was considered, the obstacle being his impaired mental faculties.

If a successor was sought outside the imperial house, Tiberius feared lest the memory of Augustus, the name of the Caesars, were turned to derision and contempt: for his care was not so much for present popularity but to find favour with posterity. Soon, irresolute of mind, weary of body, he left to fate a decision to which he felt himself unequal, though comments escaped him from which might be gained his insight into the future.

He reproached Macro with forsaking the setting, and looking to the rising sun, and to Caligula himself, who in a chance conversation derided the memory of Lucius Sulla, he remarked, prophetically, that Caligula would possess all Sulla's vices with none of his virtues. At the same time, his eyes filled with tears, he embraced Gemellus, the youngest of his grandsons then, seeing Caligula's dark look, said: 'You shall kill him, and another slay you.'

Nevertheless, despite his failing health, he denied himself none of his vices, enduring them as if in a simulation of vigour, while he mocked the physicians' arts, and those who after the age of thirty needed a stranger's advice to distinguish what harmed the body from what benefited it.

BOOK VI:XLVII THE SEEDS OF BLOODSHED

Meanwhile, in Rome, the seeds of bloodshed were being sown that would last well beyond Tiberius' reign. Laelius Balbus had accused Acutia, Publius Vitellius' ex-wife, of treason. After her conviction, when a reward was about to be granted her accuser, Junius Otho, the plebeian tribune, interceded; out of which a feud arose, leading to Otho's ruin.

Then, Albucilla, notorious for her host of lovers, and formerly married to Satrius Secundus who had divulged Sejanus' plot, was accused of impiety regarding the emperor; Gnaeus Domitius, Vibius Marsus and Lucius Arruntius being charged as her adulterous accomplices. I have previously mentioned Domitius' noble ancestry, while Marsus could also claim illustrious forebears as well as distinction in learning.

However, the statements passed to the Senate, revealed that Macro had overseen the witness interrogations and the torture of the slaves, while the absence of any communication from Tiberius on the matter gave rise to the suspicion that much of the evidence was concocted while Tiberius was ill and perhaps without his knowledge, as a result of Macro's known hostility to Arruntius.

BOOK VI:XLVIII THE FATE OF ARRUNTIUS AND OTHERS

Domitius and Marsus, therefore, remained alive, the former compiling his defence, the latter as if determined to die by starvation, while Arruntius, whose friends advised delay and more delay, responded by saying that the same methods did not suit all men. As for himself, he had lived long enough and his sole regret was that he had been forced to suffer an old age filled with anxiety, amidst derision and danger, formerly hated by Sejanus, now Macro, but always one or other of those in power, and not through his own fault but because of his intolerance of scoundrels.

Yes, he might survive a while till the old emperor died, but how could he evade the young emperor to come? And then, if Tiberius, with all his experience of affairs, had been ruined and transformed by absolute power, was it likely that Caligula, scarcely out of boyhood, ignorant of all and fed with the worst, would prove better, with Macro as his example, who had been chosen to destroy Sejanus, Macro being the worst of the pair, and who had afflicted the State with an even greater host of crimes? Now he foresaw a harsher servitude, and therefore he would flee at once from both what had passed and what threatened. With this speech in the manner of a prophecy, he opened his veins. What follows will reveal that he did well to choose death.

Albucilla, after wounding herself inconclusively, was carried off to prison by order of the Senate. Of her accomplices in sexual profligacy, Carsidius Sacerdos, an ex-praetor, was to be deported to an island, Pontius Fregellanus was to forfeit his rank as senator, and Laelius Balbus was to receive like penalties, that sentence at least bringing joy, since Balbus possessed a belligerent eloquence, always in readiness to attack the innocent.

BOOK VI:XLIX THE SUICIDE OF SEXTUS PAPINIUS

During this time, Sextus Papinius, from a consular family, chose a sudden and hideous end by leaping to his death. The motive was attributed to his mother, divorced long before, who by approving his acts of dissipation drove the youth to extremes from which he could find no escape but suicide.

Thus indicted in the Senate, she, despite throwing herself at the senators' feet, and despite pleading at length a grief all must feel, and the greater frailty of the feminine heart faced with such a blow, with more sorrowful statements in the same sad vein, was nevertheless banished from Rome for ten years, until her younger son had left the hazard she presented to his youth behind.

BOOK VI:L THE DEATH OF TIBERIUS

His bodily strength was now deserting Tiberius, but not as yet his powers of dissimulation: his mind as unbending, and attentive in speech and look, he sought meanwhile to hide his manifest defects by forced sociability. After frequent changes of residence, he settled finally in a villa on the promontory of Misenum (Miseno) once occupied by Lucius Lucullus. There he was found, in the following manner, to be nearing his end.

There was a doctor, called Charicles, noted for his skill, who had not been used to treating the emperor's illnesses, yet had frequently given him advice. While departing from a banquet as though on private business, he clasped Tiberius' hand, as if paying his respects, and felt the emperor's pulse. The hint failed; for Tiberius, unsure whether to show offence, accordingly concealed his anger, ordered the dinner to proceed, and reclined at table beyond his usual hour, as if paying a compliment to his now absent friend.

Yet Charicles confirmed to Macro that the emperor's life was ebbing, and that he would not last beyond a few days. Therefore all outstanding business was vigorously completed, by audience if the parties were present, by messenger, in the case of the legates and armies. On the sixteenth of March, owing to a breathing problem, it was thought he had ended his mortal life, and Caligula was leaving to begin his imperial rule, amidst a host of congratulations, when word suddenly arrived that Tiberius had regained his speech and sight and was summoning servants to bring him refreshment after his lapse.

A general panic ensued, and while Caligula stood silently fixed to the spot, now after having attained the height of expectation dreading the worst, and the crowd scattered in all directions, Macro, undismayed, while they all fled the threshold, ordered the old man smothered under a pile of bedclothes. So Tiberius ended his life, in his seventy-eighth year.



'Death of Tiberius'

Jan Caspar Philips, after Hubert François Gravelot,
1736 - 1775

The Rijksmuseum

**BOOK VI: LI TACITUS ON THE CHARACTER AND
BEHAVIOUR OF TIBERIUS**

His father was Tiberius Claudius Nero, and was related on both sides to the Claudian House, though his mother, Livia, had been adopted successively into the Livian and Julian families. From early infancy, life proved uncertain for him; at first as an exile, alongside his proscribed father, then entering the House of Augustus as his step-son, and struggling against numerous rivals, while Marcellus, Agrippa and later Gaius and Lucius Caesar, thrived, and with even his brother Drusus the Elder proving happier in the love of his countrymen.

Yet his situation was most precarious after he received Julia the Elder's hand in marriage, having to endure his wife's infidelities, and even escape them by retiring to Rhodes. On his return, he was master of an imperial house lacking an appointed heir for twelve years (AD2-AD14), and subsequently sole arbiter of the Roman world for almost twenty-three.

His behaviour also had its various stages. His reputation and mode of life were unexceptionable while, as a private citizen, he held office under Augustus; he exercised secretiveness and cunning, concealed behind a hypocritical display of virtue, while Germanicus and Drusus were alive; he revealed that same mix of good and evil while his mother was yet on the scene; then, while he still prized or feared Sejanus, he was loathed for his cruelty but his libidinous desires remained hidden; finally, past all shame or fear, he displayed his true character, indulging equally in vice and crime.

**BOOK VI: TRANSLATOR'S NOTE, THE MISSING PORTION
OF THE TEXT, FROM BOOK VII TO EARLY BOOK XI**

The lost material of Books VII to the first part of Book XI likely contained a narrative around the events listed below:

AD37. Caligula's accession (March 18). The purge discontinued. Claudius enters public life, and Nero is born. Tiberius Gemellus and Marcus Junius Silanus commit suicide. Early signs of Caligula's derangement.

AD38. Death of the emperor's sister Drusilla. Macro commits suicide. Delusions of divinity.

AD39. Conspiracy of Aemilius Lepidus and Lentulus Gaetulicus, legates of Lower Germany. Agrippina the Younger and Julia Livilla banished. Caligula in Gaul.

AD40. Sham campaign in Britain. Religious unrest in Jerusalem.

AD41. Caligula assassinated (January 24). Claudius proclaimed emperor by the praetorians. Herod Agrippa granted Judaea. Agrippina returns from banishment, with her sister Julia Livilla who is again banished on adultery charges. Birth of Britannicus.

AD42. Messalina, wife of the emperor, increasingly powerful and vindictive. Failed conspiracy of Vinicianus and Scribonianus, legates of Dalmatia. Purge follows.

AD43. Claudius' invasion of Britain under Plautius Silvanus, who defeats Caratacus.

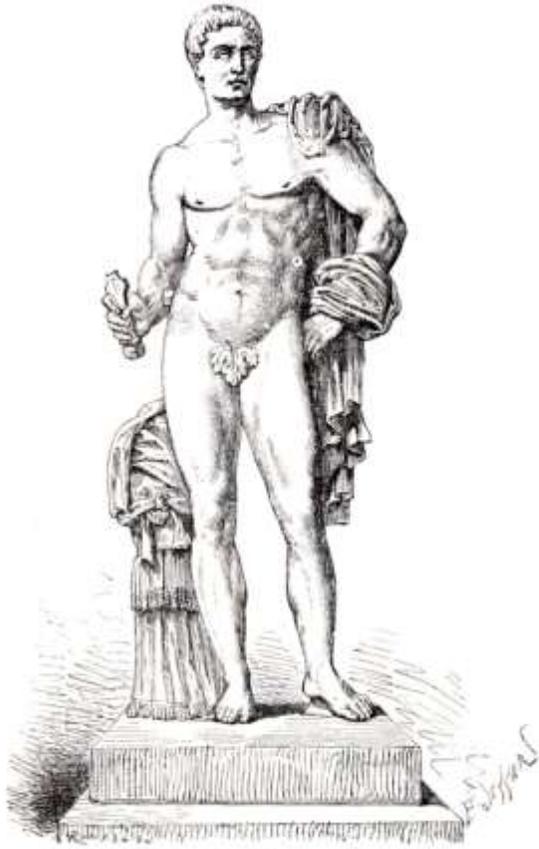
AD44. Triumph of Claudius.

AD47. Ovation of Silvanus, succeeded in Britain by Scapula.

Book XI here opens with the death of Valerius Asiaticus.

End of the Annals Book VI: I-XXXI-LI

BOOK XI: I-XXXVIII
CLAUDIUS AND MESSALINA



'Sectus Pompeius'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p713, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XI:I ARREST OF VALERIUS ASIATICUS AD47

...**M**essalina believed that Valerius Asiaticus, twice consul, had formerly been Poppaea Sabina's lover; and as she herself also coveted the gardens laid out by Lucullus which Asiaticus was adorning with remarkable splendour, she set Suillius on to arraign them both. Sosibius, the tutor to Britannicus, who joined with him, was assigned the task of warning Claudius, out of apparent good-will, to beware of this display of wealth and power inimical to emperors, saying that Asiaticus, the principle sponsor in the assassination of Caligula, had not been afraid to claim the glory of the deed also, and did so while among a crowd of Roman citizens.

Famous, as a result, in Rome, and with a reputation known throughout the provinces, Asiaticus, born in Vienne (on the Rhone) and with many powerful connections, was preparing to travel to the armies in Germany, since he would possess there the means at hand to cause trouble in his native land (Gaul).

Claudius investigated no further but, as if to quell an immediate uprising, swiftly detached a contingent of soldiers under Crispinus the praetorian prefect. The latter found Asiaticus at Baiae, clapped him in irons, and hauled him off to Rome.

BOOK XI:II ASIATICUS BROUGHT BEFORE CLAUDIUS AND MESSALINA

He was refused access to the Senate: instead he was granted an imperial audience in a bedroom, with Messalina present and Suillius presenting the charges: namely his corruption of the soldiers, whose loyalty was bought for cash, and every kind of sexual favour; his adultery with Poppaea; and finally his effeminacy. Upon which

last accusation, the defendant broke his silence: ‘Ask your sons, Suillius,’ he cried, ‘they will bear witness to my manhood.’

Entering then upon his defence, he moved Claudius deeply, and even Messalina summoned a few tears. Yet on leaving the bedroom to wash them away, she warned Vitellius not to let the prisoner slip their grasp. She herself hastened to destroy Poppaea, eliciting the help of her agents to drive the woman to suicide with threats of incarceration. Indeed Claudius was so unaware of her actions, that when Poppaea’s husband Publius Scipio dined with him a few days later, he asked where Scipio’s wife was, and received the reply that she had fulfilled her fate.

BOOK XI:III ASIATICUS COMMITS SUICIDE

When consulted regarding the wisdom of acquitting Asiaticus, Vitellius, in tears recalled their long-standing friendship, and their joint devotion to Claudius’ mother Antonia the Younger, then reminded Claudius of Asiaticus’ service to the State, including with the army in Britain, and whatever else might inspire compassion, proposing that Asiaticus be granted a free choice of his manner of death; this was followed by like words from Claudius’ conceding this act of clemency.

Some of Asiaticus’ friends then advised a mild death by starvation, but he replied that he would forgo that gift: he exercised as usual, bathed, and dined in good spirits, commenting that it would have been more honest to die from Tiberius’ cunning or at Caligula’s whim, than by a woman’s deviousness, and Vitellius shameless tongue: he then opened his veins, but not before visiting his funeral pyre, and ordering it to be transferred to a site where his trees’ shady canopies might not be threatened by the heat of the fire: so calm was his composure to the very end!

BOOK XI:IV DEATHS AND REWARDS

The Senate was then convened, and Suillius added a pair of illustrious Roman knights, surnamed Petra, to the list of those accused. The ostensible reason for their indictment lay in the claim that they had lent their house to Poppaea for adultery with Mnester (the leading actor, and favourite of Caligula). But one was in fact accused because of a dream he had seen in the depths of sleep, in which he witnessed the emperor being crowned with a wreath formed of inverted ears of corn, from which he predicted a failure of Claudius' much-improved corn supply. Some say he saw a wreath of vine-leaves with whitened leaves, indicating the emperor's death at autumn's wane. What is unambiguous is that it was some manner of dream that brought ruin to himself and his brother.

Crispinus was voted fifteen thousand gold pieces, and the praetor's insignia. Vitellius proposed that ten thousand more be awarded to Sosibius, for assisting Britannicus by his teaching, and Claudius by his advice. Scipio on being asked his view, also, replied: 'As I think the same as all, concerning Poppaea's crimes, consider me as saying the same!', an elegant compromise between his love for his wife and his obligations to the Senate.

BOOK XI:V THE CINCIAN LAW REGARDING GIFTS AND PAYMENTS

Suillius then continued his pitiless accusations, his boldness finding many an imitator; since the concentration of all legal and magisterial offices in the person of the emperor presented opportunities for depredation. And no public transaction was as open to bribery as the treacherous work of the advocates: so much so that Samius, a noted Roman knight, having paid four thousand gold pieces to Suillius only to find him colluding with his accusers, fell upon his sword in the man's house.

Therefore, roused by Gaius Silius, the consul designate, whose power and ruin I shall relate in due course, the Senate rose in a body, and demanded that the Cincian law (204BC, revived by Augustus 17BC) be restored, which in ancient times stipulated that none should accept money or gifts for pleading a cause.

BOOK XI:VI SILIUS SUPPORTS RESTORATION OF THE CINCIAN LAW

Then, accompanied by protests from those against whom his invective was directed, Silius, who was at odds with Suillius, delivered a bitter attack, quoting the example of the orators of the past, who considered their reputation with posterity as the only true reward for eloquence. What otherwise would be the first and finest of the liberal arts, he claimed, was tarnished for sordid gain; even statements of good faith lacked integrity where all eyes were on the magnitude of the fees. If only lawsuits were conducted such that none profited, there would be fewer of them: but as things stood, quarrels and accusations, hatred and injustice were fostered, so that just as the prevalence of disease rewarded the physician, corruption in the courts brought the advocate wealth. Let them recall Asinius Pollio and Messala Corvinus, he continued, and more recently Lucius Arruntius and Marcus Aeserninus: men who had achieved the heights of their profession without any reservation concerning their life or eloquence.

Given the consul designate's speech, and others in support, a resolution was being drafted by which such extortion would be banned by law, when Suillius, Cossutianus Capito, and those others who saw that the statute would mean punishment not trial, as their guilt was obvious, surrounded Claudius, begging a pardon for past actions.

BOOK XI:VII CLAUDIUS CAPS THE FEES

Once he had agreed, they began to speak, asking where was the man possessed of such arrogance, as to expect eternal fame? That help should be at hand, and was a benefit to defendants, lest lacking an advocate they might be vulnerable to the powerful. Yet eloquence could not be available for free, private business must be neglected to allow involvement in the affairs of others. Many men made a living from the army, others from tending their estates: no one devoted himself to anything unless he had first established it as profitable.

Oh, they said, it was easy for Asinius and Messala, rich from the spoils of the conflict between Antony and Octavian (Augustus), or for the heirs of wealthy houses, like Aeserninus or Arruntius, to assume a noble stance. They themselves took as ready examples the harangues Publius Clodius or Gaius Curio once delivered for a fee. They themselves were senators of modest means, who in a State at peace sought only the wages of peace. Let the emperor consider a common man who won glory in the advocate's gown: if the rewards of his art were lost, the art itself would perish.

Claudius, who considered these points less distinguished but relevant nonetheless, capped the fees at a maximum of a hundred gold pieces, those advocates exceeding the limit to be subject to the law on extortion.

BOOK XI:VIII EVENTS IN THE EAST (CAD42-CAD48)

At an earlier time, Mithridates of Armenia, whose previous reign and arrest by Caligula (cAD37) is recorded, had returned to his kingdom on Claudius' advice (cAD42), relying on the power of his brother Pharasmanes I of Iberia. That king had reported that the Parthians were in disarray, the crown being in question, and lesser affairs neglected.

Gotarzes II, it seems, had among other crimes brought about the death of his brother, Artabanus IV, together with the latter's wife and son, such that the rest of the population in fear called on the aid of another of his brothers Vardanes I. He, prepared to act as boldly as possible, covered nearly 300 miles in two days and drove the unsuspecting and terrified Gotarzes to flight; then without delay he seized the nearest districts, Seleucia alone denying him supremacy.

More from anger at a population who had also rejected his father than his own immediate interest, he involved himself in the siege of that powerful city, which was protected by the intervening Tigris, defended by walls, and well-provisioned.

Meanwhile Gotarzes' forces, strengthened by the Dahae and Hyrcanians, renewed hostilities, and Vardanes, forced to abandon Seleucia, pitched camp opposite him on the Bactrian plain.

BOOK XI:IX MITHRIDATES SEIZES ARMENIA, PARTHIA IS REUNITED

Then, with the powers in the East divided and the outcome uncertain, Mithridates was granted the opportunity to seize Armenia, due to the energy of the Roman troops in demolishing the hill forts, while the Iberian army simultaneously overran the plains. After the rout of Demonax, the

one prefect who had dared to fight, the Armenians made no resistance. A slight delay was caused by Cotys, the king of Lesser Armenia, to whom a group of nobles had turned; but he was checked by missives from Claudius, and all ran smoothly for Mithridates, though he showed more harshness than was beneficial for a new ruler.

Meanwhile as the Parthian rivals were preparing to engage, a conspiracy on the part of the populace became known, of which Gotarzes informed his brother, and they swiftly struck an agreement; meeting hesitantly at first, then, with right hands clasped, pledging before the altars of their gods to avenge their enemy's treachery, and make concessions one to the other.

It was thought best for Vardanes to retain the crown, while Gotarzes withdrew to inner Hyrcania, to avoid all question of rivalry. When Vardanes returned, Seleucia surrendered, in the seventh year after its defection (AD43), not without some shame on the part of the Parthians, whom a single town had so-long defied.

BOOK XI: X VARDANES MURDERED, GOTARZES SEIZES POWER IN PARTHIA

Vardanes next visited the principal districts, and though longing to recover Armenia was thwarted by Vibius Marsus' threat of war, he being the Roman governor of Syria. And in the meantime, Gotarzes, repenting of yielding the throne, and called upon by the nobility for whom subjection to a monarch is harder to accept in peacetime, gathered an army. Against this, Vardanes advanced to a ford of the river Erindes, where he triumphed after a brisk struggle and, in a series of successful engagements, overcame the tribes as far as the river Sindes, which separates the Dahae from the Arians. There his achievements ended, the Parthians, though the victors, rejecting any deeper incursion.

After raising a number of monuments witnessing to his power, and the fact that no previous Arsacid had forced those nations to pay tribute, he returned therefore, full of glory and more insolent and intolerable in his attitude towards his subjects. They, in a pre-planned act of treachery, assassinated him while he, suspecting nothing, was intent on hunting. Vardanes, while yet young, would have been rivalled in distinction by few kings of greater age and experience, if he had sought the love of his people as ardently as he sought to inspire fear in his enemies.

On the death of Vardanes, Parthia was reduced to turmoil, there being no agreement as to his successor. Many were inclined to accept Gotarzes, others a grandson of Phraates IV, Meherdates, given as a hostage to ourselves. Gotarzes then proved too strong, and as master of the palace, drove the Parthians, by his cruelty and licentiousness, to petition the Roman emperor, secretly, begging that Meherdates might be released to mount his ancestral throne.

BOOK XI: XI THE SECULAR GAMES

During the same consulate (of Claudius and Vitellius, AD47), eight hundred years after the foundation of Rome (753BC), and sixty-four years after their celebration (17BC) by Augustus, the Secular games were again performed. I omit the calculations used by the two emperors, as they are adequately covered in my description of Domitian's reign. For he too mounted Secular Games, and being a priest of the Fifteen and a praetor at that time, I followed them closely, a fact I relate not out of vanity but because this responsibility rested with the Fifteen from ancient times, and the magistrates are especially charged with executing their ceremonial office.

When Claudius attended the Circensian Games, where boys on horseback from the great families initiated a mimic battle of Troy, the emperor's son Britannicus and Lucius Domitius, soon to be adopted as heir

to the throne under the name Nero, being among them, the livelier applause the crowd granted the latter was considered prophetic.

It was commonly related too, that snakes had guarded him in his infancy, a tale embellished to ape foreign myths, since Nero himself, who was hardly given to self-disparagement, only claimed that a single snake had been observed in his bedroom.

BOOK XI:XII MESSALINA AND SILIUS

It was in truth the memory of Germanicus that had won Nero excessive popularity with the public, he being the last male scion of Germanicus' own house, while compassion grew for his mother Agrippina, due to her persecution by Messalina, who always her enemy was now even more excitable, and only distracted from laying further accusations and charges by a new love affair, bordering on insanity. For her passion for Gaius Silius, the most handsome young man in Rome, burned so fiercely that she drove his noble wife, Junia Silana, from under her husband's roof, and took possession of the freely available adulterer.

Silius was not unaware of the risk and the potential scandal, but since refusal meant certain death, there was some hope of maintaining secrecy, and the rewards were high, he found solace in shutting his eyes to the future and enjoying the present.

Messalina, shunning concealment, frequented his house with a large following, clung to him while abroad, showered him with wealth and honours, and finally, as if their fortunes were now reversed, the emperor's slaves, freedmen and furniture ended up in the adulterer's house for all to see.



'Emperor Claudius'
Johann Friedrich Leonard, after Paulus Moreelse,
1643 - 1680
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK XI:XIII CLAUDIUS' PUBLIC ACTIVITY

Meanwhile Claudius, seemingly unaware of the state of his marriage, and intent on his duties as censor, condemned, in severe edicts, the licence displayed by theatre audiences who had showered Publius Pomponius, of consular rank and who wrote pieces for the stage, also various noblewomen, with abuse.

The emperor also checked widespread abuse by creditors, preventing loans to minors repayable on their father's death. He built aqueducts to carry fresh water from the hills above Subiaco to Rome. And he added new letters to the Latin alphabet, after discovering that the Greek alphabet too had been extended over time.

BOOK XI:XIV DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALPHABET

The Egyptians were the first people to represent meaning by hieroglyphic symbols, and those most ancient records of human history are visible today carved on the stones. They also claim to have invented the alphabet; a concept which the Phoenicians, who dominated the sea, brought to Greece, gaining the credit for discovering what they had merely borrowed. For the story goes that Cadmus, arriving with the Phoenician ships, revealed the art to the as yet uncivilised Greeks.

Others say that Cecrops the Athenian or Linus of Thebes and, at the time of Troy, Palamedes of Argos, fashioned sixteen of the letters, the remainder being devised later by others, primarily by Simonides.

Then in Italy, the Etruscans learnt the system from Demaratus of Corinth; and the ancestors of the Roman people from Evander the Arcadian; the shapes of the Latin characters being those of the earliest Greeks. Yet in our case also there were fewer letters at first, and others

were then added. Claudius, in this way, created three more symbols, which were in use during his reign but later discontinued, though they can still be seen even now on the bronze plaques attached to forums and temples.

BOOK XI:XV CLAUDIUS FOUNDS A COLLEGE OF DIVINATION

He then consulted the Senate regarding a College of Divination, so that the most ancient art of Italy, that of soothsaying, should not die out through apathy. Often in times of public adversity, he said, they had called on the diviners, and on their advice had renewed the religious ceremonies, and observed them more correctly thereafter. The Etruscan nobles meanwhile had maintained the skill, either voluntarily or after pressure from the Roman Senate, and propagated it throughout certain families.

Now, he continued, it was performed more negligently, due to public indifference to the liberal arts and the spread of imported religions. Though all things seemed fine at present, they should show their gratitude for divine favour, by ensuring that the sacred rituals practised in times of danger were not forgotten in more prosperous days.

A Senate decree was therefore passed, instructing the pontiffs to determine what aspects of the art of divination needed to be retained and strengthened.

BOOK XI:XVI THE CHERUSCI SEEK A KING

In that same year (AD47), the tribe of the Cherusci asked Rome for a king, the other noblemen having died during their internal conflicts,

with only a single member, Italicus, of the royal house still alive, living in Rome. On his father's side he was a son of Arminius' brother Flavus, while his mother was daughter to Actumerus, chief of the Chatti. He was a handsome figure, skilled in arms and horsemanship both according to the Roman methods and his own native system.

Claudius granted him money, therefore, added a retinue, and exhorted him to embrace the honour of his heritage with confidence: he being the first person born in Rome, living not as a hostage but as a citizen, to depart the city in order to ascend a foreign throne.

Initially his arrival was greeted with joy by the Germans, and as he was free of partisanship and sought the support of all, admirers crowded round this prince who occasionally indulged in inoffensive displays of courtesy and moderation, but more frequently in the drunkenness and libidinousness dear to barbarians.

His local fame was beginning to spread further, when mistrusting his growing power those who had thrived on partisanship approached the neighbouring tribes, declaring that the former freedom enjoyed by the Germans was being denied them, while Roman power was increasing. Was there no other man, they asked, born of their native soil, to fill the highest place, rather than this offspring of Flavus the spy, raised above them all? In vain let them invoke the name of Arminius: for if this had been a son of his who had returned to rule them, they would indeed have feared his being ruined by an alien taste in food, an alien submissiveness and alien dress, indeed by all things foreign: while if this Italicus were to show his father's disposition, well, no man but his father Flavus had fought with more enmity against his country and the gods of his homeland.

BOOK XI:XVII ITALICUS CONSOLIDATES HIS POSITION

With this and similar appeals, they gathered a large force, Italicus' being no less powerful. He reminded his men that he had not invaded an unwilling country, but had been called upon because he was of higher birth than others: let his courage be tested, and let it be seen whether he proved worthy of Arminius, his uncle, and Actumerus, who was his grandfather. Nor was he ashamed of his father for never having renounced a loyalty to Rome freely subscribed to by the Germans.

The word 'liberty', he said was being used as a pretext by those who, themselves ignoble, and a threat to the nation, possessed no hope except in civil war. The host loudly acclaimed his speech, and the king proved victorious in the ensuing battle, a major engagement as far as barbarian conflicts go. Later though, flushed with his success, he lapsed into arrogance, was driven out, and was restored to the throne by Langobard forces, a scourge of the Cherusci in both good fortune and adversity.

BOOK XI:XVIII TROUBLE IN GERMANY AND GAUL

About the same time, the Lesser Chauci, with peace at home, but elated by the death of Sanquinius Maximus, legate of Lower Germany, forestalled the arrival of Corbulo his replacement by invading Lower Germany, led by Gannascus, of the tribe of the Canninefates, formerly an auxiliary worthy of his pay, then a deserter, and now employing a predatory fleet of light vessels mainly to ravage the coast of Gaul, knowing the inhabitants to be wealthy and unwarlike.

But Corbulo, on entering the province, showing great caution, and soon to win glory, beginning with this campaign, brought his triremes through the Rhine canal, and gathered the rest of the fleet, where possible, via the estuaries and other canals. Sinking the enemy craft, he drove Gannascus out.

After settling affairs satisfactorily for the present, he recalled the legions to their former discipline, which prohibited falling out on the march or acting without orders, they being as keen on plunder as they were lax in duty and effort. Picketing, standing sentry, and all official activities were to be undertaken while fully armed. It is said that two soldiers were punished by death, for digging soil to build a rampart, in the one case without weapons, in the other with only a dagger. False perhaps or exaggerated as these tales may be, they still originated in the strictness of a commander credited with such harshness over trifles that he may well be taken as severe and inexorable regarding graver offences.

BOOK XI: XIX CLAUDIUS WITHDRAWS THE LEGIONS

The terror he inspired, however, affected his soldiers and the enemy differently: it roused our courage, while sapping their spirit. The Frisian tribe, hostile or disloyal after the rebellion that began with the defeat of Lucius Apronius, gave hostages and settled in the area dictated by Corbulo, who also imposed on them a senate, magistrates and laws. And to enforce his orders, he built a fort there, while sending men to persuade the Greater Chauci to surrender, and to kill Gannascus by guile.

Against a deserter and violator of trust such an action was neither uncalled-for nor dishonourable, yet the killing of Gannascus affected the attitude of the Chauci, and Corbulo was sowing the seeds of rebellion. Though welcome to many in Rome, the news seemed sinister to others. Why was Corbulo provoking enmity? Any losses would harm the State: while if he prospered, then a formidable general would seem a danger to a nervous emperor, and a threat to peace.

Claudius therefore prohibited the fresh use of force in Germany, so much so that he ordered our garrisons withdrawn to the west bank of the Rhine.

BOOK XI:XX CLAUDIUS AWARDS TRIUMPHAL HONOURS

Corbulo was already establishing camp on enemy territory, when the despatch arrived. He was surprised, but though a host of consequences filled his mind: the risk of imperial displeasure, barbarian contempt, allied ridicule; he said nothing more than: 'Happy the Roman generals of long ago!' and signalled the withdrawal.

However, to occupy the men, he dug a canal, twenty-three miles long linking the Meuse and the Rhine, so eliminating the hazards of the sea-passage between the estuaries. Claudius though denying him his campaign, nevertheless conceded him triumphal insignia.

Not long afterwards Curtius Rufus gained the same honours, having opened a mine in the district of Mattium, in search of silver. The output was meagre and short-lived, but the legionaries lost men heavily in digging channels and excavating tunnels toilsome enough in the open. Broken by their efforts, and with similar suffering experienced in other provinces, the troops organised a private letter on behalf of the military, begging the emperor when entrusting an army to a general, to anticipate the like by bestowing triumphal honours in advance!

BOOK XI:XXI REGARDING CURTIUS RUFUS

As to the origins of Curtius Rufus, whom some have called the son of a gladiator, I would not wish to promote a slander, but am ashamed to relate the truth. On reaching manhood, he was a follower of the quaestor who had been allotted North Africa, and was passing the time alone in an empty arcade at noon, when a female form, of a superhuman nature, rose up before him and he heard a voice say: 'You, Rufus, will become proconsul of this province.'

Inspired by this omen, he left for Rome, and with the generosity of friends and his own efforts he achieved the quaestorship and soon afterwards the praetorship, despite competing with nobler candidates, following on Tiberius' recommendation, for the emperor had drawn a veil over the issue of his birth, by saying: 'Curtius Rufus, it seems to me, is his own creation.'

Afterwards, when long in the tooth, fawning sullenly on those above him, arrogant towards those below him, surly among his equals, he won consular office, triumphal insignia, and ultimately North Africa; and in dying there fulfilled the destiny prophesied for him.

BOOK XI:XXII REGARDING THE QUAESTORSHIP

In the interim, at Rome, Gnaeus Nonius, a Roman knight, was discovered with a sword at his side among the crowd at the emperor's morning audience, his motive apparent neither at that time nor later. For even after being taken apart by the torturer, though not denying his own guilt he divulged nothing regarding any accomplices, and whether any existed whose names he concealed is uncertain.

In the same consulate, Publius Dolabella proposed an annual gladiatorial show, to be paid for by those who gained a quaestorship. Among our ancestors, office was the reward for merit, and all citizens trusted for their integrity could aspire to the magistracy; nor was there any age-qualification preventing anyone attaining a consulship or a dictatorship (holding authority as supreme magistrate) in early youth.

The quaestorship was instituted while kings still reigned in Rome, as shown by Lucius Brutus' renewal of the *lex curiata* (the conferring of authority over the State). The power of selection for the post lay with the consuls, until, as with the rest of the offices, it passed into the hands of the people. The first elections to the post (447BC), sixty-three years after the expulsion of the Tarquins were of Valerius Potitus and Aemilius Mamercus,

appointed to supervise military finances. Then with the growing responsibility of the role, two quaestors were elected to look after Rome: later (267BC) the number was again doubled to handle taxation throughout Italy and tribute payments from the provinces.

Later again (81BC), twenty were appointed by a law of Sulla's to supplement the Senate, to whom he transferred jurisdiction over the criminal courts. Even when that role was reassumed by the knights, the quaestorship was still granted according to the worth of the candidate, or the readiness to appoint of the electors, until with Dolabella's proposal it was effectively put up for auction.

BOOK XI:XXIII THE COMPOSITION OF THE SENATE

In the consulate (AD48) of Aulus Vitellius (the future emperor) and Lucius Vipstianus, the question of making good the number of senators was raised, while the leading citizens of so-called Gallia Comata (Aquitania, Lugdunensis and Belgica), where the clans had long possessed status as military allies and themselves Roman citizenship, claimed the right to aspire to office in Rome. The arguments before the emperor were diverse and animated, it being asserted for example that Italy was not yet so feeble that she could not raise a full complement of senators in her own capital.

Once senators born in Rome were adequate for kindred nations, it was said, nor were those nations dissatisfied with the old republic. Indeed, even now that exemplar was recalled, that former path to virtue and glory that the Roman character had given to the world. Was it not enough that Venetians and Insubrians had invaded the Senate House, without a crowd of aliens being admitted, giving it the appearance of a captured town? What honours would be left for the nobles who remained, or some poor senator who came from Latium?

All the seats would be taken by those wealthy men whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers, chieftains of hostile tribes, struck at our armies with

the power of the sword, and besieged the deified Julius at Alesia (52BC). That was but recent: what if one were to recall those Gauls who (in 390BC) aimed to tear down the spoils dedicated to the gods in the Capitol and citadel of Rome. Let them enjoy the title of citizen by all means: but they must not make common things of the senatorial insignia, and the nobility of the magistracy!

BOOK XI:XXIV CLAUDIUS DEFENDS THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Unimpressed with these arguments and the like, Claudius stated his immediate objections and after convening the Senate addressed it thus: 'From my own ancestors, of whom the eldest Clausus, a Sabine by birth, became both a citizen and the head of a patrician house, I derive the encouragement to employ a similar policy with regard to my own administration. Nor indeed am I unaware that the Julii were from Alba, the Coruncanii from Camerium, the Porcii from Tusculum, and without probing antiquity senators were drafted from Etruria, Lucania, and the whole of Italy; and that ultimately Italy itself was extended to the Alps (49BC), so that not only individuals but countries and nations should come together under our name.

We prospered, with solid peace at home and victory abroad, and with the communities beyond the River Po admitted to citizenship and our legionaries settling the globe, we reinforced a weary empire by embracing the most worthy of the provincials. Should we now regret that the Balbi crossed from Spain or other no less distinguished families from Narbonese Gaul? Their descendants remained no less in love with this their native land than we ourselves.

What proved fatal to Sparta and Athens, despite their military strength, but the practice of dealing with those they conquered at arm's length, as aliens? But so great was the wisdom of our founder Romulus that often

those he held to be enemies in the morning he treated as citizens by the evening. Foreigners have reigned over us: the sons of freedmen becoming magistrates is not the novelty it is often thought to be, but a common practice of the people formerly.

Yet, you will say we fought the Senones: well, did the Volscians and Aequians, our neighbours, never form line of battle against us? We were captives of the Gauls: but did we not also surrender hostages to the Tuscans, and submit to the Samnite yoke? And still, when you consider all the wars we have fought, none ended in a shorter space of time than that against the Gauls. Since then, there has been continuous and unbroken peace.

Now that manners, culture, and affinities by marriage bind them to us, let them bring us their gold, their riches, rather than keeping them from us. Senators Elect, all that is now thought ancient beyond count, was once new: plebeian magistrates succeeded patrician magistrates, Latin magistrates the plebeian, and those from the other peoples of Italy followed the Latin.

What we devise today will also become established practice, and what we support by precedent will in turn become the precedent.'

BOOK XI:XXV CLAUDIUS PURGES AND FILLS THE RANKS OF THE SENATE

Claudius' speech was followed by a Senate decree, with the Aedui the first to win senatorial rights in Rome: a concession to ancient alliance, and because alone among the Gauls they enjoyed the title 'brothers to the Roman people'.

At the same time, Claudius enrolled amongst the patricians all the longest-serving or high-born senators, since few families remained of those styled the Greater Houses by Romulus, or those called the Lesser by Lucius Brutus; while even those substituted by Caesar as dictator under the Cassian

law, and Augustus as emperor under the Saenian, were exhausted. This was a popular task for him as censor, and he entered upon it with much delight.

Troubled, though, as to how to remove those noted for their abuses, he took a lenient approach rather than applying the harsh measures of the past, advising each of them to consult his conscience and seek the right to resign his office: for which, permission would be readily given. He would publish the names of those removed from the Senate alongside those excused, so that any appearance of disgrace might be mitigated by conjoining those condemned by the censor with those modestly renouncing the role of their own accord.

The consul Vipstanius proposed by way of return that Claudius should be given the title Father of the Senate: the title of Father of his Country he must share with others, but a new service to the State should be honoured by more than the usual phrase. However Claudius restrained the consul from indulging in such excessive flattery.

He also brought the lustrum to a close, the census showing the number of citizens to be five million, nine hundred and eighty four thousand, and seventy-two.

And this marked the end also of his inattention to his marital situation: before long he was compelled to take notice of, and to punish his wife's offences, only to be burned himself by an incestuous union.

BOOK XI:XXVI MESSALINA'S ILLICIT MARRIAGE WITH SILIUS

With Messalina now sated with straightforward adultery and drifting towards a wilful behaviour without precedent, Silius too, blinded by fate or believing the remedy for imminent danger was to bring on that danger itself, urged that the mask be dropped: they were not obliged to wait around, he argued, while Claudius grew old. To deliberate was only

harmless to the innocent, manifest guilt must have recourse to audacity. They had followers possessed of the same fears.

He himself was now unwedded, childless, ready to marry and to adopt Britannicus. Messalina would retain her existing power, and gain an added freedom from anxiety if they could but anticipate Claudius' reaction, who though open to treachery was easily angered.

She received his speeches warily, not through any love for her husband, but concerned that once Silius achieved power he might swiftly reject his lover, and realise the true cost of a crime committed in a moment of danger. Yet she still desired to be his wife, on account of the magnitude of that shameful action which is the last delight of the profligate. Waiting only for Claudius to leave for Ostia, where he was to perform sacrificial rites, she celebrated the marriage with full ceremony.

BOOK XI:XXVII TACITUS HIGHLIGHTS THE STRANGENESS OF THE EVENT

I am hardly unaware that it will seem amazing that, in a Rome where all was known and nothing hidden, any mortal could have felt in any degree secure, and even more so that on a specific day, with witnesses present to sign the contract, this consul designate and the wife of the emperor should have met for the purpose of legitimising their offspring; that she should have listened to the words of the augurs, assumed the veil, and sacrificed in the face of heaven; that both should have felt free to banquet with their guests, kiss and embrace, and then spend the night in the licentiousness their marriage condoned.

Yet nothing I have written should beggar belief: what I record is simply based on the oral or written evidence of my seniors.

**BOOK XI:XXVIII REACTION AMONG
THE IMPERIAL STAFF**

In consequence, the emperor's household shuddered, most of all those who wielded power, with everything to fear from a change of affairs, who voiced their complaints no longer in private but openly, saying that while a mere actor (Mnester) profaned the empress' bed, disgrace might have been incurred but their ruin was far off; yet now a young nobleman, handsomely formed, vigorous of mind, and with his consulate approaching, was girding himself for still greater office; nor was it less than evident what such a marriage portended.

Doubtless fear overcame them when they considered Claudius' inertia, his subservience to his wife, and the many deaths perpetrated on Messalina's orders. On the other hand, the emperor's very pliancy gave them confidence that if the atrocity of the crime carried the greater weight she could be seized and condemned without trial.

**BOOK XI:XXIX ACTION ON THE PART OF
THE IMPERIAL FREEDMEN**

At first, Callistus (the Secretary of Petitions), whom I have mentioned in connection with Caligula's assassination, together with Narcissus (the Secretary of State) who contrived the Appian murder, and Pallas (the Finance Secretary) then in high favour, discussed dissuading Messalina from the extremities of passion by private threats, while masking all else. Then, fearful, Pallas and Callistus desisted, lest they were drawn into danger themselves, Pallas through cowardice but Callistus because he was an expert in the ways of the previous court and thought cautious rather than bold counsel best preserved power: however Narcissus held firm, modifying one thing only: there would be no interview to forewarn her of the accusation or her accuser.

While Claudius lingered in Ostia, Narcissus, alert to the opportunity, with gifts, promises, and revelation of their greater power if the wife fell, induced the two concubines whom Claudius was most likely to admit to his bed to act as informers.

BOOK XI:XXX CLAUDIUS IS PRESENTED WITH THE TRUTH

Thus, the concubine named Calpurnia, in private audience, falling at Claudius' feet, cried out that Messalina had wedded Silius; in the next breath asked the other concubine Cleopatra, who was standing there ready to reply to the question, to confirm its truth, and at her nod of assent asked that Narcissus be summoned.

Narcissus arrived, seeking forgiveness for the past, having dissembled regarding Messalina's associates, Vettius, Plautius, and the like, but saying that he would not, even now, reproach her with adultery, far less reclaim the house, servants and other possessions she had obtained. On the contrary, let Silius enjoy them, but let him return his bride and cancel the marriage contract. 'Or have you recognised your divorce?' he asked, 'For the people, the Senate and the army, are aware of Silius' marriage, and unless you act quickly this husband holds Rome!'

BOOK XI:XXXI ACTION AT LAST

Claudius now called together his most important friends, first questioning Turranius prefect of the corn-supply, and after him Lusius Geta, the praetorian commander. On their confessing it to be true, a chorus of voices, raised in emulation, surrounded him, telling him he must go to the camp, confirm the loyalty of the praetorian guard, and ensure his

own safety before seeking revenge. It is well established that Claudius was so filled with fear that he asked repeatedly whether he still ruled the empire, with Silius still a private citizen.

Meanwhile Messalina was never so given to excess, the autumn being ripe, and was celebrating a mock vine-harvest throughout the grounds of the house. Wine-presses creaked, vats overflowed, and women clad in skins leapt about, like Bacchantes intoxicated by sacrifice or delirium. Messalina herself, her hair dishevelled, was waving a thyrsus among them, and beside her Silius crowned with ivy, buskins on his feet, was tossing his head about, the cries of a wanton chorus around him.

They say that Vettius Valens, in a fit of playfulness, clambered into a tree and when asked what he saw replied that he spied a dreadful tempest blowing from Ostia, either such a storm actually being in the offing, or he uttering a phrase, by chance, that shaped itself as prophecy.

BOOK XI:XXXII MESSALINA HASTENS TO OSTIA

However, not merely rumours but messages were arriving from every direction, announcing that Claudius knew all, and was on his way, eager for vengeance. Therefore they parted company, Messalina to the Gardens of Lucullus, Silius, concealing his anxiety, to the business of the forum; the rest were melting away via one road or another when the centurions appeared, and clapped them in irons as they came across them, some in the open, others in hiding.

Messalina, though the sudden turn of events almost robbed her of her presence of mind, nonetheless set off promptly to meet her husband face to face, a course which had often proved her salvation, and sent word that their children Britannicus and Claudia Octavia were to rush to their father's embrace. Also she begged Vibidia, the most senior of the Vestal Virgins, to gain the ear of the Supreme Pontiff, Claudius himself, and plead for mercy on her behalf.

Meanwhile, she crossed the city on foot, with a mere three companions, so swift was her isolation, intercepted a cart intended for garden rubbish, and took the road for Ostia, without a soul to pity her, since horror at her crimes prevailed.

BOOK XI:XXXIII NARCISSUS ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL THE SITUATION

There was no less trepidation among Claudius' party; since there was insufficient confidence in Geta, the praetorian commander, an unreliable mixture of good and bad. So Narcissus, supported by those who shared his fears, declared that the only hope of saving the emperor was to transfer command of the guards to one of the freedmen, for that day only, offering himself in the role.

And lest Claudius, on his way back to Rome, be led by Lucius Vitellius and Caecina Largus to feel regret, he requested a seat in the same carriage, and took his place with them.

BOOK XI:XXXIV HE THWARTS MESSALINA'S AND VIBIDIA'S PLEAS

There was a strong rumour later, that amidst the emperor's conflicting remarks, in one moment reproaching his wife for her offences against him, and then in the next recalling memories of married life, and the tender age of his children, Vitellius said nothing save: 'Oh, crime! Oh, wickedness?' Narcissus did in fact urge Vitellius to explain his enigmatic utterance, and grant them access to the truth: but failed of success, Vitellius replying vaguely and in whatever direction he was led, his example being followed by Caecina Largus also.

And now Messalina appeared before them, crying out that the mother of Octavia and Britannicus should be heard, upon which her accuser's voice challenged her with the sorry tale of Silius and their marriage; at the same time, distracting Claudius' gaze by handing him the charge sheet with the evidence of her debauchery. Not long afterwards, on entering Rome, their children were attempting to present themselves when Narcissus ordered their removal. He could not however remove Vibidia, nor stop her demanding in great indignation that a wife not be ruined without being able to present her defence.

Narcissus replied that she would be granted an audience, and there would be an opportunity to rebut the charges: meanwhile, the Vestal Virgin might go and attend to her sacred duties.

BOOK XI:XXXV THE PUNISHMENT OF THE GUILTY

Throughout all this, Claudius maintained a strange silence, while Vitellius feigned ignorance: everything was obedient to the will of the freedman. He now commanded the adulterer's mansion to be thrown open and the emperor led there. He started by pointing to an effigy of the elder Silius, in the vestibule, banned by Senate decree; then to heirlooms of the Neros and the Drusi, requisitioned as a reward for adultery.

Claudius, now incensed and muttering threats, he conducted to the military camp, where the men had been called together. After a preliminary address from Narcissus, Claudius uttered only a few words, for though his resentment was justified, the sense of shame silenced him. One prolonged cry from the troops arose, demanding the names and punishment of the guilty.

Brought before the tribunal, Silius attempted neither to defend himself nor delay judgement, and asked for a quick death. A number of illustrious Roman knights showed the same firmness. The execution of Titus Proculus, appointed by Silius to guard Messalina's conjugal fidelity and now

offering to provide evidence, was ordered, together with Vettius Valens who confessed, and Pompeius Urbicus and Saufeius Trogus, as accomplices. The same penalty was also inflicted on Decrius Calpurnianus, prefect of the city watch, Sulpicius Rufus, the procurator of the gladiator school, and the senator Juncus Vergilianus.

BOOK XI:XXXVI THE FATE OF MNESTER AND OTHERS

The fate of Mnester alone caused some hesitation, as tearing his clothes he called out to the Claudius to witness the scars of the lash, and remember the words by which the emperor had subjected him to Messalina's orders: others had sinned out of greed or ambition, he said, he himself out of necessity; and if Silius had gained power over the State, none but Mnester would have perished more quickly.

Claudius was moved, and inclined to be merciful, but his freedmen persuaded him not to spare a mere actor, after executing so many illustrious men: the offence being of such great magnitude, whether committed voluntarily or under duress. Nor was the defence submitted by Traulus Montanus, a Roman knight, acceptable: he, a shy but remarkably handsome youth, had received an unsought invitation and been dismissed by Messalina, who was equally capricious in her likes and dislikes, all in the same evening.

The death penalty was remitted in the cases of Suillius Caesoninus and Plautius Lateranus; the latter due to the distinguished service provided by his uncle (Plautius Silvanus, the conqueror of Britain), while the former, Suillius, was saved by his propensities, since in that shameful gathering he had played the woman's part.

**BOOK XI:XXXVII NARCISSUS MOVES AGAINST
MESSALINA**

Meanwhile in the Gardens of Lucullus, Messalina, not without hope and often with indignation, revealing in that way the depths of her arrogance despite her predicament, sought to save her life by composing a petition to Claudius. And if Narcissus, her accuser, had not hastened her death, destruction would rather have been visited upon him.

For Claudius, having returned home, now solaced by an early dinner, and heated with wine, ordered someone to go and tell the ‘poor woman’, his very phrase, that she must attend the next day and plead her cause. Narcissus on hearing this, noting the emperor’s anger cooling, and fearing that if they delayed then the approach of night, bringing its memories of the marriage-bed, gave reason for disquiet, burst from the room and told the tribune and the centurions, posted there, to carry out her execution: such was the emperor’s command.

Evodus, one of the freedmen, was appointed to prevent her escape and oversee the deed. Hurrying to the garden in advance, he found her lying on the ground, her mother Domitia Lepida seated beside her, who estranged from her daughter during the latter’s supremacy, had been prevailed upon to show pity to her in this last extremity, and was now advising her not to await the executioner, since her life was over, and there was nothing to seek but an honourable death.

Yet honour finds no place in a mind corrupted by lust, and Messalina’s tears and lamentations flowed, though in vain, for the gates were flung open at a blow on the approach of the centurions, led by the tribune who stood over her in silence, while the freedman rebuked her with a host of vile insults.

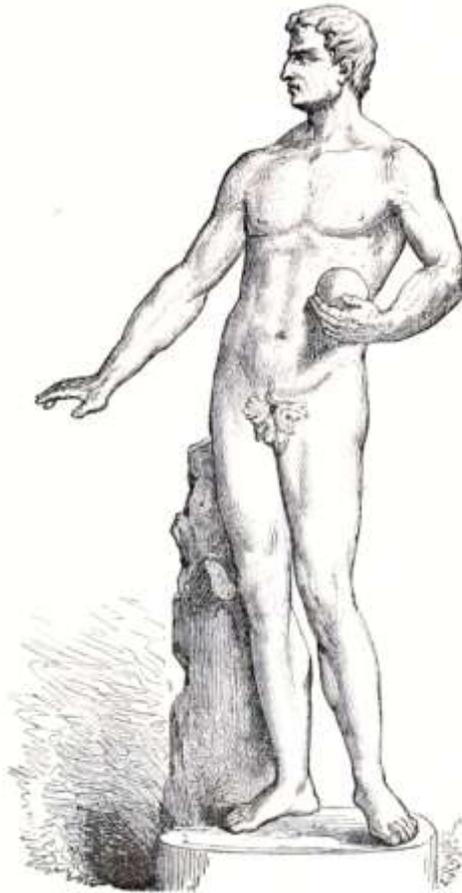
BOOK XI:XXXVIII THE DEATH OF MESSALINA

Now, for the first time, she realised her fate and, taking hold of the blade, was pointing it ineffectually at her throat and breast, in trepidation, when the tribune ran her through. The corpse was left for her mother to attend, while Claudius was told, at table, that Messalina was dead, without it being said whether by her own hand or another's. Nor did he ask, but called for wine, and celebrated the banquet as usual.

Even in the days that followed, he showed no signs of hatred or joy, of anger or sorrow, or in fact any human emotion, neither when he witnessed the accusers' delight, nor his children's grief. The senators aided in committing her to oblivion, decreeing that her name and her statues be removed from both public and private places. Narcissus was granted the insignia of the quaestorship, a trifle to one who now prided himself on acting, as regards Pallas or Callistus, as their superior... for the best, it is true, but giving rise to the worst of all worlds...

End of the Annals Book XI: I-XXXVIII

BOOK XII: I-XL
CLAUDIUS AND AGRIPPINA



'Caesar Deified'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p626, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XII:I THE SELECTION OF A NEW CONSORT

The death of Messalina shook the imperial household, since a battle started among the freedmen, as to who should find a consort for Claudius, given his impatience with a celibate life and his submissiveness to a wife's power. Competition was no less fierce among women: each put forward her nobility, beauty and wealth, and showed herself as worthy of so important an alliance.

The contest, however, was chiefly between Lollia Paulina, the daughter of Marcus Lollius, he being of consular rank, and Agrippina the Younger, daughter of Germanicus. The latter had the support of Pallas, the former of Callistus; though Narcissus favoured Aelia Paetina of the Tiberones family, Claudius' ex-wife.

The emperor, being prepared to take any one of these, according to whichever recommendation he had last heard, called the disputants together and ordered each to express his opinion and give his reasons.

BOOK XII:II THE FREEDMEN MAKE THE CASE FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE CANDIDATES

Narcissus spoke of Claudius' early marriage to Aelia, of the daughter they shared (Claudia Antonia being the child of their union), and of the fact that there would be no disruption to his domestic life in the return of a spouse who would treat Britannicus and Claudia Octavia, almost as dear to her as her own children, with anything but a stepmother's aversion.

Callistus, however, claimed that Aelia was disqualified on account of the previous divorce and that, if she were welcomed back, she would on that very account be inclined to arrogance. A better solution was to accept Lollia, who as she had never borne children, would be immune to jealousy and would act as a mother to her step-children.

Pallas, praising Agrippina the Younger highly, pointed out that she brought with her Germanicus' grandson (Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the future emperor Nero), who was worthy of imperial rank: let Claudius unite in noble lineage the descendants of the Julian and Claudian families, lest a woman of proven fecundity, in the prime of youth, transfer the glory of the Caesars to some other house.

BOOK XII:III AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER IS CHOSEN

His argument prevailed, assisted by Agrippina's seductive behaviour: whereby in a succession of visits to her uncle Claudius, ostensibly in her role as his niece, she so inveigled him that she saw off her rivals and though not yet his wife exercised a wife's powers. For, once certain of the marriage, she extended her ambitions, and worked for a match between her son (the offspring of Gnaeus Ahenobarbus) and the emperor's daughter Claudia Octavia, which could not be achieved without cunning, as Claudius had promised Octavia to Lucius Silanus, and had promoted him to public notice by awarding him triumphal insignia and mounting a magnificent gladiatorial display. Yet that problem seemed not insurmountable given the attitude of an emperor who showed neither approval nor dislike unless it was so imposed and decreed.

BOOK XII:IV VITELLIUS SUPPORTS AGRIPPINA'S SCHEMING

Vitellius, therefore, foreseeing Agrippina's impending domination, and hiding his servile intrigues behind his title of censor, sought her favour, by implicating himself in her schemes, and bringing charges against Silanus, whose beautiful but wayward sister, had indeed until recently been

his own daughter-in-law, out of which the accusation arose, Vitellius treating as infamous her brother's love for her, which though not incestuous was blatant.

Claudius lent an ear to this, his love for his daughter Octavia rendering him all the more ready to harbour doubts against her prospective husband. Silanus, ignorant of the plot against him and, by chance, praetor for the year, was suddenly removed from the Senate list, though the lustrum had been closed, and the roll was long complete. Simultaneously Claudius cancelled the proposed alliance, and Silanus was forced to resign his magistracy, the remaining day of his praetorship being conferred on Eprius Marcellus.

BOOK XII:V VITELLIUS SPEAKS BEFORE THE SENATE

In the consulate of Gaius Pompeius and Quintus Veranius (AD49), the marriage pact between Claudius and Agrippina was already being affirmed by rumour and by their illicit lovemaking; though they had not yet dared to celebrate the nuptial ceremony, no precedent existing for a niece's introduction to her uncle's household: the relationship being indeed incestuous, it was feared that if that were ignored it would result in disaster for the State.

Their hesitation only ended when Vitellius determined to bring about the marriage by his own efforts. He started by asking Claudius whether he would concede to the people's will and the Senate's authority. Claudius replied that he was a citizen among citizens, and unequal to challenging such a consensus, and Vitellius then told him to wait there in the palace. He himself went to the Senate House, and claiming urgent State business demanded leave to speak first, beginning thus:

'The emperor's grave duties, which involve the whole world, must be supported so that he might attend to State matters free of domestic anxiety. What could more fittingly lighten a censor's cares than to take a wife, a

partner in good times and bad, to whom might be confided the intimate thoughts, and the young children, of an emperor who has been a stranger to pleasure or excess, but accustomed from his early youth to comply with the law.’

BOOK XII:VI VITELLIUS PROMOTES THE CAUSE OF AGRIPPINA

As these positive opening remarks were well-received by the senators, he made a fresh start: ‘Since all advise that the emperor should marry, the woman chosen should be noble, have borne children, and be noted for her purity. Even a brief enquiry reveals that Agrippina is foremost among those of illustrious family: her fecundity is proven, and her virtue is in harmony with her other qualities. But above all, by divine providence, a widow would be united with an emperor who has known no marriage-bed but his own. You have heard from your fathers, and you yourselves have seen, how wives have been stolen from their husbands at a Caesars’ pleasure: such is far from the present principled intent.

A precedent would in fact be established, whereby an emperor’s wife would be chosen by the Senate. Yet it might be said that in Rome marriage with a brother’s daughter would be a new innovation, though it is accepted practice in foreign countries, and not prohibited by law, while marriage to a cousin, long unknown, has become more widespread with the passage of time. Custom adapts to suit what benefits us, and this too would be one of those changes which are quickly adopted.’

BOOK XII:VII CLAUDIUS ACCEPTS AGRIPPINA AS HIS WIFE

No small flood of senators from the House ensued, claiming publicly that if the emperor hesitated they would act in strength. A crowd, gathered at random, cried out that it was also the wish of the Roman people. Without delay, Claudius went to meet them in the Forum, accepted their congratulations, and entering the Senate asked for a decree whereby, in future, a man's marriage with a brother's daughter would be treated as legitimate. None the less, only one enthusiast for such a form of matrimony was discovered, Alledius Severus, a Roman knight, whose motive it was said was Agrippina's favour.

The State was transformed by the marriage, and all were subject to a woman, but not in wantonness as Messalina toyed with all things Roman. Agrippina's was a severe, almost masculine, tyranny: in public an austere and often arrogant stance; within her household nothing unchaste, unless it contributed to her power. A limitless desire for gold provided the pretext, as if designed to support her despotism.

BOOK XII:VIII SILANUS COMMITS SUICIDE

Silanus waited for the wedding day before committing suicide, either having maintained his hope of survival till then, or choosing that day to render it more inauspicious. His sister Calvina was banished from Italy. In addition Claudius, derided by all for choosing such a time to highlight the penalties and purifications demanded by incest, ordered sacrifices, in accordance with the laws decreed by King Tullus, and expiatory rites, to be performed by the pontiffs in Diana's sacred grove.

However, Agrippina, not wishing to become known only for wrongdoing, obtained Seneca the Younger's return from exile, with

confirmation of a praetorship, thinking that his literary reputation would make her action pleasing to the public, and in order to employ so distinguished a man as tutor for Domitius (Nero), on his entering adolescence, and to profit from Seneca's advice regarding her own ambitions, it being believed that Seneca was loyal to Agrippina because of his memories of her kindness, while hostile to Claudius through resentment of the injury done to himself.

BOOK XII:IX DOMITIUS (NERO) GAINS POSITION

It was now decided to delay no further, and Mammius Pollio, the consul designate, was induced by extraordinary promises to table a motion begging Claudius to pledge Octavia to Domitius (Nero), an action not implausible on grounds of age, while opening the path to greater things. Pollio employed not dissimilar language to that recently used by Vitellius; Octavia's engagement followed, and Domitius (Nero), who over and above his former relationship to the emperor was now his prospective son-in-law, achieved equality with Britannicus, thanks to his mother's zeal and the machinations of those who, having accused Messalina, feared the vengeance of her son.

BOOK XII:X AN EMBASSY FROM PARTHIA

About this time, the Parthian envoys who had been sent, as I have mentioned, to seek the return of Meherdates, addressed the Senate concerning their mandate, in the following fashion: they were not unaware of the existing treaty, nor were they there in opposition to the Arsacids, but were calling on the son of Vonones, the grandson of Phraates, to counter the tyranny of Gotarzes, which was intolerable to the nobility and the masses alike.

Already brothers, dear ones, distant connections, had been annihilated by slaughter; add to that pregnant women and infants, while, inactive at home and a disaster in the field, Gozartes masked his cowardice with savagery. With us they had a friendship that was old, and forged in a time of national unity, and it was for us to assist them as allies, who though rivals in power yielded to us out of respect.

The idea of giving the sons of kings as hostages, was that if the government at home became wearisome, they had recourse to the emperor and the Senate, and so that a more enlightened monarch, used to their ways, might be appointed.

BOOK XII:XI CLAUDIUS AGREES TO INSTALL MEHERDATES AS KING

In reply to these and similar representations, Claudius began to speak about Roman dignity and Parthian deference, and his parity with the divine Augustus whom they had asked to provide them with a king, neglecting to mention Tiberius, though he too had sent out candidates.

Since Meherdates was present, he added the suggestion that he should think not in terms of a tyrant and slaves, but of a governor and citizens, and exercise mercy and justice, things unknown to barbarous peoples, and therefore the more welcome.

Then, turning to the ambassadors, he praised this foster-child of Rome, who up to now had given evidence of his moderation: nevertheless the nature of kings had to be borne in mind, nor did frequent change serve any purpose. The Roman Empire, he added, now sated with glory, had reached the point where she wished peace on other countries also.

Gaius Cassius Longinus, who governed Syria, was then deputed to escort the young prince to the banks of the Euphrates.

BOOK XII:XII CASSIUS LONGINUS WARNS MEHERDATES

At that time, Cassius Longinus exceeded all others in his knowledge of the law: for the military arts are lost in times of quiet, and peace makes men of action and the sedentary as one. Yet, as far as was possible, in a period free of conflict, Cassius reverted to the ancient disciplinary code, exercised his legions, and acted with the same care and forethought as if an enemy was present: considering such conduct worthy of his ancestry and the Cassian family, celebrated even in those regions.

He therefore summoned those who had sought the appointment of a king, and pitched camp at Zeugma (Gaziantep province, Turkey), the most suitable place to cross the river. After the arrival of the Parthian leaders, and the Arab prince Acbarus (king of Osroene), he warned Meherdates that the eager enthusiasm of barbarians languishes with delay or turns to treachery: he should therefore pursue his objective.

The advice was ignored, due to Acbarus' deceit; the inexperienced youth, who considered luxurious excess the height of good fortune, being detained by him, day after day, in the town of Edessa (Urfa, Turkey). Even when invited to take up his position by Carenes, who pointed out that all would be easy if they arrived promptly, he did not take the nearest road to Mesopotamia, but a circuitous route via Armenia, an unsuitable one at that time, when winter was setting in.

BOOK XII:XIII MEHERDATES ADVANCES

At last, wearied by snow-covered mountains, after reaching the plain, they joined forces with Carenes, and crossing the Tigris penetrated the country of the Adiabeni (Northern Assyria), whose king, Izates, appeared as Meherdates' ally openly, but secretly, and with greater loyalty, supported Gozartes.

However in passing they captured Nineveh (Mosul, Iraq) the most ancient capital of Assyria, and also a series of defences known to history as the place where the Persian Empire fell, in the last battle between Darius and Alexander the Great.

Meanwhile, Gotarzes, was offering prayers to the local deities on a mountain named Sanbulos; the principal cult being that of Hercules, who at the appointed time warns his priests, in their sleep, to tether a number of horses, equipped for the hunt, beside his temple. The animals, adorned with quivers full of arrows, are loosed in the forest glades, returning only at nightfall, breathing heavily, and with empty quivers. In a further nocturnal vision, the god reveals his path through the forest, and the bodies of wild beasts are found there, scattered along the trail.

BOOK XII:XIV MEHERDATES IS DEFEATED

Gotarzes, his army not yet at full strength, used the river Corma as a natural defence, and in spite of derisive messages calling on him to fight, contrived delays, changed his location, and sent men to bribe his enemies to defect.

Izates was the first to defect, with his contingent of Adiabeni, then Acbarus and his Arabs, displaying the fickleness of that nation, and the inclination of barbarians to petition Rome for kings but not remain loyal to them, as proven by experience. Denuded of these auxiliary forces, and wary of treason on the part of the rest, Meherdates, taking the only course left to him, decided to take his chances in battle.

Gozartes, emboldened by this diminution of the enemy's strength, did not decline to fight, and the armies met, with vast slaughter and an uncertain outcome, until Carenes, who had broken the opposite lines, advanced too far and was surrounded by fresh troops from the rear.

Meherdates, with all hope lost, deceived by the promises made by his father's vassal Parraces, was thrown into chains through an act of treachery on the latter's part, and surrendered to the victor. Gozartes abusing him, as neither a relative of his nor a member of the house of the Arsacids, but rather a foreigner and a Roman, cut off his ears while commanding him to live, to display his own mercy and our disgrace.

Later, however, Gotarzes died of disease, and Vonones II, then ruling the Medes, was summoned to the throne (AD51). He was memorable for neither his successes nor his defeats: but completed a brief and inglorious reign, the Parthian Empire passing to his son Vologeses I.

BOOK XII:XV MITHRIDATES OF THE BOSPORUS SEEKS TO RETAKE HIS KINGDOM

Meanwhile, Mithridates III of the Bosphorus, an exile since losing his throne, had learned that the Roman commander Didius Gallus had departed with most of his army, leaving Mithridates' inexperienced younger brother Cotys I to begin his reign, along with a few Roman cohorts under Julius Aquila, a Roman knight. Scornful of both, Mithridates roused the tribes.

He attracted deserters, and finally, gathering an army, he drove out the king of the Dandaridae (a Sarmatian tribe), and seized his dominions. This being discovered, and his invasion of Bosphorus being expected from day to day, Aquila and Cotys, mistrusting their own strength since Zorsines king of the Siraci (a second Sarmatian tribe) had resumed hostilities, sought outside help, following Mithridates' example, by sending envoys to Eunones, the powerful king of the Aorsi (a third Sarmatian tribe).

An alliance was easy to forge, when they exhibited the power of Rome ranged against the rebel Mithridates. It was therefore arranged, that Eunones would command the cavalry engagements, while the Romans laid siege to the townships.

BOOK XII:XVI THE ROMANS ENGAGE AND ADVANCE

They then advanced with combined forces, the Aorsi holding the front and rear; the cohorts and the Bosporan troops, armed in our manner, holding the centre. Thus they drove back the enemy, and reached Soza, a town of the Dandaridae, relinquished by Mithridates, where, given the dubious support of the population, they thought it wise to leave a garrison.

They next advanced on the Siraci and, crossing the river Panda, surrounded Upse, set on a height and defended by walls and moat, though the walls, being made of wickerwork frames, with soil between, were too weak to withstand attack, while our siege towers, elevated higher, troubled the besiegers with spears and firebrands.

If nightfall had not interrupted the battle, the attack would have started and ended that same day.

BOOK XII:XVII ZORSINES SURRENDERS

On the next day, the town sent emissaries seeking terms for the free inhabitants, and offering ten thousand of the rest as slaves. This was rejected by the victors, because it would be difficult to guard so many, and cruel to massacre them given they had surrendered, better they should die fighting, under the rules of combat. The soldiers who had mounted scaling ladders, therefore, received the signal to grant no quarter.

The destruction of Upse, struck fear elsewhere, there being no safe haven, where men and defences, high or difficult terrain, rivers and townships, were equally surmounted. So Zorsines, after careful consideration as to whether to devote his attention to Mithridates' desperate plight or his own ancestral kingdom, gave hostages, the interests of his own people prevailing, and prostrated himself before the emperor's

effigy, to the great glory of the Roman army which, victorious and unharmed, had taken up position within three days' march of the river Don.

However, on withdrawing, their fortunes changed, as some of the ships (they were returning by sea) were driven onto the Crimean coast, and surrounded by barbarians who killed the prefect of one cohort and many of the auxiliaries.

BOOK XII:XVIII MITHRIDATES TURNS FOR SUPPORT TO EUNONES

Meanwhile, without recourse to arms, Mithridates considered where he should seek mercy. His brother Cotys, who had once betrayed him, and then acted as his enemy, was to be mistrusted: and the Romans in the region possessed insufficient authority for any great weight to be attached to their promises.

He turned to Eunones, who was not hostile to him through any personal animosity, and whose power was enhanced by his recent befriending of ourselves. With an expression and appearance suited to his present situation, he entered the palace therefore, and fell at the king's knees, saying: 'Mithridates, whom the Romans sought by land and sea for many years, is here of his own free will: use, as you wish, a descendant of the great Achaemenes, the one title my enemies have not taken from me.'

BOOK XII:XIX EUNONES SENDS AN EMBASSY TO ROME

Eunones, moved by the man's fame, the reversal in his fortunes, and his scarcely ignoble plea, raised the suppliant, and praised him for choosing to seek mercy at the hands of himself and the Aorsi. He

immediately sent an embassy to Claudius, with a letter in this manner: friendship between the Roman emperors and the kings of great nations arose from the similarity in their standing, while Claudius and himself were partners in victory. The noblest end to war was as often a question of clemency; thus Zorsines had been conquered but not despoiled.

On behalf of Mithridates, who merited graver punishment, he begged neither power nor royalty, but to be spared being led in triumph, and to escape with his life.

BOOK XII:XX CLAUDIUS CHOOSES TO GRANT MERCY

Yet Claudius, mild though he was in his treatment of foreign nobility, was nevertheless uncertain whether it was better to receive the captive with a guarantee of safety, or to reclaim him by force. He was inclined to the latter, through resentment at the injury done him and a desire for vengeance, but against this it was urged that he would be waging war in a land without roads, on a coast without harbours, not forgetting the warlike kings, nomadic population, and infertile soil, as well as the tedium of delay, the danger of haste, the limited glory of victory, and the deep ignominy of defeat. Better to grasp the offer, and spare the exile, to whom every extension of impoverished life would be so much the greater a punishment.

Won over by these arguments, he wrote to Eunones, saying that though it was true that Mithridates merited the death penalty, nor was it beyond his power to enforce it, yet it had been his ancestors' belief that as much charity should be maintained towards suppliants as firmness towards their enemies, since triumphs were earned by defeating undefeated kings and peoples.

BOOK XII:XXI MITHRIDATES IS SENT TO ROME

In due course, Mithridates was handed over and taken to Rome by Junius Cilo, the procurator of Pontus. It is said that Mithridates was more outspoken before Claudius than his situation warranted, and one sentence of his came to public notice: 'I have not been brought back to you, I have returned: if you doubt that, let me go, then try and fetch me.'

His features too remained unflinching, even when he was exposed to the populace beside the Rostra, and in the midst of his keepers. Consular insignia were granted to Cilo, bodyguard to Aquila.

BOOK XII:XXII THE DOWNFALL OF LOLLIA AND CALPURNIA

During the same consulate (AD49), Agrippina, savage in her hatreds, and an enemy of Lollia's, since the latter was a rival for the emperor's hand, appointed a prosecutor and laid charges against her, namely of consorting with astrologers and magicians, and consulting the oracular statue of Clarian Apollo regarding the emperor's marriage.

Claudius, without a defence being heard, delivered a long speech in the Senate on the illustrious nature of her family, remarking on the fact that her mother was the sister of Lucius Volusius, her great-uncle Cotta Messalinus, herself the ex-wife of Memmius Regulus (her marriage to Caligula being deliberately suppressed), while adding that her intrigues were ruinous to the State, and that she must be denied the means to cause mischief: her property confiscated, she should leave Italy. Therefore only fifty thousand gold pieces of her vast assets remained to her in exile.

Calpurnia, another woman of high rank, was also ruined, because Claudius had praised her beauty, though not out of desire for her but

simply in casual conversation such that Agrippina's anger fell short of outright fury. In Lollia's case, however, a tribune was sent to ensure her suicide.

A further conviction was that of Cadius Rufus on a charge of extortion brought by the Bithynians.

BOOK XII:XXIII VARIOUS PUBLIC BUSINESS

For showing a notable respect for the Senate, Narbonese Gaul was granted the right, which Sicily already possessed, whereby the senators from the province might visit their estates without requiring the emperor's permission.

Judaea, and Ituraea (hill-country east of the Jordan) were attached to the province of Syria, on the deaths of their kings, Herod Agrippa I, and Sohaemus respectively.

It was agreed that the Augury of National Security, omitted for the previous seventy-eight years, should be revived, and continued in future.

Also, Claudius extended the city boundary (the pomerium), according to ancient practice, whereby an expansion of the empire conferred the right to enlarge the area of the city. Nevertheless, it was a right that, even after the conquest of powerful nations, had not been exercised by any Roman leader other than Lucius Sulla and the divine Augustus.

BOOK XII:XXIV THE ORIGINS OF THE CITY BOUNDARY (THE POMERIUM)

Varying accounts are given of the ambition or pride of the kings regarding this matter, but I think it reasonable to investigate the

original nature and establishment of the pomerium, as determined by Romulus. A furrow to mark the city boundary was cut from the Forum Boarium (to the west, near the Tiber) where the likeness of a bronze bull can be seen, that animal having been yoked to the plough, so as to take in the great altar of Hercules (in the west). From there, boundary stones were set at fixed intervals along the base of the Palatine Hill to the altar of Consus (in the south), then to the old Senate House, then again to the shrine of the Lares, and after that to the Forum Romanum (in the north); the Forum and the Capitol, it is believed, being added to the city not by Romulus, but by Titus Tatius.

Later, the boundary was extended, in accordance with national success. The limits as set by Claudius are easily identifiable and inscribed in the public records.

BOOK XII:XXV DOMITIUS (NERO) ADOPTED BY CLAUDIUS

In the consulate of Gaius Antistius and Marcus Suillius, the adoption by Claudius of Domitius (later the emperor Nero) was brought forward, at the instigation of Pallas who, bound to Agrippina as the promoter of her marriage and then involved with her in debauchery, urged Claudius to consult the public good, and provide robust protection for the young Britannicus: so Augustus' step-children rose to prominence, he said, though he had grandsons to rely upon; and thus Tiberius promoted Germanicus above his own issue: let Claudius then take to himself a young man who would undertake to share responsibility.

His urging prevailed, and Claudius set Domitius, with three years' seniority, above his son Britannicus, giving in his speech to the Senate the same justification he had accepted from his freedman. Experts have noted that there was no trace prior to this of any adoption into the patrician branch of the Claudians, who had succeeded in unbroken line from Attus Clausus onwards.

BOOK XII:XXVI BRITANNICUS' SAD SITUATION

Nevertheless, thanks were returned to the emperor, with more far-fetched flattery of Domitius, and the law was carried effecting his adoption into the Claudian House, with the name Nero. Agrippina was dignified with the title of Augusta.

When the matter was concluded, no one was so lacking in pity as to be free of sorrow at Britannicus' fate. Stripped, little by little, of even the services of his slaves, the boy turned to mocking his stepmother's attentions, aware of her hypocrisy. For, they say, he was not by nature without intelligence, perhaps speaking truly or perhaps, given the risks attendant on his situation, crediting him with a reputation never put to the test.

BOOK XII:XXVII INCURSION OF THE CHATTI IN UPPER GERMANY

Agrippina though, to advertise her power to the provinces as well, organised the settlement of a colony of veterans in the town of the Ubii where she was born, which took its name from hers (Cologne: Colonia Claudia Ara Augusta Agrippinensium). It was her grandfather, Agrippa, who happened to have granted protection to the tribe on their migration across the Rhine.

At about the same time, alarm was caused in Upper Germany by marauding contingents of the Chatti. Publius Pomponius, the legate, sent auxiliary forces of the Vangiones and Nemetes, supported by allied cavalry, with orders to head off the raiders or, if they attempted to disperse, surprise and surround them.

The general's plan was attended by diligence from his men, marching in two columns, the first, towards the left, encircling a group of the enemy newly-returned from pillaging, who were sleeping heavily after enjoying to excess the results of their depredations. Adding to our delight was our redemption from slavery of various survivors of Varus' disaster, forty years previously.

BOOK XII:XXVIII THE CHATTI MARAUDERS DEFEATED BY POMPONIUS

The column taking the shorter route to the right inflicted heavier losses on the enemy, who met them and dared to engage, while weighed down with spoils and honours our auxiliary forces then returned to the heights of Taunus, where Pomponius was waiting with the legions, hoping that the Chatti, eager for revenge, would offer him the chance of battle.

The Chatti, however, fearful of being trapped between the Romans on one side, and their undying enemies, the Cherusci, on the other sent a deputation and hostages to Rome. Pomponius was decreed triumphal honours, the least part of his reputation among later generations, being surpassed by the glory of his verse.

BOOK XII:XXIX VANNIUS OF THE SUEBI

At about that time, Vannius, who had been imposed on the Suebi by Drusus the Younger, was driven from his kingdom, having been accepted and esteemed by the populace in the first years of his reign though later, through the prolonged exercise of power turning tyrant, he succumbed to the hatred of his neighbours and internal discord.

The authors of his expulsion were Vibilius, king of the Hermunduri, and Vangio and Sido who were his own sister's children. Claudius, despite frequent requests, had declined to intervene in this quarrel between barbarians, but had promised Vannius safe refuge if he were expelled. He also wrote to the governor of Pannonia, Palpellius Hister, ordering him to station a legion and picked auxiliaries from the province itself, on the bank of the Danube, to support the defeated, and deter the victors, lest elated by success they disturbed our peace.

For an innumerable horde of Lugians and others, were on the move, attracted by reports of the kingdom's riches, which Vannius had augmented by thirty years of taxation and depredation. His own infantry force, and his cavalry recruited from the Iazyges of Sarmatia, were unequal to this multitude of foes, so he had decided to defend his fortresses and draw out the conflict.

BOOK XII:XXX VANNIUS FLEES TO PANNONIA

The Iazyges, however, impatient of delay, and scattered over the nearby plain, made battle imperative, the Lugians and Hermunduri racing to the attack. Vannius therefore descended from his fortresses only to be routed in the engagement, though winning praise in defeat, for fighting sword in hand and receiving his wounds in front.

He then fled to his fleet, moored on the Danube: followed later by his vassals, who obtained grants of land and were settled in Pannonia. Vangio and Sido divided the kingdom between them, showed great loyalty to ourselves yet, whether the fault lay with their own characters or was the result of despotism, they were loved by their subjects before winning power but hated to an even greater degree after doing so.

BOOK XII:XXXI THE SITUATION IN BRITAIN

Meanwhile, in Britain, the propraetor Publius Ostorius had received a troubled welcome, since our enemies had poured into the territory of our allies, with a violence all the greater given their belief that a new commander would not oppose them with an untried force at the start of winter.

Ostorius, aware that early results may engender fear or confidence, swiftly advanced his cohorts, killing those who resisted, chasing down the stragglers, and to prevent the enemy re-forming and a hostile and treacherous lull ensuing, which would allow no rest to himself or his men, prepared to disarm those he mistrusted, and control the whole area this side of the rivers Trent (? Trisanton) and Severn.

The first to deny him were the Iceni, a powerful tribe (in Eastern England), unbroken in battle as they had voluntarily acceded to an alliance with us. At their instigation, the surrounding tribes chose as their place to fight a position defended by a rough embankment with a narrow entrance, hostile to cavalry. This defence the Roman commander prepared to carry, though he led an auxiliary force without legionary strength, and arming the cavalry squadrons appropriately deployed them as infantry.

Then at a signal they broke through the embankment, and created confusion amongst men trapped by their own barrier. The Britons, conscience of being rebels, with their means of flight blocked, performed many outstanding feats, such that the legate's son Marcus Ostorius earned the corona civica for saving a Roman life.

BOOK XII:XXXII THE BRIGANTIAN UPRISING

The tribes wavering between war and peace were now quieted by the Icenian defeat, and the army was led against the Deceangi (in North Wales). The land was ravaged, spoils taken everywhere, while the enemy dared not fight, or was punished for his treachery whenever he stealthily tried to harass the columns.

Ostorius had now advanced to a position not far from the coast which looks towards Ireland, when the beginnings of a rebellion among the Brigantes (in Northern England) recalled a leader fixed on securing his previous conquests before attempting the new. It is true that the Brigantian uprising subsided with the execution of the few men who had begun hostilities, and pardons for the rest, but neither harshness nor clemency won over the Silurian tribe (in South-East Wales) who continued the fight, and were only repressed by establishing a legionary encampment.

To allow that more readily, a colony was founded by a strong detachment of veterans on land seized at Camulodunum (Colchester), as a defence against rebellion, and to accustom our native allies to their legal obligation.

BOOK XII:XXXIII ACTION AGAINST THE SILURIANS AND ORDOVICIANS

Action was then taken against the Silurians, their own courage enhanced by their confidence in the power of Caratacus (the son of Cunobelinus), whose many partial or complete successes made him pre-eminent among the British chieftains.

But he, though preferring the treacherous nature of the terrain, being inferior in numbers, astutely migrated the conflict to the territory of the

Ordovices (in mid-Wales), where joined by all who feared our peace, he made a last stand.

A site was chosen for battle, such that the approaches, means of withdrawal, all its features, were disadvantageous to us and favourable for him, with sheer cliffs and, where there was an easier ascent, stones piled as a rampart. A river, with a precarious ford, flowed below, and bands of warriors were in position in front of the defences.

BOOK XII:XXXIV CARATACUS ROUSES HIS WARRIORS

In addition, the tribal chieftains were moving around, exhorting their men, strengthening their courage by minimising the risks, kindling hope, and employing every other incitement to battle: as for Caratacus, he flew here and there, proclaiming that this day, this field, would see them regain their freedom, or be slaves forever. And he invoked the names of their ancestors, who had driven off Julius Caesar the dictator, and through whose courage they were free of Roman rule, free of tribute, and would preserve inviolate the lives of their wives and children.

To these appeals, and the like, the warriors shouted assent, and every man swore a tribal oath to yield to neither weapon nor wound.

BOOK XII:XXXV CARATACUS IS DEFEATED

This show of eagerness amazed the Roman general, and he was equally concerned by the river barrier, the added rampart, the looming cliffs, everywhere a host of defiant defenders. But his soldiers demanded battle, shouting that with courage every place could be taken, while the prefects and tribunes, with like words, roused the ardour of the troops.

Then Ostorius, having viewed the impenetrable and vulnerable points, leading his eager men, crossed the river without difficulty. When they came to the embankment, as long it was a war of missiles most of the wounds and the majority of deaths were on our side: but once the 'tortoise' was formed, the rough shapeless mass of stones demolished, and it came to an equal struggle at close quarters, the barbarians withdrew to the hills.

Yet there too our light and heavy troops broke through, the former attacking the disordered British line with javelins, the latter in close order; and the enemy, lacking the protection of helmets and breastplates, were either felled by the javelins and swords of the legionaries as they resisted the auxiliaries, or by the broadswords and lances of the auxiliaries as they faced the legionaries.

It was a famous victory, Caratacus' wife and daughter being captured, and his brothers' surrender received.

BOOK XII:XXXVI CARATACUS TAKEN AND SENT TO ROME

Caratacus himself, since adversity seldom finds refuge, having sought the protection of Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes, was arrested and handed over to his conquerors, in the ninth year after the start of the campaign in Britain.

His fame had spread, as a result, beyond the island, permeated the closest provinces, and was celebrated in Italy also, where there was curiosity to see the man who had defied our power for so long. The name of Caratacus was not without honour even in Rome; and Claudius, in seeking to extol his own worth, brought added glory to the vanquished. For the populace were summoned as if to a spectacle of note, the praetorian cohorts arrayed fully armed, on the field before their camp.



'The Noble Behaviour of Caractacus'
Charles Grignion (British, 1717 - 1810) after Francis
Hayman (British, 1707/8 - 1776)
Yale Center for British Art

Then, while the chieftain's vassals paraded past, ornaments and torcs won in his foreign wars were carried by, next his brothers, wife, and daughter appeared, and finally himself. The others were reduced by fear to unworthy pleas, but from Caratacus came not a downcast look, not a word seeking pity. When he reached the tribunal, he spoke in this manner:

BOOK XII:XXXVI CARATACUS ADDRESSES CLAUDIUS

If my restraint in victory had matched my rank and fortune, I might have entered this city as a friend and not a captive, nor would you have disdained to welcome in peaceful alliance one who was born of famous ancestors, ruling many tribes. My present fate, hideous to me, to you adds splendour. I possessed men and horses, arms and wealth, what wonder if I lose them with reluctance? Why, though you wish to dominate the world, must it follow that the world should welcome servitude? Dragging me here, beaten, without a last struggle, would have made neither my downfall nor your triumph memorable; while to kill me will guarantee oblivion: but grant me life and I shall be an everlasting example of your mercy.'

At this, Claudius pardoned the chieftain, his wife and brothers, and the prisoners, freed from their chains, paid homage to Agrippina, conspicuous on a neighbouring platform, in the same terms of praise and gratitude as they had employed towards the emperor. That a woman should preside over the Roman standards, was indeed an innovation, one without precedent in ancient custom: she, flaunting her partnership in an empire forged by her ancestors.

BOOK XII:XXXVII THE CONFLICT IN BRITAIN CONTINUES

The senators later convened, and spoke at length and floridly on the parading of the captive Caratacus, calling it no less glorious a spectacle than Publius Scipio's exhibition (201BC) to the Roman people of Syphax the Numidian prince, or Lucius Paulus' showing (167BC) of Perseus of Macedonia, or other generals' displays of other kings in chains.

Triumphal insignia were awarded to Ostorius, whose affairs prosperous until then, soon became uncertain, either the loss of Caratacus causing the energy of our troops to wane, as if the conflict had ended, or the enemy's sympathy for such a king as theirs firing their eagerness to avenge him.

A camp prefect and some legionary cohorts left behind to construct defensive positions in Silurian territory were surrounded, and if on the news of this the besieged men had not been swiftly relieved from the neighbouring forts, they would have been seized and slaughtered. As it was, the prefect, eight centurions, and the bravest of the soldiers were killed. And not long afterwards, a foraging party of ours, and the cavalry sent to its aid, were routed.

BOOK XII:XXXIX THE DEATH OF OSTORIUS

Ostorius then sent in his light cohorts, even so failing to check the flight, until the legionaries took up the fight: their strength levelling the contest, which then proved more favourable to us. The enemy escaped with minor losses, due to daylight fading.

After this there were frequent engagements, often in the form of random or pre-planned raids, under command or without the leaders

knowing, among the woods and marshes, out of frustration or for plunder, and decided by luck or bravery.

The obstinacy of the Silures was marked, they being incensed by a comment of the Roman commander's which became known, that just as the Sugambri had been exterminated or transferred to Gallic territory (8BC), so the Silurian name should be wholly extinguished. They, in consequence, intercepted two auxiliary cohorts who because of their officers' greed were raiding incautiously. The Silurians were also tempting the other tribes to rebel, with gifts of plunder and captives, when Ostorius, exhausted by a weight of cares, chanced to die; delighting the enemy, who considered that no single battle but certainly the whole campaign had removed a general whom it was impossible to despise.

BOOK XII:XL CARTIMANDUA

Claudius, on hearing of the legate's death appointed Aulus Didius to the province, so as not to leave it without a governor. Despite a swift crossing, he found the situation had deteriorated, since in the interim the legion led by Manlius Valens had been defeated. Reports of the affair were exaggerated by the enemy hoping to alarm the governor on his arrival, and by the governor himself who magnified what he had heard, in order to gain greater praise if he settled the disturbances, and a stronger excuse if they persisted.

Here too, the losses had been inflicted by the Silurians, and they led us a merry dance until driven back on the arrival of Didius. However, since the capture of Caratacus, the chief exponent of the art of war was Venutius of the Brigantes, as noted elsewhere. He had long been loyal, and was protected by Roman forces while married to queen Cartimandua; later a divorce followed, and immediately afterwards open warfare, with hostilities extended even to ourselves.

At first the conflict was mainly between themselves, with Cartimandua cunningly snaring Venutius' brother and other relatives. Incensed by her actions, and smarting at the ignominy of submitting to the command of a woman, the enemy invaded her kingdom, with a powerful force of young and select warriors. That event we had foreseen, and the cohorts sent to her aid fought a sharp battle, initially uncertain in its result but ending more happily.

The outcome was no different in the case of the legion commanded by Caesius Nasica; Didius, weighed down by his years and with a host of honours, being content to act through his officers and keep the enemy at bay.

These actions, though carried out by two consecutive governors over a number of years (47-58AD), I have related consecutively, lest through being treated separately they fail to impress themselves on the memory: but I now return to the chronological order of events.

End of the Annals Book XII: I-XL

BOOK XII: XLI-LXIX
THE MURDER OF CLAUDIUS



'Isis'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p670, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XII: XLI FRICTION BETWEEN NERO AND BRITANNICUS

Claudius being consul for the fifth time, along with Servius Cornelius Orfitus, the toga of manhood was conferred on Nero despite his age (thirteen, not fourteen as required), so that he would appear ready for public office. Claudius yielded with pleasure to the senators' sycophancy, by which they decreed that Nero assume the consulate when he reached the age of twenty and that, meanwhile, as consul designate, he should exert proconsular authority outside the capital, and be titled Prince of Youth (as Claudius' nominated successor). A gratuity to the army and a gift of food to the populace were added, in his name.

At the games in the Circus, mounted to gain him favour with the masses, Nero now rode past in triumphal dress, Britannicus in the purple-bordered juvenile toga, so that the crowd might view the former in the robes of imperial power, the latter in a boy's robes, and anticipate the fortunes of each. Simultaneously, those centurions and tribunes showing sympathy for Britannicus' fate were removed, some for wholly fictitious reasons, others in the guise of promotion.

Even those freedmen with unbroken loyalty to him were dismissed, on the following pretext: that during an encounter between the two boys Nero greeted Britannicus by his given name, but the latter saluted Nero as 'Domitius'. Agrippina reported the incident to her husband with loud complaints, as a first sign of discord: saying that Nero's adoption had been put to scorn, the Senate decree and the people's will rendered void, and in his own household; and that unless the perverse and hostile influence of Britannicus' tutors was removed, public catastrophe would ensue.

Troubled by these near accusations, Claudius imposed death or exile on the best of his son's teachers, and handed him over to the guardians appointed by his stepmother.

BOOK XII:XLII AGRIPPINA EXTENDS HER INFLUENCE

Agrippina, however, did not dare to wield supreme power until she could obtain the removal of Lusius Geta and Rufius Crispinus from command of the praetorian guard, believing them loyal to Messalina's memory and her children's cause. Therefore asserting to her husband that their rivalry was dividing the men, and that under a single head discipline would be stricter, she persuaded him to transfer command to Afranius Burrus, of the highest military reputation, yet aware to whose favour he owed his new rank.

To promote a greater awareness of her own dignity, Agrippina also began entering the Capitol in an ornate carriage, which honour, reserved by antiquity for priests and sacred things, added to the reverence felt for a woman who to this day offers a unique precedent, in being the daughter of a commander-in-chief (Germanicus, as Emperor), and the sister, wife and mother respectively of three emperors, Caligula, Claudius and Nero.

Meanwhile, however, her principal champion, Vitellius, was attacked by accusations raised by the senator Junius Lupus. Vitellius was charged with treason and a desire for imperial power, to which Claudius might have leant an ear, had not Agrippina's use of threats rather than her pleas converted him to the idea of exiling the accuser instead, formally denying him 'fire and water', Vitellius seeking no greater a punishment for him.

BOOK XII:XLIII PROBLEMS WITH THE CORN SUPPLY

Many portents occurred that year. Ominous birds roosted on the Capitol; houses collapsed in a series of earthquakes and, as fear spread, the weak were trampled underfoot by the panicking crowd. Also a shortage of corn and the resulting famine were taken as warnings. Nor were all the complaints uttered in private, for Claudius, while administering

justice, was surrounded by a clamorous mob, driven into the farthest corner of the Forum, and hemmed in by force, until a way was forced through the hostile mass by a body of troops.

It was discovered that Rome had food for fifteen days, no longer, and the crisis was relieved only by the great beneficence of the gods and the mildness of the winter weather. Yet, by Hercules, Italy once exported legionary supplies to the remote provinces, nor is there any lack of agricultural potential now, rather it is that we rely on North African and Egyptian harvests, and the lives of the Roman populace depend on cargo-boats and chance.

BOOK XII:XLIV TROUBLE LOOMS IN ARMENIA

That same year, also, an outbreak of warfare between the Armenians and the Iberians (of eastern Georgia) was the cause of very serious issues between Parthia and Rome. The Parthian nation was now ruled by Vologeses I, the descendant of a Greek concubine on the mother's side, who had gained the crown with his brothers' agreement; Iberia was in the possession of the aged Pharasmanes I; while Armenia was held by his brother Mithridates, with our support.

Pharasmanes I had a son by the name of Radamistus, tall, handsome and noted for his physical strength, educated to embrace the national virtues, and with a high reputation among the neighbouring peoples. He claimed too often and too boldly for his ambitions to remain hidden, that the little kingdom of Iberia was being denied him by his father's longevity. Pharasmanes, fearful of this youth eager for power and also supported by the people's favour, while his own years were declining, directed him to other hopes and pointed to Armenia which, he observed, he himself had granted to Mithridates by expelling the Parthians.

Force however must wait, he added, some ruse by which they might catch him off guard was preferable. Radamistus, therefore, feigning a

disagreement with his father, as if unable to endure his stepmother's hatred, made his way to his uncle, and though treated by him with great kindness, as though he had been Mithridates' own son, enticed the Armenian nobles to rebellion, undetected and even honoured further by Mithridates himself.

BOOK XII:XLV RADAMISTUS INVADES ARMENIA

Assuming the mask of reconciliation, he returned to his father, and announced that all was ready that deceit could engineer, the rest must be pursued by arms. Meanwhile Pharasmanes invented a pretext for war: that, during his conflict with the king of Caucasian Albania, his appeal for help from Rome had been opposed by his brother, and he would avenge that injury by the latter's destruction. Simultaneously, he entrusted a large force to his son.

He, by a sudden incursion, unnerved Mithridates and, forcing him from the plains, drove him into the fortress of Gorneae, protected by its situation and defended by a garrison of auxiliaries under the command of the prefect Caelius Pollio and a centurion Casperius. Nothing is so unknown to barbarians as the machinery and refinements of siege warfare, a branch of military operations well understood by ourselves.

Thus, after several attacks, ineffectual or worse, on the defences, Radamistus blockaded the fortress, and when force was disregarded, he appealed to the prefect's avarice, despite Casperius' protests that Mithridates, an allied king, and Armenia, a gift to him from the Roman people, were being overthrown by sinful gold. At last, with Pollio employing the pretext of enemy numbers and Radamistus his father's orders, Casperius departed, on the assumption of a truce, in order to deter Pharasmanes from his campaign or, failing that, to explain the state of Armenian affairs to the governor of Syria, Ummidius Quadratus.

BOOK XII:XLVI POLLIO IS BRIBED TO PRESSURISE MITHRIDATES INTO A TREATY

With the centurion's departure, the prefect, as if rid of a warder, exhorted Mithridates to ratify a treaty, referring to the ties of brotherhood, to Pharasmanes' being the elder, and to other titles of kinship, namely his marriage to his brother's daughter, and the fact that he himself was Radamistus' father-in-law. Though the Iberians were for the time being the stronger force, he said, they would not reject peace; while he himself knew enough of Armenian treachery, his only refuge being a badly-provisioned fortress if Mithridates preferred to turn to weapons rather than an arrangement avoiding the spilling of blood.

While Mithridates hesitated despite these arguments, since the prefect's advice was suspect, he having seduced a royal concubine and being thought open to every twist and turn of venality, Casperius meanwhile sought an audience with Pharasmanes, and demanded urgently that the Iberians raise the siege. The king's replies in public were bland and mostly vague; but privately he warned Radamistus, by messenger, to advance the siege by all possible means.

The reward for treachery was increased accordingly, and Pollio in turn secretly induced the auxiliaries, by bribery, to demand peace, accompanied by their threat to abandon the position. As a result Mithridates was forced to accept the place and time suggested for ratification of a treaty, and leave the fortress.

BOOK XII:XLVII MITHRIDATES BETRAYED

Radamistus' first action was to embrace Mithridates fervently, calling him his father-in-law, his parent, adding his sworn oath that he would not employ steel or strong poison against him. At the same moment,

he dragged him into a grove nearby, telling him that there the means for sacrifice had been provided, so that peace might be affirmed with the gods as witnesses.

Their custom is that whenever kings conclude an alliance they clasp hands, tie the thumbs together, and tighten the knot: the blood soon runs to the extremities, where a slight incision elicits a few drops, which each of them licks in turn. Such an agreement acquires mysterious force, as if consecrated by the blood shared. But on this occasion, he who tied the knot pretended to slip, and clasping Mithridates by the knees, threw him face down; at once men ran to him and clapped him in irons.

He was dragged away, at the end of a chain, to barbarians the ultimate disgrace; and soon the crowd who had experienced the harshness of his regime, were aiming blows and abuse at him. Against this, there were those who pitied so complete a change of fortune, while his wife following with their little children, filled the air with her laments. The prisoners were led away to separate covered wagons, awaiting Pharasmanes' orders.

His desire for the crown was more powerful than his love for a brother, or his own daughter, and his nature was inclined to wickedness; yet he spared himself the sight of their being slain in his presence. While Radamistus, as if recalling the oath he had sworn, used neither steel nor poison against his sister and uncle, but killed them by throwing them to the ground and smothering them under a heavy pile of clothing. Mithridates' sons were also murdered, because they had shed tears on the death of their parents.

BOOK XII:XLVIII QUADRATUS REVIEWS THE SITUATION

Quadratus, in Syria, hearing that Mithridates had been betrayed and his kingdom appropriated by his murderers, called his council together, to inform them of events and decide whether he should exact revenge. A few spoke of their concern for the honour of the State, the majority of its

security: any kind of foreign villainy was to be regarded with delight, they said, and the seeds of division should even be sown, as Roman emperors had often, under the guise of generosity, given away this same Armenia, to stir up barbarian minds. Let Radamistus keep his ill-gotten gains, as long as he was hated and infamous, since that was more use to us than if he had won them gloriously. This view was adopted, but lest they appeared to have endorsed a crime when the emperor might command otherwise, messengers were sent to Pharasmanes, telling him to withdraw from Armenia territory and recall his son.

BOOK XII:XLIX JULIUS PAELIGNUS CONFUSES THE ISSUE

The procurator of Cappadocia, Julius Paelignus, was doubly despised, both for his mental laziness, and his physical grotesqueness, yet was on terms of the greatest intimacy with Claudius, once he was free to amuse himself during his hours of idle leisure in the company of buffoons. This Paelignus, had assembled the provincial auxiliaries, with the aim of regaining Armenia. Plundering our allies rather than the enemy, his men absconded, leaving him defenceless against the barbarians, so he made his way to Radamistus. More than overcome by the prince's generosity, he exhorted him to assume the royal insignia, and was present at the ceremony, as his sponsor and attendant.

Ugly reports of the event spread, and lest other Romans too were judged by Paelignus' behaviour, the legate Helvidius Priscus was sent off, with a legion, to deal with the situation as required. After crossing the Taurus range at speed, then calming matters more by moderation than force, he was ordered to return to Syria, lest he initiated war with Parthia.

**BOOK XII:L VOLOGESES ATTACKS ARMENIA,
RADAMISTUS OCCUPIES THE COUNTRY**

Since Vologeses, considering the opportunity had arrived to invade Armenia, once possessed by his ancestors and now gained by a foreign king through criminal means, gathered his forces, and prepared to install his brother Tiridates on the throne, so that no branch of the family should lack a kingdom.

The Parthian incursion drove the Iberians back, without a battle, and the Armenian towns of Artaxata (Artashat) and Tigranocerta (Silvan or Arzan) submitted. Then a severe winter, a shortage of supplies, and an epidemic due to both these causes, forced Vologeses to abandon the action.

Armenia, once again without a ruler, was occupied by Radamistus, more ferocious than ever towards such traitors, who were bound to rebel, given time. They in turn, though accustomed to servitude, lost patience, and fully armed surrounded the palace.

**BOOK XII:LI RADAMISTUS ESCAPES,
HIS WIFE ZENOBIA SURVIVES**

The only recourse open to Radamistus lay in the speed of the horses that bore away himself and his wife. His wife however was heavy with child, though fear of the enemy and love of her husband sustained her at first. Yet with the continuous pace, which jarred and shook her womb and innards, she began to beg for an honourable death, to save her from the insult of captivity.

Initially he held and supported her, encouraging her, now wondering at her bravery, now sick with fear lest she be left in the hands of another. Finally overcome by his passion for her, and no stranger to violence, he

drew his scimitar, and wounding her dragged her to the bank of the river Araxes (Aras), and gave her to its stream, so that even her corpse might be lost. He himself rode headlong to his native kingdom of Iberia.

Meanwhile Zenobia, as his wife was named, was found by shepherds, in a quiet backwater, breathing and showing other signs of life. Arguing, from the nobility of her appearance, that she was of high birth, they bound her wound, applied their local remedies, and on learning her name and travails, carried her to Artaxata, from which town, thanks to the attention of the people, she was escorted to Tiridates, and after a kind welcome was treated with royal honour.

BOOK XII:LII THE DEATH OF FURIUS SCRIBONIANUS

In the consulate of Faustus Sulla and Salvius Otho (AD52), Furius Scribonianus was driven into exile, charged with questioning astrologers regarding the emperor's death. His mother Vibidia was linked to the indictment, as being impatient of her prior punishment (she had been relegated). Her husband, Camillus, the father of Scribonianus, had taken up arms against the emperor, in Dalmatia (AD42); and Claudius ascribed it to his clemency that he was sparing this hostile breed for a second time.

The exile, however, did not survive long: whether he died a natural death or from poison being asserted according to the speaker's belief. A draconian, but ineffective Senate decree ordered the expulsion of all astrologers from Italy.

A speech by the emperor followed, in which he praised those senators who voluntarily renounced their rank due to straightened circumstances, and commanded the removal of those who added impudence to poverty by remaining.

BOOK XII:LIII PALLAS REWARDED

At the same time, Claudius submitted a proposal to the senators regarding women who married slaves; and it was decided that if the woman had stooped so low without the knowledge of the slave's owner, she should be classed as a slave, while if he had consented to the marriage, she was to be considered a freedwoman.

Barea Soranus, the consul designate, suggested that Pallas, whom Claudius identified as the deviser of the proposal, should be granted praetorian insignia and a hundred and fifty thousand gold pieces. Cornelius Scipio added that Pallas should receive the thanks of the nation, because though a scion of Arcadian kings (playing on the name of Evander's ancestor, Aeneid VIII.51), he disregarded his ancient ancestry, to the benefit of the public, allowing himself only to be considered as one of the emperor's servants.

Claudius earnestly assured them that Pallas, content with the honour, would remain in his former state of poverty. And a Senate decree was inscribed on official bronze, heaping praise on this freedman, the possessor of three million gold pieces, for his old-world frugality!

BOOK XII:LIV THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS BROTHER FELIX IN JUDAEA

But his brother, Antonius Felix, who had held the governorship of Judaea for some time past, revealed no such humility, clearly thinking that, with such powerful backing, all wrongdoing could be indulged in with impunity. The Jewish people, it is true, had shown signs of disaffection in rioting prompted by Caligula's order that his statue be placed in the Temple; and though his murder rendered compliance unnecessary, the fear remained that another emperor might demand the same.

Meanwhile, Felix was fuelling the flames, by untimely measures, emulated in his worst efforts by Ventidius Cumanus his colleague in the other half of the province, which was divided such that the populace of Galilee was subject to Ventidius, that of Samaria to Felix, areas previously in conflict, and now, in contempt of their overlords, with hatred less constrained.

They raided each other's territory, therefore, sending out bands of robbers, sometimes engaging in battle, and turning over the thefts and spoils to their respective procurators, who were, at first, delighted. Then when the destruction quickly increased, and the procurators intervened with armed troops, the troops were defeated, and if not for reinforcements sent by Quadratus, the governor of Syria, the province would have been ablaze with conflict.

There was no great hesitation in inflicting the death penalty on those Jewish fighters who had caused the deaths of regular soldiers, but the question of Cumanus and Felix gave rise to greater embarrassment, since Claudius, on hearing of the cause of these disturbances, had empowered Quadratus to deal with the procurators himself. Quadratus, as a result, exhibited Felix among the judges, and welcomed him to the tribunal, hoping to quell the zeal of his accusers; Cumanus was convicted of the wrongs that both had committed, and quiet returned to the province.

BOOK XII:LV TROUBLE IN CILICIA

Not long afterwards, the tribes of barbarous Cilicians known as the Cietae, who had caused trouble on many previous occasions, who were encamped in their rugged hills and led by Troxobor, descended to the townships and the coast and dared to use force against farmers and townsmen, and even more often merchants and ships' captains, The city of Anemurium (Anamur, Turkey) was besieged, and a cavalry troop sent to its relief from Syria, led by the prefect Curtius Severus, was routed, because

the rough ground in the vicinity, suited to fighting on foot, did not allow effective cavalry engagement.

Eventually King Antiochus IV of Commagene, the coastline being his responsibility, by cajoling the masses and deceiving their leader, scattered the barbarian forces and, after executing Troxobor and a few of the leading chieftains, pardoned the rest.

BOOK XII:LVI THE DRAINING OF LAKE FUCINUS (LAGO DI CELANO)

At about this time, a drainage channel under the mountain (Monte Salviano) between Lake Fucinus and the river Liris (Liri) was completed, and a naval fight staged on the lake itself, so that the magnitude of the result could be viewed by many. The display was on the model of an earlier spectacle mounted by Augustus, on his artificial lagoon adjoining the Tiber, but with lighter vessels and a smaller force.

Claudius armed triremes, quadriremes, and nineteen thousand men. Rafts marked the circumference to allow no easy escape, but with enough space within to display vigorous rowing, the helmsmen's skills, the shock of encounter, and all the usual action in battle. Companies and squadrons of the praetorian cohorts were stationed on the rafts, fronted by shielded platforms from which to operate catapults and ballistae. The rest of the lake was occupied by marines on decked vessels.

The lakeshore, hills and mountain ridges formed a kind of amphitheatre, filled with an innumerable crowd of people from the neighbouring towns, and even Rome itself, drawn by curiosity or respect for the emperor. He and Agrippina presided, he dressed in a magnificent military cloak, she, not far away, in a Greek mantle of cloth of gold.

The battle, though between convicted criminals, was contested with the spirit and bravery of free men, and after much blood-letting the combatants were spared execution.

BOOK XII:LVII THE PARTIAL FAILURE OF THE SCHEME

At the end of the display, the tunnel was opened for the discharge of water, but faulty construction was immediately evident, the passage not having been sunk to the maximum or even mean depth of the lake, and time had to be allowed for it to be dug to a lower level, with a view to gathering a fresh audience and mounting a gladiatorial display, on pontoons also laid for an infantry battle.

Moreover, a banquet had been served near the outlet to the lake, leading to widespread panic when the water broke through carrying all away nearby, and either overwhelming those further away or terrifying them with the shock and its reverberation. Agrippina seized on the emperor's agitation to accuse Narcissus, as Minister of Works, of greed and fraud. He was not to be silenced, and attacked her, in return, as an overbearing woman of excessive ambition.

BOOK XII:LVIII NERO MARRIES AND EXERTS HIS INFLUENCE

In the consulate of Decimus Junius and Quintus Haterius (AD53), Nero, at the age of sixteen, married Claudia Octavia the emperor's daughter.

Desiring to shine, through liberal learning and a reputation for eloquence, he took up the cause of Ilium (Hisarlik, Turkey) and gave a speech on the Romans' Trojan descent; Aeneas as the progenitor of the

Julian line; and other traditions which were not far from fable; with the result that the inhabitants of Ilium were released from all state taxation.

Again, through his oratory, the colony of Bononia (Bologna) which had been destroyed by fire, was assisted by a grant of one hundred thousand gold pieces; the inhabitants of Rhodes regained their freedoms, the frequent forfeiting or re-confirmation of these being the result of sedition at home balanced against their military service abroad; and finally Apamea on the Maeander (Dinar, Turkey) which had suffered an earthquake was relieved from tribute for the following five years.

BOOK XII:LIX THE DEATH OF STATILIUS TAURUS

Yet Claudius, through the continued machinations of Agrippina, was compelled to display extreme harshness, Statilius Taurus, of famous wealth and whose gardens she coveted, being ruined after being accused by Tarquinius Priscus, who had been legate to Taurus when the latter, exercising proconsular power, governed Asia Minor. On their return, Priscus charged him with acts of extortion, but more seriously with practising magical rites.

Taurus, impatient of these false accusations and his undeserved disgrace, anticipated the Senate's verdict and took his own life. As a result, Priscus was driven from the House, a point which the senators, in their loathing of informers, carried in the face of Agrippina's intrigues.

BOOK XII:LX CLAUDIUS DEVOLVES POWERS TO HIS PROCURATORS

On several occasions during the year, Claudius was heard to remark that the judgements of his procurators ought to carry as much weight as his own. In order that his views might not be taken as unfortunate lapses, a fuller and wider provision to that effect was further enacted by Senate decree. For the divine Augustus had ordered that legal powers be conferred on the members of the equestrian order who governed Egypt, and that their decisions were to apply as though they had been handed down by the magistrates in Rome.

Later, both in other provinces and the city, a host of judgements were permitted them that had previously been handled by the praetors. Claudius granted them the full powers so often disputed by public dissent or force, for example when the Sempronian rogations placed the equestrian order in possession of the courts (122BC); when the Servilian law returned these to the Senate (106BC); or when in the days of Marius and Sulla it provided the main grounds for conflict.

However the partisanship then was between the classes and, whoever won, the results applied generally. Gaius Oppius and Cornelius Balbus, supported by the power of Julius Caesar, were the first individuals who could decide the conditions for peace, or the management of war. There is little purpose in mentioning their successors, Matius, Vedius, and the names of other Roman knights with such exalted powers, given that Claudius had placed the freedmen whom he had set in charge of his personal affairs on a level with himself and the law.

BOOK XII:LXI CLAUDIUS GRANTS THE ISLAND OF COS EXEMPTION FROM TRIBUTE

Claudius next raised the question of exempting the island of Cos from tribute, and spoke at length about their ancient history: the oldest inhabitants of the island having been Argives, or possibly the people of Coeus, the father of Latona; later the advent of Aesculapius having brought us the art of medicine, celebrated most highly by his descendants (for example Hippocrates). Here, Claudius listed their individual names, and the times in which they had flourished.

Indeed, Gaius Xenophon, he said, to whose knowledge he himself had recourse, was also of that same ancestry, and he asked that, at his request, the Coans might be exempted from all tribute in future, to cultivate their island in the service of its god. No doubt a great number of their services to the Roman people, and of victories which they had shared in, might have been cited, but Claudius, with his usual affability, did not wish to add extraneous arguments to his concession to a single individual.

BOOK XII:LXII AN EMBASSY FROM THE BYZANTINES

In contrast, the Byzantines, when granted an opportunity to speak, in protesting to the Senate about the magnitude of their burden, rehearsed their whole history. Beginning with the treaty (146BC) struck with ourselves, at the time of our war against the pretender (Andriscus) to the throne of Macedonia, whose dubious birth earned him the title of Pseudo-Philip, they recalled the forces they had sent against Antiochus III (192BC), Perseus of Macedon (168BC) and Aristonicus (Eumenes III, 129BC); their assistance to Marcus Antonius in his war against piracy (101BC); their assistance to Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey, and more recently their services to the Caesars, since they occupied a territory well-placed for the transit of generals and armies by land or sea, and the transport of supplies.

BOOK XII:LXIII THE HISTORY OF BYZANTIUM

For it was on the narrow straits between Europe and Asian Minor, at the extreme end of Europe, that Byzantium was founded by Greeks, who on consulting the oracle of Pythian Apollo as to where to build a city were told to seek a home opposite the country of the blind. That referred it seems to the inhabitants of Chalcedon, opposite, who had arrived from Megara before them, surveyed the qualities of the area, and chosen for the worse.

For Byzantium itself has fertile soil, and rich waters, since vast shoals of tuna, on emerging from the Euxine, fearful of the shelving reefs beneath the sea, shun the winding coast of Asia Minor and head for the harbour opposite. They were thus a thriving and wealthy community.

However, driven by the burden of tribute, they now asked for an exemption or at least a reduction, and their request was accepted by the emperor, given their exhaustion after the recent Thracian (AD46) and Bosporan (AD48) wars which entitled them to relief. They were therefore exempted from tribute for five years.

BOOK XII:LXIV OMINOUS PORTENTS

In the consulate of Marcus Asinius and Manius Acilius (AD54), it appeared from a series of portents that a change for the worse was at hand. Fire from the heavens flickered around the soldiers' standards and tents. A swarm of bees settled on the heights of the Capitol. It was said that hermaphrodites were born, and a pig with the talons of a hawk. It was counted amongst these portents that the numbers of each magistracy were diminished in the same way by the deaths of a quaestor, an aedile, a tribune, a praetor and a consul, all within a few months.

But Agrippina felt especial fear. Troubled by a comment Claudius let fall, when intoxicated, that it was his fate to suffer, and then punish, his wives' ill-conduct, she decided to act, and quickly. First though, she ruined Domitia Lepida the Younger, and for a woman's reason, that Lepida, as the daughter of Antonia the Elder, grand-niece to Augustus, first cousin once removed to Agrippina, and sister of the latter's ex-husband Gnaeus Domitius, believed herself equally illustrious.

There was little to distinguish them in beauty, age and riches; and since each was as shameless, disreputable, and violent as the other, they were no less rivals in their vices than in the advantages they had received from fortune's favour. And the fiercest quarrel by far was as to whether the aunt or the mother was to prevail as regards Nero; since the aunt, Lepida, was trying to captivate his young mind by flattery and generosity, while on the other hand, his mother, Agrippina, grim and menacing, might grant her son an empire, but would never endure him as emperor.

BOOK XII:LXV DOMITIA LEPIDA THE YOUNGER CONDEMNED TO DEATH

However the actual charges against Lepida were that she had sought the life of the emperor's wife by the use of magic spells, and that by failing to control her regiments of slaves throughout Calabria she was disturbing the peace of Italy. On these grounds the death penalty was pronounced, despite the determined opposition of Narcissus, who with his deepening suspicion of Agrippina, was said to have remarked to his closest friends: that his own destruction was certain, whether Britannicus or Nero came to power; yet Claudius' kindness to himself had been such that he would sacrifice his own life for the emperor's benefit.

Messalina and Silius, he said, had been condemned, and there were like grounds for a like charge; there was no fear for the emperor's life if Britannicus succeeded to the throne: but the stepmother's intrigues were

aimed at destroying the whole imperial House, a much greater disgrace to him than his keeping quiet about her predecessor's infidelities. Though there was no lack of infidelity even here, adultery with Pallas leaving no doubt that she valued her dignity, her modesty, her body, her all, less than the throne.

With these and other comments he would embrace Britannicus, praying for him to reach man's estate as swiftly as possible then, raising his hands now towards the heavens, now towards the prince, that once grown to manhood, he would expel his father's enemies and take vengeance on his mother's murderers.

BOOK XII:LXVI AGRIPPINA OBTAINS POISON

Narcissus' health suffered under this weight of cares, and he left for Sinuessa's (Mondragone, Italy) medicinal springs, to recover his strength in a gentler climate. Agrippina, long determined on murder, eager to seize the opportunity offered, and not lacking helpers, now took advice as to the type of poison to be used. Too swift and drastic an action would reveal the crime; whereas if she chose something slow and enervating, Claudius, facing his end and aware of her treachery, might revert to affection for his son.

Something choice was needed, to derange the mind while delaying death. A specialist in such things was found, a woman named Locusta, lately condemned on a poison charge, and long retained as an instrument of power. This woman's ingenuity supplied the potion, to be administered by the eunuch Halotus, who was accustomed to bringing in and tasting the emperor's food.



'Agrippina'

History of Rome and the Roman people, from its origin to
the establishment of the Christian empire - Victor Duruy
(1811 - 1894) (p473, 1884)

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BOOK XII:LXVII XENOPHON COMPLETES THE MURDER OF CLAUDIUS

So widely known was all this later, that the historians of the period recorded that the poison was introduced into a tasty dish of mushrooms, though the full force of the drug was not immediately felt, due to Claudius' lethargy or his state of intoxication; at the same time a loosening of the bowels seemed to relieve him.

Agrippina, therefore, was terrified, and since it was her own death that was to be dreaded, scorning to act in person, she invoked the complicity of the doctor Xenophon, already forewarned by her. He, as if encouraging the emperor's effort to vomit, is believed to have plunged a feather dipped in a swift-acting poison down Claudius' throat, aware that the greatest crimes must begin dangerously to end profitably.

BOOK XII:LXVIII AGRIPPINA DETAINS BRITANNICUS AND HIS SISTERS

Meanwhile the Senate had been convened, and the consuls and priests were formally praying for the emperor's safety at the very moment when the lifeless body was being swathed in blankets and warm bandages, while already the requisite measures were being taken to secure Nero's accession.

Firstly Agrippina prevented Britannicus from leaving his room, by clasping him in her arms as though heart-broken and seeking comfort, calling him the living picture of his father, and by employing diverse other means. She likewise detained his sisters, Antonia and Octavia, and had guards secure every entrance. She gave out news continuously that the emperor's health was improving, to maintain the soldier's hopes, and waited for the opportune moment as advised by the astrologers.

BOOK XII:LXIX NERO IS HAILED BY THE GUARDS' CAMP

Then, at noon on the thirteenth of October, the palace gates suddenly swung open, and Nero with Burrus in attendance, exited to meet the cohort who were on guard according to the rules of the service. Once there, at a hint from the prefect, he was greeted with cheers, and placed in a litter.

Some of the men are said to have hesitated, looking back and asking where Britannicus might be: then as no one promoted the alternative, they accepted the choice on offer. Nero was carried to the camp and, after a few words appropriate to the moment and following his father's generous example, promised them a gratuity, and was hailed as emperor.

The decision of the troops was supported by Senate decree, nor was there any hesitation in the provinces. Claudius was voted divine status, and his funeral solemnities celebrated with the magnificence accorded those of the deified Augustus, Agrippina emulating the lavishness of her great-grandmother Livia.

Claudius' will however was not read aloud, lest the injustice and invidiousness of his preferring the stepson to the son should disturb the minds of the crowd.

End of the Annals Book XII: XLI-LXIX

BOOK XIII: I-XXXIII
NERO AND AGRIPPINA



'Nemesis, Retributive Justice'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p528, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XIII:I THE DEATH OF JULIUS SILANUS

The first death under the new emperor, that of Julius Silanus, the proconsul for Asia Minor, was brought about by Agrippina's guile, without Nero's knowledge. It was hardly a case of Silanus provoking his end by any innate aggression, he being so lethargic, and so completely disdained by previous regimes that Caligula used to call him 'the golden sheep', but rather that Agrippina who had brought about the death of his brother Lucius, feared the possibility of revenge, since it was commonly thought that a man of mature years should take precedence over Nero, almost an adolescent still, and emperor only through crime, while Julius was of unstained reputation and noble lineage and, as was to be taken note of at such a time, also a descendant of the Caesars: since he too was the son of a great-granddaughter of Augustus.

Such was the motive for his execution: the instruments were Publius Celer, a Roman knight, and Helius, a freedman, who ran the emperor's affairs in Asia Minor. They administered poison to Silanus at a dinner, too openly to avoid detection.

With no less haste, Claudius' freedman Narcissus, whose quarrels with Agrippina I have already noted, was driven to suicide by harsh custody and extreme deprivation, though against Nero's wishes, since his greed and prodigality were wonderfully in harmony with the emperor's as yet hidden vices.

BOOK XIII:II AGRIPPINA'S HOLD ON POWER

He would have progressed to murder, had not Afranius Burrus and Seneca the Younger intervened. Both guardians to the imperial youth, and both in agreement, a rarity where power is shared, they influenced him equally by contrasting methods. Burrus, with his military

interests and austere character, and Seneca, with his lessons in eloquence and kindly virtue, aided one another in ensuring that the emperor's years of easy temptation would be kept, if he scorned moderation, within the bounds of acceptable pleasure.

Each faced the same opposition in Agrippina's pride, who, burning with all the passion of ill-founded authority, possessed the allegiance of Pallas, at whose instigation Claudius had destroyed himself, through an incestuous marriage, and a fatal act of adoption. Yet equally, Nero's character was not one of subservience, and Pallas, whose sullen arrogance exceeded the limits of a freedman, had attracted his loathing.

Nevertheless, in public, every honour was heaped upon Agrippina, and when the guards' tribune asked for the password, in accordance with military routine, Nero replied: 'The best of mothers'. The Senate too granted her a pair of lictors, and the office of priestess to Claudius, in the same session whereby he was voted a public funeral, followed by deification.

BOOK XIII:III NERO'S EULOGY ON CLAUDIUS

On the day of the funeral, Nero began his eulogy on Claudius, and while rehearsing the antiquity of that emperor's family, the consulates and triumphs of his ancestors, he was taken seriously both by himself and others. Also his references to Claudius' literary achievements and the absence of defeats abroad during that reign, were listened to respectfully. But when he referred to the deceased's foresight and wisdom, no one could repress a smile, though the speech, composed by Seneca, showed the degree of refinement expected from a man whose pleasing ingenuity was so well-suited to the listeners of that age.

The elder statesmen, whose pastime always is to compare past and present, noted that Nero was the first of those who had held power to require a borrowed eloquence. For Julius Caesar, as dictator, had rivalled

the greatest orators; and Augustus possessed the ready and fluent eloquence worthy of one who ruled. Tiberius too was skilled in the art, weighing his words, and powerful in his judgements, or deliberately ambiguous. Even Caligula's troubled mind did not affect his power of speech. Nor did Claudius lack eloquence when he had prepared his thoughts. Nero, though, even as a child, immediately turned his lively mind to other things: composing, painting, singing, displaying his command of horses; and occasionally, in forging a set of verses, showing that he had in him the rudiments of learning.

BOOK XIII:IV NERO ADDRESSES THE SENATE

When all this pretence of grief was over, Nero entered the Senate House, and prefacing his speech with references to the senators' authority, and the military consensus, talked of the advice and precedents he could draw upon in governing supremely well. Nor, he said, had his youth been filled with civil war or domestic strife; he brought to his task neither hatred, nor injury, nor desire for vengeance.

He then described the future form of his rule, those things to be especially shunned that had aroused recent dissatisfaction. He would not be the judge of every matter, with prosecutors and defendants shut in the same room, and the power of the few given full rein; to his inner circle bribery and intrigue would find no access; palace and State would be separate entities.

Let the Senate, he cried, retain its ancient rights, let Italy and the public provinces face the consuls' tribunal before the consuls gave them access to the senators: while he himself would account for the interests of the armies entrusted to him.

BOOK XIII:V A GOOD START, BUT AGRIPPINA STILL SEEKS SUPREMACY

Nor was adherence to this lacking, and many decisions were devolved to the Senate: for example, none were to sell their services in pleading a cause, neither for cash nor gifts; nor were quaestors designate obliged to mount a gladiatorial show. This latter point, though opposed by Agrippina, as a subversion of Claudius' decree, was passed by the senators, who had been summoned specially to the palace so that she could position herself at a newly-added door to the rear concealed by a curtain, to hide her from view but not prevent her hearing.

Indeed, when an embassy from Armenia, was pleading the nation's cause before Nero, she would have ascended the emperor's tribunal and presided there alongside him, if Seneca had not advised him, while others stood stupefied in alarm, to descend and greet her. This guise of filial piety thus averted a scandal.

BOOK XIII:VI THE PARTHIANS EXPEL RADAMISTUS AND RAVAGE ARMENIA

At the end of that year, there were disturbing rumours that the Parthians had again erupted and were ravaging Armenia after driving out Radamistus who, often ruling that kingdom then fleeing, had once more deserted the field.

In Rome, with its appetite for gossip, the question therefore arose as to how an emperor who was barely seventeen could contain or repel such a threat. What safety lay in a youth ruled by a woman? Were battles also, the siege of cities, all the business of war, to be handled by his tutors, they asked.

Others maintained that things were better than if it were Claudius, weakened by age and idleness, who had been summoned to take on the efforts of a campaign, while complying with orders from his servants! Burrus and Seneca, however, were known for their experience of affairs; and was the emperor so lacking in years, when it was said that Pompey at eighteen (84BC) and Octavian (Augustus) at nineteen (44BC) had withstood civil war?

More was achieved by a ruler's auspices and advice, than his sword and a strong right hand. If, unmoved by jealousies, he employed an outstanding general rather than one relying on bribery and court favour, it gave a strong indication as to whether the friends around him were honest or otherwise.

BOOK XIII:VII NERO'S STRATEGY AND GOOD LUCK, AVERT THE THREAT

In this midst of all this gossip, Nero ordered that recruits from the neighbouring provinces were to be moved to reinforce the eastern legions, while the legions themselves were to be stationed closer to Armenia. At the same time the two veteran kings Herod Agrippa II, and Antiochus IV, with their forces, were to prepare to cross the Parthian borders, and two bridges were to be constructed over the Euphrates, while Lesser Armenia was entrusted to Aristobulus, and the district of Sophene to Sohaemus, both receiving the royal insignia.

Then, just at the right moment, a rival to Vologeses II, his son Vardanes appeared; and the Parthians, so as to postpone hostilities, abandoned Armenia.

BOOK XIII:VIII CORBULO AND QUADRATUS COMPETE FOR AUTHORITY

In the Senate, however, the whole thing was glorified in speeches by those who proposed that there should be a public thanksgiving, and that on the day of thanksgiving the emperor should wear triumphal robes, enter Rome to an ovation, and be voted a statue of himself, the same size as that of Mars the Avenger and to be placed in the same temple.

Apart from the usual sycophancy, there was delight in the appointment of Domitius Corbulo to secure Armenia, a choice which seemed to open a path for the virtues. The forces in the east were divided accordingly, with half the auxiliaries and two legions remaining in the province of Syria under its governor Ummidius Quadratus, while Corbulo was assigned an equal number of allies and Roman citizens, with the addition of the auxiliary cohorts and cavalry wintering in Cappadocia.

The allied kings were to take orders from either, according to the requirements of war: but they were more eager to support Corbulo, who to confirm his reputation, which is valuable at the start of a campaign, travelled swiftly, and met with Quadratus at the Cilician town of Aegeae (Yumurtalik, Turkey). Quadratus had travelled there, for fear that once Corbulo had assumed command of the forces in Syria allocated to him, all eyes would be turned towards this massive and grandiloquent general, noted for his experience and judgement as much as his vain splendour.

BOOK XIII:IX VOLOGESES GIVES HOSTAGES

However each of them advised King Vologeses to choose peace rather than war, and by giving hostages preserve that respect towards the Roman people customary among his predecessors. Vologeses handed over the most illustrious members of the Arsacian house, either to

prepare for war when he wished, or remove his suspected rivals in the guise of granting hostages.

They were received by the centurion Insteius, Quadratus' envoy, who chanced to be with the king on prior business. Once Corbulo had news of this, he ordered Arrius Varius, a cohort prefect, to go and take charge of the hostages.

A quarrel then started between prefect and centurion who, so as not to provide a spectacle for foreigners, left the decision to the hostages and the envoys escorting them. They chose Corbulo, on the strength of his recent successes and of that liking for him shown even by his enemies. Discord between the generals ensued; Quadratus complaining that he had been robbed of the fruits of his policy, Corbulo asserting that, on the contrary, the king had not been prepared to offer hostages until he himself was appointed as commander in the field, the king's ambition then giving way to fear.

Nero, in order to resolve their differences, ordered a proclamation to this effect: in view of the successes obtained by Quadratus and Corbulo, laurels were to be added to the imperial rods and axes (fasces).

All this I have related together, although the series of events extended into the following consulate.

BOOK XIII:X NERO SHOWS A WELCOME MODESTY

That same year, Nero asked the Senate for a statue to his father Gnaeus Domitius, and consular insignia for Asconius Labeo, who had acted as his guardian; but vetoed the offer of statues of himself, in solid-gold or silver.



'Roman Emperor (likely Nero)'
Anonymous, c. 1750 - c. 1830
The Rijksmuseum

And though the senators had decreed that the new year should begin in December, the month in which Nero had been born, he retained the first of January as the opening day of the year, out of respect for its old religious associations.

Nor was prosecution of Carrinas Celer allowed, the senator being accused by a slave, nor that of Julius Densus of the equestrian order, whose support for Britannicus was claimed as a crime.

BOOK XIII:XI THE EMPEROR'S RESTRAINT CONTINUES

In the consulate of Nero and Lucius Antistius, when the magistrates were swearing loyalty to the acts of empire, he restrained his colleague Antistius from swearing loyalty to those performed by himself: and was applauded warmly by the senators, who hoped that his young mind, elevated by the glory attached even to small things, might aspire to greater ones.

Indeed a display of leniency towards Plautius Lateranus followed, who was now restored to the ranks of the Senate, having been demoted for adultery with Messalina. Nero, in fact, pledged himself to clemency, in a series of speeches which Seneca kept offering to the public via the emperor's lips, either in order to teach virtue, or to advertise his skill.

BOOK XIII:XII AGRIPPINA'S HOLD OVER NERO WEAKENS

As far as other matters were concerned, Agrippina's maternal authority had somewhat weakened, Nero lapsing into a love affair with a freedwoman named Acte, and at the same time taking into his confidence

two handsome young men, Marcus Otho (the future emperor) and Claudius Senecio; the former being of consular family, the latter the son of an imperial freedman.

Without his mother's knowledge, then despite her ineffectual objections, they had insinuated themselves into his household, through sharing both his dissipation and his dubious secrets, while even the emperor's older friends were not against the girl gratifying his desires without harming anyone, since he loathed his wife Octavia, despite her nobility and known virtue, either it being so fated, or because what is illicit proves stronger, while there was always the fear that if his passions were thwarted, he might take to despoiling women of higher rank.

BOOK XIII: XIII SHE BEGINS TO CONCEDE GROUND

But Agrippina complained bitterly, as is a woman's way, against 'her rival the freedwoman', 'her daughter-in-law the serving wench' with more in the same vein. She refused to wait for her son's repentance or satiety, and the viler her reproaches the more she fanned the flames until, conquered by the force of his love, Nero relinquished his obedience to his mother, and placed himself in the hands of Seneca, whose close friend, Annaeus Serenus, feigning a love affair with the same freedwoman, screened the emperor's adolescent desires, and used his own name so freely, that the gifts conferred on the girl by Nero in private were openly attributed to Serenus.

Agrippina now reversed her approach, attacking her son with blandishments, offering her bedroom and its privacy to hide what his dawning manhood and high estate demanded. Indeed she even confessed her ill-timed severity, and offered to transfer to him her own wealth, which was not much less than the emperor's riches, a change as intemperate in its humility, as the excessive harshness with which she had lately repressed him. This reversal was not lost on Nero, and struck fear into his intimates,

who begged him to beware the machinations of a woman always ruthless, and now deceitful towards him also.

About this time, it chanced that Nero, on inspecting some glittering apparel which had once adorned the wives and mothers of the imperial house, chose a dress and some jewellery and sent them to his mother as a gift. There was no question of frugality in the action, since he was conferring on her extremely valuable items previously coveted by others. But Agrippina proclaimed that the move was designed less to enrich her wardrobe than to deprive her of the rest, and that her son was dividing property that he owned solely because of her.

BOOK XIII:XIV SHE CHALLENGES NERO DIRECTLY

There was no lack of those who ascribed worse to her. And Nero, inimical to anyone who supported such female arrogance, removed Pallas from the role to which Claudius had appointed him, and in which he virtually controlled the government. It was said, that as he departed, with his vast multitude of followers, the emperor remarked, not inappropriately, that Pallas was off to swear the formal oath on exiting office (thereby stating that he had done nothing illegal), and indeed Pallas had stipulated that there should be no enquiry into his past actions, and that his accounts with the State balanced perfectly.

Agrippina now turned precipitously to threats and alarms, nor were the emperor's ears spared her testimony that Britannicus was now of age, the true and worthy successor to his father's powers, which he, a spurious adopted heir, was now exercising through his mother's wrongdoing. She had no objection to all the evils of that unhappy house being revealed, starting with her marriage, and her use of poison: the only act of foresight on her part and the gods, being that her stepson still lived. She would go with Britannicus to the guards camp: there let the daughter of Germanicus be heard on the one side, and on the other Burrus the maimed, and Seneca

the exiled, claiming no doubt, with twisted hand and schoolmaster's tongue, lordship over the human race.

At that moment she raised her arm, and heaping reproaches on him, invoked the deified Claudius, the shades of the brothers Silanus, and all the many pointless crimes.

BOOK XIII:XV NERO MOVES AGAINST BRITANNICUS

Startled by all this, and with the day nearing on which Britannicus completed his fourteenth year and hence came of age, Nero began to brood, now on his mother's violent moods, now on his rival's character, lately revealed by a trivial test, which nevertheless gained the lad wide sympathy. During the drunken days of the Saturnalia, when among other diversions his contemporaries were drawing lots as to who should be their king, chance favoured Nero. He commanded various actions of the rest, intending to spare them embarrassment, but on ordering Britannicus to stand, walk to the centre, and recite something, hoping by this to make a laughing stock of a boy who knew nothing of sober, never mind drunken, entertainment, his victim steadfastly began a poem in which he hinted at his eviction from his father's house and from the heights of power. This awoke feelings of compassion, all the more manifest in that night and revelry had banished dissimulation.

Nero, aware of ill-will, redoubled his hatred; and faced with Agrippina's urgent threats, but not openly daring to order his brother's execution, there being no grounds for criminal charges, he moved secretly, ordering poison to be prepared. His agent in this was Julius Pollio, tribune of a praetorian cohort, to whose charge was committed the convicted poisoner Locusta, notorious for her wickedness.

Now, that no one close to Britannicus gave a thought to right or loyalty, had long been provided for, and the first dose of poison he received was administered by his own tutors, but his bowels being opened he

excreted the potion, which was either not powerful enough or had been diluted to prevent immediate action. Nero, however, unable to endure any tardiness in the execution of crime, threatened the tribune and the sorceress with execution, on the grounds that, too mindful of their reputation and already preparing their defence, they were creating obstacles to his safety. Promising, then, that death would be as instantaneous as if effected by the blade, they concocted the venom next to Nero's bedroom, guaranteeing its potency by prior tests.

BOOK XIII:XVI BRITANNICUS IS POISONED

It was the custom for the emperor's children to be seated, with other noble offspring of the same age, in sight of their relations, at a more scantily furnished table. There Britannicus dined, and since his food and drink was first tasted by one of his attendants, the following deceit was used, to avoid altering the procedure, or revealing the plot in killing both.

A harmless hot drink, previously tasted, was handed to Britannicus, and when he rejected it as still over-warm, cold water was added containing the poison. It thus pervaded his whole body, so that his voice and his ability to breathe failed him simultaneously. Those seated around him were startled, and the more unwise began to disperse: but those with a deeper understanding sat motionless gazing at Nero. He, reclining, and as if unknowing, observed that this was a not unfamiliar event due to the epilepsy with which Britannicus had been afflicted from infancy, and that consciousness and feeling would presently return.

But from Agrippina came such a shudder, provoked by terror and mental anguish, despite her usual ability to control her features, that it was obvious she had been as ignorant of the plot as was Britannicus' sister Octavia, and now realised that indeed all hope was lost, and the precedent had been set for her own murder. Octavia, though young and inexperienced, hid her grief, her concern, her every emotion. So, after a brief silence, the pleasures of the feast were resumed.



'The Death of Britannicus'
Pieter Tanjé, after Louis Fabritius Dubourg, 1743
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK XIII:XVII HIS FUNERAL PYRE

The one night saw both Britannicus' murder and his funeral, the pyre and its trappings, modest as they were, having been prepared in advance. Yet his ashes were interred in the Mausoleum of Augustus, on the Field of Mars, though in such a downpour of rain the crowd believed it portended the anger of the heavens against a crime which has again and again been condoned by the majority when taking into account the age-old discord between brothers, and its incompatibility with autocratic rule.

Many authors of the period claim that, on a series of days prior to the murder, Nero had so abused Britannicus' innocence that his death might no longer be seen as too cruel, or arriving too soon, even though it took place amongst the sanctities of the table without his being granted time even to embrace his sister and before his enemy's eyes, by its coming so swiftly to this last scion of the Claudian House, since he had been defiled by lust before the poison.

The hastiness of the funeral was defended in a decree of the emperor, claiming that it was a tradition among our ancestors to remove untimely obsequies from the public gaze, and not detain it with eulogies and processions. Moreover, having lost the help of his brother, all remaining hope rested on the State, and the Senate and people themselves must cherish their emperor the more, as he was in fact the sole survivor of a house (the Claudian) fashioned for the heights of power.

BOOK XIII:XVIII AGRIPPINA ISOLATED BY THE EMPEROR

He now showered gifts on the most important of his friends. Nor were men lacking to condemn those who, though professing austerity at the time, divided up houses and villas like so much plunder.

Others however believed that they had been compelled to do so by the emperor, conscious of his crime but hopeful of forgiveness, so that by his generosity he could place the most powerful men under an obligation.

However, no show of munificence could assuage his mother's anger. She took Octavia to her heart, held endless private conversations with her friends, while, with more than her inborn greed, she appropriated money from every source as a reserve. She welcomed tribunes and centurions courteously, and showed a respect for the titles and virtues of the nobility, of whom some indeed still survived, as if in search of a faction and a leader.

This was known to Nero, and he withdrew the military guard which she had acquired as an emperor's wife and had retained as the present emperor's mother, as well as the German bodyguards lately assigned to her as a similar mark of honour. He created his own household, and lest her gatherings might draw a crowd, he installed his mother in the house that had belonged to Antonia the Younger, and when he visited her there arrived with a throng of centurions, and left after a perfunctory kiss.

BOOK XIII:XIX AGRIPPINA IS INDICTED

Nothing in human affairs is as fickle and mutable as fame attached to a power not supported by its own strength. Agrippina's threshold was instantly avoided: no condolences, no visits except from a very few women, from love or perhaps hatred. Among these was Junia Silana, driven from her husband Silanus by Messalina, as I have related.

Noted for her ancestry, beauty and lasciviousness, and long Agrippina's most dear friend, she was later involved in a private quarrel between them, since Agrippina had dissuaded the young nobleman Sextius Africanus from marrying Silana, describing her as a loose woman of uncertain age, not with the intention of winning him for herself, but to keep the rich and childless Silana from gaining a husband. She, in hopes of wreaking revenge, procured two of her own followers, Iturius and Calvisius,

to bring charges against Agrippina, not by employing the old often-heard tale of the latter being in mourning for Britannicus, or of broadcasting the wrongs done against Octavia, but claiming that she was resolved to encourage Rubellius Plautus to foment rebellion, he being equally descended, with Nero, from the divine Augustus (as his great-great-grandson) on the mother's side. As Plautus' wife and then empress she would once more enter into power.

The charges were communicated to Atimetus, a freedman of Nero's aunt Domitia, by Iturius and Calvisius. Delighted by what had been disclosed (since the rivalry between Agrippina and Domitia was fierce) Atimetus urged the actor Paris, also a freedman of Domitia, to go instantly and present the charge to Nero in the most brutal manner possible.

BOOK XIII:XX NERO CONTEMPLATES MURDERING HIS MOTHER

The night was well-advanced, and Nero was spending it over his wine, when Paris, who was accustomed usually to bring some life to the emperor's debauchery, but now feigned melancholy, entered the room, and revealing the evidence in detail so terrified his listener, that Nero not only determined to kill his mother together with Plautus, but even to remove Burrus from his command, on the grounds that his promotion had been furthered by Agrippina and Burrus was repaying the debt.

According to Fabius Rusticus, the letter to Caecina Tuscus, ordering him to take over command of the praetorian cohorts had been written, but the role remained with Burrus thanks to Seneca's intervention. Pliny and Cluvius Rufus do say that Nero never doubted the prefect's loyalty; and indeed Fabius Rusticus is inclined to overpraise Seneca, through whose friendship he flourished. For my part, when the historians agree, I will follow them, where they disagree I will record the various versions against their respective names.

In a state of trepidation, and desirous of his mother's death, Nero would brook no delay, until Burrus, promising she should indeed die if her guilt could be conclusively proven, said that anyone, especially a parent, was permitted a defence; and there were no accusers present, only a lone voice, here from the house of an enemy. Let the emperor consider the darkness, a night spent wakefully in feasting, all that was conducive to rash and foolish action.

BOOK XIII:XXI AGRIPPINA REBUTS THE CHARGES

The emperor's fears having been calmed in this manner, a visit was paid at daybreak to Agrippina, so that she might hear the charges and either rebut them or pay the penalty, the task being undertaken by Burrus, with Seneca present; while a number of freedmen attended to bear witness to the conversation.

After expounding all the accusations and their various sources, Burrus adopted a threatening attitude. Agrippina however summoned all her arrogance, saying: 'It is no surprise that Silana, who has never given birth, is ignorant of maternal affection; parents do not change their children as an adulteress changes lovers. Nor, if Iturius and Calvisius, having exhausted their estates, pay for an ageing mistress with this latest effort, by inventing charges, is that a justification for my sad reputation, or the emperor's conscience, being tainted with parricide.

As for Domitia, I should be grateful for her enmity if, instead of now staging this theatrical scenario with the help of her bedfellow Atimetus and her actor Paris, she were competing with me in benevolence towards my Nero. While my advice was preparing the way for his adoption, his proconsular powers, his designation as consul, and his other steps to power, she was beautifying the fishponds at her beloved Baiae!

Who can stand forth and accuse me of tampering with the guards in the city, or shaking the loyalty of the provinces, or finally of seducing slaves

or freedmen to crime? Could I have lived happily with Britannicus as master of all? And even if Plautus or some other were to sit in judgement over the State, would there not still, without doubt, be plenty of accusers ready to charge me, not with some odd impatient utterance of unguarded affection but with that crime from which only a son could absolve me?

Those present were moved, and moreover tried to assuage her feelings, but she insisted on an audience with her son; where she spoke neither of her innocence, as if unsure of him, nor of her past services to him, as if in reproach, but by way of winning vengeance for herself and recognition for her friends.

BOOK XIII:XXII REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

As a result, Faenius Rufus was made custodian of the corn-supply, Arruntius Stella supervisor of the Games to be given by Nero, and Tiberius Balbillus governor of Egypt. Syria was destined for Publius Anteius, but through various subterfuges it eluded him, and ultimately he was kept in Rome.

Silana, on the other hand, was driven into exile; Calvisius and Iturius were also relegated; Atimetus received the death penalty; while Paris was too vital to the emperor's debaucheries for any punishment to be inflicted. Plautus was, for the moment, passed over in silence.

BOOK XIII:XXIII PALLAS IS BANISHED

It was then reported that Pallas and Burrus had agreed to summon Cornelius Sulla to power, on the strength of his illustrious ancestry and his relationship to Claudius, whose son-in-law he had become by marrying Antonia.

The accusation was brought by one Paetus, notorious for supervising the treasury's sales by auction, and now convicted of lying. But Pallas' insolence caused offence more than his innocence of the charge gave pleasure: since on the freedmen being named, on whose complicity he was alleged to have relied, he replied (mere names not being evidence) that he never indicated anything under his own roof except by a nod or a gesture, or if more was needed, wrote a note to avoid speaking.

Burrus however, though a defendant, gave the verdict amongst the judges. Pallas was sentenced to banishment and the account books, with which he was resurrecting cancelled debts owing to the treasury, were burned.

BOOK XIII:XXIV A PURIFICATION OF THE CITY

At the end of the year, the guards usually present at the Games were withdrawn, to give a greater appearance of liberty, to prevent the men being corrupted by close contact with the theatre's licentiousness, and to see if the masses would behave if the soldiers were removed.

A purification of the city was performed by the emperor, as advised by the soothsayers, after the temples of Jove and Minerva were struck by lightning.

BOOK XIII:XXV NERO ROAMS THE STREETS

The consulate of Quintus Volusius and Publius Scipio (56AD) was a time of peace, but with shameful excess at home, where Nero, disguised in slave's dress, roamed the streets, whorehouses, and inns with his gang of friends, snatching goods for sale, and assaulting those they met, the victims so unaware of his identity that he received blows with the rest, and bore the marks on his face.

Then, when it became known that the emperor was the perpetrator, outrages against men and women of note increased, and others, taking advantage of the licence now permitted, began to carry out the same in their own gangs, in Nero's name and with impunity. Julius Montanus, a member of the senatorial order, though he had not yet held office, who on meeting the emperor by chance in the dark repelled the violence offered then, recognising him, begged pardon but as if in reproach, was driven to suicide.

However, Nero, less venturesome in future, surrounded himself with soldiers and groups of gladiators, who were to hold back at first from quarrels of a modest almost private extent, but use their weapons if there was too great a show of energy by the injured party.

He even turned the players' licence and their factions in the audience into something akin to warfare, waiving penalties and offering prizes himself, while looking on secretly or openly until, with the masses in conflict and for fear of worse commotions, no other remedy could be found but to expel all the actors from Italy, and station soldiers at the theatres again.

BOOK XIII:XXVI THE SENATE DEBATES THE RIGHTS OF FREEDMEN

At about that time, the Senate debated the offences committed by freedmen, and the demand made that, in unsatisfactory cases, former owners should have the right to revoke an act of emancipation. There was no lack of support for this, but the consuls did not dare to put the motion without the emperor's knowledge, though they wrote to him that the Senate were in agreement.

Nero was doubtful whether he could sponsor the measure, his few advisors being of conflicting opinions: some complained indignantly that insolence had flourished with liberty, that patrons no longer possessed the

same rights in law as the freedmen, who strained their patrons' patience, and even raised their hands to strike them with impunity, or if they were punished it was in a manner suggested by themselves!

What redress was open to an injured patron, except to banish his freedman beyond the hundredth milestone, which merely meant to the beaches of Campania? But beyond that, the courts were open and equal to all: and some measure impossible to ignore should be enacted. It should be no great trouble for a freedman to retain his liberty by practising the same obedience that had earned it: but those convicted of wrongdoing should be returned to slavery, so that fear might encourage those whom kindness had not altered.

BOOK XIII:XXVII THE EMPEROR RULES IN FAVOUR OF THE STATUS QUO

Against this, it was maintained that the guilt of the few should only affect themselves, the rights of the many ought not to be diminished. Freedmen formed a group from which the tribes, the magistrate's staff, the priests, and even the city watch were largely recruited, while most of the knights and senators owed to no other origin: if the freedmen were divided off, the lack of free-born would be more than apparent!

It was not without reason, that our ancestors, in creating the various classes, made freedmen a communal asset. Indeed, two forms of manumission (formal and complete, or informal and incomplete) had been instituted, so as to leave room for a change of heart or renewed favour. Those who had not been liberated 'by the rod', were in some manner still held by the bond of slavery. All must judge on the merits of the case, and be slow to concede what could not be retrieved.

This latter view prevailed, and Nero wrote to the Senate that they must consider each freedman's case individually, where their patron had brought the accusation: nothing generally applying should be amended. Not long

afterwards, Domitia, his aunt, had her freedman Paris taken from her, as if by civil law and much to the emperor's discredit, by whose command a ruling of noble birth had been obtained.

BOOK XIII:XXVIII CONFLICTS OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN THE MAGISTRATES

Nevertheless some shadow of the republic still remained. For a quarrel arose between the praetor Vibullius and the plebeian tribune Antistius, who had ordered the release of some disorderly members of the theatre factions, who had been clapped in irons by the praetor. The senators approved the arrest, and censured the liberty taken by Antistius.

At the same time the tribunes were forbidden from pre-empting praetorian and consular jurisdiction by summoning people from any area of Italian when civil action against them was already pending there. Lucius Piso, the consul designate, added a proposal that their powers should not be exercised under their own roofs, nor were the many fines they imposed to be entered in the treasury accounts by the quaestors until four months had passed; in the meantime appeals were to be allowed, the decision lying with the consuls.

The powers of the aediles were also narrowed, and limits set on the amounts up to which the curule or plebeian aediles could seize assets pledged as security, or impose fines. And the plebeian tribune Helvidius Priscus brought a private action against the treasury quaestor Obultronius Sabinus, arguing that he was going to merciless lengths in his use of auction sales against the impoverished. The emperor then transferred responsibility for the public accounts from the quaestors to the prefects.

BOOK XIII:XXIX THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SENATORIAL TREASURY

Authority over the Senatorial treasury had been in various hands, often altering. Augustus left the choice of prefects to the Senate; then as bribery for votes was suspected, they were drawn by lot from among the praetors. This was short-lived too, as the lots often fell upon those unequal to the task.

Claudius then reinstated the quaestors (as in the Republic) and promised them immediate promotion to higher rank: but as this was their first magistrate's appointment they lacked the necessary years of experience: Nero therefore chose ex-praetors with a proven track-record.

BOOK XIII:XXX FOUR INDICTMENTS, AND AN HONOURABLE PASSING

In that same consulate (AD56), Vipsanius Laenas was convicted, in his province of Sardinia, of financial corruption. Cestius Proculus, on the other hand, was acquitted on a charge of extortion brought by the Cretans.

Clodius Quirinalis who, in command of the oarsmen stationed at Ravenna, had troubled Italy with his savagery and debauchery, as though Italy were the least of nations, pre-empted his execution by taking poison. And Caninius Rebilus, who ranked amongst the most illustrious for his legal knowledge and the magnitude of his fortune, escaped the torments of sickness and old-age, by opening his veins, though due to the un-masculine vices for which he was notorious he had been thought incapable of the willpower required to commit suicide.

However, Lucius Volusius departed this life, his illustrious reputation intact, after enjoying ninety-three years of life, a notable fortune virtuously gained, and the unbroken friendship of a succession of emperors.

BOOK XIII:XXXI NO GREAT EVENTS, AD57

In Nero's second consulate, Lucius Piso being his colleague, little occurred worthy of note, unless one wished to fill a volume by celebrating the foundations of, and beams with which, the emperor built his vast wooden amphitheatre on the Field of Mars, though it has been found more in accord with the dignity of the Roman people to entrust great events to the histories, and such things as those to the daily papers.

As for other matters, the colonies of Capua and Nuceria (Nocera Inferiore, Campania) were reinforced by the addition of veterans, and the populace given a grant of four gold pieces per head.

Also four hundred thousand gold pieces were paid into the treasury to support public credit, while the tax of four per cent levied on the purchase of slaves was remitted, though more in appearance than fact since, being required now to fall on the vendor, the buyer found it merely inflated the price.

Nero issued an edict, too, to the effect that no magistrate or procurator should mount a gladiatorial or wild-beast show, or any other entertainment, in the province they administered. For prior to this, their subjects were no less oppressed by their largesse, than by their financial greed, since they were merely masking their corrupt practices by courting favour with the crowd.

BOOK XIII:XXXII REGARDING POMPONIA GRAECINA

A Senate decree was also passed, both precautionary and punitive, whereby if a man was killed by his own slaves, those of his household granted freedom under his last will and testament should still suffer the same punishment as a slave.

The consular Lurius Varus, sentenced long before on extortion charges, was restored to his rank. And Pomponia Graecina, a woman of illustrious family, married to that Aulus Plautius whose ovation following the British campaign I recorded elsewhere, being charged with following alien rites, was left to her husband's jurisdiction. He, following ancient custom, held the enquiry into his wife's life and reputation before a family council, and pronounced her innocent.

Pomponia was destined to live many years, and experience continual sorrow. For after Julia Livia, daughter of Drusus the Younger, had been executed (AD43) as a result of Messalina's treachery, Pomponia survived forty years dressed only in mourning and so saddened in spirit that her constancy to Julia's memory, which went unpunished in Claudius' time, later became her title to glory.

BOOK XIII:XXXIII PUBLIUS CELER, COSSUTIANUS CAPITO, EPIRUS MARCELLUS INDICTED

That same year, saw many indictments, one being of Publius Celer, by the province of Asia Minor, which Nero could not forgive so delayed the case until the defendant died of old age; though Celer's murder of the proconsul Julius Silanus (AD54), which I have recorded, was a great enough crime to eclipse all his other wrongdoings.

Also, the foul and hideous Cossutianus Capito was indicted, a man who thought that the same audacious authority he exerted in Rome should apply in the provinces but, defeated by his accusers' tenacity, ultimately waived his defence and was convicted under the law of extortion.

However, lobbying on behalf of Epirus Marcellus, from whom the Lycians were claiming reparation, was so effective that various of his accusers were punished with exile, for endangering an innocent man.

End of the Annals Book XIII: I-XXXIII

BOOK XIII: XXXIV-LVIII
WAR IN ARMENIA AND GERMANY



'Statue of Jupiter'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p92, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XIII:XXXIV WAR AGAINST PARTHIA RENEWED

Nero being consul for a third time (AD58), Valerius Messala joined him as his colleague, his great-grandfather, the orator Corvinus, being remembered, as I write, by only a few of the very old, as colleague (AD31) to the divine Augustus, the great-great grandfather of Nero, in that same role. However the honour of a noble ancestry required the support of an annual subsidy of five thousand gold pieces, such that Messala could maintain an honest poverty. The emperor also granted a yearly stipend to Aurelius Cotta and Haterius Antoninus, even though their profligacy had dissipated their family estates.

At the start of the year, the struggle between Parthia and Rome for possession of Armenia, which had begun quietly, and been deferred till now, was pursued with energy. For Vologeses I of Parthia refused to allow his brother, Tiridates I of Armenia, to be barred from a kingdom which he himself had granted him, or to hold it as a gift from an alien power, while on our side Corbulo considered that the majesty of the Roman people was owed the recovery of possessions once held by Lucullus and Pompey.

Added to that, the Armenians, of dubious loyalty, were invoking the aid of both sides, though by their geography, and the similarity of their way of life, they were closer to the Parthians, with whom they intermarried, and under whom, being ignorant of true freedom, they were more inclined to accept servitude.

BOOK XIII:XXXV CORBULO ADVANCES

Corbulo's main difficulty, however, was rather countering his troops' lethargy than enemy treachery: since the legions transferred from Syria, sluggish after a long peace, tolerated their duties in a Roman camp only reluctantly. It was well enough known that his army contained veterans

who had never mounted guard, or stood on watch, who viewed ditches and ramparts as something strange and wonderful, had neither helmets nor breastplates but, sleek and prosperous, had served their time in town. So, after dismissing the aged and sick, he sought reinforcements.

Levies were raised throughout Galatia and Cappadocia, and a legion from Germany was added, with its complement of auxiliary horse and foot. The whole army was kept under canvas, though the winter weather was so fierce that the ice-covered ground had to be dug over to provide pitches for the tents. Many of the men had frostbite from the force of the cold, and a few died while on sentry-duty. One soldier was seen carrying a bundle of firewood, his hands so frozen to his load that they were torn from his arms when it fell.

Corbulo himself, lightly clothed and bare-headed, frequently amongst them on the march, or at their labours, praising the strong, comforting the weak, was an example to them all. Then objection to orders, and desertion, became so frequent due to the harsh climate and the military task, that the remedy was sought in greater severity.

Indeed, contrary to the rule elsewhere, no pardon was granted for first and second offences, but whoever relinquished the standard immediately paid with his life. It was clear that this procedure had a salutary effect, and was more effective than showing sympathy: since the camp experienced fewer desertions than in those where exemptions were granted.

BOOK XIII:XXXVI PACCIVS ORFITVS IS ROUTED

Meanwhile, until spring came, Corbulo kept the legions encamped, and positioned the auxiliary cohorts at suitable locations, with orders not to attack first: giving command of these garrison-posts to Paccius Orfitus, who had held the rank of leading centurion. Though Paccius sent word in writing that the barbarians were off guard and there was the chance to mount a successful action, he was ordered to stay within the lines awaiting stronger forces.

However, when a few inexperienced squadrons arrived from the nearest fort, and cried out for battle, he broke orders, engaged the enemy, and was routed. And his failure so terrified the troops who ought to have come to his rescue, they beat a hasty retreat to their various camps.

The incident vexed Corbulo considerably, and reprimanding Paccius he ordered him, with his prefects, and men, to bivouac outside the rampart, in which humiliating position they remained until reprieved following a petition from the entire army.

BOOK XIII:XXXVII TIRIDATES, UNDER THREAT, SEEKS PEACE

Meanwhile Tiridates, now supported not merely by his own vassals, but by assistance from his brother Vologeses, began to attack Armenia, no longer by stealth, but in open warfare, destroying those he considered loyal to ourselves or, if troops were led against him, avoiding contact, and flying here and there, terrifying the populace more by rumour than the sword.

Corbulo, frustrated by an endless quest for battle, and forced to follow his enemy's example in pursuing war everywhere, divided his forces so that legates and prefects might attack together but at diverse locations. At the same time, he advised Antiochus IV of Commagene to advance on the neighbouring prefectures. For Pharasmanes I of Iberia, who had executed his son Radamistus as a traitor, was now, as a witness to his loyalty to us, readily pursuing his old feud with the Armenians; while, for the first time, the Moschi of Armenia, a tribe previously allied to Rome, were now won to his cause and raided the Armenian wilderness.

Thus Tiridates' strategy was completely overturned, and he sent ambassadors, demanding in his own name and that of Parthia why, after the recent grant of hostages and renewal of friendship, meant to open the way to further favour, he was being expelled from his long-standing possession

of Armenia. Indeed, he said, Vologeses had made no move himself, simply because they both preferred to act with reason and not by force: but if the warfare continued, the House of Arsaces lacked none of that courage and good-fortune which had resulted several times already in Roman defeat.

To this, Corbulo, who was satisfied that Vologeses was detained by a revolt in Hyrcania (to the east), replied by advising Tiridates to petition the emperor: since a stable kingdom and a bloodless reign might be his, if he renounced a dim and distant hope and pursued one within his immediate grasp.

BOOK XIII:XXXVIII CORBULO AND TIRIDATES FAIL TO MEET

It was thus agreed, since passing messages to and from in turn was doing nothing to achieve peace, to designate a time and place where they could talk together. Tiridates announced that a guard of a thousand horsemen would accompany him: as to the size and composition of the force which might attend on Corbulo, he made no stipulation, so long as they came in the guise of peace, without breastplates and helmets.

Any ordinary mortal, much less an experienced and far-sighted general, could comprehend the barbarian's tactic: and that the point of offering a restriction on his own numbers, while allowing the other an unlimited escort, was to prepare an act of treachery; since if unprotected soldiers were exposed to horsemen trained to the bow, numbers would prove irrelevant. Feigning unawareness of this, however, Corbulo replied that consultations of national import were better conducted in the presence of both armies, and chose a site, one part gently rolling hills suitable for ranks of infantry, the other extending to a plain allowing the deployment of cavalry.

First there, on the day chosen, Corbulo positioned the allied cohorts and the auxiliaries provided by the kings on the wings, and in the centre the

Sixth legion, with three thousand men of the Third summoned from another camp by night, the solitary eagle appearing to denote a single legion's strength only.

Day was already declining, when Tiridates took up position far off, where he was visible rather than audible. The Roman general therefore, without joining him, ordered his troops to return to their different camps.

BOOK XIII:XXXIX CORBULO REDUCES THE ARMENIAN FORTRESSES

Tiridates, suspecting a ruse since our troops were moving off in several directions, or hoping to intercept the supplies reaching us via the Black Sea and the town of Trapezus (Trabzon, Turkey, historically Trebizond), departed in haste. Yet not only was he unable to use force against our supply trains, since they were led through mountain passes held by our posts, but Corbulo to avoid a fruitless campaign and at the same time force the Armenians onto the defensive, prepared to raze their fortresses.

The strongest in that district was known as Volandum, which he reserved for himself; leaving the smaller forts to the legate Cornelius Flaccus, and the camp-prefect Insteius Capito. Then after inspecting its defences and making appropriate provision for the assault, he exhorted his men to drive this nomadic enemy, ready for neither peace nor battle, but confessing its treachery and cowardice by flight, from its lair, and think of both glory and the spoils.

He then divided his force in four, leading one section massed in 'tortoise' formation to undermine the ramparts, another to move ladders against the walls, while ordering a strong party to launch burning brands and spears from the catapults. The slingers, both 'libitores' and 'funditores', were assigned a position from which to hurl their shot at long range lest, threatened on all sides, one point under pressure was relieved by reinforcements from another.

In the event, the men showed so much ardour in action, that before a third of the day had passed, the walls were cleared of defenders, the barricaded gateways shattered, the fortifications taken by escalade, and all the adult males within slaughtered, without the loss of one soldier, and with very few wounds incurred. The crowd of non-combatants were sold at auction, the rest of the spoils falling to the victors.

The legionary commander and the prefect had equal good fortune, and with three forts taken in a day the rest surrendered, from panic, or by the will of those inside. All this inspired confidence for an attack on the national capital Artaxata (Artashat). The legions were not led there by the shortest route, however, since the bridge over the Araxes (Aras), which runs beside the city walls, would have brought them within missile range: thus they crossed further away by a ford wider than the bridge.

BOOK XIII:XL TIRIDATES ATTACKS, THEN RETREATS

Meanwhile Tiridates, torn between shame and fear, in that if he conceded the outcome of the siege he would appear powerless, while if he intervened he might find himself and his cavalry caught on impassable ground, finally decided to reveal his forces in line of battle and, given an opportunity, to begin the fight, or simulate flight in order to prepare a place for ambush.

His attack on the Roman column was therefore sudden, and from all quarters, but without surprising our commander, who had organised his troops for battle as well as the march. On the right were the Third legion, on the left the Sixth, and picked men of the Tenth in the centre; the baggage had been brought within the lines, and a thousand horse protected the rear, their instructions being to resist an enemy attack at close quarters, but not pursue if they retreated. Archers on foot were on the flanks with the rest of the cavalry, the left wing extending along the foothills, so that if the enemy forced their way through, they could be met simultaneously both in front and by an enveloping movement.

Tiridates, on the other hand, attacked in desultory fashion, never within javelin throw, but now threatening and now feigning panic, in hopes of disorganising the ranks and falling on them while scattered. Then since there was no breach due to rashness, and the example presented by a cavalry officer in his advancing too audaciously, and being transfixed by arrows, merely confirmed the discipline of the rest, Tiridates drew back at the coming of nightfall.

BOOK XIII:XLI CORBULO TAKES ARTAXATA

Laying out a camp on the spot, Corbulo considered whether to advance on Artaxata with unencumbered legions, by night, and lay siege to the city, into which he assumed Tiridates had retired. Later, when his scouts brought news that the king's journey appeared to be a lengthy one, it being uncertain whether he was headed for Media or Caucasian Albania, Corbulo waited for dawn, but sent lightly-armed troops forward meanwhile to throw a cordon round the walls and start the attack from a distance.

However, the townspeople opened the gates of their own accord, and surrendered themselves and their property to the Romans, thereby securing their personal safety. Artaxata itself was set on fire, demolished, and razed to the ground, since it could not be held without a robust garrison, nor was our strength such that it could be divided between a strong garrison and the waging of a campaign, while if the town was left unscathed and unguarded the mere fact of its capture could be neither beneficial nor glorious.

In addition a portent appeared, as if sent by the powers above: for the whole landscape shone with sunlight as far as Artaxata, yet suddenly the area bounded by the fortifications was enveloped in dark cloud and distinguished by lightning, such that it was believed hostile gods were consigning it to its doom.

For this, Nero was hailed as Emperor, and thanksgivings were held by Senate decree, statues, and arches, and successive consulates were

granted him, and the days on which victory was achieved, and announced, and on which the resolution concerning it was passed, were to rank as national festivals. More, in the same vein, was agreed, so utterly excessive that Gaius Cassius who had approved the other honours pointed out that if thanks were shown to the gods in accord with the benignity of fortune, a whole year would not suffice for thanksgiving, and therefore there ought to be a distinction drawn between sacred days and working days, ones on which the heavens could be worshipped without impeding human activity.

BOOK XIII:XLII PUBLIUS SUILLIUS ACCUSED

Next, a defendant was convicted who had been hurled about by a variety of events and earned himself the hatred of many, though his conviction was not achieved without some loss of popularity on Seneca's part. He was Publius Suillius, the terrible and venal favourite of Claudius' reign, who was less diminished by the change of emperor than his enemies wished, and would rather be treated as a defendant than as a supplicant.

For the sake, it was believed, of crushing him, an earlier Senate decree had been revived, along with its penalties prescribed by the Cincian law against lawyers who pleaded cases for gain. Suillius abstained from neither complaints nor reproaches, with a freedom due not only to his fierce spirit but also his extreme age, attacking Seneca as an enemy to all friends of Claudius, the emperor under whom that Seneca had suffered a well-earned exile (in AD41).

At the same time, he exclaimed, since Seneca was accustomed only to insipid books and callow youths, he possessed a jaundiced eye for those who applied a vivid and genuine eloquence to the defence of their fellow-citizens. He himself had been Germanicus' quaestor, Seneca an adulterer under that prince's roof. Was it to be judged a graver offence to obtain a client's gift for honourable service than to pollute the bed of an imperial princess (Julia Livilla).

By what manner of wisdom, what precepts of philosophy, had he acquired, in a mere four years of imperial favour, three million gold pieces? In Rome, the childless and their wills were caught in his net; Italy and the provinces were sucked dry by his boundless usury: while he, Suillius, possessed only his hard-earned and modest income. He would rather suffer charge, trial everything, than submit his ancient, homespun honour to this sudden success.

BOOK XIII:XLIII SUILLIUS CLAIMS THAT HE WAS SIMPLY OBEYING ORDERS

There was no lack of hearers to report his words, unchanged or with changes for the worse, to Seneca. Accusers were found to charge Suillius with plundering our allies, during the time when he ran Asia Minor, and embezzling public funds. Then as the prosecution had sought a year's delay to continue their enquiries, it seemed expedient to start on his crimes at home, witnesses to them being at hand.

They accused Suillius of the cruel indictment which drove Quintus Pomponius to the last resort of rebelling against the emperor (AD42); of hounding to death Drusus the Younger's daughter Julia Livia (AD43) and Poppaea Sabina the Elder (AD47); the entrapment of Valerius Asiaticus (AD47), Lusius Saturninus, and Cornelius Lupus; and lastly the conviction of a host of Roman knights, with all the savagery of Claudius' reign.

He, in his defence, claimed that none of his actions were undertaken of his own free will, but that he had merely obeyed the emperor's orders, before Nero cut short his oration by stating that he knew from his father's papers that Claudius had never compelled the bringing of a single prosecution. Then orders from Messalina were given as the excuse, and the defence gave way: why had no one else been chosen then, it was asked, to give voice to that shameless woman's ravings? Punishment must fall on the perpetrators of such atrocities as these, who win the rewards of crime, then ascribe their crimes to others.

Therefore, after the seizure of part of his estate (his son and granddaughter being granted the rest, after exempting the property they had received from their mother's or their grandmother's will) he was banished to the Balearic Islands. His spirit was broken neither by the trial nor his conviction; and it was said that a rich and pleasant way of life made his seclusion tolerable.

When his son, Nerullinus, was attacked by the accusers, who relied both on his father's unpopularity and on charges of extortion, Nero interceded, on the grounds that the desire for vengeance had been fully satisfied.

BOOK XIII:XLIV THE TRIAL OF OCTAVIUS SAGITTA

At around the same time, Octavius Sagitta, a plebeian tribune, who was madly in love with a married woman named Pontia, first bribed her to commit adultery by means of substantial gifts, and then to desert her husband, for his own part promising to wed her, and gaining her agreement too. But once the woman had obtained her freedom, she contrived a delay, pleading that it was against her father's wishes, and then broke her promise when a wealthier prospect appeared.

Octavius now remonstrated with her, now threatened her, claiming the ruin of his reputation, the exhaustion of his wealth, finally placing his life, all that was left to him, in her hands. Moreover, having been rejected, he demanded the consolation of a single night with her, as a solace to him thereafter. The night was set, and Pontia entrusted a maidservant in the know, with guarding the bedroom. Octavius, a dagger hidden beneath his clothing, now arrived accompanied by a freedman.

Now, as is usual in love, came angry words, entreaty, reproach, and reparation, a portion of the night being devoted to passion; inflamed by which, it seems, she still suspecting nothing, he pierced her with his weapon, scared away the maid who came running, by wounding her, and

fled from the room. Next day the murder was revealed, and the assassin's name not in doubt, since it was shown that he had been alone with the victim.

However, the freedman claimed the crime was his own, he had avenged the injury done his master. This account, as an instance of devotion, shook some, until the maidservant, recovered of her wound, revealed the truth. Brought before the consuls, after resigning the tribunate, by the victim's father, Octavius was convicted by the Senate, and sentenced under the laws applying to murder and assassination.

BOOK XIII:XLV THE RISE OF POPPAEA SABINA

That year, a no less striking example of shameful behaviour proved to be the beginning of grave harm to the State. There was in Rome a daughter of Titus Ollius, named Poppaea Sabina the Younger after her maternal grandfather Poppaeus Sabinus, of illustrious memory, who with the honours of the consulate (AD9) and triumphal insignia (AD26) outshone her father Ollius who before ever achieving office was ruined by his friendship with Sejanus.

Poppaea was a woman possessed of every advantage except a virtuous character. Indeed her mother, who had eclipsed in beauty every woman of her day, endowed her equally with good looks and ambition, and her wealth matched the distinction of her birth. Her conversation was charming, her wit not wasted: she displayed modesty and practised lasciviousness, rarely appearing in public, and then with her face partly veiled in order not to satisfy the onlooker, or because it became her so.

She was never sparing of her reputation, drawing no distinction between husbands and lovers; a slave neither to her own moods or those of others, wherever advantage was revealed, there she directed her passion. Thus, while married to Rufrius Crispinus, a Roman knight by whom she had a son, she was attracted by Otho's youth, excesses, and his reputed

position as Nero's most brilliant friend: nor was it long before her adultery ended in their marriage.

BOOK XIII:XLVI MISTRESS TO NERO

Otho praised his wife's beauty and elegance before Nero, either employing such terms of endearment incautiously, or perhaps to inflame the emperor's desire, and thus through their sharing the same woman forge a powerful bond between them. He was frequently heard to say, as he rose from Nero's table, that he at least must return to his wife, since to his lot had fallen an excellence and beauty which all longed for and only the fortunate enjoyed.

In view of these and similar incitements, no great delay intervened, before Poppaea, once admitted to Nero's presence, gained an ascendancy, first by blandishments and cunning, pretending to be unequal to her passion, captivated by Nero's looks; then, as the emperor's love grew fiercer, turning to arrogance, and if detained for more than a night or two, insisting that she was a wife, and could not renounce her marriage, linked as she was to Otho by a way of life that none could equal: he being of splendid mind and culture, seen by that to be worthy of the highest fortune: while Nero, enthralled by a slut of a girl, habituated to an Acte, drew nothing that was not mean and abject from that slavish relationship.

Otho was barred from his usual intimacy with Nero, later from his audiences and his suite, and finally, lest he acted as a rival in Rome, he was appointed to Lusitania; where until the outbreak of civil conflict he lived not in the notorious style of the past, but honestly and virtuously, active in his amusements but temperate in his use of power.

**BOOK XIII:XLVII CORNELIUS SULLA
BANISHED TO MARSEILLES**

From that time onwards, Nero no longer tried to conceal his debauchery or his crimes. He was acutely suspicious of Cornelius Sulla, mistaking his slowness of wit for cunning and deceit. This fear was deepened through the mendacity of Graptus, a freedman of the Caesars, whose age and experience had acquainted him with the households of the emperors from Tiberius onwards.

At that time the Mulvian bridge was famous for its night-life, and Nero frequented the area, to run wild more freely outside (two miles north of) the city. The story went that an ambush of the emperor had been intended, as he re-entered Rome via the Flaminian way, which by chance had been avoided, since he had returned, by another route, to the Gardens of Sallust; and that the author of the plot was Sulla. The foundation for the tale was that as some of the emperor's servants were on their way home, they happened to be thrown into a baseless panic by some juvenile revels, instances of which occurred indiscriminately at that time.

None of Sulla's servants or followers were seen to be involved, and his contemptible character, incapable of any kind of daring, was totally incompatible with the charge: yet just as though he had been found guilty, he was ordered to leave his homeland and incarcerate himself within the walls of Marseilles (Massilia).

**BOOK XIII:XLVIII THE SITUATION IN PUTEOLI
(POZZUOLI) RESOLVED**

In the same consulate, two deputations from Puteoli (Pozzuoli) were granted an audience, sent separately to the Senate by the town council, and the populace, the former bemoaning the violence of the mob, the latter

the avarice shown by the magistrates and leading citizens. Lest the sedition, which had progressed to stone-throwing and threats of arson, should lead to armed bloodshed, Gaius Cassius was entrusted with applying the remedy.

As his harshness was resisted, the task was transferred to the Scribonius brothers at his request. They were given a praetorian cohort, the fear of whom, plus a few executions, restored harmony to the town.

BOOK XIII:XLIX THRASEA JUSTIFIES HIS APPROACH

Iwould not have chosen to record here a commonplace Senate decree allowing the town of Syracuse to exceed the set numbers for gladiatorial shows, if Thrasea Paetus had not, by speaking against the proposal, presented his opponents with material for denouncing his approach. Why, they asked, if he thought the management of affairs showed a lack of senatorial freedom, did he pursue such trivia? Why not argue for or against matters of war and peace, finance, law, or whatever else was vital to the Roman State?

It was open to members, whenever they were allocated time to speak their piece, to express whatever views they wished, and demand a debate. Was the only bill worth amending that regarding the extent of public entertainment in Syracuse? Was everything else throughout the empire in such a state of perfection that it was as if Thrasea's and not Nero's hand was at the helm? If the greatest matters were allowed to pass in silence, how much greater the need to avoid irrelevancies.

Thrasea, on his friends requesting he give his reasons, answered by saying that it was not ignorance of the present state of affairs that made him seek to amend proposals of this nature, but that he was paying members a compliment, by showing that in turning their attention to the slightest of issues, neither would they be silent regarding matters of greater import.



'Emperor Nero'
Joos Gietleughen (Dutch, 1559)
The Rijksmuseum

BOOK XIII:L THE QUESTION OF INDIRECT TAXATION

That same year (AD58), due to repeated public complaints denouncing the extortionate demands of the indirect-tax gatherers, Nero debated whether to order the abolition of all such duties and levies, and thereby grant the finest of gifts to the human race.

However, the senators, after first praising his generosity of spirit, restrained his initial impulse by pointing to a dissolution of the empire if the revenues that supported the State were reduced. If the customs duties, for example, were abolished, then surely demands for the abolition of direct taxation would follow. The companies of knights collecting the indirect taxes had largely been established by the consuls and plebeian tribunes when the independence of the Roman people was at its most vigorous; and subsequent provision had only been made to ensure a proper balance between income and essential expenditure.

Plainly though, they commented, the zeal of these indirect-tax collectors should be contained, or a system that had survived for so many years without objection might become distinctly unpopular through a newly-applied harshness.

BOOK XIII:LI NERO TIGHTENS THE CONTROL OF TAXATION

The emperor therefore issued an edict that individual tax regulations, previously kept secret, should be published in writing; that lapsed claims could not be revived after a year had passed; that in Rome the praetor, and in the provinces the propraetors or proconsuls, were to give priority to legal actions against indirect-tax collectors; and that soldiers were to retain their exemptions except as regards goods they themselves offered for sale. Other extremely fair rulings were included, which were observed

briefly then evaded, though the abolition of the two, and two and a half, percent taxes, and whatever other specific illicit forms of extortion the indirect-tax gatherers had invented, is still in force.

The duties on transport of grain in the overseas provinces were reduced, and it was stipulated that a merchant's cargo vessels were not to be included in the assessment of his assets or treated as taxable.

BOOK XIII:LII THE TRIALS OF SULPICIUS CAMERINUS AND POMPEIUS SILVANUS

Two defendants, Sulpicius Camerinus and Pompeius Silvanus, from the province of North Africa, where they had held proconsular powers, were acquitted by Nero. Camerinus' adversaries were a handful of private individuals, and the charges concerned acts of cruelty rather than financial malpractice. A strong force of accusers had laid siege to Silvanus, and were demanding time to summon their witnesses: but the accused insisted on defending himself at once. He prevailed, due to his wealth, age and childlessness, and outlived those whose intrigues he had escaped.

BOOK XIII:LIII LUCIUS VETUS PROPOSES A SAÔNE- MOSELLE CANAL

Quiet had prevailed in Germany, up to then, thanks to the nature of our generals there, who, triumphal insignia having become commonplace, anticipated greater honour from maintaining the peace.

The armies were commanded at that time (AD55) by Paulinus Pompeius (Upper Germany) and Lucius Vetus (Lower Germany). Not to allow idleness among the troops, however, Paulinus began completion of

the Rhine embankments, begun sixty-seven years earlier (12BC) by Drusus the Elder: while Vetus prepared to connect the Saône (Arar) and Moselle by canal, so that goods shipped by sea, and then up the Rhone and Saône, could enter the Rhine via this canal, and reach the ocean; thus with the natural obstacles removed, there would be a navigable route between the shores of the western Mediterranean and the North Sea.

Jealous of the scheme, Aelius Gracilis, the governor of Belgica, discouraged Vetus from courting popularity in Gaul by marching his legions into a province outside his jurisdiction, saying it would arouse the emperor's fears, the usual barrier to honest enterprise.

BOOK XIII:LIV TROUBLE WITH THE FRISIANS

However, through prolonged inaction on the part of the armies, a rumour began that the legates had been denied authority to lead them against the enemy. Accordingly, the Frisians moved to the banks of the Rhine, the warriors by way of the forests and marshes, those unfit for war via the lakes (later the Zuyder Zee), where they settled in the clearings reserved for troops. The instigators were Verritus and Malorix, who ruled the tribe, to the extent that anyone does command a tribe in Germany.

They had already set up home, sown the fields, and were exploiting the soil of their new homeland, when Dubius Avitus, who had taken over the province (of Upper Germany) from Paulinus, coerced Verritus and Malorix into petitioning the emperor in Rome, threatening them with force unless they withdrew to their previous location or secured endorsement of the new settlement.

They departed for the capital, where, while awaiting an audience with Nero who was preoccupied with other matters, they visited, among the other sights shown to barbarians, the Theatre of Pompey, to view the vast numbers of people. There, to pass the time (not knowing enough to be amused by the performance), they were enquiring about the audience, the

distinctions in rank, which were the knights, where was the Senate, when they noticed a few individuals in foreign garb among the senatorial seats.

On asking who those people were, and hearing that theirs was an honour granted to ambassadors from nations distinguished by their courage and friendship to Rome, they exclaimed that none excelled the Germans in arms or loyalty, made their way down and took their seats alongside the senators. It was taken in good part by the audience, as showing a primitive impetuosity and a generous spirit of rivalry.

Nero granted both of them Roman citizenship. The Frisians, however, he ordered to give up the land they had occupied. As they scorned to do so, compulsion was applied by the sudden despatch of auxiliary cavalry, who captured or killed those most obstinate in refusal.

BOOK XIII:LV BOIOCALUS ADDRESSES AVITUS

The same ground was then occupied by the Ampsivarii, a tribe not only stronger in numbers, but bolstered by the sympathy shown them by their neighbours, since they had been driven out by the Chauci, and were a homeless people begging for a safe place of exile. Added to this was the support of one Boiocalus, an illustrious individual among the clans, and loyal to us also, who reminded Avitus that during the Cheruscan revolt he had been clapped in irons on Arminius' orders, then had served under the leadership of Tiberius and Germanicus, and was now adding to his fifty years of allegiance to us by submitting his people to our rule.

Why, he asked, should such a large tract of ground lie there unused, so as to allow passage someday for the army's flocks and herds? Let them, by all means, keep pasture for their animals to feed hungry men, but not to the extent of preferring a solitary wasteland to friendly nations! Once those fields belonged to the Chamavi, then the Tubantes, and after them the Usipi. As the skies had been granted to the gods, so had the earth to the human species; and what was unoccupied, was there to be shared.

Then raising his eyes to the sun, and invoking the other heavenly bodies, calling out to them as if he stood before them, he demanded if they too wished to gaze on empty lands: sooner let the sea pour out its waters, he cried, against these appropriators of the earth!

BOOK XIII:LVI AVITUS REJECTS HIS PLEAS

Avitus, moved by this, replied that all must submit to the commands of their betters; it pleased the gods, whom they invoked, that the decision as to what to give and what to take away should lie with the Roman people, and that they should submit to no judges but themselves. This was his official response to the Ampsivarii, but he would grant land to Boioalus himself, as a reminder of their friendship. Scorning this, as the reward for treason, the German added: 'We may lack land to live in, but not to die in': and they parted with hostile thoughts on both sides.

The Ampsivarii invited the Bructeri, the Tencteri, and tribes even more remote, to join them in war: Avitus wrote to Curtilius Mancina, then commander of the army of Upper Germany, requesting him to cross the Rhine and display his forces to the rear, while he himself led his legions into the territory of the Tencteri, threatening them with destruction unless they dissociated themselves from the cause.

They desisting, the same threat deterred the Bructeri; and since the other tribes also abandoned this foreign confrontation, the Ampsivarii, isolated, fell back on the Usipi and Tubantes. Driven from those territories also, they sought refuge with the Chatti, then the Cherusci, and after long wanderings, in which they were treated as guests, beggars, and then enemies, their young men died on alien soil, while those not of fighting age were portioned out as spoils.

BOOK XIII:LVII TRIBAL WARFARE AND THE COLOGNE FIRE

That same summer, a great battle was fought between the Hermunduri and the Chatti, trying to take by force a boundary river, and the rich salt-springs nearby. Besides their passion for settling everything by the sword, they held an innate belief that this area was dear to the heavens, and nowhere did the gods give closer ear to human prayer. So, with the gods' indulgence, salt was not produced as it is in other lands by evaporation from pools left behind by the waves, but beside this river and in these forests by pouring the water over a pile of burning logs, the crystals forming from the fusion of those two elements, water and fire.

But this war favouring the Hermunduri, was disastrous to the Chatti, since both sides consecrated, if victorious, their adversaries to Mars (Tiu/Tyr) and Mercury (Odin/Woden/ Wotan); horses, men and all to be given to slaughter. The enemy threatening us thus turned upon itself. Nevertheless the township (Cologne) of our allies the Ubii, was afflicted with a sudden catastrophe. Devouring fires, beneath ground, took hold of farms, crops and villages, and swept towards the walls of the colony, founded not long before (50AD).

Nothing could extinguish the flames, rain nor running water nor liquid of any kind, till devoid of remedy and angered by the destruction a few countrymen threw stones at the fire from far away, then as the flames halted they drew closer, beating them down with sticks and other things, trying to scare them off as if they were wild creatures: finally tearing their clothes off and heaping them on the coals, which they were the more likely to smother the more worn and soiled by use the clothes happened to be.

**BOOK XIII:LVIII THE FIG-TREE, THE RUMINALIS,
IN THE COMITIUM IS RENEWED**

By that same year (AD58), the tree in the Comitium sacred to Rumina (goddess of nursing mothers) which had sheltered the infants Romulus and Remus eight hundred and thirty years before, had reached such a stage of decrepitude, with its dead branches and withered trunk, that its state had been taken as a portent, until now, when it revived and showed fresh shoots.

End of the Annals Book XIII: XXXIV-LVIII

BOOK XIV: I-XXXIX
THE MURDER OF AGRIPPINA



'Bonus Eventus'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p76, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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**BOOK XIV:I NERO AGAIN CONTEMPLATES
MURDERING AGRIPPINA**

In the consulate of Gaius Vipstanius and Gaius Fonteius (AD59), Nero no longer postponed the long-considered crime, since a long period of authority had fuelled his audacity, and day by day his love for Poppaea burned more fiercely. She, who while Agrippina lived, saw no hope of marriage for herself, nor divorce for Octavia, hurled reproaches at the emperor, and sometimes shafts of wit, calling him the 'little ward', submissive not only to other's orders regarding his rule, but even lacking basic freedoms. Why, she asked, was their marriage deferred? Presumably her beauty displeased him, or her grandfather's triumph, or was it her fecundity and true spirit? Or was there the fear that, once she was his wife, she might disclose the wrongs done to senators, the anger of the populace against his mother's pride and avarice?

Or if Agrippina would brook no daughter-in-law not hostile to her son, she argued, let she herself be restored to Otho: or go to whatever corner of the earth existed, where she might rather hear, not witness, this insult to the emperor, and no longer be entangled in his troubles. None opposed such reproaches, pressed home as they were with tears and seductive art, all longed for the mother's hold to be broken, yet none believed his hatred could harden him to murder.

**BOOK XIV:II SUGGESTIONS THAT
AGRIPPINA SOUGHT INCEST WITH HER SON**

Cluvius states that Agrippina's craving to retain her power, was carried so far that at noon, when Nero was warmed by food and wine, she often presented herself to her tipsy son, ready for incest and dressed for the part. Already lascivious kisses and endearments, heralding the guilty act, had

been noted by his intimates, before Seneca sought in a woman the antidote to Agrippina's feminine wiles, by introducing the freedwoman Acte, seemingly alarmed at her own danger and Nero's supposed infamy, to report to him that the incest was already common knowledge, his mother boasting of it, and that the army would not tolerate rule by a sacrilegious emperor.

Fabius Rusticus claims that Nero, not Agrippina desired it, the scheme being wrecked by that same freedwoman's astuteness. But other authors too support what Cluvius puts forward, and tradition leans towards them, either the monstrous idea truly being conceived in Agrippina's mind, or it being the more credible that such unheard of lustfulness be seen in one who, in hopes of winning power, had when still a girl committed sexual acts with Marcus Lepidus; who for similar reasons had prostituted herself to Pallas' desires; and who had been weaned to a thing so shameful by marriage with her uncle.

BOOK XIV:III NERO PLOTS HER ASSASSINATION

So Nero now avoided meeting privately with her, and whenever she withdrew to her gardens or her estates at Tusculum (near Frascati) or Antium (Anzio), he commended her cultivation of leisure. Finally, considering her a burden upon him wherever she might be, he decided to kill her, only debating at that point as to whether it should be by poison, the blade, or some other violent end.

At first he chose poison. But if it were given her at the emperor's table, then it would not be ascribed to chance, Britannicus having died in that very manner; and it would seem difficult to try and suborn the servants of a woman whose experience of crime made her vigilant against deceit; and besides she would have protected herself by prior use of antidotes. The employment of cold steel, with its attendant bloodshed, no one could find a way to hide; and besides there was the fear that whoever was chosen for such a task might well disobey orders.

It was the freedman Anicetus, admiral of the fleet at Misenum (Miseno), Nero's childhood tutor, and through mutual hatred an enemy of Agrippina, who suggested the solution. He pointed out that a vessel could be built, part of which could be cunningly made to detach itself at sea, dashing the unsuspecting victim underwater: nothing offered such scope for accidents as the sea; and if she was shipwrecked and lost, who could be so unjust as to attribute what wind and wave had perpetrated to any wrongdoing? The emperor would of course need to grant the deceased a temple, altars, and the other trappings of filial piety.

BOOK XIV:IV THE SCHEME IS PUT IN MOTION

This clever scheme was accepted, even the timing was favourable, as Nero was accustomed to celebrate the festival of Minerva (the Quinquatria, 19-23 March) at Baiae. He lured his mother there, giving out that parental irascibility must be endured, and he must show a forgiving spirit, in order to give birth to rumours of a reconciliation, which Agrippina might credit, given a woman's ready belief in what gave her pleasure.

He greeted her arrival on the shore, as she had come from Antium (Anzio), took her hand, embraced her and escorted her to the villa named Bauli, washed by an arm of the sea between the promontory of Misenum (Miseno) and the lake of Baiae. Here among other vessels lay a more ornate one, seemingly one further attention granted his mother, since she had been accustomed to travel by water in a trireme with marines at the oars. She had then been invited to dinner also, so that night would be at hand to conceal the crime.

It is well established that some informer appeared, and that Agrippina, warned of a plot but uncertain whether to believe it, journeyed to Baiae carried in a litter. There, her fears allayed by flattery, she received a cordial welcome and a seat above the emperor himself. Now with a flow of words, at one moment boyishly familiar, and then again frowning as though to

share something serious, after long drawn-out entertainments, Nero attended her departure, clinging more closely than usual to the sight of her and to her embrace, either in a last show of deceit, or because the last look at his doomed mother daunted even his brutal spirit.

BOOK XIV:V THE MURDER ATTEMPTED

A night bright with stars, and the quiet of a calm sea, seemed sent by the gods as if to reveal the evidence of crime. The vessel had made scant progress as yet, and two of Agrippina's household were in attendance: Crepereius Gallus was standing not far from the tiller, while Acerronia, leaning above the feet of the reclining princess, was joyfully recalling the son's penitence and the mother's restoration to favour, when the signal was given, and the canopy over them, heavily weighted with lead, suddenly dropped, crushing Crepereius, and killing him instantly.

Agrippina and Acerronia were protected by the high sides to the couch which by chance were too solid to yield to the impact. Nor did the break-up of the vessel follow, confusion being universal and even those aware of the plot impeded by the mass of those who were not. Then the oarsmen decided to lean to one side and so sink the vessel, but agreement did not come promptly enough for sudden measures, and a counter-effort by others provided an opportunity for the victims' gentler entry into the waves.

Acerronia, in fact, unwisely calling out that she was Agrippina and demanding aid for the emperor's mother, was despatched with poles, oars and every piece of nautical equipment to hand: but Agrippina, silent, and so less easily detected (though she received a wound in the shoulder), swam for it, then reaching some sailing-vessels was carried to the Lucrine lake, and brought to her villa.

**BOOK XIV:VI AGRIPPINA SENDS WORD
TO NERO OF HER 'ACCIDENT'**

There she reflected on the evident motive for the treacherous invitation she had received, and the striking attention shown her, and on the fact that the vessel, close to shore, not driven before a gale or striking some reef, had collapsed from above as if by some earthly contrivance; while, in considering Acerronia's murder, and glancing at her wound, she realised her sole defence against treachery was not to show it had been perceived.

She therefore sent her freedman Agermus to tell her son that by the grace of the gods and his good fortune she had avoided a serious accident; begging him, however great his alarm at his mother's condition, to defer the kindness of a visit; her need at the moment was for rest. Meanwhile, with apparent unconcern, she applied balm to her wound and warm bandages to her body. She also ordered a search for Acerronia's last will and testament, and the sealing up of her property, a process that could not be masked.

BOOK XIV:VII NERO PANICS, IN CONSEQUENCE

Meanwhile, as Nero was waiting for messengers to confirm the deed had been done, the news arrived that Agrippina had escaped with only a slight wound from a blow, but had suffered enough danger not to doubt its author. Then half-dead with terror, he swore she would be there at any moment, eager for revenge, and whether she armed her slaves, or roused the troops, or appealed to the Senate and the people, charging him with the shipwreck, her wound, and the killing of her friends, what could aid him against her? Unless it were Burrus and Seneca whom he had sent for immediately, perhaps to test their reaction, or as being already in the know.



'The tragic death of Agrippina'

Charles Ange Boily, after Benjamin Samuel Bolomey,
c. 1753 - 1813

The Rijksmuseum

A long silence ensued on both their parts, either not to give adverse

advice in vain, or because they believed the matter had reach a point where, unless Agrippina was forestalled, Nero must perish. Then Seneca went so far as to glance at Burrus and ask if the fatal order should be given to the soldiers. Nero replied that the guards, attached as they were to the entire house of the Caesars and the memory of Germanicus, would never venture such an atrocity against the latter's issue: Anicetus must make good his promise. He, in fact, without hesitating, asked to take full responsibility for the deed.

His words brought a declaration from Nero that this day gifted him an empire, and a freedman was the author of that great gift: Anicetus was to go swiftly, and take with him the men most prompt to obey orders. Hearing that Agrippina's messenger Agermus had arrived with a message, he himself set the scene for the man to be charged with treason, throwing a sword at his feet as he performed his errand, then ordering him clapped in chains as if the man himself had dropped it; so as to pretend his mother had aimed at the emperor's life, and taken refuge in suicide herself for fear of being apprehended.

BOOK XIV:VIII THE ASSASSINATION OF AGRIPPINA

In the meantime, Agrippina's situation became known, as if the result of an accident, and as the news spread there was a rush to the beach. Some clambered over the sea-wall, others into nearby sailing boats; others waded into the sea as far as they could go; while some stood with outstretched arms; the whole shore filled with lamentations, vows, and the clamour of endless questions and uncertain replies. A vast crowd poured in, bringing lights, and, as the news that she was safe permeated, set out to offer their congratulations, until at the sight of the arrival of an armed and menacing column they were forced to scatter.

Anicetus now cordoned off the villa and, breaking down the door,

dragged aside the servants in the way, until he reached the entrance to the bedroom. A few servants stood there, the rest had fled in terror at the onslaught. There was a dim light in the room, and a single handmaid, Agrippina's anxiety growing moment by moment, as to why no one had come from her son, not even Agermus: joyful tidings wore another face; now there was only solitude, loud alarms, and the signs of a final act of evil.

Then the maid rose to go: 'Do you too forsake me,' Agrippina began, then looking behind her saw Anicetus accompanied by Herculeis, a trireme captain, and Obaritus, a captain of marines. If he had come, she said, to visit her, he could return with word she was recovered, if to perform a crime. she would not believe it of a son; matricide could not have been commanded.

Her executioners surrounded the couch, and the trireme captain struck at her head with a club. The captain of marines was already drawing his sword to bring about her death, when she offered her belly to the blow: 'Strike here,' she cried, and with many a wound was despatched.

BOOK XIV:IX THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

So far the accounts agree. But some affirm and some deny that Nero now came to inspect his mother's body, and that he praised the corpse's figure. She was cremated the same night on a banqueting couch, with modest rites; nor while Nero reigned was the earth piled up to enclose the ashes.

Later, through the attention of her servants, she received a humble tomb, close by the road to Misenum and that villa of Julius the dictator, which looks from its highest point to the bay spread below. Now, as the pyre was kindled, one of her freedmen, Mnester, ran a sword through his body, whether from love of his mistress or fear of execution is unknown.

This was the end to which, years before, Agrippina had given

credence, and for which she had shown contempt. For on her enquiring as to Nero's destiny, the astrologers had replied that he would reign but kill his mother; and: 'Let him kill', she had said, 'so long as he reigns.'

BOOK XIV:X NERO HAUNTED BY THE CRIME

Yet only when the crime was done, did Nero realise its magnitude. For the remainder of the night, sometimes silent and unmoving, often starting to his feet in fear, his mind a blank, he waited for the daylight as if it were bringing him death.

It was the adulation of the centurions and tribunes, organised by Burro, that first gave Nero hope, as they grasped his hand and congratulated him on escaping the danger presented by his mother's crime. His friends then visited the temples, and given the example, the nearest towns of Campania gave witness to their joy with sacrifices and deputations.

He himself, in a contrasting display of hypocrisy, was mournful as if remorseful at his own preservation, and tearful at his mother's death. Yet because the grave aspect of that sea and those shores obtruded on his gaze, the landscape not changing as human faces do (with some believing trumpet calls were heard from the surrounding hills, and lamentations from his mother's grave), he withdrew to Naples, and sent a letter to the Senate, the sum of which was that Agermus, an intimate freedman of Agrippina armed with a blade, had been revealed as an assassin, and that Agrippina, conscious of having prepared the crime, had paid the penalty.

BOOK XIV:XI HE RAKES UP OLD CHARGES AGAINST HER

He added a list of less recent charges: that she had hoped to share power, and for the praetorian guard to swear allegiance to a woman, and for the Senate and people to do the same; and that later in frustration she had become an enemy of the soldiers, the senators and the populace, opposing the gratuities and gifts of food, and had worked for the ruin of illustrious men.

With what effort had he not succeeded in preventing her invading the Senate and giving the response to foreign nations! He attacked the Claudian reign indirectly, attributing every scandal of that period to his mother, calling her death a public blessing. Even the incident of the shipwreck was related: though who could ever be foolish enough to believe it an accident, or that only one solitary man had been sent, by a woman half-drowned, to make his way past all the imperial guards and marines with a weapon!

It was Seneca therefore, who by composing such a speech had penned a confession, whom public opinion censured, no longer Nero, whose savagery was beyond all protest.

BOOK XIV:XII DECREES, PORTENTS, RESTORATIONS

Nevertheless, in a spirit of wondrous emulation among the nobility, it was decreed that thanksgivings be held at all the sacred sites; that the Festival of Minerva, during which the conspiracy had been revealed, be celebrated with annual games; that a gold statue of the goddess, with an image of the emperor nearby, be erected in the Senate House; and that Agrippina's date of birth (6th of November) be entered among the inauspicious days.

Thrasea Paetus, had usually allowed previous marks of adulation to pass, either by keeping silence or with a brief nod of assent, but now he left the House, creating a source of risk to himself, despite planting no seed of independence in the rest.

Idle portents also appeared, thick and fast. A woman gave birth to a snake, another was killed in her husband's embrace; the sun was suddenly eclipsed; and the fourteen districts of the capital were struck by lightning. Which events, however, occurred without the gods' being concerned, as Nero's rule and wickedness continued for many years thereafter.

As for the rest, to exacerbate popular feeling against his mother, and to show that his own leniency had increased with her death, he restored two women of high rank, Junia Calvina and Calpurnia, along with the ex-praetors Valerius Capito and Licinius Gabolus previously driven into exile by Agrippina, to their native soil.

He even allowed the return of Lollia Paulina's ashes, and the erection of a tomb; also Iturius and Calvisius, whom he had relegated a short while ago, he now absolved from punishment. Though Silana, having returned to Tarentum (Taranto) from distant exile, as Agrippina through whose enmity she had fallen was already weakened or had relented, had since died a natural death.

BOOK XIV:XIII NERO RETURNS TO ROME IN TRIUMPH

Still, Nero lingered in the towns of Campania, anxious as to how to effect his entry to Rome, and whether he would meet with obedience on the part of the Senate, or enthusiasm on that of the crowd. Against his nervousness, all of the scoundrels, of whom no court in existence has ever proved more prolific, asserted that Agrippina's name was loathed, and that her death had gained him the favour of the populace: let him enter intrepidly and experience the reverence felt for his person! At the same time, they asked leave to precede him.

Indeed, they found an eagerness greater than promised, the tribes on their way to meet him, a column of senators in festive dress, with their wives and children, ranked according to age and gender, and tiers of seats erected for spectators, as if to observe a triumph, past which he progressed.

From there, full of pride, victor over a nation of slaves, he made his way to the Capitol, gave thanks, and again abandoned himself to every vice, having been constrained till now, though scarcely repressed, by some sort of deference to his mother.

BOOK XIV: XIV HE INDULGES IN CHARIOT-RACING AND THE LYRE

It was an old desire of his to drive a chariot and four, and a no less distasteful ambition to sing to the lyre in the theatrical manner. He recalled that horse-racing was the sport of kings, practised by the leaders of antiquity, celebrated in the glorious works of the poets, and performed in honour of the gods. Indeed the practice of song was sacred to Apollo, and this great and prescient deity was seen to stand so attired, not only in Greek cities but also in Roman temples.

He could no longer be contained when Seneca and Burrus decided to concede the one point rather than have him carry both. An area was enclosed in the Vatican valley, where he could command his horses without being seen by all. Soon the people were summoned at will, and extolled his praises, as is the way of crowds hungry for amusement, and joyful if the emperor has the same inclination.

However, this shameful publicity brought not satiety as expected, but an incitement to perform. And thinking to ameliorate his own disgraceful actions, by tarnishing others, he brought to the stage those scions of the nobility rendered venal through lack of funds. They having passed on, I regard it as a duty to their ancestors not to record them by name. For the disgrace is his who rewards an offence rather than preventing it. He even

compelled notable Roman knights to promise their services in the arena, one would have said by means of vast inducements, if it were not that gifts from one with the power to command are applied with the force of compulsion.

BOOK XIV:XV THE GAMES OF YOUTH

Not wishing as yet to disgrace himself on a public stage, he instituted the so-called Games of Youth (*Juvenalia*), for which people volunteered their names indiscriminately. Neither rank, nor age, nor a public career, prevented anyone from practising the arts of Greek and Latin theatre, down to gestures and music not intended for the male sex. Even illustrious women studied indecent parts; and in the grove which Augustus had planted round a lake created for the navy to perform their displays, little meeting-places and drinking-dens sprang up, with inducements to voluptuousness exposed for sale.

Funds were made available too, for the virtuous to spend as compelled, and the extravagant for the glory of it. Thence debauchery and scandal flowed, nor has anything contributed more in the way of lasciviousness to our long-corrupted morality than that rabble. Even in the virtuous arts, decency is hard to maintain, far less could any vestige of shame or modesty or integrity survive amidst that vicious rivalry.

Finally, Nero took the stage himself, trying out his lyre, giving it close attention, and practising a few notes for his singing-masters who were standing by. A guards cohort had been added to the audience, tribunes and centurions, and Burrus with his sighs and applause; and for the first time ever, a company of Roman knights known as the *Augustiani*, notably young and muscular, some wanton by nature, others for the sake of gaining influence. They were there to provide thunderous applause day and night; apply divine epithets to the emperor's form and voice; and earn, as if by virtue, fame and honour.

BOOK XIV:XVI NERO TOYS WITH POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

Yet, lest it were only the emperor's theatrical skills which gained attention, he also affected the study of poetry, gathering together those with some skill in composition, but not yet distinguished. After dining they sat with him, stringing together verses they had brought, or invented on the spot, and filling out phrases provided, in one way or another, by the emperor himself, the method being obvious from the poems themselves, which lacked force, inspiration, or fluency by way of a unified style.

He even granted time to doctors of philosophy, after dinner, to enjoy the hostile battle of assertions. Nor was they any lack of those, with gloomy faces and expressions, desirous of being seen amidst these princely entertainments.

BOOK XIV:XVII NUCERIA (NOCERA) VERSUS POMPEII

At about that time, a minor incident led to serious trouble between the colonies of Nuceria (Nocera) and Pompeii, during a gladiatorial show staged by Livineius Regulus, whose removal from the Senate has been noted elsewhere.

With the freedom typical of country places, the crowd took turns in hurling abuse, then stones, finally resorting to weapons; the Pompeians, in whose town the spectacle was being presented, proving the stronger.

As a result, many of the Nucerians were carried home to their township, their bodies maimed and wounded, where most mourned the death of a parent or a child. Judgment on the matter was delegated by the emperor to the Senate, and by the Senate to the consuls. And on it being

returned to the Senate once more, the Pompeians were barred from holding any such gathering again for ten years, while the illegal factions they had formed were dissolved.

Livineius and the other instigators of the conflict were punished with exile.

BOOK XIV:XVIII PEDIUS BLAESUS AND ACILIUS STRABO INDICTED

Pedius Blaesus too was removed from the Senate, accused by the inhabitants of Cyrene (Shahhat, Libya) with violating the treasury of Aesculapius and, for money and to curry favour, manipulating the process of military recruitment.

An indictment was also brought by Cyrene against Acilius Strabo, who had held praetorian powers and been sent by Claudius to pass judgement regarding land, handed down by his father to their king, Ptolemy Apion, which the latter had bequeathed along with the kingdom to the Roman people (96BC). It had been taken over by neighbouring landowners who relied on their long-accepted annexation as granting fair and just title.

So, when judgement went against them, there was an outbreak of ill-will towards the judge. The Senate could only reply that Claudius' instructions were unknown to them, and the present emperor would need to be consulted. Nero, while endorsing Strabo's verdict, wrote that none the less he was minded to assist, and yielded them the land they had taken.

BOOK XIV:XIX THE DEATHS OF DOMITIUS AFER AND MARCUS SERVILIUS

The deaths of two illustrious men, Domitius Afer and Marcus Servilius Nonianus, followed, who had flourished as senior officials and orators of eloquence, Afer as a pleader of causes, Servilius for his long court service, being celebrated thereafter as a historian of Roman affairs and for his refined lifestyle, more noticeable for his being Afer's equal in intellect, but the pair being markedly different in character.

BOOK XIV:XX THE GREEK GAMES OF AD60

In Nero's fourth consulate (AD60), his colleague being Cornelius Cossus, a quinquennial games (the Neronia) was established in Rome, after the Greek style of contest, to varied criticism as with all new things.

It was said that Pompey had been censured by his elders too, in his case for establishing a permanent home for theatre. Before then, games had been shown with the construction of tiers of benches and a stage improvised for the occasion, and even further back people simply stood to watch, lest if provided with seats they might pass whole days in idleness.

Let the old form of these attractions be maintained, it was argued, whenever the praetor presided, and with no obligation on citizens to compete. But the nation's morals, to which people had gradually become indifferent, were being utterly destroyed by foreign lewdness, such that whatever could corrupt, or be corrupted, was on view in Rome, and our youth were degenerating by acquiring alien tastes, into devotees of the gymnasia, idleness, and sordid affairs, at the instigation of an emperor and Senate who not only granted a licence to vice, but applied compulsion, so that the Roman nobility might be shamed on stage, by way of delivering a poem or oration.

What remained, they cried, but to strip the body bare, put on boxing gloves, and indulge in bouts of fighting, instead of armed military service. Would it serve justice better, would the panel of equestrian judges better fulfil their distinguished legal function, if they were trained to listen to soft tones and dulcet voices? Even the night hours were attuned to scandal, so that modesty had no space left, and amidst a promiscuous crowd, every abandoned creature might dare in the dark what was lusted for in the light.

BOOK XIV:XXI THE PRETEXT FOR IMPORTED NOVELTY

It was this very licence that attracted the majority, and yet their pretexts were honestly given. Our ancestors too, they asserted, had not been averse to amusing themselves in keeping with their wealth, which was why actors were then imported from Etruria, horse-racing from Thurium (near Sybaris); and since the annexation of Achaia (146BC) and Asia Minor (133BC), more ambitious games had been mounted, yet no one in Rome born of honourable rank had descended to taking up the theatrical arts, it now being two hundred years since Lucius Mummius' triumph, when a performance of that kind was first mounted (145BC) in the capital.

And anyway, it was more economic, they added, to house the theatre in a permanent structure, than to build one, and tear it down, each year, at enormous expense. Just as the magistrates would not find all their private resources exhausted, the populace not having the same excuse for demanding Greek style contests of them, since the cost would be borne by the State.

The victories won by orators and poets would apply the spur to genius, they claimed, nor would any judge feel obliged to turn a deaf ear to arts made reputable and pleasures made lawful. A few nights, in five whole years, were being given over to joy not wantonness; nights in which, in the blaze of the lights, nothing illicit could be hidden.

Indeed the performance in question passed off without any sign of scandal. There was not the slightest outbreak of partisanship among the audience, since the actors though restored to the stage were barred from the sacred competitions. No one carried off the prize for eloquence, as the emperor was declared the winner. The Greek dress, which many adopted throughout the festival, was immediately rendered obsolete.

BOOK XIV:XXII PORTENTS AND SACRILEGE

Meanwhile a comet blazed amongst the stars, from which the vulgar opinion arose that it portended a change of emperor. Thus, as if Nero was already dethroned, they began to question who might next be chosen. Rubellius Plautus was the name on every tongue, who, on his mother's side, drew nobility from the Julian House. He cherished the beliefs of his ancestors, austere of character, his household chaste and secluded, and the more retiring he became due to his fears, the finer his reputation.

The rumours were increased by the interpretation, equally worthless, placed on a lightning strike. For while Nero was dining beside the Simbruine dams (at Subiaco), in his villa known as Sublaqueum (Below the Waters), the banquet was struck and the table shattered. Because the accident occurred in the area of Tibur (Tivoli), from which Plautus' father originated, it was believed that he had been marked out by divine intent. He was favoured by many of those whose desire, and generally unrewarding ambition, it is to nurture the new and dubious.

Nero, therefore, troubled by this, composed a letter to Plautus advising him to consider the peace of the capital, and remove himself from the scandal-mongers: saying that he had family estates in Asia Minor, where he could enjoy his youth in safety, and undisturbed. Accordingly, Plautus retired there, with his wife Antistia, and a few intimate friends.

At about the same time, Nero's desire for excess, brought him into disrepute and some danger. He had entered the source of the water that Quintus Marcius had brought to Rome (via the Aqua Marcia) in order to swim, and it was considered that by bathing there he had polluted the holy spring, and profaned the sanctity of the site. Divine anger was confirmed by a severe illness that followed.

BOOK XIV:XXIII CORBULO MARCHES ON ARTAXATA

Meanwhile Corbulo, having razed Artaxata (Artashat), thought to profit by the terror recently induced, and seize Tigranocerta, which he could destroy and so increase the enemy's alarm, or spare, thus earning a reputation for mercy. He marched upon it, avoiding an offensive, so as not to dispel their hope of pardon, but nevertheless maintaining vigilance, knowing the facile inconstancy of a nation as slow to embrace danger as it was quick to seize the opportunity for treachery.

The barbarians, according to their nature, either met him with prayers, or abandoned their villages and fled into the wilds; while some concealed themselves and their dearest possessions in caverns. The Roman general therefore varied his tactics, extending pardon to the suppliants, and granting a swift pursuit to the fugitives, while to those who hid he was merciless, firing the exits and entrances to their caves, after blockading them with brushwood and lopped branches.

The Mardi, disciplined bands of brigands defended by a mountain barrier against invasion, harassed his march along their border; against whom Corbulo sent the Iberians, ravaging the country, and punishing the enemy's boldness by spilling foreign blood.

BOOK XIV:XXIV THE CITY OF TIGRANOCERTA SURRENDERS

He himself and his army, despite incurring no casualties in battle, were wearied by short rations and continual effort, forced to keep starvation at bay by killing livestock. Added to this were lack of water, the hot summer and the long marches; the only mitigating factor being the general's powers of endurance, he suffering the same privations as the common soldier, or greater.

In time they reached cultivated land, reaped the crops, and of the two forts in which the Armenians had sought refuge took one by storm and reduced the other, which had repulsed the first assault, by siege. From there Corbulo crossed into the Tauronite region, where he survived an unexpected threat. For a barbarian of rank was discovered with a weapon near Corbulo's tent, revealing the nature of the conspiracy, his part in it, and his accomplices, under torture. The conviction and punishment of those who were plotting to commit murder under the cloak of friendship, quickly followed.

Not long afterwards, an embassy from Tigranocerta brought news that the city gates lay open, and the inhabitants were awaiting his orders: at the same time, as a token of welcome, they handed him a golden crown. He accepted it courteously, and took nothing from the city, prompting readier loyalty by leaving it intact.

BOOK XIV:XXV LEGERDA TAKEN, AND A HYRCANIAN ALLIANCE

But the outpost at Legerda, which some resolute young warriors defended, was only carried with a struggle, since they not only risked a fight outside the walls, but when driven within the ramparts yielded only to siege-works and armed assault.

These victories were gained more easily since the Parthians were fully occupied by their war with Hyrcania. The Hyrcanians had sent ambassadors to the Roman emperor, seeking alliance, and as a pledge of amity pointing to their efforts in detaining Vologeses. On their return, Corbulo, to prevent their being intercepted from the enemy outposts, assigned them a full escort and conducted them to the shores of their own sea (the Caspian), from which they were able to regain their homeland while avoiding Parthian territory.

BOOK XIV:XXVI TIGRANES VI GRANTED ARMENIA

Indeed, as Tiridates was attempting to penetrate furthest Armenia by way of Media, Corbulo sent the legate Verulanus forward with the auxiliaries, and after a forced march himself compelled Tiridates to withdraw to some distance and abandon the conflict.

After ravaging the districts he found hostile to ourselves, with fire and sword, he had secured possession of Armenia, when Tigranes arrived, chosen by Nero to assume the throne (as Tigranes VI), he being of the Cappadocian royal house, and a great-grandson of King Archelaus of Cappadocia, though he had been long a hostage at Rome, and reduced to a servile submissiveness. Nor was his welcome universal, since the Arsacids remained popular with some. Nevertheless the majority, detesting Persian arrogance, preferred a king appointed by Rome.

In addition, he was given a garrison of a thousand legionaries, three allied cohorts and two cavalry squadrons, and so that he might more easily defend the new kingdom, the regions of Armenia adjoining the frontiers with Pharasmanes I of Iberia, Polemon II of Pontus, Aristobulus of Lesser Armenia, and Antiochus IV of Commagene, were ordered to obey him.

Corbulo withdrew to Syria, deprived of a governor by the death of Ummidius, and since then left to its own devices.

BOOK XIV:XXVII DECLINE OF THE ITALIAN COLONIAL TOWNS

That same year, Laodicea on the Lycus, one of the most illustrious cities in Asia Minor, was ruined by an earthquake, but recovered from the disaster by employing its own resources without help from ourselves.

In Italy, the old town of Puteoli (Pozzuoli) acquired from Nero the rights and title of a colony. Veterans were also drafted to Tarentum (Taranto) and Antium (Anzio), yet without preventing the decline in population of those districts, the majority slipping away to the provinces where they had completed their military service; and as it was their habit not to take wives or rear families, the homes they left were bereft of heirs. It was not, indeed, as in past times when entire legions, with their tribunes, centurions, and ordered ranks of soldiers, in a spirit of unanimity and comradeship, created some new element of the State; now, strangers to one another, from diverse companies, without a leader, without mutual affection, as if suddenly gathered together from any other human occupation but their own, combined as one, more to make up the numbers than as a colony.

BOOK XIV:XXVIII RULINGS AND A BANISHMENT

The praetorian elections, usually administered by the Senate, being troubled by over-energetic canvassing, Nero restored calm by appointing the three candidates in excess of the numbers required to legionary command.

He also increased the senators' powers, by ruling that those who appealed to the Senate from civil tribunals should risk the same deposit as those who applied to the emperor; previously the process had been free of charge and without penalty.

At the close of the year, Vibius Secundus, the Roman knight, was convicted on a charge of extortion, brought by the Mauretians, and exiled from Italy, avoiding no heavier a sentence due to the resources of his brother, Vibius Crispus.

BOOK XIV:XXIX TROUBLE IN BRITAIN

In the consulate of Caesennius Paetus and Petronius Turpilianus (AD61), a serious reverse was sustained in Britain. As I have mentioned, the governor Aulus Didius, had only retained territory, and his successor, Veranius, having harassed the Silurians with a few minor raids, was prevented by death (AD58) from pursuing the campaign. Famous in life for great strictness, his ambitions became evident in the closing words of his last will and testament: where he added, to his extensive flattery of Nero, that if he had lived two more years, he would have laid the province at the emperor's feet.

But it was Suetonius Paulinus who was now in charge of Britain, in military skill and by popular report, which allows none to lack rivals, a competitor to Corbulo, desirous of equalling the glory of the latter's recovery of Armenia, by crushing the enemy.

He therefore prepared to attack the Island of Mona (Anglesey), itself densely inhabited and also a haven for refugees, flat-bottomed boats being constructed to counter the uncertain shallows. Thus the infantry were ported across, while the cavalry waded behind, or swam their horses through the deeper water.

BOOK XIV:XXX DESTRUCTION OF THE DRUIDS

The opposing array lined the beach, a mass of arms and men, with women flitting about amongst them dressed in black, with dishevelled hair, brandishing their torches like Furies. A circle of Druids, hands raised to the heavens, pouring out dire imprecations, struck such awe into the soldiers, at the strangeness of the sight, that they exposed their motionless bodies to injury as though their limbs were paralysed.

Then, encouraged by their general, and exhorting each other not to be cowed by a host of women and fanatics, they charged with the standards, slew all before them, and enveloped the enemy in their own flames. A garrison was then imposed on the defeated, and the groves sacred to their savage cult were felled: for they believed it their duty to drench their altars in the blood of their captives, and consult their gods by the use of human entrails.

While thus engaged, news came of sudden revolt in the rest of the province.

BOOK XIV:XXXI REVOLT OF THE ICENI

Prasutagus, the king of the Icenii, famous for his long-lived opulence, had named the emperor heir, along with his own two daughters, thinking by such deference to keep his kingdom and household out of harm's way.

The result was quite to the contrary, so much so that his kingdom was ravaged by centurions and his household by their slaves, as if both had been taken captive. Already his wife Boudicca (Boadicea), had felt the lash, and his daughters had been violated: all the Icenian nobility had been stripped of their family estates, and the king's relatives were treated as servants.

At this outrage, and fearing worse to come, since they had been reduced to the status of a province, they took up arms and stirred the Trinobantes to rebellion, along with others not yet broken by servitude, who had entered into the secret plot to regain their freedom.

Their bitterest hatred was for the legionaries. Indeed fresh from their recent settlement in the colony of Camulodunum (Colchester), the Roman veterans were driving them from their homes, ejecting them from their land, styling them captives and slaves, their violence fuelled by the regular troops, with a like manner of behaving and hopes of similar licence.

Add to this that the temple raised to the divine Claudius rose to their view like a citadel of eternal domination, while those of them chosen as priests had to pour out their whole fortune, under the pretext of supporting his rites.

They found little difficulty in demolishing a colony unprotected by fortifications; a point too little allowed for by our commanders, who had paid attention to the amenities rather than what was needed.

BOOK XIV:XXXII CAMULODUNUM (COLCHESTER) DESTROYED

Meanwhile, the statue of Victory at Camulodunum (Colchester) fell, for no obvious reason, with its back turned as if retreating from the enemy. Their women, whipped into a frenzy, cried out that destruction was at hand, and that the foreigners' cries had had been heard in their senate house; the theatre had resounded to their screams, and a vision of the ruined colony had been seen in the estuary of the Thames. That the sea indeed had appeared blood-red, and the ebbing tide had left behind the very images of human corpses, brought hope to the Britons and fear to the veterans: however, as Suetonius was far off, the latter sought help from the procurator, Catus Decianus.

He sent no more than two hundred men, without suitable weapons; while there was a small force of troops in the town. Relying on the protection of the temple, but impeded by those who, aware of the covert rebellion, interfered with their plans, they neither defended themselves with a ditch and rampart, nor ensured, by removing the women and the aged, that only the young men remained; behaving as incautiously when surrounded by a crowd of barbarians as if they were in the midst of peace.

Everything else was ravaged or set on fire in the assault: only the temple, where the troops were congregated, withstood a two day siege, and was afterwards stormed. Then the victorious Britons, turned to face Petilius Cerialis, legate of the Ninth, who was advancing to the rescue, routed the legion, and slaughtered the infantry to a man. Cerialis escaped to the camp, along with the cavalry, and found shelter behind its defences. The procurator, Catus, unnerved by the disaster and loathed by the provincials, whom his avarice had roused to war, crossed to Gaul.

BOOK XIV:XXXIII LONDINIUM (LONDON) AND VERULAMIUM (ST ALBANS) FOLLOW

But Suetonius Paulinus, showing remarkable strength of mind, headed, straight through the midst of the enemy, to Londinium (London) which though not honoured with the title of colony, was nevertheless densely populated, and filled with traders and their goods.

Once there, he was uncertain whether to adopt it as his military base, but on considering the paucity of troops, and the severe enough lesson dealt Petilius' foolhardiness, he decided to sacrifice one town to save the whole. He was inflexible regarding the weeping and lamentations of the inhabitants as they begged his help, simply giving the order to depart, while allowing them to accompany the column: all those prevented from doing so by reason of gender, the fatigue of age, or their attachment to the location, were seized by the enemy.

A similar fate overtook Verulamium (St Albans), since the barbarians, with their delight in plunder and reluctance to exert themselves, left the forts and garrison-posts alone, and sought out the site which offered the richest spoils and was hardest to defend. It is well-known that seventy thousand Roman citizens and their allies died in the afore-mentioned places. For the enemy neither captured nor sold them, nor entered into any of the other transactions of war, but hurried on the slaughter, hanging, burning, crucifying, as though punishment must follow but only after revenge had been taken in the interim.

BOOK XIV:XXXIV SUETONIUS PAULINUS CHOOSES HIS LOCATION FOR BATTLE

Suetonius Paulinus had with him the Fourteenth legion, with a detachment of the Twentieth, and the auxiliaries from the nearest posts, making almost ten thousand armed men, as he prepared to dispense with delay, and fight a pitched battle. He selected a position with a narrow approach closed off by woodland to the rear, once sufficiently satisfied that the only enemy was in front, and that the level ground was open, without risk of ambush.

The legionaries were ranked shoulder to shoulder, the light-troops round them, with the cavalry on the wings. The British forces, however, composed of squads of foot and horse, ranged about at will, in unprecedented numbers, their spirits so high they had brought their wives with them to witness their success, placing them in wagons stationed just beyond the edge of the plain.



'Boudicca'

Character Sketches of Romance, Fiction and the Drama -
Ebenezer Cobham Brewer (p270, 1892)

Internet Archive Book Images

**BOOK XIV:XXXV BOUDICCA (BOADICEA)
ADDRESSES HER WARRIORS**

Boudicca (Boadicea), mounted in a chariot, her daughters before her, rode up to each clan, giving witness that though, in truth, it was customary for Britons to wage war under a female leader, she, born of highest ancestry, was taking vengeance not simply for the insult to her realm and power but, as a woman of the people, her freedom lost, her body scarred by the lash, for the shame visited on her daughters.

Roman covetousness was now such that their very bodies and neither old-age nor virginity itself remained unpolluted. Yet the gods of just revenge were present: one legion, daring to give battle, had perished; the rest were skulking in camp or seeking a way of escape. They would never endure the roar and clamour of so many thousands, much less an attack in force: let the clansmen but think of their strength under arms, of their reasons for war, and on that field let them conquer or die! Such was a woman's destiny, let it be left to men to live as slaves!

**BOOK XIV:XXXVI SUETONIUS PAULUS
EXHORTS HIS TROOPS**

Not even Suetonius Paulinus could be silent in the face of such danger. Though trusting in the courage of his men, he still both exhorted and entreated them to scorn the barbarians' noise and empty threats: more women than warriors were visible out there. Unwarlike, defenceless, they would yield at once, and, so often routed, once more acknowledge the swords and courage of their conquerors.

Even amidst many legions, he cried, it was the few who decided battles: and their glory would be all the greater, in that their modest force would win fame for the whole army. Let them but engage and, their javelins

once sent on their way, with shield-boss and sword let them go on piling up the dead, forgetting all thought of plunder: with victory gained all would accrue to them.

Such was the ardour following his words, so swiftly did his veteran troops, proven in many a battle, ready themselves to hurl their javelins, that Suetonius Paulus, certain of the outcome, gave the signal for battle.

BOOK XIV:XXXVII DEFEAT OF THE ICENI

At first the legionaries held position, with the defile as a defence, then when the enemy's closer advance enabled them to hurl their missiles with accuracy, they ran forward in wedge formation. The auxiliaries charged in the same manner; and the cavalry, with lances extended, broke through whatever force opposed them. The remainder turned and fled, though escape was difficult, since the surrounding wagons blocked their exit.

The soldiers gave the women no quarter, and even the baggage animals were speared and added to the pile of dead. The glory won that day was brilliant and equalled our ancient victories: indeed they say that scarcely fewer than eighty thousand Britons met their deaths, with some four hundred Romans killed, and a not much greater number injured.

Boudicca (Boedicea) ended her life by taking poison. While Poenius Postumus, camp-prefect of the Second legion, learning of the success gained by the men of the Fourteenth and Twentieth, and that he had robbed his own troops of a share of the glory by disobeying his commander's orders in contravention of the rules of the service, fell on his own sword.

**BOOK XIV:XXXVIII THE TROOPS IN BRITAIN
STRENGTHENED**

The whole army was now concentrated, under canvas, ready to complete what remained of the campaign. Nero increased its strength, sending two thousand legionaries from Germany, eight auxiliary cohorts, and a thousand cavalry, upon whose arrival the Ninth legion was supplemented.

The cohorts and cavalry were stationed in new winter quarters, and the tribes which appeared neutral or hostile were harried with fire and sword. But nothing afflicted as badly as famine those who had neglected to sow their crops and, devoting old and young alike to the war, had destined our supplies for themselves.

The more impetuous of the tribes were reluctant to make peace, because Julius Classicus, sent as successor to Catus, and at loggerheads with Suetonius Paulinus, was impeding the affairs of the province with his private feuding, and had spread the view that it was best to await a new governor, who, lacking the irascibility of an opponent and the arrogance of a conqueror, might show clemency towards those who surrendered.

At the same time he spelt out to Rome that no end to the fighting could be anticipated until Suetonius Paulinus was replaced, whose defeats were due to his own perversity, his successes to good fortune.

**BOOK XIV:XXXIX PEACE ACHIEVED
THROUGH MODERATION**

Polyclitus, one of the imperial freedmen, was therefore sent to assess the situation in Britain, Nero cherishing high hopes that through Polyclitus' influence, not only might harmony between the governor and

procurator be achieved, but the rebellious spirits of the barbarians be reconciled to peace.

Polyclitus, his immense entourage having weighed heavily on Italy and Gaul, did not fail to instil dread in our troops too, once he had crossed the Channel. But to the enemy he was an object of derision, they, with the fires of liberty still burning, not yet having met with the power of freedmen, amazed that a general and his army who had fought such a war, could obey mere servants.

Nevertheless, all was reported favourably to the emperor; Suetonius Paulinus was retained in charge, but when a few vessels and the oarsmen in them ran aground and were lost, he was ordered, on the pretext of an ongoing campaign, to transfer his troops to Petronius Turpilianus, who had by now retired from the consulate.

He, by not provoking the enemy, nor being provoked, conferred the honourable name of peace on this quiet inaction.

End of the Annals Book XIV: I-XXXIX

**BOOK XIV: XL-LXV
NERO'S GRIP TIGHTENS**



'Venus Victrix'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p69, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XIV:XL TWO MAJOR CRIMES

In that same year (AD61), two notable crimes were perpetrated, one by a senator, the other through the audacity of a slave.

The first crime was a conspiracy against an ex-praetor, Domitius Balbus, who was vulnerable due to his advanced age, childlessness and wealth. A relative of his, Valerius Fabianus, who was destined for public office, drew up a false will in his name, aided and abetted by Vinicius Rufinus, and Terentius Lentinus. They, in turn, had taken Antonius Primus and Asinius Marcellus into their confidence.

Antonius was bold and eager, while Marcellus, distinguished as being the great-grandson of Asinius Pollio, possessed a character not to be despised, except in that he believed poverty to be the greatest of evils. Fabianus sealed the document, which was witnessed by those I have mentioned, and a handful of less illustrious individuals.

Brought before the Senate, Fabianus, Antonius Primus, Rufinus and Terentius Lentinus were sentenced under the Cornelian law (of Sulla, 81BC). Marcellus was exempted from punishment, though not disgrace, out of respect for his ancestry and due to Nero's intercession.

BOOK XIV:XLI LEGAL SUBTERFUGE

At the same time, the young ex-quaestor Pompeius Aelianus, was also indicted for complicity in Fabianus' crime, and banished from Italy, and from his native Spain. The same ignominy was visited on Valerius Ponticus, who to save the accused from being brought before the city prefect submitted it to the praetor, in order to evade justice temporarily by a legal subterfuge and later by collusion.

A clause was added to the Senate's decree regarding Ponticus, such that whoever purchased, or offered to perform, this type of evasion would be liable to the same penalty as if convicted of dishonesty in open court.

BOOK XIV:XLII THE MURDER OF PEDANIUS SECUNDUS

The second case, not long afterwards, involved the murder of the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, by one of his own slaves, either because the slave's emancipation had been refused after a price had been agreed, or because he was intoxicated with a male lover and could not tolerate his master proving a rival.

When, however, the whole body of servants resident under that same roof were due to be led off to execution, according to the ancient custom, the massing together of the populace, in order to save so many lives, amounted almost to sedition, and the Senate House was besieged.

Even within its walls, there were those keen to reject excessive harshness, though most supported the existing law. Of these, Gaius Cassius, rising to speak, argued the point in the following manner:

BOOK XIV:XLIII GAIUS CASSIUS ARGUES FOR WHOLESALE PUNISHMENT

'Senators Elect, I have frequently made one of our number when new decrees were being proposed which ran counter to the laws and traditions of our ancestors; nor did I oppose them, and not because I doubted whether those past provisions were better or more just, beyond all question, while any alteration appeared a change for the worse, but so as not to appear to overrate my own branch of study by displaying an

excessive love of ancient custom. At the same time, I thought that whatever influence I possessed here should not be undermined by exhibiting perpetual dissent, in order that it would remain intact for whenever the State needed my opinion.

That moment is here, a time when an ex-consul has been murdered in his own home through an act of treason devised by a slave, which none gave warning of, or prevented, though nothing had as yet lessened the force of the Senate decree (of AD57), which threatened the whole household with execution. Vote for impunity, by Hercules, and whom shall his rank protect, when it proved no help to this prefect of Rome? Whom shall the size of his household save, when four hundred could not protect Pedanius Secundus?

Who can hope for help from his servants, when not even fear for themselves can avert danger from us? Or, as some pretend without a blush of shame, was the perpetrator avenging some wrong of his, in the setting aside of a father's bequest and the loss of an inherited slave? Let us go further then, and declare his master was justly murdered!

BOOK XIV:XLIV HE DEMANDS AN EXAMPLE BE SET

Will you allow debate, on a matter which has been deliberated over by wiser minds than ours? Yet even if we were being required to frame such legislation for the first time, do you really think that a slave could decide to kill his master without a threatening word, with nothing spoken in rashness? Assume however that he kept counsel, obtained the weapon from those who knew nothing: could he evade the watch, open the bedroom door carrying a light, and perform the murder without anyone knowing? Many indications precede a crime: if our slaves disclose them to us we can live alone among many, safe from trouble, and if ultimately we must perish, at least vengeance will be taken on the guilty.

The temper of their slaves was always a source of suspicion to our ancestors, even when they were born on that same estate, or under that same roof, and knew kindness from their owners from the outset. But now those of other nations are part of our household, with diverse customs, and alien religion or none, you will never control such a motley crew except by fear. But innocent lives will be lost, you cry! True, for when every tenth man of a routed army is beaten to death, the lot falls on the brave also. Every great example contains something of injustice, benefitting the State though to the detriment of the individual.'

BOOK XIV:XLV THE SENTENCE IS CARRIED OUT DESPITE POPULAR OPINION

While not a single member dared to oppose Cassius' verdict directly, a murmur of voices rose, expressing pity at the numbers, age or gender of the majority of the victims who were undoubtedly innocent. Nevertheless, the faction advocating execution prevailed.

But the sentence could not be complied with, a dense crowd gathering, threatening the use of stones and firebrands. Nero therefore rebuked the people, by edict, and lined the whole road by which the condemned were led to punishment with detachments of soldiers. Cingonius Varro had even proposed that the freedmen present under that same roof be deported from Italy. This, Nero vetoed, lest the ancient custom, which mercy had failed to temper, be reduced to a mere show of savagery.

**BOOK XIV:XLVI THE RISE OF TREBILIUS MAXIMUS
(LATER GOVERNOR OF BRITAIN)**

In that same consulate (AD61), Tarquinius Priscus was convicted, on charges laid by the Bithynians, of extortion, much to the delight of the Senate who remembered his persecution of Statilius Taurus, his own pro-consul.

A property census was carried out in the Gallic provinces by Quintus Volusius, Sextius Africanus, and Trebellius Maximus, Volusius and Africanus being mutual rivals due to their rank: though, while they both held Trebellius in contempt, he was promoted beyond them.

BOOK XIV:XLVII THE DEATH OF MEMMIUS REGULUS

That year saw the death of Memmius Regulus, renowned for his authority, his self-possession, and his being held in good repute, to the maximum degree possible in the shadow of the emperor, so much so that Nero, in ill health, and surrounded by sycophants who were predicting the end of empire if events so dictated, replied that the State still had a last resource. When asked in what, especially, he added: in Memmius Regulus. Yet Regulus continued to survive, protected by his quiet manner, and by his being born of a recently ennobled family, his modest wealth arousing no envy.

In that year also, Nero dedicated a gymnasium, the oil being supplied to the equestrian and senatorial orders with Greek liberality.

BOOK XIV:XLVIII ANTISTIUS ACCUSED OF TREASON

In the consulate of Publius Marius and Lucius Afinius (AD62), the praetor Antistius, whose independence of action as plebeian tribune I have already mentioned, composed a number of scandalous verses regarding the emperor, and broadcast them aloud at a crowded table, while dining with Ostorius Scapula.

Following this, he was accused of treason by Cossutianus Capito, who had lately regained his senatorial rank due to the intercession of his father-in-law Tigellinus. That law was now revived for the first time, and it was thought that it was less Antistius' execution that was sought than the glorification of the emperor, who was to snatch him from death when condemned by the Senate, using his veto by virtue of holding tribunician powers.

Though Ostorius stated in evidence that he had heard nothing, the adverse testimony was believed; and the consul designate, Junius Marullus, moved that the accused be stripped of his praetorship and executed in the traditional manner.

The rest then expressing assent, Thræsea Paetus, after a long speech honouring Nero and vigorously attacking Antistius, argued that the accused should not undergo the full penalty merited, given so excellent an emperor and a Senate so constituted as not to be constrained by any compulsion: the executioner and the garrotte had been long abolished, and there were punishments established by laws under which sentence could be decided, without the judges seeming harsh in the extreme, or the age being disgraced.

Indeed, he added, the longer Antistius dragged out his guilty existence on some island or other, his property having been confiscated, the more miserable it would be to him personally, while constituting the noblest of examples of public clemency.

**BOOK XIV:XLIX THRASEA SECURES THE MILDER
SENTENCE**

Thrasea's display of independence overcame the servility of others, and on the consul authorising a division, the former's judgement was followed, except for a dissenting few, of whom the most eager sycophant was Aulus Vitellius, who directed his abuse at the most virtuous and, as is usual with cowardly natures, was silent when answered.

The consuls, however, not venturing to ratify the decree, wrote to Nero stating their combined opinion. He hovered between embarrassment and anger, finally replying that Antistius, without provocation, had uttered the gravest insults regarding his emperor; retribution for those insults had been demanded from the senators; and the penalty initially agreed upon would have matched the seriousness of the offence. However since he had intended to prevent excessive harshness in their sentencing, he would not overrule their moderation: they must decide as they wished, and were at liberty to acquit.

These comments and their like were read aloud, his displeasure being obvious, but the consuls did not alter the penalty on that account, nor did Thrasea withdraw the proposal or the rest abandon the course they had pursued; one group of senators lest it should arouse ill-will against the emperor, the majority because there was safety in numbers; Thrasea because of his usual strength of mind, and lest the credit he had gained was lost.

BOOK XIV:L FABRICIUS VEIENTO, AND THE BURNING OF HIS BOOKS

Fabricius Veiento was attacked on a not dissimilar charge, of composing a series of libels on various senators and priests, in the books he had entitled his *Codocil*. His accuser, Tullius Geminus, also claimed that he had been selling what was in the imperial gift, and the right to promotion. For this reason, Nero undertook the case himself, convicted Veiento, expelled him from Italy, and ordered his books burnt. The latter were in demand, and widely read, as long as it was dangerous to procure them: later, their purchase being freely allowed brought oblivion.

BOOK XIV:LI THE DEATH OF BURRUS

While the public ills grew daily more serious its resource diminished with Burrus' passing, whether by sickness or poison is unknown. It was attributed to his health, in that he had died from a gradual swelling of the throat, which obstructed his breathing. Many asserted, however, that on Nero's orders his palate was smeared with a noxious drug, in the guise of a remedy, and that Burrus, detecting the crime, averted his eyes from the emperor when he visited, and replied to his enquiries with a curt: 'Myself, I am well.'

A deep sense of loss remained in a State mindful of his virtues, and of his successors, one of them mild and innocent, the other the most flagrant of criminals. For Nero had appointed two commanders to the praetorian cohorts: Faenius Rufus, as he was a favourite of the masses, managing the corn-supply without himself profiting by it; and Sofonius Tigellinus, because of his former licentiousness and propensity for scandal.

Both displayed their known attributes, Tigellinus having the greater influence with the emperor, and being a party to his intimate debauches;

Rufus maintaining an excellent reputation with the populace and the military, but disadvantaged with Nero.

BOOK XIV:LII ATTACKS ON SENECA

The death of Burrus shook Seneca's authority, for not only was public morality the weaker for having lost one of its erstwhile champions, but Nero was turning to worse advisors. They, in turn, attacked Seneca, with a variety of claims; that he was still adding to that enormous wealth, which had passed the bounds of private measure; that he was directing the citizens' enthusiasm towards himself; and that in the delightfulness of his gardens, and the magnificence of his villas, he was out to surpass the emperor also.

They even reproached him with arrogating the laurels awarded for eloquence to himself alone, writing verse more often, now that Nero had come to love the art. For, regarding the emperor's entertainments, he was openly and unjustly critical of his powers when driving his horses, and derided his lack of expression whenever he sang.

How long, they cried, must not a single thing in the State prove outstanding unless it was deemed to be of Seneca's invention? Nero's boyhood was indeed over now, and the vigour of youth was upon him: let him be rid of his old master, he was possessed of more than enough teachers in his own ancestors.

BOOK XIV:LIII SENECA SEEKS AN INTERVIEWWITH NERO

But Seneca was not unaware of his detractors, their names were made known by those with some care for decency, while Nero's avoidance of intimacy was becoming more apparent. He therefore sought a time to address the emperor, and permission being granted he began: 'It is the fourteenth year, Caesar, since I was moved by hopes of you, the eighth that you have ruled the empire: in the intervening time you have heaped upon me so much wealth and honour that nothing is lacking to my happiness but keeping it within bounds.

I shall summon mighty precedents, not from my rank in life but yours. Augustus, your great-great grandfather, granted Marcus Agrippa the city of Mytilene as a retreat, and Gaius Maecenas, something akin to retirement abroad here in Rome. The one had been his ally in the wars, the other burdened by further labours in the city, ample rewards indeed, though for exceptional service.

As for myself, how have I been able to summon your generosity except by my literary efforts, conducted, as I might put it, in the shadows, and which have gained fame because I am seen to have assisted your first youthful efforts, a mighty reward for such things. But you have surrounded me with endless favours, innumerable riches, so that I often ask myself: "Is it I, born to be a mere provincial knight, who am numbered among the greatest citizens? Have I, the newcomer, distinguished myself among these noblemen displaying their ancient glories? Where is the mind that found content in moderation? Is it present in the laying out of these gardens of mine, in pacing about those villas near Rome, in my being blessed with such tracts of land, in my far-flung investments!"

A single justification occurs to me, that I had no right to resist your generosity.'

**BOOK XIV:LIV SENECA SEEKS TO GIFT
HIS ESTATES TO NERO**

But we have both filled the measure, you of what an emperor may give to a friend, and I of what a friend may accept from his emperor: beyond that envy breeds. Envy, indeed, like everything mortal, lies far beneath your summit, but it is a burden to me, I need relief. As I would beg for support in war, or when wearied by the road, so on the journey of life, old and unequal to the lightest cares, now I can no longer bear my riches onward, I seek aid.

Order my estates to be managed by your procurators, and subsumed in your fortune. Not that I would reduce myself to poverty, merely surrender what dazzles me with its brightness, that I might summon again to the service of thought those hours now reserved for the care of my gardens and villas. You have energy and to spare, and have watched for years the workings of supreme power: we, your older friends, can now demand our rest. This too will work to your glory, that you raised, to the heights, those who would have accepted the middle way.'

**BOOK XIV:LV NERO DISSIMULATES,
FLATTERING SENECA**

To this, Nero replied approximately thus: 'That I can immediately respond to your studied eloquence, is the first gift of yours I possess, you who taught me to speak spontaneously not merely by premeditation.

Augustus, my great-great-grandfather, granted Agrippa and Maecenas rest from their labours, but had himself reached an age whose authority justified whichever place of whatever kind he assigned them; and yet he took from neither the gifts he himself had given. They earned them in war, and amidst danger; indeed Augustus' youth was lived amongst such things.

Nor, weapon in hand, would your arm and spear have failed me: but you did what the present time demanded, nurturing my boyhood and then my youth, with reason, advice and precept.

And your gifts to me will endure, as long as life itself: those you had of me, gardens, wealth, villas, are vulnerable to chance. They may seem extensive, but many scarcely equal to you in attainment have owned more. I am ashamed to speak of those freedmen who exhibit greater riches than yourself. I am even forced to blush, that you, the first in my affections, do not exceed all others in your fortune; unless by chance you set yourself below Vitellius, three times consul, or myself below Claudius, and the wealth Volusius won by years of parsimony incapable of being matched by my generosity to you?

BOOK XIV:LVI THE OFFER IS REJECTED, BUT SENECA STILL ADOPTS A LOW PROFILE

In fact, not only are you vigorous in years, equal to public affairs and their reward, but I myself am only entering the first stage of my rule. Why should you not, if my youthful step slips, recall it, and ever more zealously guide, by your aid, the power you have embellished? If you return your wealth to me, it will not be your sense of moderation that will be on everyone's lips nor, should you abandon your emperor, your peace in retirement, but rather an avarice and cruelty attributed to me! And however much your restraint were praised, it is still not fitting for the wise to win credit themselves for an action which reflects badly on a friend.'

Nero followed this by embracing and kissing him, nature having formed him, and habit trained him, to hide his enmity in deceitful caresses. Seneca ended, as with all conversations with the powerful, by thanking him: nevertheless he curtailed his previous displays of power, banishing the crowds from his audience chamber, shunning attendants, and rarely appearing in the city, as if poor health or his philosophic studies detained him at home.

**BOOK XIV:LVII THE DOWNFALL OF FAENIUS RUFUS
AND THE EXECUTION OF SULLA**

With Seneca unnerved, it was simple to undermine Faenius Rufus, in his case charged with his friendship with Agrippina. And Tigellinus, growing more powerful by the day, and thinking his malign arts, the sole source of that power, would be welcomed all the more, if he could but bind the emperor to him through partnership in crime, probed Nero's fears, and finding his greatest anxieties concerned Plautus and Sulla, both lately removed from court, Plautus to Asia Minor, Sulla to Narbonese Gaul, he began to draw attention to their noble birth and their closeness to the armies of the East and Germany respectively.

He himself, unlike Burrus, he said, had no other ambition but only Nero's safety. In Rome, where he was present, he could ward off any plot, but how were distant rebellions to be crushed? Gaul was alert to the name of Julius the dictator (Sulla being distantly related to him), nor were the peoples of Asia Minor any less in awe of the glory of such a grandfather as Drusus the Younger (Plautus being his grandson).

Sulla was poor, he continued, therefore highly audacious, and feigned lethargy until he could find an opportunity for rashness. Plautus, with his great wealth, never even pretended a desire for quiet, but in imitation of the ancient Romans had adopted the arrogance of that sect the Stoics, and their appetite for playing politics.

There was no more delay. Six days later, his executioners having crossed to Marseilles (Massilia), Sulla, who had taken his place at table, was killed before any whisper of alarm had reached him. His head was brought to Rome, where Nero laughed at the unsightliness of its premature grey hairs.

BOOK XIV:LVIII PLAUTUS IS WARNED OF HIS DANGER

That Plautus' execution was in train, was not exactly a secret, his safety being the concern of a greater number, while the distance by land and sea gave time for rumours to start. The widespread story was that he had sought out Corbulo, then commanding significant forces, and that if there was a purge of the illustrious and innocent, then Plautus was greatly exposed to danger. Indeed, it was said, Asia Minor had taken up arms to support the youth, and the soldiers sent to perpetrate the crime were neither strong in numbers nor enthusiastic at heart, and after failing to accomplish their orders, had joined the rebellion.

These fictions, as is the way with all rumours, were augmented by idle credulity. In fact, a freedman of Plautus, granted a following wind, had outrun the centurion, and brought advice from Plautus' father-in-law Lucius Antistius: to the effect that he should flee a coward's death, while a refuge still existed; sympathy for his great name would be found among the virtuous, support among the bold; meanwhile no resource should be ignored. Were he to repel the sixty soldiers (the number set to arrive) then, while the news was reaching Nero and another force was sent on its way, a train of events would follow which might escalate into full-scale war. Finally, he would either save his life in this manner, or bravery would weigh less heavily on him than cowardice.

BOOK XIV:LIX THE EXECUTION OF PLAUTUS

But Plautus was unmoved by this, perhaps because, exiled and defenceless, he could see no help; or was tired of uncertain hope; or was constrained by his love for his wife and children, towards whom he felt Nero might be less implacable if free of alarm.

Some say further messengers had arrived from his father-in-law, implying nothing drastic was about to happen; while his teachers of philosophy, Coeranus the Greek, and Musonius the Tuscan, had urged him to await death calmly, rather than choose an uncertain and anxious existence. He was found, in fact, at midday, his body stripped for exercise, and in that state was cut down by the centurion, in front of the eunuch Pelago, whom Nero had placed in command of the detachment like a royal minion with his accomplices.

The victim's head was brought back to Rome; at the sight of which the emperor (I shall give his very words) asked: 'Nero, why fear a man with such a nose? (see Cassius Dio LXII, 14) and relinquishing all concern prepared to expedite his marriage with Poppaea, deferred until now due to like anxieties, by removing his wife, Claudia Octavia, who, however well-behaved, was frowned upon for her father's name, and her support amongst the populace.

He sent a letter to the Senate, not, however, confessing to the executions of Sulla and Plautus, but stating that both were disruptive spirits, while he himself was maintaining a painstaking watch over State security. For that reason, a national thanksgiving was decreed, together with the erasure of Sulla and Plautus from the Senate roll, a mockery of an act more painful than the evil visited upon them.

BOOK XIV:LX CLAUDIA OCTAVIA BANISHED

Therefore, on receipt of the Senate decree, since it seemed that his every crime was applauded, he put away Claudia Octavia, saying she was sterile; then married Poppaea. Long his mistress, ruling over Nero the lover, and then the husband, she forced one of Claudia Octavia's servants to accuse a slave of intimacy with her; the defendant chosen being one Eucaerus, a native of Alexandria, and an expert performer on the flute. In pursuance of this, her maidservants were put to the question, and though

some subject to torture assented to falsehoods, the majority maintained their mistress' innocence; one, on being pressed by Tigellinus, responding that Octavia's body was more chaste than his mouth.

Nevertheless, Octavia was put aside, at first by civil divorce, receiving two ominous gifts, Burrus' house and Plautus' estates: soon afterwards being banished to Campania and placed in military custody. This led to frequent and open protests by the populace, who were less discreet, and in their humbler station incurred less risk, than their betters. It resulted in a rumour that Nero, repenting of his action, was to recall Octavia to his side.

BOOK XIV:LXI POPPAEA PROTESTS

At this, exultant crowds scaled the Capitol, and the gods finally were thanked. Statues of Poppaea were toppled, and images of Octavia were borne shoulder-high, the people strewing them with flowers, and erecting them in the forum and the temples. Even the emperor was revered thus, with loud praise.

They were already filling the Palace itself with their numbers and clamour, when bands of soldiers, with levelled weapons and the lash, were sent to scatter the troublemakers. All the damage done by the outburst was rectified, and Poppaea's honours reinstated. She, always rendered cruel by hatred, and now by fear, had thrown herself at Nero's feet, anxious lest the violence in the streets might grow fiercer and Nero respond to popular feeling. Her affairs she said were not in such a state that she could fight for her marriage, though it was dearer to her than life, but life itself had been rendered intolerable by those slaves and followers of Octavia, who invoked the name of the people, daring in peace what would scarcely occur in war.

Those weapons, she said, had been lifted against their emperor; they only lacked a leader, and one could be easily found once events were afoot, it only needed her, whose nod from afar had raised the storm, to travel to Rome. What, in any case, had she herself done wrong? Whom and in what

way had she offended? Perhaps it was because she, indeed, was about to grant a true heir to Caesar's House? Would the Romans rather have the offspring of an Egyptian flautist presented to the heights of power?

In short, if that was where things were leading, let him summon his lady, freely and not through compulsion, or let him look to his own safety. Right action and lenient measures had quelled the first disturbances: but let the people despair of Octavia being restored as Nero's wife, and they would soon find her a husband!

BOOK XIV:LXII ANICETUS TAKES THE FALL

Her various arguments, appealing to fear and anger, at once terrified and incensed her listener. Yet an accusation made by a slave was worth little, and the maidservants' interrogations were inconclusive. Therefore, it was resolved to secure a confession from someone other, apropos of whom a charge of fomenting rebellion could also be invented. Anicetus, moreover, the admiral of the fleet at Misenum as I mentioned, and the perpetrator of matricide, was felt to be ideal, who after committing that murder had experienced slight favour but then a more serious antipathy, since the agents of crime are always viewed as a visible reproach.

He was, therefore, summoned, and Nero reminded him of his earlier service: alone he had upheld the emperor's safety against a mother's treachery; now an opportunity presented deserving of no less gratitude, the removal of a dangerous spouse. Neither hand nor steel were needed: he had merely to confess to adultery with Octavia. He promised him a reward, to be kept secret at present, but a large one, and a pleasant place of retirement, threatening him with death if he refused.

Anicetus, with an innate perversity and a facility bred by his history of crime, invented and confessed even more than he had been ordered to, before friends of the emperor who had been summoned as if to council. He was then packed off to Sardinia, where he endured a less than penurious exile and died a natural death.

BOOK XIV:LXIII CLAUDIA OCTAVIA IS BANISHED

Nero, meanwhile, stated in an edict that Octavia, as established by himself, had seduced the admiral in hope of gaining the support of the fleet and, given her adultery, had procured an abortion, he conveniently forgetting his previous accusation that she was infertile; and he then confined her to the island of Pandateria (Ventotene).

No woman in exile presented a more pitiful sight to the eye. Some still recalled Agrippina's banishment there by Tiberius, and retained the more recent memory of Julia Livilla's expulsion by Claudius: but both were in their maturity, had experienced a little happiness, and recollections of past good-fortune could ameliorate the cruelty of the present.

For Octavia, her wedding day had proved her funeral, entering a household where nothing but sorrow awaited; her father snatched away by poisoning, followed by her brother; then the appearance of a handmaid more worthy of notice than her mistress; then Poppaea turned bride to a wife's ruin; and finally, an accusation heavier to bear than any form of doom.

BOOK XIV:LXIV THE DEATH OF CLAUDIA OCTAVIA

And so this girl of twenty-two, surrounded by soldiers and centurions, already banished from life by foreknowledge of her fate, could not yet find peace in death. A few days then intervened before that death was demanded, though she bore witness that she no longer had a husband and was merely a sister (through Nero's adoption by Claudius), invoking shared ancestry through the House of Germanicus, and finally the name of Agrippina, with whom she had felt safe, enduring a marriage unhappy enough, that was true but not fatal.

She was bound with rope, and the veins in all her limbs opened; and because the blood, constrained by her terror, was slow to flow, she was suffocated in the steam from an over-heated bath. A further, more atrocious, cruelty followed, her head being severed and carried to Rome for Poppaea to view.

How often must I remember to say that offerings were decreed in the temples for all these occurrences? Let those who come to know the events of those times, from myself or other authors, make the firm presumption that whenever the emperor ordered an exile or a murder, thanksgiving was made to the gods, and what was once a token of good fortune was now a sign of national disaster.

Nevertheless, I shall be not silent, if a Senate decree prove novel in its sycophancy, or the last word in self-abasement.

BOOK XIV:LXV POISONINGS AND A CONSPIRACY

That same year (AD62), Nero was credited with the death by poisoning of two of his foremost freedmen: Doryphorus, as an opponent to his marriage with Poppaea, and Pallas, because he had retained his great wealth throughout an old age too long protracted.

Romanus, in secret accusations, charged Seneca with being an associate of Gnaeus Piso, but was brought down by Seneca's more powerful attack, on the same charge. Piso took fright at this, and the birth of an elaborate and unfortunate conspiracy against Nero resulted.

End of the Annals Book XIV: XL-LXV

BOOK XV: I-XXXII
WAR WITH PARTHIA OVER ARMENIA



'Roman Soldier'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p406, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XV:I TROUBLE IN PARTHIA AGAIN

Meanwhile, Vologeses I, the king of Parthia, aware of Corbulo's actions and the placing of the alien Tigranes on the Armenian throne, and while wanting to pursue vengeance for that contempt for Arsacian dignity shown by the expulsion of his brother Tiridates, yet, at the same time, drawn once more to consider other options, by the power of Rome and respect for the as yet unbroken treaty (of 20BC), and moreover being cautious by nature, was hampered by a rebellion of the Hyrcanians, a strong tribe, and the series of campaigns that ensued.

He was still in two minds, when news of a fresh indignity spurred him to action: for Tigranes, invading Adiabene, the neighbouring region, from Armenia, ravaged more widely and for far longer than implied by a mere raid after plunder, and the tribal chiefs were becoming restless, plunged as they were into humiliation by the event, harried by a general who was not even Roman, rather by the temerity of an ex-hostage for many years considered the Romans' slave.

Their resentment was fuelled by Monobazus, the leading power in Adiabene, who asked what help he should seek and from where. Armenia had already been conceded; its neighbour would follow; and if Parthia failed to come to their defence, well, the Roman yoke weighed more lightly on those who surrendered than those who were conquered!

Tiridates too, exiled from the throne, carried greater weight by his silences or restrained protests, saying that great empires were not maintained by inaction; they demanded the use of men and arms in battle; to those of highest rank might was right, the glory of a private family was to hold their own possessions, of a king to contend for those of others.

**BOOK XV:II VOLOGESES PRAISES HIS BROTHER
TIRIDATES**

Moved by this, Vologeses therefore summoned a council, seated Tiridates next to himself, and began thus: 'When this prince, born of the same father as myself, conceded the supreme title to me on the grounds of age, I placed him in possession of Armenia, which owed to the status of a third power, since Media Atropatene had fallen to my brother Pacorus II.

It seemed to me that I had rightly brought order to our family's House, rather than the hatred and rivalry brothers bore each other of old. The Romans now forbid it, and the peace they have never successfully challenged they are now breaking, to their ruin. I do not deny that I would rather have retained my father's gains through fair dealing than bloodshed, reason than weapons.'

With this, he bound the diadem on Tiridates' head, saying: 'If I have been at fault in delaying, I will rectify it through valour. At all events, your courage and glory are intact, added to which is your reputation for self-control, which is not to be scorned by the greatest of mortals, and is valued by the gods.'

A cavalry force, which usually accompanied the king, was at hand, whose command he handed to a nobleman, Monaeses, adding some Adiabenean auxiliaries, and ordering him to drive Tigranes VI from Armenia, while he himself set aside his quarrel with the Hyrcanians, and summoned his internal forces and all the panoply of war, in a threat to the Roman provinces.

BOOK XV:III CORBULO PREPARES FOR WAR

As soon as Corbulo was certain of the news he had received, he sent two legions, under Verulanus Severus, and Vettius Bolanus, to aid Tigranes, with private instructions that they act calmly rather than hastily: being in truth keener to contain than fight the war.

He had also written to Nero, saying that a second general was needed to defend Armenia: Syria being in grave danger if Vologeses attacked. Meanwhile he positioned his remaining legion on the banks of the Euphrates, armed an improvised force of provincials, and moved to block the enemy advance, by establishing garrison posts. Since the region was deficient in water, he also built forts to control the water sources; burying a few streams under banks of sand.

BOOK XV:IV TIGRANES AND THE ROMANS DEFEND THE TOWN OF TIGRANOCERTA

While Corbulo, therefore, prepared for the defence of Syria, Monaeses, marching at full speed, to overtake news of his advance, nonetheless failed to catch Tigranes unawares and off guard. Tigranes had occupied Tigranocerta, the town being formidable in the number of defenders and the scale of its fortifications. In addition the Nicephorius, a river of significant width, runs past a section of the walls, and a large moat had been dug where the flow was not to be relied on.

There were Roman troops within, and previously assembled supplies, during the transport of which a few men, advancing too eagerly, had been cut off by the swift-moving enemy, exciting anger rather than fear in the rest. The Parthian lacks sufficient daring however to promote a siege: resorting to occasional flights of arrows which fail to terrify the besieged and frustrate himself, while the Adiabeni, on deploying ladders and siege equipment, were easily dislodged, then cut down by a sally from our men.

BOOK XV:V VOLOGESES DECIDES TO NEGOTIATE WITH ROME

Corbulo, however, despite an outcome favourable to him, decided not to press his good fortune, and sent a protest to Vologeses regarding the use of force against the province: by which a friendly monarch and Roman cohorts had been placed under siege. It would be better, he said, to lift the blockade, or he too would pitch camp in enemy territory.

The centurion Casperius, chosen for the mission, approached the king at Nisibis (Nusaybin, Turkey), thirty-seven miles from Tigranocerta, and delivered the message forcefully. To avoid conflict with Rome was an old and deep-seated principle of Vologeses, nor was the present set of events favourable. The siege had been fruitless, Tigranes, with men and supplies, was safe; those who had undertaken the assault had fled; legions had been sent into Armenia, and more stood ready on the Syrian border for a further advance. His own cavalry were unfit for battle, lacking fodder for the horses: since a swarm of locusts had appeared that consumed every leaf of grass or foliage.

So, hiding his fears, he adopted a milder tone, replying that he would send envoys to the Roman emperor regarding his claim on Armenia, and strike a firm peace. He ordered Monaeses to abandon the siege of Tigranocerta, while he himself retired.

BOOK XV:VI CORBULO CRITICISED, PAETUS JOINS HIM

The majority acclaimed the outcome as a triumph, achieved due to Corbulo's threats and the king's fears: others suspected a private agreement, whereby if the conflict was suspended on both sides, and Vologeses withdrew, Tigranes would also quit Armenia. Why else, they said, would the Roman army have been withdrawn from Tigranocerta? Why

abandon in peace what had been defended in war? How was it preferable for them to have wintered at the extremity of Cappadocia, in hastily arranged cover, rather than in the capital of a kingdom they had retained? In short, battle had been deferred, so that Vologeses might fight someone other than Corbulo, and Corbulo not endanger the laurels earned in the course of so many years!

For, as I have said, Corbulo had requested a second general to defend Armenia, and the news was that Caesennius Paetus was at hand. He had already arrived, the forces being divided such that the Fourth and Twelfth legions, reinforced by the Fifth recently summoned from Moesia, with auxiliaries from Pontus, Galatia and Cappadocia, were subject to Paetus; while the Third, Sixth and Tenth legions, and the troops formerly in Syria, remained with Corbulo; the rest to be used jointly or severally as events dictated.

But Corbulo was impatient of rivals, and Paetus, for whom the glory of serving as second-in-command might have proved sufficient, disdained the former's achievements, saying there had been no bloodshed, no plunder, and the storming of cities had been achieved in name only: it was for he himself to impose tribute, law, and Roman jurisdiction on the conquered, in place of a shadow of a king.

BOOK XV:VII WAR AND PORTENTS

At the same time, Vologeses' envoys, whose mission to the emperor I have noted, returned empty-handed, and open warfare was initiated by Parthia. Paetus did not shirk confrontation, and entered Armenia, with two legions, the Fourth commanded by Funisulanus Vettonianus, and the Twelfth, under Calavius Sabinus, though to sinister omens.

For at the passage of the Euphrates, which they crossed by a bridge, the horse carrying the consular insignia took fright, for no apparent reason, and escaped to the rear. And a sacrificial victim tethered in the winter-

quarters, which were being fortified, broke free, fled the half-completed works, and leapt out of the entrenchment.

The soldiers' javelins also appeared to be on fire, a prodigy all the more striking in that the Parthian enemy fights it out with flying missiles.

BOOK XV:VIII PAETUS CROSSES THE TAURUS MOUNTAINS THEN RETREATS

However, Paetus, ignoring all portents, with his winter-quarters not yet fully strengthened, making no provision for the supply of grain, hurried his troops over the Taurus Mountains, to retake Tigranocerta as intended, and ravage the region which Corbulo had left untouched.

He captured a few fortresses and would have gained a certain amount of glory and plunder, if he had kept his success within bounds, or been more careful with the plunder. But while he was racing through, in protracted marches, land he could not hold, the provisions he captured were ruined, and winter now threatened. He therefore led the army back again, and composed a letter to Nero, as if the war was over, as magnificently phrased as it was empty of content.

BOOK XV:IX CORBULO HOLDS THE LINE, VOLOGESES TURNS TO ARMENIA

Meanwhile, Corbulo had established further garrison-posts along the line of the Euphrates, which he had never failed to defend: and lest the construction of a pontoon bridge, formed by mooring large vessels across the stream, connected by planks and equipped with turrets, be impeded by the enemy cavalry (now an imposing sight as they manoeuvred

on the adjoining plains) he drove the barbarians back by use of catapults and ballistae, the stones and spears penetrating further than could be matched by a counter-volley of arrows.

The bridge being completed, the hills beyond were occupied by the allied cohorts and then a legionary camp, at such a speed and with such a display of strength that the Parthians ceased their preparations for the invasion of Syria, and set all their hopes on Armenia, where Paetus, unaware of what impended, having retained the Fifth legion far away in Pontus, was weakening the other two by granting indiscriminate leave, when news came that Vologeses was advancing with a large and threatening column.

BOOK XV:X PAETUS WAVERS

The Twelfth were summoned to join Paetus, such that the action, by which he hoped to advertise an increase to his forces, betrayed his weakness. Even so the fort might have been held and the Parthian thwarted by a delaying tactic, had Paetus remained faithful to his own counsel or that of others. In fact, no sooner had the soldiers' courage hardened him to face the imminent crisis, than he changed his mind and, lest the judgement of others made his own seem lacking, took the opposite, less advantageous course.

Leaving his winter quarters, crying out that men and arms, not ditch and rampart, were assigned him to meet the enemy, he now led his legions forward as if to contest a battle. Then, after the loss of a centurion and a few soldiers, whom he had sent ahead to observe the enemy, he retraced his steps in trepidation.

As Vologeses had pursued less than keenly, Paetus' vain self-confidence returned, and he positioned three thousand picked infantry on the neighbouring heights of the Taurus, where they were to bar the king's passage; also deploying the flower of his cavalry, the Pannonian squadrons,

in an area of the plain. His wife and son were concealed in a fortress, named Arsamosata, which was garrisoned by a cohort, thereby dispersing a force which concentrated might have readily checked a fickle adversary.

They say he would barely confess the threat to Corbulo, nor was Corbulo in any hurry, hoping that if the danger were even greater so would be the glory of a rescue. Nevertheless, Corbulo ordered a thousand men from each of his three legions and eight hundred auxiliary cavalry, with a similar number from the cohorts, to prepare for the road.

BOOK XV:XI VOLOGESES DEFEATS AND SCATTERS PAETUS' FORCES

But Vologeses, though he had received news that Paetus had the roads guarded, here by infantry, there cavalry, made no alteration to his plans, and by threats and force, struck the cavalry with fear, and crushed the legionaries; one lone centurion, Tarquitiu Crescens, daring to defend the tower he was garrisoning, in repeated sorties killing the nearest barbarians who approached, till he was enveloped in burning firebrands.

The infantry who were unhurt fled far into the wilderness, the wounded returned to camp, exaggerating in their fear the king's military virtues, the fierceness and numbers of the tribesmen, everything possible, and were readily believed by those who shared their terror.

The general himself offered no resistance, but abnegated all military function, having sent a further plea to Corbulo, telling him to come speedily, to save the eagles, the standards, and the unhappy remnants of what was an army only in name: they, meanwhile, would retain their loyalty while life lasted.

BOOK XV:XII CORBULO TO THE RESCUE

Corbulo, undeterred, left part of his force in Syria to man the defences positioned on the Euphrates, and headed for the region of Commagene, by the shortest route not devoid of supplies, then Cappadocia and finally Armenia. He was accompanied, over and above the usual equipment of war, by a large train of camels loaded with corn, so that he could repel hunger as well as the enemy.

The first man of the beaten army he met was the leading centurion, Paccius Orfitus, followed by a crowd of soldiers, whose various excuses for flight he answered by advising them to return to the standards, and test Paetus' clemency, as for himself, he was implacable towards all but the victorious.

At the same time, he addressed his own legionaries, exhorting them, reminding them of their past achievements, and pointing the way toward fresh glory. The prize they sought for their efforts was not the towns and villages of Armenia, he cried, but a Roman camp and the pair of legions within. If the civic crown, for saving a Roman life, was conferred on a man by the emperor's own hand, how much greater the honour when rescuers and rescued were seen to be equal in number!

The troops, fired with universal zeal by these words and the like (and there were those, with brothers and relatives at risk, driven by personal motive) marched at full speed day and night.

BOOK XV:XIII PAETUS UNDER SIEGE

Vologeses pressed the siege with all the more vigour, now threatening the legions' defences, now the fort which sheltered the non-combatants, venturing closer than Parthians are prone to do, to lure the enemy into battle by his seeming rashness. But they could only be drawn

from their retreat with difficulty, and would only fight in defence of their fortifications, some because their general had so commanded, others from true cowardice or a desire to await Corbulo, foreseeing, if attacked in force, a defeat like those at the hands of the Samnites at Caudium (321BC) or those of the Celtiberians at Numantia (137BC); while the Samnites, an Italian people, had lacked the strength of the Parthians, rivals of imperial Rome. Even the staunch and celebrated ancients, they said, took thought for their own safety when fortune went against them.

Undermined though he was by this despondency in the ranks, Paetus still couched his first letter to Vologeses not as a petition but as a protest against the king's waging war on the Armenian front, that country being always under Roman control, or subject to a king chosen by the emperor: peace was of benefit to both parties; he should not look wholly to the present. The king had moved against two legions with the full might of his kingdom: but Rome had a whole world in reserve, with which to support the war.

BOOK XV:XIV PAETUS STRIKES A DEAL WITH VOLOGESES

Vologeses replied, offering nothing material, but saying that he must await his brothers, Pacorus and Tiridates, this being the place and time destined for their meeting regarding Armenia; the gods had added to this a task worthy of the House of Arsaces, that of deciding, at the same time, the fate of the Roman legions.

Messengers were then sent by Paetus seeking an audience with the king, who ordered his cavalry commander, Vasaces, to attend in his place. There, Paetus recalled Lucullus, Pompey and the various acts by which the Caesars had held Armenia or granted it to another, while Vasaces asserted that only a pretence of retention or disposal was ours, the real power lay with Parthia.

After much debate, on both sides, Monobazus of Adiabene was summoned the following day to witness what had been agreed. The result was that the blockade of the legions should be raised, the whole force withdrawn from Armenian territory, and the forts and supplies transferred to the Parthians. When all this had been concluded, an opportunity would be granted Vologeses to send envoys to Nero.

BOOK XV: XV PAETUS BUILDS A BRIDGE FOR HIS ENEMIES

In the interim, Paetus built a bridge over the river Arsanias (which flowed past the camp), ostensibly as a path of retreat, though the Parthians had insisted on it as evidence of victory; for they made use of it, our men departing in the opposite direction.

There was also a rumour that our legionaries had passed under the yoke, with other unhappy details, a version of which was adopted by the Armenians. Not only did they enter our defences before the Roman column left, but they lined the roads, identifying and dragging away slaves and baggage-animals previously captured: even clothing was snatched and weapons detained, our soldiers conceding their actions, fearful lest a pretext for hostilities emerge.

Vologeses, after gathering the corpses and weapons of the dead into a pile, as a testament to our defeat, abstained from viewing the legions' flight: seeking a reputation for moderation, now that pride was satisfied. Mounted on an elephant, he plunged through the river Arsanias, with his close attendants in force, since a rumour had started that by its constructors' cunning the bridge would give way beneath the Parthians' weight: though those who dared to use it found it strong and reliable.

**BOOK XV:XVI THE DEFEATED TROOPS
REACH THE EUPHRATES**

Moreover, it is established that the besieged forces had been so well-supplied with corn, they set fire to their own granaries; while in contrast, Corbulo has written, the Parthians were about to raise the siege, through lack of supplies and dwindling forage, while he was not more than three days' march away.

He adds that Paetus swore on oath, before the standards and in the presence of witnesses sent by the king, that not a single Roman would enter Armenia until Nero's letter arrived assenting to peace, or not. Though this may have been written to add to the disgrace, the rest of the tale is likewise in no way hidden: that Paetus covered forty miles in a single day, abandoning his wounded along the road, and that their panic-stricken flight was no less ugly than if they had turned their backs in battle.

Corbulo, meeting them with his own force on the banks of the Euphrates, made no display of banners and weapons that might have seemed, by contrast, a reproach. The rank and file, sorrowful, and sympathetic to their comrades, could not control their tears: and the military salute could hardly be given for weeping. Rivalry in courage, and the competition for glory, strivings reserved for fortunate men, were absent: only pity held sway, most so among the lower ranks.

BOOK XV:XVII STALEMATE WITH PARTHIA

A brief conversation between the generals ensued, Corbulo complaining that his effort had been wasted, the war might have been settled by their putting the Parthians to flight: Paetus replying that the situation for both was unchanged: they had but to turn their eagles about, and invade Armenia together, now weakened by Vologeses withdrawal.

Corbulo said he had no such mandate from the emperor: he had only left his province moved by the danger to the legions; and since Parthia's intent was uncertain, he would return to Syria: praying, as things were, that fortune was also at her kindest, if his infantry, exhausted by their long marches, were overtaken by horsemen on the alert, who were easily capable of outstripping them on the plain.

Paetus left for winter quarters in Cappadocia: Vologeses sent envoys to Corbulo proposing that the Romans withdraw their guard-posts beyond the Euphrates, and make the river the dividing line as before. Corbulo demanded that Armenia should be cleared of various defences also: and the king, ultimately, conceded. Corbulo demolished what he had constructed beyond the Euphrates, and the Armenians were left without a ruler.

BOOK XV:XVIII NERO ABANDONS TRUTH FOR APPEARANCE

Meanwhile in Rome, memorials of victory over the Parthians were being erected, and arches in the centre of the Capitoline Hill, all having been decreed by the Senate while the war was ongoing, and which were not abandoned now, truth being ignored in favour of appearances. Indeed, to hide his own anxiety as to the situation abroad, Nero had old grain, which had spoiled, thrown into the Tiber to show that there were no fears for the corn-supply. Nor was the price raised, though some two

hundred vessels had been wrecked in harbour by a violent storm, and a hundred more which had navigated upriver were destroyed on the Tiber by a chance fire.

He appointed three men of consular rank, Lucius Piso, Ducenius Geminus and Pompeius Paulinus to supervise State revenues, coupled to his criticism of previous emperors whose heavy expenditure had exceeded statutory income: he himself endowing the State with six hundred thousand gold pieces a year.

BOOK XV:XIX A RULING AGAINST TEMPORARY ADOPTION

At that time there was a widespread custom whereby close to an election, or the assignment of provinces by lot, childless candidates procured themselves sons by temporary adoption. Then, once qualified as a father, after obtaining a praetorship or governorship they immediately freed those they had adopted from the arrangement.

Many genuine heads of families, jealous of their status, approached the Senate, spelling out their natural rights, and the effort of raising a child, as against these fraudulent, calculated and ephemeral adoptions. The childless, they said, were amply compensated, in that, without care or responsibility, they had influence, office, everything ready to hand. Their own long-established expectation, as promised at law, turned to a mockery when becoming a parent without a thought, then childless again without bereavement, could in a moment grant a man the same status as genuine fathers with long-cherished hopes.

A Senate decree was therefore enacted ruling that public office should not, in any circumstances, be granted to those employing temporary adoption, nor should they benefit by acquiring an inheritance of any kind.

BOOK XV:XX THE TRIAL OF CLAUDIUS TIMARCHUS

Now Claudius Timarchus, the Cretan, was put on trial, the charges being those common in the case of provincial magistrates, with wealth excessive enough that they could browbeat those of lesser estate, except for one remark of his that had gone so far as to constitute an insult to the Senate. He was reported to have claimed it was in his power whether or not to offer thanks to the proconsuls who had been administering Crete.

Turning the occasion to the benefit of the State, Thrasea Paetus, on stating his opinion that the defendant should be exiled from Crete, added this: ‘Senators Elect, experience has shown that amongst the virtuous excellent laws and honest examples have been derived from the sins of others. Thus the licence adopted by advocates led to the Cincian rogation; bribery by candidates to the Julian laws; the greed shown by officials to the Calpurnian decree; for, in the course of time, a crime must be recognized as such before its punishment can be devised, and reform must follow its recognition as an offence.

Let us, therefore, counter this new example of provincial arrogance with a decision worthy of our Roman honour and firmness, in no way detracting from the security of our allies, while disabusing ourselves of the idea that a Roman’s reputation depends on anything other than his fellow-citizens’ judgement.’

BOOK XV:XXI THRASEA PAETUS ARGUES FOR THE PROHIBITION OF VOTES OF THANKS

‘**O**nce we sent not only a praetor or consul but private citizens themselves to inspect the provinces and report on how loyal each one appeared, and whole nations trembled at the judgement of a single individual. But now we court foreigners and flatter them, and just as thanks

are decreed at a nod from one or other of them, so even more readily is an accusation.

Well, let those things be theirs to decree; leave to the provinces the right to show their power in that way: only let false praise elicited by entreaty be stifled, as malice or cruelty are. We often err more when we act obligingly than when we offend. Indeed there are virtues that rouse hatred, for example undeviating strictness, and a mind uninfluenced by gratitude.

Hence, the early days of a governorship are usually the best, and the last a decline, where we search for votes as candidates do: if that were halted, the provinces would be ruled more equably and more consistently. For as greed is restrained for fear of the extortion laws, so would prohibiting decrees of thanks stop this canvassing for votes.'

BOOK XV:XXII AN EARTHQUAKE AT POMPEII

His proposal was greeted with loud assent, but it was still not possible to issue a Senate decree, the consuls refusing a vote on the matter. Later, at the emperor's suggestion, it was ordained that no one should propose, at provincial council, that a vote of thanks be given in the Senate to a propraetor or proconsular governor, nor should anyone undertake such a mission.

In the same consulate (AD62), the Gymnasium was struck by lightning and burned to the ground; a statue of Nero, within, being melted to shapeless bronze. An earthquake also largely destroyed the densely-populated Campanian town of Pompeii.

Also, the Vestal Virgin Laelia died, and was replaced by Cornelia of the Cossi family.

BOOK XV:XXIII THE BIRTH OF NERO'S DAUGHTER CLAUDIA AUGUSTA, AND HER EARLY DEATH

In the consulate of Memmius Regulus and Verginius Rufus (AD63), Nero greeted a daughter, born to him by Poppaea, with a delight more than human, and named her Augusta, granting Poppaea the same title. The place of birth was the colony at Antium (Anzio), where he himself had been born.

The Senate had already commended Poppaea's labour to the gods, and offered vows on behalf of the State, which were now redoubled and discharged. Public thanksgivings were added, and a Temple of Fertility decreed, together with a contest on the lines of the festival commemorating Actium (31BC), and golden effigies of the two Goddesses of Fortune (Fortunae Antiates) to be placed on the throne of Capitoline Jove; while Circus Games, such as those held for the Julian House at Bovillae, were to be performed for the Claudian and Domitian Houses at Antium.

Yet all this was ephemeral, as the infant died within four months. Fresh forms of adulation then appeared, she being voted the honour of deification, a place on the sacred couch (pulvinar), a temple, and a priest. The emperor showed himself as immoderate in his grief as in his joy.

It was also noted that when the whole Senate had streamed towards Antium shortly after the birth, Thrasea, who was forbidden from attending, accepted the slight, prophetic of his impending execution, without emotion. It was followed by a comment from Nero, boasting to Seneca that he was reconciled to Thrasea, upon which Seneca congratulated him: which increased the reputation of, and the risk to, both those eminent men.

BOOK XV:XXIV VOLOGESES SENDS A PROVOCATIVE MESSAGE TO NERO

Meanwhile, at the start of spring, Parthian envoys brought a message from King Vologeses, and a letter to the same effect: that he was now relinquishing his prior and oft-asserted claim to the possession of Armenia, since the gods, arbiters of the power of nations, had now transferred control to Parthia, and not without ignominy on the part of Rome.

He had recently besieged Tigranes, he said, and had then let Paetus and his legions depart unscathed, when he might have crushed them. He had shown his power sufficiently; and displayed an example of his leniency. Tiridates, for his part, would not have declined to visit Rome to receive his diadem, were he not detained by the strictures of his priesthood. He would, instead, go to meet the standards and images of the emperor, so that his reign might be inaugurated in the legions' presence.

BOOK XV:XXV NERO RENEWS THE WAR

Given this letter from Vologeses, and the fact of Paetus having written to the contrary, as if the situation was still unchanged, the centurion who had arrived with the envoys was interrogated as to the state of affairs in Armenia, and replied that all the Romans had afterwards departed the country.

Recognising now the derision implicit in the barbarians demanding what they had already taken by force, Nero consulted with the foremost citizens as to the choice of a dangerous war or a dishonourable peace. There was no hesitation as to war. And Corbulo, with years of experience regarding the troops and the enemy, was placed in charge of the campaign, lest, given the irritation with Paetus, by appointing some other general, offence might again be caused through incompetence.

The token envoys were therefore sent home, yet with gifts, to create the expectation that if Tiridates were to bring the same request himself, his words would not be in vain. The administration of Syria was given to Gaius Cestius, its military forces to Corbulo with the addition of the Fifteenth legion from Pannonia, led by Marius Celsus. The tetrarchs, kings, prefects, procurators and praetors governing neighbouring provinces received written instructions to obey Corbulo's orders, his authority being raised almost to the level the Roman people granted Pompey to conduct his war against piracy.

When Paetus arrived home, fearing the worst, Nero was content to reprimand him facetiously, in almost these very words: that he was pardoning him with immediate effect, lest being so prone to panic he were made ill by prolonged suspense.

BOOK XV:XXVI CORBULO GATHERS HIS FORCES

Meanwhile, Corbulo transferred the Fourth and Twelfth legions, who appeared incapable of active service through the loss of their bravest men and the demoralisation of the rest, to Syria, from which he led the Sixth and Third legions, their numbers intact and trained to frequent and successful action, into Armenia. He added the Fifth legion, which stationed in Pontus, had escaped the disaster; men of the Fifteenth recently assembled; picked troops from Illyricum and Egypt; the whole of the allied cavalry and infantry; and the auxiliaries of the minor kings, concentrated on Melitene (Malatya, Turkey), where he was about to cross the Euphrates.

After the usual act of purification (lustration), he summoned the army, and began his address to them with a florid reference to the emperor's power and his own exploits, attributing the defeat to Paetus' incompetence, all delivered with great authority which in a military man passed for eloquence.

BOOK XV:XXVII PEACE OVERTURES

Soon he took the road by which Lucullus had once penetrated (69BC), clearing whatever time had obstructed. And on the appearance of envoys from Vologeses and Tiridates seeking peace, rather than scorning them he sent a few centurions with them on their return bearing conciliatory messages: saying that things were not yet such that all-out war was necessary. Many victories had accrued to Rome, one in particular to Parthia, a lesson against over-confidence. Therefore it was in Tiridates' interest to accept as a gift a kingdom as yet free of devastation, and better for Vologeses to consult the interests of the Parthian people through alliance with Rome, rather than through mutual injury.

Simultaneously, he added terror to persuasion, expelling those Armenian notables from their homes who had first defected from us, razing their fortresses, inspiring the same fear on plain and mountain, in strong and weak, alike.

BOOK XV:XXVIII CORBULO MEETS WITH TIRIDATES

Corbulo's name was not regarded by the barbarians themselves with any degree of hostility or hatred as an enemy, and therefore they thought his advice trustworthy. So Vologeses, without seeming inexorable on the main issue, sought a truce in certain prefectures: Tiridates seeking meanwhile a place and time to meet.

The date was to be soon, the place preferred by the barbarians being the scene of their recent siege of Paetus and the legions, in commemoration of their success there. Corbulo was not averse to this, as enhancing his glory through the generals' contrasting fortunes. Nor had he any qualms about shaming Paetus, as can clearly be seen by the fact that he ordered Paetus' son, a tribune, to take a few detachments and bury the relics of the unfortunate confrontation.

On the appointed day, Tiberius Alexander, a leading Roman knight, who had been appointed to assist the campaign, and Annius Vinicianus, Corbulo's son-in-law, not yet of senatorial age, and acting legate of the Fifth, went to Tiridates' camp, out of respect for him and as a pledge against any fear of treachery; both parties were then accompanied by twenty mounted men. On seeing Corbulo, the king was first to leap from his horse; nor was Corbulo slow to follow, and approaching on foot they clasped hands.

BOOK XV:XXIX TIRIDATES PROPOSES TO SEEK RATIFICATION FROM NERO

The Roman general next praised this youth who had rejected rashness for the safe and salutary course. Tiridates, after a long preamble regarding the nobility of his House, continued, with a display of moderation: saying that he would certainly go to Rome, bringing Caesar new honour, an Arsacid as suppliant, though Parthia was undefeated.

It was then agreed that Tiridates would lay his royal insignia before Caesar's statue, only to receive it again from Nero's hand; and the dialogue ended with an embrace. Then, after an interval of a few days, with great splendour on both sides, there the Parthian cavalry squadrons assembled, bearing their national insignia, here the ranks of legionaries, amidst a glitter of eagles, standards and effigies of the gods, as if in a temple: while in the centre, the tribunal supported a curule chair, and that chair a statue of Nero.

To this, Tiridates progressed, and after the customary killing of sacrificial beasts, lifted the diadem from his head and placed it at the statue's feet, stirring deep emotions in all present, augmented by the image still imprinted on their minds of the siege and slaughter of a Roman army. Yet now the situation was reversing: Tiridates would depart to become a spectacle for nations, and in what degree other than that of captive?



'Tiridates receives the crown of Armenia from Nero'
Ludwig Gottlieb Portman, after Reinier Vinkeles (I), 1804
The Rijksmuseum

**BOOK XV:XXX CORBULO GIVES A BANQUET
FOR TIRIDATES**

Corbulo added the courtesy of a banquet to his glory; and whenever the king noticed some feature new to him, and enquired as to its purpose, for instance the centurion announcing the start of a watch, the dismissal of a company by a bugle-note, or the firing of the altar in front of the general's pavilion with a torch, Corbulo extolled each item to the highest degree in order to rouse admiration for our ancient traditions.

The next day, Tiridates requested time to visit his brothers and mother before undertaking so long a journey: meanwhile he left behind his daughter as hostage, and a letter petitioning Nero.

**BOOK XV:XXXI VOLOGESES INSISTS ON TIRIDATES
BEING GIVEN FULL RECOGNITION**

He then met with his brothers, finding Pacorus II in the latter's kingdom, Media Atropatene, and Vologeses at Ecbatana (Hamadan, Iran), the latter being far from inattentive to him: indeed he had asked of Corbulo, by special messenger, that Tiridates should not be forced to carry any tokens of subservience, or surrender his sabre, or be prevented from embracing the provincial governors, or be left standing at doorways, and that he should when in Rome receive every honour granted to a consul.

Clearly, accustomed to Oriental displays of pride, he lacked familiarity with ourselves, who value the power of sovereignty and ignore the trappings.

**BOOK XV:XXXII THE KNIGHTS ARE ASSIGNED
SEATS IN THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS**

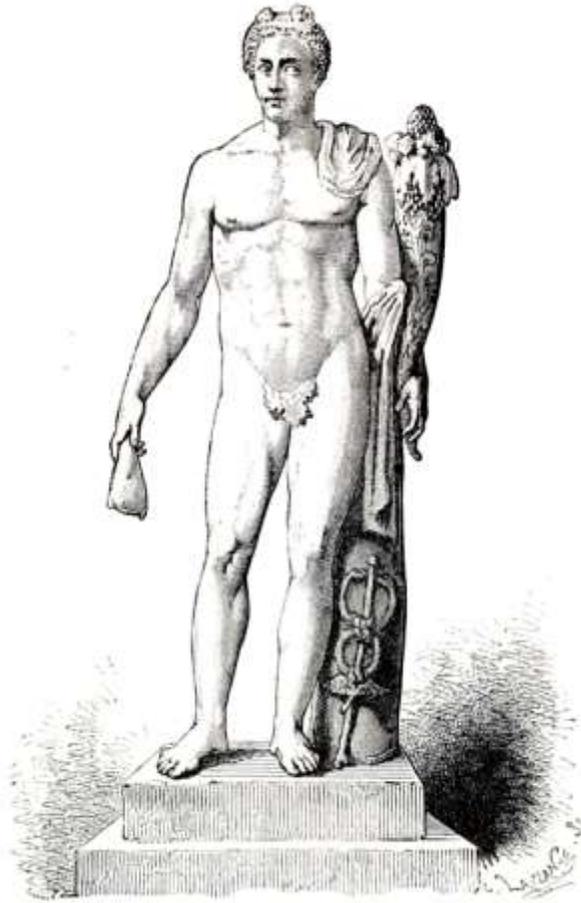
In that same year (AD63), Nero granted the tribes in the Maritime Alps the Latin privilege (of partial citizenship).

He also assigned seats in the Circus Maximus to the Roman knights, immediately in front of the ordinary rows; since, up till that time, they had sat anywhere, the provisions of the Roscian law applying only to their 'fourteen rows' in the theatres.

That year witnessed a number of gladiatorial shows, equal in magnificence to their predecessors, though even more noblewomen and senators brought shame on themselves in the arena.

End of the Annals Book XV: I-XXXII

BOOK XV: XXXIII-XLVII
NERO RUNS AMOK, THE GREAT FIRE



'Manilius as Mercury'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p198, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XV:XXXIII NERO SINGS PUBLICLY IN NAPLES

In the consulate of Gaius Laecanius and Marcus Licinius, a desire to frequent the public stage possessed Nero, and grew every day more intense. As yet he had only sung in the Palace or gardens during the Games of Youth, which he now rejected, as the games were thinly attended and too restrictive for such a voice as his.

Not daring, however, to begin in Rome, he chose Naples, as akin to a Greek city: once started he might cross into Achaia, win the illustrious crowns made sacred by time and then, his reputation heightened, elicit the applause of his fellow citizens.

So a crowd, gathered from that city; with those who were drawn by rumours of the event from neighbouring colonies and townships; the entourage which follows an emperor in his honour, or with duties assigned; and a few detachments of soldiers; filled the Neapolitan theatre.

BOOK XV:XXXIV THE THEATRE COLLAPSES AFTER THE AUDIENCE HAS DEPARTED

An incident took place there, sinister in the judgement of many, but providential and a mark of divine favour, in Nero's own eyes; for after the audience had left, the now empty theatre collapsed without injury to anyone. Extolling, in a set of verses, his gratitude to the gods and this recent example of good fortune, Nero, seeking to cross the Adriatic, came to a temporary halt at Beneventum (Benevento), where a well-attended gladiatorial show was being mounted by Vatinius, he being one of the foulest exhibits at court, fostered by a shoemaker's shop, with a crooked body, and a scurrilous wit; he had been first adopted as the butt of abuse, then, by slandering every decent individual, acquired power until he was pre-eminent even among the rogues in his influence, wealth, and capacity to harm.

**BOOK XV:XXXV TORQUATUS
SILANUS COMMITS SUICIDE**

Though Nero might be attending a public show, there was nevertheless no end of wickedness, even amongst such pleasures. For at that very time, Decimus Junius Silanus Torquatus was driven to suicide, as over and above the lustre of the Junian House he could lay claim to the deified Augustus being his great-great-grandfather.

The accusers were ordered to charge him with a prodigality of expenditure which left him no hope but in revolution: and that, further, among his freedmen were those he addressed as his Secretaries of Correspondence, Petitions and Accounts, clearly titles and preparation for the business of empire.

Then his closest freedmen were arrested and removed. And with condemnation imminent, he opened the veins in his arms. The usual speech from Nero followed, that however guilty the accused, and whatever misgivings he may have had regarding the merit of his defence, he would yet have lived had he awaited the clemency of his judge.

**BOOK XV:XXXVI NERO ABANDONS
HIS TRIP TO GREECE**

Not long afterwards, abandoning Achaia for the time being (for some unknown reason), he returned to Rome, his private fancies excited now by the Eastern provinces, especially Egypt. Then after witnessing, in an edict, that he would not be absent for long, and as regards the State all would remain as stable and prosperous as ever, he mounted the Capitol in connection with his departure. There he prayed to the gods, but when he then entered the temple of Vesta, he suddenly shook in every limb, either in terror of the deity, or because the memory of his crimes never allowed him to feel free of fear.

He abandoned his intention, saying that all his preoccupations weighed less than his love of his country. He had seen his fellow citizens' gloomy faces, heard their secret complaints against such a journey being undertaken by one whose briefest excursions were scarcely endurable to those habitually revived in adversity by a chance sighting of their emperor. Therefore, as in private relationships those closest and dearest weighed most, so in public affairs the Roman people had the strongest claim, and he must submit to staying.

These and other such statements were popular with the masses, desirous of amusement, and fearful of a shortage of corn, their main preoccupation, if he were absent. The Senate and nobility were uncertain as to whether he should be considered more to be dreaded far off or at close quarters: hence, as in the case of all great terrors, they believed that whichever alternative actually applied was the worse.

BOOK XV:XXXVII TIGELLINUS' FEAST

Nero himself arranged banquets in public places, treating all Rome as if it were his palace, to spread the belief that nowhere else delighted him as much. And the most celebrated for its notorious extravagance was that presented by Tigellinus, one which I shall take as my example instead of repeatedly describing the selfsame excess.

A raft was constructed on Agrippa's Pool, on which the banquet was laid, to be roped to other craft and moved about. The vessels were adorned with gold and ivory, and the oarsmen were catamites organised by age and libidinous skill.

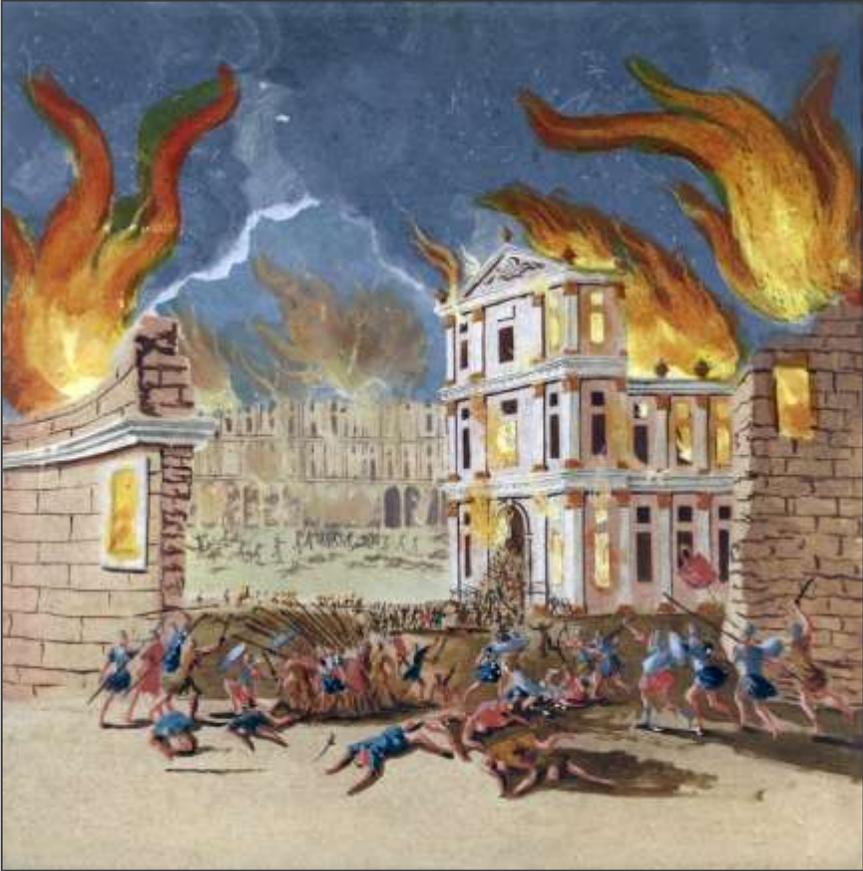
He had sought out birds and wild beasts from the ends of the earth and marine creatures from the very Ocean. Brothels stood on the shores of the lake, full of noblewomen, while, opposite, naked harlots were on view.

First came obscene mimes and dances, then, as darkness descended, all the neighbouring grove and the houses around echoed with song and glittered with light. Nero himself, stained by every licit and illicit lust had neglected no source of shame to complete his corruption, except his wedding a few days later, with the rites of solemn marriage, to one of that vicious crew (named Pythagoras). The bridal veil draped over the imperial head, the witnesses who had been sent, the dowry, the marriage bed, the nuptial torches, everything, in short, was visible which, even where a woman is involved, night conceals.

BOOK XV:XXXVIII THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME

A disaster followed, whether due to chance or the emperor's guile is unknown (both alternatives have support), but more serious and dreadful than any other violent fire which has befallen Rome. It began in that part of the Circus bordering the Palatine and Caelian Hills where, among shops full of merchandise which fed the flames, the fire started and then immediately, fanned by the wind, swept the full length of the Circus. There were no mansions there screened by palisades, no temples enclosed by walls, nor anything other to delay its progress.

The thrust of the flames first overrunning the level, then surging to the heights, before ravaging the lower districts again, outpaced all defences with its speed and destructive power, the city being vulnerable, with its narrow streets, winding this way and that, and its twisting lanes typical of old Rome. Add to this the terrified shrieking women, those weary with age or of tender years, and those seeking their own safety or that of others as they dragged the infirm along or paused for breath, some hesitating some hurrying on, impeding everything.



'Burning City (likely Rome)'
Anonymous, c. 1750 - c. 1830
The Rijksmuseum

Often, in gazing behind, they were attacked to their sides or front, or found in escaping to a neighbouring quarter that it too was wreathed in flames, with even places they thought remote in precisely the same state. At last, unsure which areas to seek out or avoid, they filled the roads or flung themselves down in the fields.

Some, all their possessions lost and even the means to live, chose to die though escape routes lay open, along with others consumed by love of those dear to them, whom they could not save. None dared to combat the fire, under widespread threats from the mob who prohibited its extinction, while others were openly hurling burning brands and shouting out that they were in charge, either to loot more freely or because so ordered.

BOOK XV:XXXIX NERO RUMOURED TO HAVE SUNG WHILE ROME BURNED

Nero, who was staying in Antium (Anzio) at the time, did not return to Rome until the fire was approaching that house by means of which he had linked the Palatine and the Gardens of Maecenas. It proved impossible however to prevent it engulfing the house, the Palatine and all around.

Yet, to aid the homeless fleeing populace, he threw open Agrippa's vast buildings on the Campus Martius, and even his own gardens, and erected temporary shelters to house the helpless masses. The means of life were shipped in from Ostia and the nearest townships, and the price of grain was reduced to three sesterces.

Though popular, his measures achieved nothing for his reputation, since a rumour spread that at the very time Rome was burning, he had mounted his private stage and sung the Fall of Troy, mimicking in the moment of calamity that disaster of the past.

BOOK XV:XL A SECONDARY CONFLAGRATION

The fire was only brought to an end on the sixth day, at the foot of the Esquiline, by demolishing buildings over a wide area, so that level ground and an empty skyline met its unabated violence. But fear had not yet been quenched, nor had hope yet returned to the masses, when the flames renewed their ravages in the more open parts of the city, with a lower loss of life therefore; the destruction of temples, and the colonnades dedicated to leisure, however was more widespread.

This secondary conflagration caused greater scandal, since it erupted on Tigellinus' Aemilian property, and it seemed that Nero might be seeking the glory of founding a new capital endowed with his own name. Rome was, at that time, divided into fourteen districts: three were razed to the ground; in seven little survived but the few ruined, half-burned, and shattered houses remaining; only four were left intact.

BOOK XV:XLI THE MATERIAL LOSSES

It would be difficult to enumerate the mansions, tenements, and temples lost: but of the most ancient sacred sites, Servius Tullius' Temple of Luna; the great altar and sanctuary which Arcadian Evander dedicated to propitious Hercules; the shrine of Jupiter Stator vowed by Romulus; Numa's Palace; and Vesta's holy place with the Household Gods (Penates) of the Roman people, were destroyed; then there were the precious spoils of a host of victories, the glories of Greek art, and ancient original memorials to literary genius, so that despite the striking beauties of the resurrected city, our elders remember many things that were irreplaceable.

There were those who noted that the first outbreak of fire was on the nineteenth of July, the day on which the Senones captured and burnt Rome (after Allia, in 390 BC). Others have taken the matter so far as to calculate

the period between the two fires (454 years) as the sum of an equal number of years, months and days (418 of each).

BOOK XV:XLII THE BUILDING OF THE GOLDEN HOUSE

Nero however made use of the city's destruction to build a palace, whose wonders were to be not so much gems and gold, long familiar and which luxury had rendered commonplace, as fields and lakes and an atmosphere of solitude, with woods here and open spaces and prospects there.

The architects and engineers were Severus and Celer, who even had the courage and ingenuity to attempt through art, and with the emperor's resources, what nature had neglected. They had promised to construct a navigable canal from Lake Avernus to the mouths of the Tiber, along desolate banks and through intervening hills.

For only the Pontine Marshes were moist enough to provide a flow of water: the rest was cliffs and sand, which if penetrable at all, was only so by intolerable effort for which insufficient motive had existed. Yet Nero, with his passion for the extraordinary, endeavoured to tunnel through the Avernus heights, and some evidence of that futile hope remains.

BOOK XV:XLIII THE REBUILDING OF ROME

The rest of the city, apart from the palace, was rebuilt not, as after the Gallic fire, indiscriminately and at random, but with streets in measured order, wide thoroughfares, buildings restricted in height, and open spaces, with porticos added to protect the front of tenement blocks.

Nero offered to erect these porticos at his own expense and to hand back sites to their owners cleared of rubble. He added incentives, according to the rank and resources of claimants, setting a term within which houses or tenement-blocks must be completed in order to qualify. He assigned the Ostian Marshes to receive the rubble, and the vessels that had brought grain upriver on the Tiber were to run down-stream carrying debris. New buildings for their part were required to be solid, un-timbered, and of Gabine or Alban stone, which is fire-resistant.

Again, inspectors were to be appointed, to ensure the water supply, illegally tapped into by private individuals, should be available to the public in greater quantity at more access points, and whoever owned fire-fighting equipment was to keep it in the open. Nor were there to be any communal enclosures, but each building was to be surrounded by its own walls.

These measures adopted for practical reasons also added to the appearance of the rebuilt capital. Yet there were those who believed that the former layout had been more conducive to health as its narrow streets and tall houses were not so open to the sun's rays: while now the broad spaces without protective shade glared with a more oppressive heat.

BOOK XV:XLIV PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS

These provisions were the result of human forethought. Now, means to placate the gods were sought, and the Sibylline books consulted, following which public prayers were offered to Vulcan, Ceres and Proserpine, while women propitiated Juno, first in the Capitol, then at the nearest point of the coast where water was drawn for sprinkling the temples and statues of the goddess, and ritual banquets and vigils were celebrated by wives. But neither human aid nor imperial largesse, nor all the modes of placating the gods, could smother the scandalous belief that the fire had indeed been started to order.

Therefore, to stifle rumour, Nero made scapegoats of, and marked out for most particular punishment, those whom the masses called Christians, and who were loathed for their abominations. Christ, from whom the name derived, had suffered the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by order of the procurator Pontius Pilatus; and the deadly superstition had been temporarily suppressed, only to erupt again not only in Judaea, the home of this evil, but even in Rome, to which all that is dreadful or shameful in the world flows and here is celebrated.

First those who confessed were arrested, then, on their testimony, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the charge of arson, but because of their antipathy towards the rest of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: covered with wild beast skins and torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or set alight and, when daylight failed, burned to serve for nocturnal illumination.

Nero offered his Gardens for the spectacle and gave public shows in the Circus, mingling with the crowd dressed as a charioteer, or mounted in his chariot. Hence, despite their guilt which had earned exemplary punishment, feelings of compassion arose, in that seemingly they were being killed not for the good of the State but due to a single individual's savagery.

BOOK XV:XLV NERO PLUNDERS THE STATE'S RESOURCES

Meanwhile, Italy had been devastated by forced contributions: the provinces, the allied communities and the so-called free states were ruined. In this, even the gods were a source of plunder, the temples in Rome despoiled and stripped of the gold dedicated in every age, according to the triumphs, vows, success or fears of the Roman people.

Indeed, throughout Asia Minor and Achaia, not only the offerings but the divine images were swept away, Acratus and Carrinas having been sent into those two provinces. The former was a freedman ready for any scandalous act; the latter, as far as titles go, was a Greek doctor of philosophy, though his character was not exactly imbued with the virtues.

It was said that Seneca, to deflect the odium of sacrilege from himself, had asked to retire to a remote country estate, and when it was not conceded, feigned illness, a wasting sickness, and would not leave his room. Some maintain that poison had been prepared by one of his own freedmen, named Cleonicus, on Nero's orders, which was evaded by Seneca, because of the freedman's confession or his own fears, while he supported life on the simplest of diets and the fruits of the fields, and if thirst grew insistent, spring-water.

BOOK XV:XLVI A DISTURBANCE AT PRAENESTE (PALESTRINA), AND THE FLEET WRECKED

At about that time, there was a disturbance caused by gladiators in the town of Praeneste (Palestrina), which was suppressed by the detachment of soldiers, stationed there as guards, but not without talk of Spartacus and past afflictions among a populace ever eager for, and terrified by, rebellion.

And not long afterwards, there was news of a naval disaster, not through war (indeed never had things been so peaceful) but because Nero had ordered the fleet to return to Campania by a certain date without allowance for conditions at sea. The helmsmen, therefore, sailed from Formiae (Formia) despite heavy weather, and while heading for the promontory of Misenum (Miseno) were forced to contend with a south-westerly gale, the triremes being driven onto the beach at Cumae (Cuma), and a host of smaller vessels indiscriminately lost.

BOOK XV:XLVII SIGNS AND PORTENTS

At the end of the year, there were rumours of portents, announcing imminent disaster. Lightning bolts struck more intensely than ever before, and a comet appeared, phenomena which Nero, as ever, expiated with the blood of illustrious men. Two-headed embryos, human or animal, were disposed of in public, or discovered during sacrifices where it is customary to kill pregnant creatures.

Again in rural Placentia (Piacenza) a calf was born near the road, with its head fused to one leg; and an interpretation from the soothsayers followed, that another head was being prepared for human affairs, but that it would neither be effective nor well-hidden, because it had been constrained in the womb, and had emerged by the wayside.

End of the Annals Book XV: XXXIII-XLVII

BOOK XV: XLVIII-LXXIV
THE PISO CONSPIRACY



'Captive Bithynia'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p161, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XV:XLVIII GAIUS PISO

In the year in which Silius Nerva and Vestinus Atticus entered upon their consulate (AD65), a conspiracy was born and grew swiftly, to which senators, knights, soldiers, and even women lent their names, in hatred of Nero, but also support of Gaius Piso.

He came of the Calpurnian House, and due to his father's noble descent, involving many illustrious families, had a glowing reputation among the masses, for virtue or qualities resembling virtue: since he exercised eloquence in support of his fellow citizens, generosity on behalf of his friends, and courtesy in his encounters and conversations, even with strangers.

Chance had favoured him, too, with a tall figure and handsome features: though gravity of character and restraint where pleasure was concerned were lacking: he indulged in frivolous, ostentatious, and sometimes debauched pursuits. These were nevertheless approved of by the majority who, given the many charms of vice, are not keen on severity or austerity in their imperial ruler.

BOOK XV:XLIX THE PRIME MOVERS OF THE CONSPIRACY

The conspiracy did not spring from his own desires: though it is hard to say who was its original author, who initiated the movement that so many embraced. That Subrius Flavus, tribune of a praetorian cohort, and Sulpicius Asper, a centurion, were the most resolute of its supporters, was shown by their loyalty to the end; while Annaeus Lucanus (Lucan) and Plautius Lateranus, brought to it the energy of their hatred. Lucan was inflamed by private motives, since Nero, through false comparison with his own efforts, had limited the fame of Lucan's verse, in denying him

publication: while Lateranus, a consul designate, joined the cause not from any grievance but out of republican idealism.

By contrast, Flavius Scaevinus and Afranius Quintianus, both of senatorial rank, belied their reputation by taking the lead in such an enterprise. For Scaevinus' mind had been ruined by debauchery, and his way of life was correspondingly slow and somnolent: while Quintianus, notorious for his physical degeneracy, and defamed by Nero in scurrilous verse, was intent on revenge.

BOOK XV:L THE MOVEMENT GATHERS STRENGTH

So, by talking among themselves, or with their friends, of the emperor's crimes, the approaching dissolution of the empire, and the need to decide who might rescue the State, they gathered to the cause the Roman knights Claudius Senecio, Cervarius Proculus, Vulcacius Araricus, Julius Augurinus, Munatius Gratus, Antonius Natalis, and Marcius Festus.

Of these, Senecio, one of Nero's closest intimates, maintaining even then a show of friendship, was exposed as a result to greater risk; Natalis shared in all Piso's private plans; while the rest sought hope in revolution. In addition to Subrius and Sulpicius, whom I have mentioned, were the military men, Gavius Silvanus and Staius Proxumus, tribunes of the praetorian cohorts, together with Maximus Scaurus and Venetus Paulus.

Their greatest strength however was seen to exist in Faenius Rufus, the prefect, whose praiseworthy life and character were outweighed in the emperor's mind by Tigellinus' ferocity and shamelessness. Tigellinus had wearied Rufus with accusations, and often induced fear by describing him as Agrippina's lover, one still missing her presence and intent on vengeance. Hence, when Rufus, by his frequent assurances, convinced the conspirators that he himself, a commander of the Praetorian Guard, had condescended to join their faction, they were now more prompt to set a time and place for the assassination.

It was said that Subrius Flavus had felt the impulse to attack Nero when he was singing on stage, or when the palace was on fire and he was rushing here and there, unguarded, in the night. In the latter case there was the opportunity presented by Nero's temporary isolation; in the former, the very presence of an audience, as the finest witness possible to such a deed, had stirred his imagination. But his desire to remain unscathed, ever the bar to great endeavour, gave him pause.

BOOK XV: LI EPICCHARIS TRIES TO SUBORN THE NAVAL OFFICERS

Meanwhile, as they hesitated, prolonging both hope and fear, a certain woman named Epiccharis, who had learned of the plot by unknown means (never having shown any previous interest in anything of virtue) began to scold and incite the conspirators, and finally, weary of their dilatoriness, and being in Campania, she tried to weaken the loyalty of officers of the fleet at Misenum (Miseno) and implicate them, beginning as follows.

There was a captain in the fleet called Volusius Proculus, one of Nero's agents in his mother's murder, but not promoted, as he thought, in accordance with the magnitude of the deed. He, having known the woman Epiccharis before though the friendship may have been more recent, revealing to her the service he had done Nero, and how unrewarding it had proved, added his complaints and his intention to be revenged, if the opportunity arose, giving her hope that he might be persuaded, and win others to the cause. The fleet as a resource was no small thing, opening up many opportunities, since Nero delighted in frequent excursions to Puteoli (Pozzuoli) and Misenum.

So Epiccharis went further, and listed all the emperor's crimes, saying that the Senate and the people were left with no option, except that which had been provided as a way of punishing him for the ruin of the State.

Proculus had only to play his part, win the bravest men to the cause, and expect a valuable reward. However she was reticent as to the names of the conspirators, so that, though Proculus relayed what he had heard to Nero, he proved an ineffectual witness. For Epicharis was summoned, confronted with the informant, and with no other witness available, silenced him with ease.

Nevertheless, she herself was detained in custody, Nero suspecting that though the evidence had not been proven true neither was it necessarily false.

BOOK XV:LII PISO ADVOCATES ROME AS THE LOCATION FOR THE MURDER

The conspirators, however, spurred on by fear of betrayal, decided to commit the murder sooner, and in Piso's villa at Baiae, Caesar being taken by its charms, and frequently visiting, indulging while there in bathing and banquets, dispensing with guards and the burdens of power.

But Piso demurred, his justification being that unpopularity would be incurred in desecrating with an emperor's blood the sanctity of both the table and the gods of hospitality. It was preferable that an action undertaken for the public good should be carried out in Rome, in that hated palace built from his country's spoils, or beneath the public gaze.

This Piso said openly, though hiding a fear that Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus who thanks to his distinguished lineage (other than Nero, he being the last direct descendant of Augustus) and his training under Gaius Cassius the jurist by whom he had been educated was exalted enough for any distinction, might grasp at power, which indeed would be offered him by those uninvolved in the plot and those who felt compassion for Nero as the victim of so evil a crime.

Most thought that Piso also sought to evade the shrewd eye of Vestinus, lest the consul might wish to appear as the great liberator or, by backing another as emperor, treat the State as within his own gift. Vestinus, in fact, had no involvement in the plot, though that was the charge with which Nero fulfilled his long-standing hatred of an innocent man.

BOOK XV:LIII THE PLAN OF ACTION

They ultimately decided to strike on the day of the Circensian Games, which celebrate Ceres, as the emperor, who rarely left the palace or the seclusion of his gardens, would attend the Games in the Circus, and was readier of approach thanks to the exuberance of the spectacle.

They planned a sequence of events, whereby Lateranus, who was intrepid and physically massive, would fall at the emperor's feet on the pretext of seeking financial help, topple him while he was off guard, and pin him down. Then as Nero lay there, prostrate and incapable of movement, the tribunes, centurions and whoever else dared, would rush upon him and kill him, a leading role being claimed by Scaevinus, who had removed a dagger from the Temple of Salus (Salvation), or, as some relate, that of Fortuna (Fate) in the town of Ferentinum (Ferento), and wore it as being dedicated to a great deed.

Meanwhile Piso was to wait in the Temple of Ceres, from which he would be summoned by the prefect Faenius and others, and carried to the camp, in company with Claudius' daughter Claudia Antonia, in order to elicit the favour of the masses, as Pliny the Elder states. For my own part, I am not inclined to suppress whatever is related, though it seems absurd to suppose that Antonia would have lent her name to such a perilous venture, or that Piso, famously devoted to his wife, would have pledged himself to marry again, unless the lust for power is to be thought of as burning more fiercely than all our emotions combined.

BOOK XV:LIV SCAEVINUS MAKES READY

It is however surprising that among people of diverse ranks and classes, age and gender, wealth and poverty, all was kept secret, until the conspirators' betrayal occurred, originating in Scaevinus' household.

On the day before the intended assassination, Scaevinus had a long conversation with Antonius Natalis, then returned home, sealed his will, and taking the dagger, mentioned above, from its sheath, complained that it was blunt with age, and gave orders for it to be sharpened till the edge gleamed, entrusting his freedman Milichus with the task.

At the same time, he ate a more elaborate meal than usual, presenting his most devoted slaves with their freedom, and others with gifts of cash. He himself was subdued and clearly deep in thought, though he feigned pleasure in the desultory conversation. Finally he ordered bandages to be prepared, and whatever else might help staunch the flow from bleeding wounds.

This alerted that same Milichus, either aware of the conspiracy and so far loyal or, as the majority of historians relate, unaware and now possessed of his first suspicions. Regarding the sequel all agree. For when his slave's mind inwardly considered the reward for treason, while at that moment the vision of immense riches and power hovered before his eyes, ideas of virtue, his master's very life, and the memory of his own freedom having been granted were all forgotten.

Indeed, he also took his own wife's advice, a woman's and baser: she offered fear as a further motive, in that many of Scaevinus' freedmen and slaves had been present, and had witnessed the same: one man's silence would prove of no avail, while he who first informed would reap the reward.

**BOOK XV:LV MILICHUS, HIS FREEDMAN,
BETRAYS SCAEVINUS**

Thus, at daybreak, Milichus went straight to the Servilian Gardens, was stopped at the gate, but on saying that he bore great and terrible news, was conducted by the gatekeepers to Nero's freedman Epaphroditus, and later by him to Nero, whom he informed of his imminent danger, the illustrious nature of the conspirators, and whatever else he himself had heard or conjectured. He also showed the weapon chosen for the murder, and requested the accused be summoned.

Scaevinus was dragged there by the soldiers, and began his defence by maintaining that the weapon presented in evidence against him had long been revered by his family, was kept in his bedroom, and had been fraudulently taken by his freedman. As for his will, he re-sealed it many a day, without hiding the fact from observation. He had also granted his slaves liberty or gifts before, but more liberally on this occasion, because his means were now slender, and he was concerned about his will being challenged as his creditors were pressing.

Regarding his dinner table it had always been well provided for, he lived in a pleasant manner scarcely approved of by harsh critics. He had issued no orders involving bandages for wounds, but his accuser, whose other allegations were clearly idle, had therefore added a charge by which he could play informer and witness alike.

He continued, speaking firmly, accusing the man further of being an unspeakable disgrace, in so assured a tone and manner, that the evidence would have been discredited if Milichus' wife had not reminded her husband that Antonius Natalis had conversed with Scaevinus at length and in secret, and that both were intimates of Gaius Piso.

BOOK XV:LVI NATALIS AND SCAEVINUS CONFESS UNDER THREAT

Natalis was summoned accordingly, and the two were questioned separately, as to who and what their conversation had been about. As there were disparities between their replies, suspicion was aroused, and they were clapped in irons.

They were unable to face the threat of torture: Natalis however was the first to confess, he being more knowledgeable regarding the conspiracy as a whole, and with a longer history as an informant. He admitted the case against Piso, then divulged the name of Seneca, either because he had acted as intermediary between Seneca and Piso, or to elicit thanks from Nero, who in his hatred of Seneca, grasped at any means of attacking him.

Once Natalis' confession was known, Scaevinus, equally cowardly, or believing that all had been disclosed and there was no benefit in silence, named the rest. Of these, Lucan, Quintianus and Senecio, denied the charge at length: but after being bribed with promises of impunity, which would justify their tardiness, Lucan named his mother, Acilia; Quintianus and Senecio their closest friends, Glitius Gallus and Annius Pollio, respectively.

BOOK XV:LVII EPICHARIS TORTURED

Meanwhile, Nero, recalling that Epicharis had been detained on information from Volusius Proculus, and thinking female resistance unequal to the agony of torture, ordered her racked. Yet neither whips, nor fire, nor the wrath of her torturers, who redoubled their efforts lest they be beaten by a woman, weakened her denial of the accusations. Thus she defied her first day of interrogation.

On the next, as she was being dragged in a chair to repeated torment (her dislocated limbs being unable to support her) she looped the breast-band she was restrained by and had loosened, over the back of the chair in a sort of noose, and thrusting her neck inside, and using the weight of her body, stemmed the little breath left to her.

Thus a lone freedwoman by shielding, despite such pressure, others almost unknown to her, set an example all the brighter in contrast to the freeborn men, Roman knights and senators untouched by torture, who were betraying their nearest and dearest. For even Lucan, and both Senecio and Quintianus, gave away their confederates, indiscriminately, as Nero's fears grew greater and greater, though he had increased the number of guards surrounding him.

BOOK XV:LVIII NERO INSTITUTES TERROR THROUGHOUT ROME

Indeed, Nero virtually held the city captive, detachments of soldiers manned the walls, and even the river and estuary were occupied. And infantry and cavalry, intermixed with Germans, whom as foreigners the emperor trusted, roamed about the squares and houses, the countryside too and the nearest towns.

Continuous lines of men in chains were dragged from thence and deposited at the gates of his Gardens (the Servilian Gardens); and when they entered to plead their case, friendship with a conspirator, a chance conversation, an impromptu meeting, their presence together at some banquet or spectacle, were treated as signs of guilt, while over and above relentless questioning from Nero and Tigellinus, there were also Faenius Rufus' vicious attacks, the prefect not yet having been named by the informants, and trying to demonstrate his loyalty and innocence by treating his fellow conspirators brutally. It was the same Rufus, who when Subrius Flavus beside him asked by a gesture whether he should draw his sword

and carry out the assassination during the interrogation itself, shook his head, and checked the motion which was already carrying Flavius' hand to the hilt.

BOOK XV:LIX PISO COMMITS SUICIDE

There were those who, with the plot already betrayed, and while Milichus was still being heard and Scaevinus wavered, urged Piso to head for the camp, ascend the Rostra, and test the mood of the troops and the people. If those in the know rallied to the attempt, even the unknowing would follow; and the movement would gain public awareness, that being worth a great deal where revolutions were concerned.

Nero, they advised, had done nothing to prepare for such an eventuality. Even brave men may lose their nerve in emergencies, was it likely then that this mere actor, accompanied only by Tigellinus and his lovers, would rouse himself to fight? Many things are achieved by the enterprising, they said, which seem too difficult to the hesitant. It was pointless to expect silence and steadfastness from the minds and bodies of the many involved: bribery or torture would discover all.

Men would arrive to bind him too, they insisted, and inflict on him, in the end, a death he did not deserve. How much more laudable to perish while embracing public action, and summoning support in the cause of liberty! Rather let the soldiers refuse and the people desert the cause, than he, if his life be cut short, fail to justify his death to his ancestors and posterity.

Unmoved by all this, Piso assessed the situation briefly in public, then secreted himself at home, steeling himself for death, until the arrival of a detachment of soldiers, whom Nero had chosen, they being raw or recent recruits, since it was feared the veterans were tainted by partisanship. He died by severing the veins in both arms.

The disgusting flattery of Nero in Piso's last will and testament was a concession to his love for his wife whom, low-born and commended only for her physical beauty, he had stolen from the bed of a friend. She was named Satria Galla, her former husband being Domitius Silus: adding, by her shamelessness and his complacency, to Piso's notoriety.

BOOK XV:LX PLAUTIUS LATERANUS EXECUTED, SENECA QUESTIONED

The next death, that of the consul designate Plautius Lateranus, Nero added to the list with such speed that Plautius was not even allowed to embrace his children, nor given the usual brief respite to choose its manner. Dragged to the place reserved for executing slaves (the Sessorium) he was slaughtered at the very hands of the aforementioned tribune Statius Proxumus, while maintaining a steadfast silence, not even reproaching that tribune for his own knowledge of the affair.

The death of Annaeus Seneca followed, delighting the emperor, not because Nero had detected Seneca's open involvement in the conspiracy, but simply to see if the sword might succeed where poison had failed. Indeed, only Natalis had so far implicated Seneca, insofar as he himself had been employed to visit Seneca when the latter was sick, to complain that he had closed his door to Piso, and say that it would be better to cultivate the friendship by meeting privately.

Seneca had replied that mutual exchanges and frequent dialogue were to neither's advantage; in addition his own safety depended on Piso remaining secure. Gavius Silvanus, the aforementioned tribune of a praetorian cohort, was ordered to repeat this to Seneca and ask if he recognised Natalis' words and his own reply.

By chance or design, Seneca had returned from Campania that day, and had halted at one of his country houses, four miles from Rome. Evening was approaching, when the tribune arrived and surrounded the

villa with a guard of soldiers; he then put the emperor's question to Seneca himself, as he dined with his wife Pompeia Paulina, and a couple of friends.

BOOK XV:LXI NERO ISSUES THE DEATH SENTENCE ON SENECA

Seneca replied that Natalis had indeed been sent to him, to complain in Piso's name about his refusal to receive the latter, and by way of an excuse he had pleaded his poor health and love of quiet. He had no reason to place a private individual's safety above his own, and his character was not prone to flattery. No one was more aware of that than Nero, who had more often experienced Seneca's freedom of speech than his servility.

When Silvanus made his report, Poppaea and Tigellinus were present, who formed the emperor's intimate council in times of savagery. Nero asked whether Seneca was preparing for suicide. The tribune confirmed that Seneca had given no sign of alarm, nor was any regret evident in his words or looks. He was therefore ordered to return and pronounce sentence of death.

Fabius Rusticus has it that Silvanus, instead of retracing the route by which he had come, diverted to visit the prefect Faenius Rufus, explained Nero's orders, and asked if he should obey; being then advised to carry them out, fate having made cowards of them all. For Silvanus, one of the original plotters, was now abetting the very crimes he had conspired to avenge. However he spared himself the sound and sight of the matter, by sending one of his centurions to announce the ultimate penalty.



'Bust of Seneca'
Guido Reni (Italian, 1575 - 1642)
Yale University Art Gallery

BOOK XV:LXII SENECA SHOWS HIMSELF A STOIC

Seneca, undaunted, demanded his will be brought; and on the centurion refusing his request, turned to his friends to witness that, as he was prevented from demonstrating his gratitude for all their services to him, he was leaving them his sole, and now as ever, most beautiful possession, the record of his life, which, if they kept it in mind, would bring them their reward for loyal friendship: a reputation for moral virtue.

At the same time, he recalled them from tears to fortitude, now conversationally, now in a sterner and almost coercive tones, asking them where their code of philosophy was now, where that reasoned approach to imminent disaster they had studied for so many years? For who indeed could be unaware of Nero's cruelty? What was left to him, after murdering his mother and step-brother, but to add the death of his tutor and mentor to the list?

BOOK XV:LXIII SENECA'S INITIAL ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE

After these and similar remarks, seemingly meant for a wider audience, he embraced his wife, and softened a little by the imminent terror threatening her, begged and prayed her to temper her grief and not to burden herself with it forever, but in contemplating a life lived virtuously to find true solace for the loss of her husband.

Paulina replied by assured him in reply that she too chose death, and demanded to share with him the executioner's stroke. Then Seneca, not wishing to diminish her glory, nor at the same time leave his sole beloved exposed to outrage, said: 'I have pointed the way to life and solace, you prefer honourable death: I shall not grudge you that distinction. May the constancy of this brave ending be shared by both, yet may the greater fame of it be yours.'

After this, they severed their veins with a single cut of the blade. Seneca, because the flow of blood was slower, due to his aged body emaciated by a frugal way of life, slashed the arteries in the leg too, and behind the knee. Weary of the intense pain, and lest his suffering might weaken his wife's spirit, or he be unable to endure the sight of his wife's agony, he persuaded her to withdraw into another room. And since even at the last moment his eloquence remained at his command, he called his secretaries, and dictated a long speech, which has been given to the public in his own words and which I therefore refrain from appropriating here.

BOOK XV:LXIV HIS SUBSEQUENT TAKING OF POISON, AND DEATH BY SUFFOCATION

But Nero, who had no personal dislike of Paulina, ordered that death be denied, lest hatred of him for his savagery grew. Urged on by the soldiers, the slaves and freedmen bandaged her arms and checked the bleeding, whether with or without her knowledge is uncertain, though with the usual readiness of the masses to believe the worst, there were those who speculated that while she feared Nero's implacability she had sought the glory of dying with her husband, but when a milder hope was offered had succumbed to the attractions of life. To that life she added a few more years, laudably faithful to her husband's memory, her face and limbs, whitened by a pallor that revealed how great had been the drain on her vital powers.

Meanwhile Seneca, death proving slow and protracted, begged Statius Annaeus, long his loyal friend and an experienced physician, to bring that poison (hemlock), prepared earlier, used to despatch prisoners condemned by the public tribunal in Athens. It was brought, but he swallowed it in vain, his limbs being already cold and his body resistant to the power of the drug. Finally, he entered a heated pool, and sprinkling some water over the nearest servants, remarked that he offered it as a libation to Jove the Liberator. He was then lifted into a bath, and was suffocated by the vapour.



'Death of Seneca'
Alexander Voet (II), after Peter Paul Rubens, 1662 - 1678
The Rijksmuseum

He was cremated without funeral ceremony, such being the instruction in his will added when, still at the height of his wealth and power, he had considered his own end.

BOOK XV:LXV SENECA AS POTENTIAL EMPEROR

It was rumoured that Subrius Flavus and the centurions had decided, in secret conclave, though not without Seneca's knowledge, that after Nero had been assassinated in the name of Piso, Piso would also be killed, and the empire bestowed on Seneca, as if chosen, in all innocence, to hold supreme power, due to his reputation for virtue.

Indeed there was a remark of Flavus' in circulation, to the effect that regarding the degree of dishonour, it mattered not if a singer with a lyre were removed and a tragic lyricist succeeded him, since if Nero sang to his instrument, so did Piso sing dressed for tragedy.

BOOK XV:LXVI FAENIUS RUFUS IMPLICATED

The military involvement in the conspiracy was now no longer a secret, the informants being stung into denouncing Faenius Rufus, whose role as both accomplice and inquisitor they could not endure.

Thus, while under pressure of threat, Scaevinus sarcastically remarked that none knew more than Faenius himself, and exhorted him to tell all, voluntarily, to so kind an emperor. Faenius could neither speak nor be silent, but openly terrified, swallowing his words as the others, especially the Roman knight Cervarius Proculus, strove to implicate him, he was seized and bound, on the emperor's order, by Cassius, a common soldier who was on standby on account of his remarkable physical strength.

BOOK XV:LXVII SUBRIUS FLAVUS DENOUNCES NERO TO HIS FACE

Before long, like evidence brought down the tribune Subrius Flavius, who at first raised in his defence the contrast in character between himself, a man of the sword, and a bunch of unarmed effeminates with whom he could never have associated in such a conspiracy.

Then, on being pressed, he sought glory in confession. Interrogated by Nero, as to the motives which had led to him breaking his oath of allegiance, he replied: 'I loathe you, yet while you deserved affection no soldier was more loyal. I began to hate you when you became a matricide, a wife-killer, a charioteer, an actor, an arsonist.'

I report his words because, unlike Seneca, they were not made public, yet the unvarnished and weighty sentiments of the soldier are no less worthy of being known. Nothing said regarding the conspiracy fell more harshly on Nero's ears, he being as prompt to commit crime as he was unused to being called to account for what he might do.

The execution of Flavius was entrusted to the tribune Veianius Niger, who ordered a grave dug in a nearby field. Flavius, on seeing that it was both too shallow and too narrow, reproached the soldiers around him: 'Sloppy discipline, even here!' Admonished to hold his head steady, he replied: 'I hope you are as steady when you strike!'

The tribune, trembling violently, severed the head with difficulty at the second blow, boasting of the brutality later to Nero, telling the emperor that he had killed Flavius with a stroke and a half.

BOOK XV:LXVIII THE DEATH OF SULPICIUS ASPER, AND NERO'S PURSUIT OF VESTINUS

The next example of staunch behaviour was provided by Sulpicius Asper, the centurion, who when asked by Nero why he had conspired to murder him replied, curtly, that it was the only way they could be free of his many crimes. He then submitted to the prescribed penalty. Nor were the other centurions any less steadfast in undergoing their executions: though Faenius lacked equal spirit, his lamentations making their way even into his last will and testament.

Nero was awaiting the like incrimination of the consul Vestinus, considering him rash and an enemy: but the conspirators had not shared their plans with Vestinus, some because of former disagreements, the majority because they thought him headstrong and difficult. Nero's loathing had grown out of close acquaintance with the man, Vestinus knowing intimately, and despising, the emperor's cowardice, while Nero feared this courageous associate, who often mocked him with a rough facetiousness which when it contains too much truth leaves sour memories behind.

An additional and recent motive, was that Vestinus had been joined in marriage with Statilia Messalina, though fully aware that she was Nero's mistress.

BOOK XV:LXIX THE DEATH OF VESTINUS

Accordingly, without accuser or charge, and unable to take on the role of judge, Nero turned to main force and sent the tribune Gerellanus, with a squad of soldiers, with orders to forestall the consul's attempt, occupy what might be termed his fortress, and detain his picked troop of young warriors, for Vestinus had a house overlooking the Forum, and a team of handsome slaves matched in age.

Vestinus had completed his consulship that day, and was holding a banquet, either fearing nothing or concealing his fear, when the soldiers entered and said the tribune was asking for him. he rose without delay, and all was hurried forward in a moment: he enclosed himself in his room, the physician was at hand, the veins cut, and still living he was carried to the bath and immersed in hot water, without letting fall a word of self-pity.

Meanwhile those who were reclining at table with him were surrounded by guards, and were not released till late at night, when Nero, amused at his vision of their fear, as the diners awaited death, commented that they had paid dearly for their consular banquet.

BOOK XV:LXX THE DEATHS OF LUCAN, SENECIO, QUINTIANUS AND SCAEVINUS

He next ordered the killing of Lucan. His blood flowing, and feeling his feet and hands growing cold, and the life slowly receding from his extremities, though his mental powers were still intact, Lucan recalled a passage from his own poem (*Pharsalia*, III:638) where he had described a wounded soldier dying a similar kind of death, and recited the lines, those being his last words.

Then Senecio, Quintianus and Scaevinus perished, countering the weakness shown in their former life, and soon afterwards the rest of the conspirators, without doing or saying anything of note.

BOOK XV:LXXI NERO COMPLETES THE PURGE

Meanwhile Rome was filled with funerals, and the Capitol with sacrificial victims; here for the execution of a son, there a brother,

relation or friend. Thanks were given to heaven, laurel decked the houses, they fell at the emperor's knees, and wore out his hand with kisses. And Nero, thinking these signs of their joy, repaid the hasty confessions of Antonius Natalis and Cervarius Proculus, by granting them immunity.

Milichus, richly rewarded, assumed the title, using its Greek form, of 'Saviour'. Of the tribunes, Gavius Silvanus, though acquitted, took his own life; Staius Proxumus negated the pardon he had received from the emperor, with the emptiness of his end. The following were deprived of the rank of tribune: Pompeius, Cornelius Martius, Flavius Nepos, and Staius Domitius, on the grounds of their being thought to loathe Nero even though they did not.

Novius Priscus, Glitius Gallus and Annius Pollio were handed sentences of exile, the first as a friend of Seneca, the others as being discredited, even though not convicted. Priscus was accompanied by his wife Artoria Flacilla, Gallus by Egnatia Maximilla, her great riches at first intact, later confiscated, both circumstances adding to her reputation.

Rufrius Crispinus was also banished, the conspiracy being the pretext, though he was in truth detested by Nero for once being married to Poppaea. Expulsion was also visited on Verginius Flavus, and Musonius Rufus, because of their illustrious names, Verginius having fostered young men's studies with his eloquence, Musonius with the precepts of philosophy.

Like a rear-guard and to round out the numbers, Cluvidienus Quietus, Julius Agrippa, Blitius Catulinus, Petronius Priscus and Julius Altinus were allowed the Aegean islands, but Caedicia the wife of Scaevinus, and Caesennius Maximus were both barred from Italy, and only by their sentence discovered they had been indicted. Lucan's mother, Acilia, was ignored, neither being absolved nor punished.

BOOK XV:LXXII NERO DECLARES A TRIUMPH

Having perpetrated all this, Nero addressed the troops, and distributed two hundred gold pieces a man, plus the grain ration previously supplied to them at market price, at no cost. Then, as though he were celebrating success in war, he convened the Senate and bestowed triumphal honours on Petronius Turpilianus, of consular rank, Cocceius Nerva (the future emperor), and Tigellinus the praetorian prefect. He exalted Nerva and Tigellinus so far as to place not only their triumphal statues in the Forum, but effigies of them in the Palace itself.

Consular insignia were granted to Nymphidius Sabinus, who because he now appears for the first time I briefly notice: since he too will be part of the tragedies of Rome. The son of a freedwoman, then, who made her physical beauty available to the slaves and freedmen of emperors, he made out he was the offspring of Caligula, having been granted a tall physique and fierce countenance, by fate, or perhaps it was that Caligula, who lusted after whores also, had amused himself with Sabinus' mother....

BOOK XV:LXXIII NERO PUBLISHES THE DETAILS OF THE PLOT

Then, after addressing the Senate, Nero continued by publishing an edict to the people, and a collection in writing of the evidence and the confessions of those condemned. Certainly, he was attacked intensely in public gossip, for destroying so many illustrious and innocent men, out of jealousy or fear.

However, that a conspiracy was born, nurtured and suppressed was never doubted by those who were at pains to know the truth, and was confirmed by those exiles who returned to Rome once Nero was dead. And in the Senate, while all, including those with most to mourn, were stooping

to sycophancy, Lucus Annaeus Junius Gallio, dismayed at the death of his brother Seneca, and petitioning for his own survival, was attacked by Salienus Clemens, who called him an enemy and traitor to his country, until requested to refrain by popular consensus, lest he were seen to abuse a national tragedy from motives of private hatred, while dragging up anew barbarities ignored, or consigned to oblivion, due to the emperor's clemency.

BOOK XV:LXXIV OFFERINGS AND CELEBRATIONS

Then offerings and thanks were decreed to Heaven, particularly honouring the Sun, who possesses an ancient temple in the Circus where the assassination was to have been carried out, he having revealed by his power the secrets of the conspiracy.

The Circensian Games to Ceres were to be celebrated with more extensive horse-racing, and the month of April was to be named after Nero. A temple of Salvation was to be erected in Rome, and a memorial placed in the temple from which Scaevinus had taken the dagger. Nero himself consecrated that weapon in the Capitol, and inscribed it to Jove the Avenger. At the time, this was barely noticed, but after the rising of Julius Vindex (his name meaning the Avenger), it was taken as a sign and omen of retribution to come.

I find in the Senate records, that Anicius Cerealis, consul designate, gave it as his opinion that a temple to the divine Nero should be erected, as quickly as possible and at public expense. In truth he was simply proclaiming that the emperor had surpassed the heights of all things mortal, and had earned the veneration of all humanity, but Nero vetoed it, lest it might be translated, by another interpretation, into a prophecy of, and desire for, his death: for the honour of deification is not paid to an emperor before he has ceased to perform actions among men.

End of the Annals Book XV: XLVIII-LXXIV

BOOK XVI: I-XXXV
THE TALE OF BLOOD



'Roman Pontiff'

History of Rome, and of the Roman People (p235, 1883)
Victor Duruy, M. M Clarke Ripley, W. J Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland
Internet Archive Book Images

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BOOK XVI:I HIDDEN TREASURE

Fate now mocked Nero, as a result of his own vain credulity and the promises of Caesellius Bassus, who, mentally disturbed, was Carthaginian by origin. Treating a vision he had seen, in a dream at night, as certain of expectation, he sailed to Rome and, bribing his way in to see the emperor, disclosed that he had found a cave, immensely deep, on his own land, which contained a vast weight of gold, not in the form of coinage, but in ancient, unworked bullion. Heavy ingots lay about, while in another section the metal was piled high; a treasure lying hidden throughout the centuries to bring wealth to present times.

Dido, the Phoenician, so his conjectures ran, having fled Tyre, and founded Carthage, had concealed the hoard, lest excess riches ruin her young nation, or the petty kings of Numidia, always hostile, might be roused to war by their greed for gold.

BOOK XVI:II NERO SENDS FOR THE GOLD

Nero, giving insufficient consideration to the informant's credibility, or that of the tale itself, and without seeking to know the truth of the matter, added further impetus to the report, and sent men to retrieve the treasure as if it were already to hand. Triremes were provided, with select oarsmen to increase their speed. At that time, nothing else was talked of with such certainty by the populace, or with so firmly contrasting an opinion by the wise.

It so happened that the Quinquennial Games (the Neronia) were being celebrated for the second time, and the project provided the chief material for the orators' praise of the emperor: not merely the usual crops were forthcoming, they said, nor simply gold alloyed with other metals, but the earth showed fresh fecundity and the gods sent gold unsought.

They invented other flatteries of lofty eloquence, with no less sycophancy, assured of being readily believed.

BOOK XVI:III THE TALE PROVES UNFOUNDED

Meanwhile, Nero's extravagance increased, on the basis of this idle expectation, and his former riches were consumed, as if what had been revealed were to serve his prodigality for many years to come. Indeed, from that time on he spent freely, though he had done so even before, and his expectation of imminent wealth was one of the reasons the State became impoverished.

For Bassus, accompanied not only by the soldiers but a whole army of countrymen enlisted to carry out the project, having dug over his own land and a wide stretch of the surrounding fields, insisting the site of the promised cave was here or there, at last ended the madness, and amazed that, his visions never having previously proven false, this was now the first to deceive him, fled from shame and fear by committing suicide.

Some say he was merely imprisoned and soon released, his assets being confiscated to reimburse the palace.

BOOK XVI:IV NERO SINGS AT THE GAMES

Meanwhile, the Senate, with the Quinquennial competition already imminent and to avert scandal, offered the emperor the victory in the singing, adding a garland for eloquence to veil the stigma of theatrical performance. But Nero protested that he needed neither bribery nor the Senate's indulgence, he would meet his rivals on equal terms, and the judges' conscientiousness would guarantee him a worthy commendation.

He began by reciting a poem on the platform; then with the crowd clamouring for him to 'display all his skills' (those being the very words employed) he entered the theatre, observing all the rules of the lyre, not to sit when tired, not to wipe the sweat away except with the robe he was wearing, nor allow any discharge from nose or mouth to be seen. Then, on bended knee, kissing his hand to the crowd, he awaited the judges' verdict, with a feigned look of trepidation.

And the urban masses, at least, used to delighting in the actors' posturing, shouted their acclaim, in no uncertain manner, and with thunderous applause. You might have thought them joyful, and perhaps they were joyful, through blind indifference to the nation's shame.

BOOK XVI:V ATTENDANCE THROUGH FEAR

But those in the audience from far-off country towns, from an Italy still austere and holding fast to its ancient ways, those from the provinces unused to shamelessness, there on official missions or private business, were neither comfortable with the spectacle nor adequate to their inglorious task, their ineffectual applause soon fading, or disturbing the cognoscenti, and they were often struck at by the soldiers positioned among the blocks of seats, lest an instant was wasted in inappropriate noise or dull silence.

It is well known that many knights were trampled to death while clambering upwards along the narrow gangways, against the crowd's flow. Others too, caught some incurable disease, from spending days and nights among the benches. For it was a graver threat still to be absent from that audience, where many openly and others in hiding were there to note the names and faces, the cheerfulness or gloom.

Hence the fate of the insignificant was punishment there and then, that of the illustrious the emperor's hatred, concealed for the present but soon visited upon them. They say that Vespasian, briefly closing his eyes in

sleep, and reprimanded by Phoebus the freedman, a fact barely concealed despite the entreaties of the superior party, was only saved later from imminent death by a higher destiny.

BOOK XVI:VI NERO'S MANSLAUGHTER OF POPPAEA

After the Games had ended, Poppaea met her death, by accident, through the irascibility of her husband, who felled her with a blow from his foot, while she was pregnant. Though some writers relate, more out of hatred for Nero than conviction, that poison was involved in her death, I cannot believe it: since he wished for heirs and was obsessed by love for his wife.

The body was not cremated in the Roman manner, but embalmed, after the practice of foreign courts, being filled with spices, then laid to rest in the tomb of the Julians. Nevertheless a public funeral followed, and the emperor himself praised her beauty from the Rostra, and that she had been mother to a daughter now deified, and her other gifts of fortune that did duty for virtues.

BOOK XVI:VII NERO ATTACKS GAIUS CASSIUS AND LUCIUS SILANUS

Nero incited fresh odium, adding to that caused by Poppaea's death, which was outwardly regretted but delighted those who recalled her shamelessness and savagery, by prohibiting Gaius Cassius the jurist from attending her funeral, which was a first hint of evil to come. Nor was that long delayed, Lucius Silanus the Younger being associated with him, their only crimes being that Cassius was notable for his inherited wealth and austere character, Silanus for his illustrious lineage and temperate youth.

Nero, therefore, sent a speech to the Senate, arguing that both should be excluded from public life, objecting to Gaius Cassius on the grounds that among his ancestral busts he had honoured that of Cassius the tyrannicide, with the inscription ‘To the leader of the cause’: and that indeed Gaius was sowing the seed of rebellion and civil war against the House of the Caesars, and not merely be employing the memory of a hated name to foster discord, but by adopting Lucius Silanus, a youth of noble family, but rash spirit, as the leader of his revolution.

BOOK XVI:VIII CASSIUS’ WIFE LEPIDA ALSO INDICTED

Nero then attacked Lucius Silanus himself, in the same manner as he had his uncle Decimus before him (AD64), accusing him of allocating the offices of empire already, and appointing freedmen to the roles of his secretaries for accounts, records and correspondence, a claim that was idle and false, for fear had made Silanus more vigilant, and his uncle’s death had driven him to take further precautions. Next, informants, so-called, were led to invent charges against Junia Lepida, Cassius’ wife and aunt to Silanus, of incest with her nephew, and celebration of the dark rites.

The senators Vulcacius Tullinus and Cornelius Marcellus, and the Roman knight Calpurnius Fabatus, were dragged in as accomplices. They evaded imminent conviction by appealing to the emperor, and later escaped as being of minor importance, Nero being occupied with more serious crimes.

BOOK XVI:IX CASSIUS AND SILANUS EXILED

By decree of the Senate Cassius and Silanus were then sentenced to exile: Nero would announce Lepida’s fate. Cassius was deported to

the island of Sardinia, there to await old age. Silanus left, as if for Naxos, but was taken to Ostia and later confined in an Apulian village, namely Barium (Bari).

There, while enduring philosophically the most undeserved of fates, he was seized by a centurion sent to slaughter him; urged to slash his veins, he replied that he had determined to die, but would not deny the assassin the glory of his office. The centurion, however, seeing that Silanus was, though unarmed, powerfully built and betrayed anger rather than fear, ordered his men to overpower him.

Silanus did not fail to put up a fight, and struck whatever blows bare fists allowed, until he fell to the centurion's sword, his wounds in front, as in battle.

BOOK XVI: X LUCIUS VETUS ACCUSED

Lucius Antistius Vetus, his mother-in-law Sextia, and his daughter Antistia Pollitta, met death no less resolutely, being loathed by the emperor as a living reproach for his execution of Rubellius Plautus, Vetus' son-in-law.

The opening for exhibiting his savagery, however, was provided by Fortunatus, his freedman, who after embezzling his patron's property, turned accuser, in association with Claudius Demianus, imprisoned by Vetus for various offences when Vetus was proconsul of Asia Minor, but freed by Nero as his reward for informing.

Aware of this, and knowing he and his freedmen were to meet as equals, Vetus left for his estate at Formiae (Formia). There he was surrounded by a concealed military guard. His daughter, Pollitta, was present, who above and beyond the imminent danger was embittered by the grief she had endured from the day she saw her husband Plautus assassinated; having embraced his neck as he lay bleeding, she still treasured

his blood-stained robe, a widow, unkempt and endlessly grieving, taking no more than a little sustenance to keep death at bay.

Now, at her father's request she went to Naples and, denied access to Nero, besieged his door, clamouring, now in female lament, now in threatening accents belying her gender, for him to hear the innocent, and not sacrifice his one-time colleague in the consulate (AD55) to a mere freedman, until the emperor showed himself unmoved alike by prayer or reproach.

BOOK XVI:XI THE DEATHS OF LUCIUS VETUS, SEXTIA AND POLLITTA

She brought the news to her father, telling him, therefore, to abandon hope and accept the inevitable: at the same time word came that a Senate trial was being arranged aimed at a harsh verdict. There was no lack of those advising him to name Nero as his principal heir, thus saving the residue for his grandchildren.

Rejecting this, lest a life lived in virtual freedom be marred by a final act that proved servile, he distributed what money he had among his servants, and ordered them to take whatever they could carry away for their own use, leaving three couches at the last. Then, all three of them severed their veins, in the same room, with the same blade, and hurriedly, wrapped in the single robe decency required, they were carried to the baths, the father gazing with admiration on his daughter, the grandmother on her grandchild, and she on both, all praying in fond rivalry for a swift end to failing breath, and to leave the others behind though dying themselves.

Fate obeyed the natural order, the two eldest passing first, then Pollitta still in her early youth. They were indicted after burial, it being decreed that they should be punished in the ancient fashion, Nero, however, interceding, and permitting death without a conviction: such was the farce enacted when the deed was already done.

BOOK XVI:XII RENAMING OF MONTHS

Publius Gallus, a Roman knight was banished, forbidden fire and water, as an intimate friend of Faenius Rufus and no stranger to Vetus. His accuser, a freedman, was given a seat in the theatre among the tribunician summoners as his reward.

Also the months following April or Neroneus, were renamed: May becoming Claudius, June taking the title of Germanicus; the alteration to June, according to the testimony of Cornelius Orfitus who proposed it, being due to the fact that the death of two Torquati (Decimus Junius and Lucius Junius) for their crimes had already rendered the name Junius unpropitious.

BOOK XVI:XIII STORM, DISEASE, DISASTER

Even the heavens set their mark, with storm and disease, on this year (AD65) of foul deeds. Campania was devastated by a whirlwind, which wrecked farms, orchards and crops at random, and brought its violence close to Rome, where every class of humanity was being scythed down by pestilence, though that celestial storm was not visible to the eye.

Nevertheless, the houses were filled with corpses, the streets with funerals; neither age nor gender gave immunity from danger; slaves and free-born alike were swiftly extinguished, amidst the lamentations of their wives and children who, by tending them or weeping beside them, were often destined to burn on the same pyre. Knights and senators, though meeting death indiscriminately, were less mourned, as if they were eluding the emperor's ferocity by so commonplace a death.

That same year, levies were raised in Narbonese Gaul, North Africa and Asia Minor, to reinforce the legions in Illyricum, from which all men

incapacitated by age or sickness were being discharged the service. Also the emperor relieved the city of Lyon (Lugdunum) after a fire, with a grant of forty thousand gold pieces to repair the losses; which amount Lyon had previously offered in the like case of the capital.

BOOK XVI:XIV PUBLIUS ANTEIUS COMMITS SUICIDE

In the consulate of Gaius Suetonius Paulinus and Luccius Telesinus (AD66), that Antistius Sosianus who had been exiled, as I have said, for composing scurrilous verses concerning Nero, hearing of the honour shown informants and the emperor's readiness for bloodshed, and being restless and quick to see an opportunity, ingratiated himself with Pammenes, exiled to the same location, who as a noted astrologer had a wide network of friends.

Antistius considered that it was not for nothing that messengers seeking consultations were arriving endlessly, discovering that at the same time Pammenes received an annual pension from Publius Anteius. He was not unaware also that Anteius was hated by Nero due to the former's affection for Agrippina, and that his riches were especially likely to arouse the latter's greed, a circumstance fatal to many.

Antistius, therefore, intercepted a letter from Anteius, and even stole the documents hidden in Pammenes' archives containing Anteius' birth-chart and career, and discovering at the same time what he had calculated regarding the birth and life of Ostorius Scapula, he then wrote to Nero that he could bring grave news conducive to the emperor's safety, if he might be granted a brief respite from exile: for Anteius and Ostorius, he claimed, threatened the State, and were consulting the astrologer regarding Caesar's fate and their own.

Frigates were sent at once, and Antistius soon arrived. As soon as his evidence was divulged, Anteius and Ostorius took their places among those condemned rather than those accused, to the point where no one would

sign Anteius' last will and testament, until Tigellinus emerged as its sponsor, first warning Anteius not to delay making his final provisions. Anteius swallowed poison, but dismayed by its slowness in acting, hastened death by opening his veins.

BOOK XVI:XV OSTORIUS FOLLOWS HIS EXAMPLE

At that moment, Ostorius was at a remote estate on the Ligurian frontier. A centurion was sent to execute him immediately. The reason for speed arose from the fact that Ostorius, famous for his many military campaigns, including the civic crown earned in Britain, both physically powerful and skilled in arms, had inspired Nero with fear lest he attack him, Nero being forever a coward and further terrified by this newly discovered plot.

The centurion, after securing the exits from the villa, showed Ostorius the imperial order. The latter turned the same courage he had often shown against his enemies against himself: and finding that although he had opened his veins the blood ran slowly, he made use of his slave's arm only so far as to hold the blade steady, then pulling the man's hand closer cut his own throat.

BOOK XVI:XVI TACITUS APOLOGISES FOR HIS TALE OF BLOOD

Even were I recalling foreign wars and lives sacrificed there for the State, I might find myself sated with so constant a repetition of events, and anticipate the tedium of others repelled by an endless tale of woe, however honourable the deaths of those citizens might be. As it is, this patient servility and wealth of blood lost at home weary the mind and drown it in melancholy.

The only concession I demand from those who study these records is not to revile those who perished so tamely. It was the anger of heaven against the Roman State, which cannot, as with military defeat or captured towns, be simply mentioned once and then passed over. Let us grant this to the memory of famous men, that as in their funeral exequies they avoid the common grave, so in the history of their death they shall receive and retain their own remembrance.

BOOK XVI:XVII THE RANKS ARE THINNED FURTHER

For in the course of a few days, in a single sweep, fell Marcus Annaeus Mela, Anicius Cerealis, Rufrius Crispinus and Titus Petronius.

Mela and Crispinus were Roman knights of senatorial rank. Crispinus, once a praetorian prefect, and granted consular insignia, but recently banished to Sardinia on a charge of conspiracy, hearing his death had been ordered, committed suicide.

Mela, brother to both Gallio Annaeanus and Seneca the Younger, had refrained from seeking office due to the perverted notion that a Roman knight could wield a consul's power; at the same time thinking the swifter path to acquiring wealth lay with the procurators handling the emperor's private affairs. He was Lucan's father also, which greatly added to his reputation.

After his son's death, by calling in the debts owed to the estate with vigour, he gave birth to an accuser in Fabius Romanus, one of Lucan's close friends. Concocting the charge that knowledge of the conspiracy had been shared between father and son, Romanus also forged a letter from Lucan, having inspected which Nero ordered it to be carried to Mela.

Mela, however, took what was then the most favoured path to death, opening a vein, having written a will leaving a large amount to Tigellinus and the latter's son-in-law Cossutianus Capito, hoping the rest might be

retained. A codicil was added, so written as to form a protest against the iniquity of fate, saying that while he was sentenced to execution for no reason, Rufrius Crispinus and Anicius Cerialis though hostile to the emperor remained to enjoy the fruits of life.

The item was believed to be a forgery (on behalf of Nero) to justify Crispinus' prior death and that of Cerialis still to come. For not long afterwards, Cerialis took his own life, accruing less sympathy than the rest since memories remained of his betraying a conspiracy to Caligula.

BOOK XVI:XVIII THE INDICTMENT OF PETRONIUS (AUTHOR OF THE SATYRICON)

There is a little more to say regarding Petronius. For he passed his days sleeping, his nights in the offices and amusements of life; effort may have promoted others, he idled himself to fame. Nor was he held to be a scoundrel and spendthrift, like the majority of his companions, but rather a connoisseur of excess. His words and actions displayed an air of freedom and self-abandonment which rendered them so much the more acceptable by their apparent innocence. Yet as proconsul of Bithynia and later as consul, he showed himself energetic and equal to his role.

Then lapsing into vice, or a semblance of vice, he was absorbed into Nero's narrow circle, as his arbiter of elegance, the emperor finding sweetness and charm only in that which Petronius approved. As a result Tigellinus was jealous of this seeming rival, one more expert in the knowledge of sensuous pleasure. Therefore, he invoked the emperor's savage instincts, before which his other passions yielded, attacking Petronius for his friendship with Scaevinus, bribing one of Petronius' slaves to turn informer, thwarting any appeal, and clapping the majority of the household in irons.

BOOK XVI:XIX THE DEATH OF PETRONIUS

As it happened, Nero was at that time travelling to Campania, and Petronius having reached Cumae was detained there. No longer wishing to endure the vagaries of fear or hope, neither did he rush to his life's end, but having severed his veins had them bound up and re-opened at whim, to converse with his friends, not in any serious manner or with a view to the glories of stoicism. Instead, he listened as they recalled neither discourses on the immortality of the soul, nor the principles of philosophy, but light airs and trivial verses.

Of his slaves, some experienced his generosity, others the lash. He took his place at the table, and dozed a little, so that death, though enforced, might at least seem natural. Nor like the majority of the doomed did he flatter Nero, or Tigellinus, or any others of the powerful in his will but, against the names of various catamites and loose women, he listed the emperor's acts of debauchery and the novel features of each of these, sending it under seal to Nero. His signet-ring he shattered, lest it rendered dangerous service later.



'Interior of Roman Building with Figures'

Ettore Forti

(Italian, active late 19th century - early 20th century)

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BOOK XVI:XX SILIA EXILED, THERMUS EXECUTED

While Nero remained in doubt as to whether, and how, the nature of his nights might reach the public, he was reminded of Silia, a senator's wife and therefore of some note, who had been appropriated by himself for every kind of sexual indulgence, and was one of Petronius' closest intimates. She was now driven into exile, on the pretext of failing to keep silent about what she had seen and experienced, though in truth to settle a score of his own.

Minucius Thermus the ex-praetor, however, he sacrificed to Tigellinus' animosity, for one of Thermus' freedmen had made certain claims about Tigellinus, which the freedman expiated by the agonies of torture, his patron by an unmerited death.

BOOK XVI:XXI THRASEA PAETUS UNDER THREAT

Having slaughtered so many outstanding men, Nero finally conceived the idea of rooting out virtue itself, by killing Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus. Hating both of old, he felt additional animosity towards Thrasea, who had walked out of the Senate, as I have said, during discussion of Agrippina, and who had made barely an appearance at the Games of Youth, an offence all the graver in that Thrasea had sung in tragic dress, in Padua (Patavium) his native town, at the games instituted by Antenor of Troy.

Also on the day when Antistius was all but sentenced to death for his scandalous verses regarding Nero, Thrasea had proposed a milder punishment and seen his proposal passed. Moreover, after deliberately absenting himself when Poppaea was decreed divine honours, he had not been present at her funeral.

Cossutianus Capito prevented these sins being forgotten, who over and above a predilection for crime, hated Thrasea intensely, whose influence had led to his defeat and delighted the Cilician envoys who had prosecuted him for extortion.

BOOK XVI:XXII COSSUTIANUS CAPITO SPEAKS AGAINST THRASEA

Indeed Capito raised other charges also: that Thrasea had evaded taking the solemn oath at the start of the year; that he had taken no part in the national vows though he was on the Council of Fifteen; and that he had never offered a sacrifice for the emperor's well-being or his celestial voice.

Also, he claimed, Thrasea had not set foot in the Senate House for three years, though having once been an assiduous and tireless attendee, who had shown himself advocate or adversary of the most commonplace Senate resolutions; and only recently, when his colleagues were rivalling each other in their haste to crush Silanus and Vetus, he had found the leisure to pursue his clients' private cases.

The situation, he argued, had come to dissension and faction already, and if enough dared the same, it would be open warfare: 'As this quarrelsome State once talked of Caesar and Cato, so now of you, Nero, and Thrasea. And he has his followers, accomplices rather, who as yet do not adopt his defiant opinions only his dress and looks, whose severity and austerity are a reproach to your laxity.

To him alone your safety is a matter of indifference, your talents dishonourable. He scorns his emperor's happiness, dissatisfied even with your bereavements and sorrows. The same mind is at work in refusing to accept Poppaea's divinity as in failing to endorse the acts of the deified Augustus, the deified Julius.

He scorns religion, he nullifies the law. The Roman daily gazette is scanned with special care throughout the provinces for news of what Thrasea might not have done. Let us either adopt his creed, if it is the better, or let those who seek a revolution lose their leader and their champion. His is the sect that gave birth to the Tiberones and Favonii, names unwelcome even to the old Republic.

To undermine the empire, they make a show of freedom: if they should overthrow it, they will launch an attack on freedom itself. You remove Cassius in vain, if you allow these rivals of the Bruti to increase and flourish. In conclusion, write nothing yourself concerning Thrasea: leave the Senate to judge between us.'

Nero fanned the flames of Cossutianus' eager fury even higher, by adding the support of Eprius Marcellus' fierce eloquence.

BOOK XVI:XXIII THE INDICTMENT OF SORANUS AND THRASEA

As for Barea Soranus, the Roman knight Ostorius Sabinus had already claimed him for himself, on a charge arising from Soranus' governorship of Asia Minor, during which he added to the emperor's displeasure by his equity and industry, by the care he had taken to open up the port of Ephesus, and his failure to punish the city of Pergamum for using force to prevent the looting, by the emperor's freedman Acratus, of its statues and pictures.

But the charges preferred were of friendship with Plautus, and bribery in order to win the province to the revolutionary cause. The moment chosen for indictment was immediately prior to Tiridates' arrival to accept the Armenian crown, so that public gossip regarding foreign affairs might cast a veil over crime at home, or so that the empire's greatness might be on display, through the 'regal' act of executing famous men.

BOOK XVI:XXIV NERO CONVENES THE SENATE

Thus while the whole populace poured out to welcome the emperor back from Campania, and gaze at the king, Thrasea was prohibited from attending, but showed no dejection, composing a message to Nero asking to know the charges against him, stating that he would rebut them, if he might be acquainted with his crime and given the opportunity to defend himself. Nero received the message gladly, hoping that Thrasea had written, under threat, something which might enhance the emperor's reputation while marring his own fame.

As this proved not to be the case, and Nero himself was alarmed at the manner, spirit and frankness exhibited by an innocent man, he ordered the Senate to be convened.

BOOK XVI:XXV THRASEA CONSULTS HIS FRIENDS

Thrasea now consulted his closest friends as to whether to attempt a defence or scorn to do so. Various opinions were offered him. Those who favoured him entering the Senate House argued that they were confident of his self-control; he would say nothing which would fail to add to his reputation. Only the timid and those lacking in spirit veil death in obscurity: let the people see a man who could face it squarely, let the Senate hear words inspired as if by some superhuman deity: even Nero might be moved by the wonder of it.

If Nero insisted on his savagery, the record of posterity at least would distinguish between Thrasea's honourable fate, and the cowardice of those who perished in silence.

**BOOK XVI:XXVI THRASEA CONSIDERS
WHETHER TO ATTEND THE SENATE**

Those on the other hand who advised his awaiting his fate at home, expressed the same confidence in Thrasea himself, but advised that he would be threatened with mockery and humiliation: it would be better not to lend an ear to insults and invective.

Cossutianus and Eprius were not alone in their readiness for evil: there were others who in their savagery might resort to physical violence; and even decent men might follow them through fear. Let him rather spare the Senate, of which he had been so outstanding an ornament, the disgrace of such a scandal, and leave as uncertain whatever the senators might have decreed with Thrasea a defendant before them.

To make Nero feel shame for his crimes was an idle hope: it was more to be feared that he would display cruelty where Thrasea's wife, daughter, and other dear ones were concerned. So let him, his reputation untarnished, unpolluted, seek as glorious an end as those whose footsteps and studies had guided his life.

Arulenus Rusticus, young and ardent, was present at the time, and seeking fame offered, as a plebeian tribune, to veto the senate resolution. Thrasea checked his enthusiasm, lest Rusticus pursue a course idle and unprofitable for the accused, but fatal to himself. His own time was done, and he must not desert a mode of life pursued for so many years: Rusticus however now held his first official post, and his prospects were intact. He must weigh well for himself beforehand, what course of public life to engage in, given such an age as this. Meanwhile he himself reserved for his own consideration whether he should address the Senate or not.

BOOK XVI:XXVII NERO REPROACHES THE SENATORS

But the next morning, two armed praetorian cohorts occupied the temple of Venus Genetrix. The approach to the Senate House was guarded by a gang of men wearing the toga but with drawn swords, and squads of soldiers were scattered around the forums and basilicas. The senators entered the House under their menacing gaze, and heard the emperor's quaestor read Nero's speech.

Without naming any specific senator, he reproached them for abandoning public office and by their example leading Roman knights into a life of idleness. What wonder indeed, he continued, that senators from distant provinces barely attended, when many who attained the consulate or priesthood would rather devote themselves to their pleasure-grounds?

The accusers seized on this speech of his as a weapon.

BOOK XVI:XXVIII MARCELLUS SPEAKS AGAINST THRASEA

Cossutianus having opened the attack, Marcellus, with greater force, proclaimed that public affairs of the highest order were at stake; the defiance of inferiors was trying the imperial patience. Previously the senators had proved too lenient, he said, allowing themselves to be mocked with impunity by Thrasea, who had parted company with them; by Helvidius Priscus his son-in-law who shared his wild ideas; by Paconius Agrippinus too, heir to his father's hatred of emperors; and by that scribbler of detestable verses Curtius Montanus.

He found them missing an ex-consul from the Senate, a priest from the vows, a citizen from the oath of allegiance, unless it was that Thrasea had openly assumed the role of traitor and public enemy, counter to the institutions and ceremonies of their ancestors.

In brief, let him appear, this man who played at being a senator and defended the emperor's detractors. Let him propose what he wished to correct and alter: they might more readily tolerate his individual censure than, as now, a silence condemning all. Was it the world-wide peace, or the victories gained without loss to the army, that displeased him? Let not his perverse ambition be gratified, this man who grieved at national success, who treated the forums, theatres and temples as a wilderness, who held out his own exile as a threat.

To him, it seemed, there were no decrees, no magistrates, no city of Rome. Let him part company with a country which he had long ceased to love and now to regard.

BOOK XVI:XXIX THE SENATORS ARE FEARFUL

As Marcellus, grim and threatening as ever, fire in his voice, eyes and expression, uttered these words and the like, there was not the customary gloom in the Senate driven by the familiar sense of frequent danger, but a new and more intense terror as they saw the soldiers' hands on their sword-hilts.

At the same time there rose to mind the revered form of Thræsea himself; while there were those too who felt compassion for Helvidius, soon to pay the penalty for an innocent relationship. And what was Agrippinus charged with but his father's sad fate, the latter being equally guiltless, having fallen to the savagery of Tiberius?

As for Montanus, an excellent youth, his verse without spite, he would be driven from his country simply for showing talent!

BOOK XVI:XXX SABINUS SPEAKS AGAINST SORANUS

Meanwhile, Ostorius Sabinus, the accuser of Soranus, had entered and began to speak of the defendant's friendship with Rubellius Plautus, and of his governorship of Asia Minor which, he said, Soranus had treated rather as adapted to serve his own glory than to benefit the community, by fostering sedition in the cities.

This was an old tale: but Soranus' daughter was newly implicated in her father's peril, by the claim that she had given money to astrologers. It was in fact a result of her filial piety that Servilia (so the girl was named) influenced by love for her father, and with the rashness of her years, had consulted them, though only regarding the safety of her family and whether Nero would prove forgiving and the Senate trial deliver no tragic outcome.

She was therefore summoned before the Senate, such that both stood before either end of the consular tribunal, an aged parent and opposite him his daughter, who was not yet twenty but already condemned to a desolate widowhood by the recent exile of her husband, Annius Pollio, she not even daring to look at her father, whose danger she appeared to have aggravated.

BOOK XVI:XXXI SERVILIA DEFENDS HERSELF

When her accuser then asked whether it was her bridal dress she had sold, or the necklace from around her neck, in order to find the money for performing magic rites, she first threw herself to the ground in a prolonged fit of silent weeping, then clasping the altar as her refuge, replied: 'I have invoked no false gods, cast no spells, nor in my unhappy prayers asked anything but that you, Caesar, and you, the Senate, should preserve this best of fathers, unharmed.'

Thus I gave my jewels, robes, and emblems of my rank, as I would my life's blood were it demanded. Let it be for those men, previously unknown to me, to look to what reputation they bear, what arts they practise: I never spoke of the emperor as other than a deity. Yet my unfortunate father knew nothing of this, and if it was a crime, I alone have sinned.'

BOOK XVI:XXXII PUBLIUS EGNATIUS INSPIRES HATRED

She was still speaking, when Soranus intervened, proclaiming that Servilia had not accompanied her father to his province and, given her age, could not have been known to Plautus, nor was she implicated in her husband's crimes: they should therefore treat her case separately as one of filial piety taken to excess, as for her father let him submit to whatever might prove his fate. At that moment, the father would have rushed to meet his daughter's embrace, had not the lictors intervened and stopped them both.

The evidence was heard next; and whatever sympathy had been awakened by the savagery of the prosecution was matched by the anger roused against Publius Egnatius in his role of witness. A client of Soranus, bribed to bring about his friend's destruction, he affected the gravity of the Stoic sect, being practised in displaying the look and manner of an honest man, while treacherous at heart and cunning, in order to conceal his avarice and lust. Bribery exposed those traits, and later he provided a cautionary example, not only against those veiled in deceit and stained with guilt, but those who fraudulently pretend to the arts of virtue, and prove false friends.

BOOK XVI:XXXIII THE VERDICTS GIVEN

That same day, however, Cassius Asclepiodotus provided a fine example of honesty, he being, due to his vast wealth, the first citizen of Bithynia. With the same devotion he had shown to Soranus in his heyday, he refused to desert him in his fall and, stripped of his whole fortune, was driven into exile, as evidence that the heavens are impartial towards the good and evil alike.

Thrasea Paetus, Barea Soranus, and Servilia Sorana, the daughter, were given the right to choose the manner of their death. Helvidius and Paconius were banished from Italy. Montanus was spared because of his father, providing that he avoided public office in future. Of their accusers, Eprius and Cossutianus were each granted fifty thousand gold pieces, Ostorius twelve thousand and a quaestor's insignia.

BOOK XVI:XXXIV THRASEA RECEIVES THE NEWS

As evening was drawing in, the consul's quaestor was then sent to Thrasea, who was passing the time in his gardens. He had gathered a large party of illustrious men and women, his attention mainly being directed towards Demetrius, a master of the Cynic philosophy, with whom, to judge from his intense gaze and what might be heard when they raised their voices, he was debating the nature of the soul, and the dissociation of body from spirit, when Domitius Caecilianus, one of his close friends, arrived and informed him of the Senate's decision. So, amidst the tears and laments of those present, Thrasea exhorted them to leave quickly, lest they risk their own fate being linked to that of the condemned.

He advised his wife, Arria the Younger, who aspired to share her husband's destiny, following the example set by her mother, Arria the Elder, to stay alive and not deprive the daughter, Fannia, they shared, of her only support.

BOOK XVI:XXXV THE DEATH OF THRASEA

Thrasea then walked to the portico where the quaestor found him, closer to delight than sorrow having discovered that his son-in-law Helvidius was only banished from Italy. Then accepting the Senate decree he led Helvidius and Demetrius to his room, presented the veins of both arms to the knife and, once the blood began to flow, sprinkled some on the ground, and called the quaestor near, saying: ‘We are offering a libation to Jove the Liberator. Observe, young man; may the gods deny the omen, yet you have been born in a time when it is good to strengthen the mind with examples of self-possession.’

Then, as the prolonged nature of his death brought severe pain, he again directed his attention towards Demetrius...

**End of the Annals Book XVI: I-XXXV,
and of the extant manuscript**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Publius Cornelius Tacitus was born AD56/57, in one of the Roman provinces, possibly Gallia Narbonensis, to an equestrian family. He studied rhetoric in Rome, and in AD77 or 78 he married Julia, the daughter of the noted general Agricola. He held various posts under the Flavian Emperors, surviving the reign of Domitian, an experience which left him with the deep aversion to tyrannical government evident in his writings. He was a Senator, and a Consul *suffectus* in 97 under Nerva, gaining a high reputation as both lawyer and orator. Leaving public life he then turned to literature, though returning to practise law under Trajan. He was a close friend of Pliny the Younger, who assisted him in his early career. His major historical work survives as the *Annals* and the *Histories*, the extant parts of which cover large sections of the period from Tiberius to the death of Nero (the *Annals*, the later work), the Year of the Four Emperors, and the founding of the Flavian dynasty (the *Histories*). In AD112 or 113 he held highest office as civilian Governor of the province of Asia, and may have lived until as late as AD130.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.