

# The Histories



**Publius Cornelius Tacitus**

*A Translation into English*

*by A. S. KLINE*

***POETRY IN TRANSLATION***

[www.poetryintranslation.com](http://www.poetryintranslation.com)

© Copyright 2016 A. S. Kline

All rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions.

Textual content of this work may be freely reproduced, stored and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose. Restrictions apply to adaptation of the work. Usage of any material for commercial purposes resulting in direct, indirect or incidental commercial gain requires permission to be sought and granted in writing from the copyright holder.

Refer to the Poetry in Translation copyright statement ([www.poetryintranslation.com/Admin/Copyright.htm](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/Admin/Copyright.htm))

Any statements or opinions expressed in this book reflect the views of the author alone. Although the author has made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at the time of going to press, the author does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause

Please direct editorial enquiries to:

[tonykline@poetryintranslation.com](mailto:tonykline@poetryintranslation.com)



This digital edition is published by **Poetry In Translation** ([www.poetryintranslation.com](http://www.poetryintranslation.com)).

# Contents

[Book I: I-XXX](#) Galba's reign and Otho's uprising

[Book I: XXXI-LX](#) Galba's death, Otho's reign and Vitellius's uprising

[Book I: LXI-XC](#) Otho versus Vitellius

[Book II: I-XXXI](#) Continuing conflict, the Flavians in the East

[Book II: XXXII-LXIV](#) Otho's death, Vitellius seizes power

[Book II: LXV-CI](#) Vespasian prepares his bid

[Book III: I-XXXI](#) The Flavian forces invade Italy

[Book III: XXXII-LVIII](#) Events in Rome, Gaul and Germany

[Book III: LIX-LXXXVI](#) The battle for Rome, the death of Vitellius

[Book IV: I-XXXI](#) The Batavian uprising led by Civilis

[Book IV: XXXII-LXV](#) Events in Rome, conflict in Germany

[Book IV: LXVI-LXXXVI](#) Cerialis versus Civilis, the German war

[Book V: I-XXVI](#) War in Judea, the surrender of Civilis

[About the Author](#)

[About the Translator](#)

# **Book I:I-XXX - Galba's reign and Otho's uprising**

## **Contents**

[Book I:I Introduction](#)

[Book I:II The state of the Empire](#)

[Book I:III A redeeming nobility](#)

[Book I:IV After the death of Nero](#)

[Book I:V Sabinus' mutiny against Galba](#)

[Book I:VI Galba's entry into Rome](#)

[Book I:VII The Emperor's unpopularity in the City](#)

[Book I:VIII The situation in the provinces](#)

[Book I:IX Germany, Britain and Illyricum](#)

[Book I:X The Middle East](#)

[Book I:XI Egypt and North Africa](#)

[Book I:XII The matter of the succession](#)

[Book I:XIII Potential candidates](#)

[Book I:XIV Licinianus Piso](#)

[Book I:XV Galba's adoption speech](#)

[Book I:XVI His justification for his course of action](#)

[Book I:XVII Piso's reaction](#)

[Book I:XVIII Announcement at the Praetorian camp](#)

[Book I:XIX Senate action regarding the revolt in Germany](#)

[Book I:XX The state of the finances](#)

[Book I:XXI Otho's ambitions](#)

[Book I:XXII Ptolemy's prophecies](#)

[Book I:XXIII Otho foments discontent](#)

[Book I:XXIV His use of bribery](#)

[Book I:XXV The plot against Galba](#)

[Book I:XXVI The eve of revolt](#)

[Book I:XXVII Otho proclaimed Emperor by the soldiers](#)

[Book I:XXVIII The tribunes and centurions acquiesce](#)

[Book I:XXIX Galba learns of the rebellion](#)

[Book I:XXX Piso speaks to the palace guards](#)

## **Book I:I Introduction**

My work begins when Servius Galba was once more consul, with Titus Vinius as his colleague (69AD). Many authors have written of the previous eight hundred and twenty-two years since the founding of the city, and with equal eloquence and freedom of the Roman Republic: but after the battle of Actium (31BC) when peace demanded all power be conferred on one man, writers of equal ability vanished. At the same time, truth was impaired in a host of ways, initially because the people treated politics as outside their concern, later out of a desire to flatter, or conversely to show their dislike of their rulers. So that, between the subservient and the hostile, the needs of posterity were ignored. For people quickly lose interest in writers who look to win favour, while they readily give a hearing to detraction and envy, flattery being charged with a shameful display of servility, while malice grants a false show of liberty.

As for myself, I received neither kindness nor injury from Galba, Otho, or Vitellius. I cannot deny that my career was initiated by Vespasian, advanced by Titus, and prolonged by Domitian: but those who are faithful to the truth must speak of none simply through affection or hatred. Though, should my life be long, I have reserved for my old age the deified Nerva's reign and Trajan's rule, fertile and less dangerous material, the rare blessing of a time when one may think what one wishes and say what one thinks.

## **Book I:II The state of the Empire**

I enter on a period rich in events, made dreadful by violence, discordant with sedition, brutal even in peacetime. Four emperors died by the sword: there were three civil conflicts and even more foreign wars, both often taking place at the same time. There was success in the East, adversity in the West. Illyricum was turbulent, the Gallic provinces wavered, Britain was subdued then steadily relinquished, the Sarmatians and Suevi rose against us, the Dacians won fame by defeats suffered and inflicted, and even the Parthians were almost roused to warfare by the pretensions of one who claimed to be Nero. Moreover Italy was troubled by fresh disasters, or by those re-experienced after a lapse of ages. Cities on the fertile shores of Campania were overwhelmed and buried, Rome was devastated by fire, her ancient shrines consumed, and the Capitol itself set alight by her citizens. The sacred rites were corrupted, with widespread adultery: the sea bore a host of exiles, the cliffs were foul with corpses.

There was greater savagery still in Rome: birth, wealth, the refusal or the performance of office, led to accusations of guilt, and virtue was the surest way to ruin. The rewards given to informers were as detestable as their crimes, some being granted priesthoods and consulships as their prize, while others as imperial agents or powerful at court worked everywhere to inspire hatred and terror. Slaves were corrupted to betray their masters, freedmen their patrons; and those who lacked enemies were destroyed by their friends.

### **Book I:III A redeeming nobility**

Nevertheless, the age was not so lacking in virtue that it failed to display examples of nobility. Mothers accompanied their children in fleeing, wives followed husbands into exile: relatives showed courage, sons-in-law steadfastness, slaves a loyalty that even withstood torture. The eminent met the final necessity with fortitude, emulating the glorious deaths of antiquity.

Besides the many disasters that beset humanity, there were strange events in the heavens and on earth, flashes of lightning in warning, and presages of things to come, joyful or sad, ambiguous or clear. Never was it more fully shown, by the dreadful things experienced by the Roman people and by incontestable signs, that it is not our well-being that the gods desire, but our punishment.

### **Book I:IV After the death of Nero**

Before, however, I compose what is planned, I think it worth considering the state of the city, the morale of the armies, the condition of the provinces, all the strengths and weaknesses of the Empire, so as to understand not only the events, and their outcomes which were in the main due to chance, but also their motives and causes.

Though Nero's death was initially welcomed with cries of joy, it aroused a spectrum of emotions not only in the city among the senators, the citizens and the urban military, but also among the legions and their leaders, an unknown reality of Empire having been revealed, that an Emperor (*Galba*) could be proclaimed elsewhere than at Rome.

The Senate rejoiced and immediately made full use of their freedom, as was fitting with a new but absent Emperor; the leading knights were almost as elated; decent people attached to the noble houses, the clients and freedmen of those condemned and exiled, were roused to hope; but the elements of the people addicted to the Circus and the theatres, along with the vilest of the slaves, as well as those who had squandered their wealth and depended on Nero's favour, mourned and fed on every rumour.

### **Book I:V Sabinus' mutiny against Galba**

The City's military had long been accustomed to swear allegiance to the Caesars, and had been brought to desert Nero more by skill and pressure than their own inclination. When they realised that the gifts promised in Galba's name were denied them, and that the opportunities for distinguished merit and reward were not available in peacetime as they were in war, and that the legions had the favour of an Emperor they had made, then being inclined as they were to fresh revolution, they were roused anew by Nymphidius Sabinus' criminal actions, he being a prefect who was eager to rule as Emperor himself.

True, Nymphidius was destroyed in the attempt, but though the leader of the mutiny was eliminated, many of the soldiers were conscious of guilty involvement, and there was no lack of open criticism of Galba's decrepitude and avarice. His severity also, which had once been praised and celebrated among the soldiers, now angered them, vexed by the former discipline, since they had been led by Nero, for fourteen years, to love the Imperial vices no less than they had once revered the virtues.

Moreover there was a saying of Galba's, noble as regards the state but dangerous to himself for everything else was at odds with such an idea, that he chose his soldiers, he did not buy them.

## **Book I:VI Galba's entry into Rome**

He being weak and old, Titus Vinius and Cornelius Laco, the former the worst of men, the latter the idlest, ruined him, burdened as Galba was by public hatred of Titus' crimes, and contempt for Cornelius' lethargy. Galba's approach to Rome had been slow and blood-stained: the consul-elect, Cingonius Varro, and an ex-consul, Petronius Turpilianus, had been executed, Cingonius as one of Nymphidius' accomplices, Petronius as one of Nero's generals, both undefended and without a hearing, therefore believed innocent.

Galba's entrance into the city, after the massacre of a host of unarmed soldiers, was ill-omened, and the very men who had been their murderers were unnerved. Rome was unusually full of military force. A Spanish legion had arrived, while that which Nero had drawn from the fleet was still in place; and also many detachments from Germany, Britain and Illyricum, chosen by Nero and sent to the Caspian Gates ready to campaign against the Albani, but recalled to quell Vindex's uprising. Here was a wealth of material for revolution, and while the soldiers favoured none, they were ready to hand for anyone daring enough to employ them.

## **Book I:VII The Emperor's unpopularity in the City**

Now it so happened that the executions of Clodius Macer and Fonteius Capito were announced at this time. Macer, undoubtedly stirring trouble in Africa, was executed on Galba's orders by an imperial agent, Trebonius Garutianus. Capito, who was likewise attempting something in Germany, was executed there, by Cornelius Aquinas and Fabius Valens, the commanders of the legions, before they had been so ordered. Some believed that Capito, though smirched and tainted by greed and lust, had no thought of revolution, but that the officers urging him to rebel, unable to persuade him, had deliberately invented a charge of treason against him, while Galba, inclined to indecision, or reluctant to pry into the matter, had approved the manner of their action, simply because it could not be undone. But both executions were badly received, and once hated, Galba's actions, whether for good or evil, rendered him unpopular.

All was for sale, his freedmen held sway, his slaves grasped at sudden wealth, impatient under so aged a master. The same evils plagued the new court as the old, equally oppressive

but without an equal excuse. Galba's years sparked laughter and scorn amongst those used to Nero's youth, judging emperors by their looks, as is the way of the vulgar.

### **Book I:VIII The situation in the provinces**

Such were the sentiments in Rome, varied as is natural in so extensive a population. Regarding the provinces, Spain was under Cluvius Rufus, a man eloquent indeed in the arts of peace, but unskilled in warfare. The Gallic provinces remained under an obligation, not merely because of the memory of Vindex's failure, but also on account of the recent grant of Roman citizenship, and a reduction in their future taxes, but the Gallic tribes bordering our forces in Germany were not so treated, some even losing their land, equally aggrieved in weighing their neighbours' gains or their own injury. Our soldiers in Germany were also roused in anger, a dangerous situation in so large a force, stirred by pride in their recent uprising but also by fear in having favoured the loser. Slow to abandon Nero, their commander Verginius had not at once declared for Galba. It was believed he was not unwilling to rule in his own right, and that the soldiers offered him imperial power. Even those unable to claim the execution of Fonteius Capito as a direct grievance, were nevertheless indignant. Yet they lacked a leader since Verginius had been removed in a show of apparent friendship, and his being brought to trial and not returned to them they considered an accusation against themselves.

### **Book I:IX Germany, Britain and Illyricum**

The soldiers in Upper Germany despised Hordeonius Flaccus, their general, he being crippled by age and lameness, and devoid of consistency or authority. Even when the men were placid he had no control over them; when they were roused, the weakness of his response only angered them the more. Those in Lower Germany went some time without a commander of consular rank, before Galba sent them Aulus Vitellius, son of the Vitellius who had been censor and three times consul: that seemed to satisfy them. There was no hostility amongst the army in Britain, and no other legions were more blameless, throughout the commotion of the civil wars, either because they were far beyond the sea, or had learned, in the thick of campaigning, to hate the immediate enemy more.

There was calm too in Illyricum. Though the legions Nero had recalled from that province made overtures to Verginius via their legates while based in Italy, the disparate forces, separated by a wide distance which is the best tactic for maintaining military discipline, were united neither in their strength nor failings.

## **Book I:X The Middle East**

The East was as before. Syria with its four legions was held by Licinius Mucianus, a man of note whether in good fortune or adversity. When young and ambitious he cultivated friendships with the famous; later, his wealth consumed, his position insecure, suspecting also that Claudius was angered by him, he chose retirement to Asia, as close to exile then as he was later to the court. He was a mixture of extravagance and industry, kindness and arrogance, qualities tending to evil and to good: excessive in his pleasures when idle; showing great virtues whenever he took the field; his public life deserved praise, his private life damaged his reputation: yet he exercised influence over his subordinates, those close to him, and his colleagues in office, a man who found it easier to dispose of imperial power than hold it.

Meanwhile three legions were involved in the Jewish Wars, led by Flavius Vespasianus (Nero had appointed him as general). Vespasian opposed Galba neither in letter nor spirit: since he sent his son Titus to pay his respects and show allegiance, as we shall relate in the appropriate place. The soundings of fate, the signs and prophecies that destined Vespasian and his sons for power were only credited after his success.

## **Book I:XI Egypt and North Africa**

Egypt had been ruled since the time of the deified Augustus by Roman knights with the troops needed to keep order, instead of by its former Pharaohs: it being considered expedient to maintain direct imperial control of the province, which is difficult of access, productive of grain, but given to discord and disturbance because of superstition and lawlessness, ignorance of civil order and a total lack of local magistrates. Tiberius Alexander was the governor, at this time, himself an Egyptian.

Africa and its legions, after the death of Clodius Macer, were content to serve any Emperor, after their experience of petty tyranny.

Both the Mauritaniae, Raetia, Noricum, Thrace, and the other districts ruled by governors, were supportive or hostile according to their contact with the more powerful forces of neighbouring armies, while the un-militarised provinces, and especially Italy herself, were exposed to enslavement by any master, and fated to become the spoils of war.

Such was the state of the Empire when Servius Galba, consul for a second time, with Titus Vinius as his colleague, entered on that year destined to see his demise, and the near-extinction of the state.

## **Book I:XII The matter of the succession**

In early January, a despatch arrived from Pompeius Propinquus, the procurator in Belgic Gaul, saying that the legions of Upper Germany now had scant respect for their oath of allegiance and were demanding a new Emperor, leaving the choice to the Senate and the people of Rome, so that their show of disloyalty might be viewed more lightly. This brought forward a decision on the question of adopting a successor, which Galba had already been debating with his counsellors. Indeed nothing had been more widely discussed in the previous few months, primarily because of the freedom allowed to, and passion for, such talk, but also because of Galba's obvious age and feebleness.

Few showed judgement or love of the state; most, prompted by foolish hopes, determined on this man or that, in their ambitious murmurings, naming whoever's friend or client they were; prompted also by hatred of Titus Vinius, who was daily more unpopular as his power grew. Moreover Galba's affability itself enhanced the cupidity of his friends, their greed swelled by success, since, in dealing with an infirm and trusting man, they had less to fear and more to gain from their iniquity.

## **Book I:XIII Potential candidates**

Imperial power was actually divided between the consul Titus Vinius, and the praetorian prefect Cornelius Laco, though Galba's freedman Icelus exerted no less influence, he having been granted the gold ring of a knight, and given the equestrian appellation of Marcianus. The trio were disunited and worked for themselves on minor issues, but formed two factions as regards the succession.

Vinius favoured Marcus Otho, while Laco and Icelus agreed not so much on a specific candidate as that it should be anyone other than Otho. Galba was not unaware of the friendship between Otho and Vinius; and rumour, that lets nothing pass in silence, marked them out as father-in-law and son-in-law, since Otho was single and Vinius had an unmarried daughter. I believe Galba cared also for the public good, which if left in the hands of Otho would have been wrested from Nero in vain.

For Otho, having passed a thoughtless childhood and undisciplined youth, found favour with Nero by emulating his extravagance. The Emperor had therefore chosen to place the imperial mistress Poppaea Sabina, with his household, until Nero had rid himself of his wife Octavia. Later, suspicious of his relationship with Poppaea, the Emperor sent him off to Lusitania, ostensibly as governor. He administered the province effectively, but was the first to join Galba's cause and, far from idle during the civil war, was the most brilliant of his supporters. Now, hopeful of being adopted by Galba, he began to seek that adoption more attentively with every passing day. The majority of the army favoured him, and former courtiers inclined to him because his character resembled Nero's.

## **Book I:XIV Licinianus Piso**

Now Galba, on receiving news of the sedition in Germany and as yet unsure of Vitellius, was anxious as to where military rebellion might break out, lacking confidence even in the City's soldiery. He therefore gathered together an imperial committee, considering it his sole remedy, calling for Marius Celsus the consul-elect, and Ducenius Geminus, the city prefect, as well as Vinius and Laco.

He spoke briefly of his own advanced years, then ordered Licinianus Piso to be summoned, either because he was his preference, or as some believed at Laco's insistence, he having formed a close friendship with Piso under the auspices of Rubellius Plautus. Though Laco cleverly supported him as if he were a stranger to him, while Piso's fine reputation added weight to the advice.

Piso was the son of Marcus Crassus and Scribonia, therefore of noble ancestry on both sides, with the features and manner of the ancient school, and rightly considered severe, though a harsher judgement called him morose. This aspect of his character, which made him a doubtful choice for those of a nervous disposition, recommended his adoption to Galba.

## **Book I:XV Galba's adoption speech**

Then, they say, Galba clasped Piso's hand, and spoke in this manner: 'Even if I, simply as a private citizen, were adopting you according to curiate law and before the pontifices as customary, it would indeed be an honour for me to admit to my house a scion of Gnaeus Pompey and Marcus Crassus, and for you to add the distinction of the Sulpician and Lutatian houses to your own high rank: while as it is, being summoned to imperial office with the consent of men and gods, I am impelled, by your noble character and your love of country, to offer you the Empire for which our forefathers contended, which I won in war and that is now at peace.

In doing so I follow the example of deified Augustus who raised to the highest place next his own firstly his nephew Marcellus, then Agrippa his son-in-law, then his grandsons, and finally his step-son, Tiberius. Augustus sought a successor from within his own family, I from the entire state, not because I lack relatives or comrades-in-arms, but because I did not accept power for ambition's sake, witness to which is the fact that I have not only passed over my own relatives, but yours also, in choosing you. For you have an older brother, of the same rank as yourself, worthy of the role if you were not the finer man.

You are already of an age that is free of youth's passions; your life is such that you need not apologise for the past. So far you have experienced much adversity; yet good fortune tests the spirit more acutely, because misfortune is simply suffered, but success opens us to corruption. You may adhere, as loyally as before, to honour, liberty, and friendship, the greatest blessings of the human spirit, but others will encroach upon them, by their servility. Flattery, adulation, and self-interest, the worst poison to afflict the honest mind, will find their point of entry. Though you and I might speak to each other now with perfect openness, others would rather recognise our great rank than ourselves; since to advise a prince as to

what he ought to do is a laborious task, whereas to flatter whatever sort of prince he is already costs little effort.’

### **Book I:XVI His justification for his course of action**

‘If only the vast body of the Empire might stand firmly without a supreme head, it would be right for the republic to be reinstated by me: but necessity has long been such that I can make no better a gift to the Roman people, in my old age, than a fine successor, nor you of your youth more than a fine Emperor. Under Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius, our position was a kind of family inheritance: now we initiate election to the role there will be a kind of freedom, and with the Julian and Claudian houses no more whoever is best must be chosen for adoption. For to be conceived by and born of a noble house is mere chance, and of no greater significance than that, but the judgement shown in adoption is impartial and, if one would choose, consensus points the way.

Keep Nero’s example before your eyes, swollen as he was with his pride in the long line of Caesars. It was not Vindex, with a harmless province, nor I with my single legion that drove him from power, but his own savagery and extravagance; and before that there was no precedent for condemning an Emperor to death.

We who are raised by war and men’s esteem will be subject to envy however worthy we might be. Nor should you fear a legion or two that are still in turmoil, given that the world has been shaken to its foundations. I did not come to the throne without risk, but on the news of your adoption I shall cease to seem an old man, the sole charge now made against me. The worst of men will always long for Nero, you and I must take care that the good do not wish for him too.

Further advice is not appropriate now, and all advice is needless if I have chosen well. The best and quickest way to distinguish between good and bad is to think what you would desire or oppose under some other Emperor. For there is not with us, as there is among nations ruled by kings, a certain house that rules while all the rest are slaves, rather you will command men who can neither tolerate utter servitude, nor utter freedom.’

Then Galba spoke further in this manner, as if he were still in the process of adopting his successor, while everyone else conversed as if it were already a fact.

### **Book I:XVII Piso’s reaction**

They say Piso showed no sign of concern, nor of joy, either to those around him or later when all eyes were upon him. He answered with the respect due his Emperor and adopted father, speaking of himself with moderation. There was no sign of alteration in his clothing or appearance, he seeming more capable of wielding power than wishing to do so. They then discussed whether his adoption should be announced from the rostra, in the senate, or in the praetorian camp. It was decided to visit the camp, considering this a mark of honour for the military, whose support was not to be scorned if obtained through honest means rather than through bribery and inducement. Meanwhile an expectant crowd had gathered in front of the

palace, impatient to learn of this great decision taken in private; while the ill-fated efforts of those who sought to quell the rumour merely propagated it.

### **Book I:XVIII Announcement at the Praetorian camp**

On the tenth of January, a day of heavy rain, the heavens were more than usually troubled by the threat of thunder and lightning. In former times such events would have caused such an announcement to be deferred, but they did not deter Galba from visiting the praetorian camp, dismissing these things either as chance occurrences, or because he thought that we cannot escape what fate reveals by various portents.

Before a dense gathering of soldiers, he declared, with imperial brevity, that he had adopted Piso after the precedent set by the deified Augustus, and the military custom whereby one man levied chose the next. And to prevent greater credence being given to the unrest among the Fourth and Twenty-second legions by trying to hide it, he claimed they had been led astray by a few rebellious leaders, but their errors had not gone beyond outcries and missives and discipline would soon be restored.

He added neither flattery nor promises to his oration, while the tribunes, centurions and nearest soldiers responded in a welcoming manner; but among the rest a gloomy silence reigned, for they felt they had lost a gratuity by wartime service which was owed to them even in peacetime. They could certainly have been won over by the slightest generosity on the part of the stingy old man, but his old-fashioned rigour and boundless severity, qualities we no longer respect, harmed his position.

### **Book I:XIX Senate action regarding the revolt in Germany**

Galba's speech to the Senate was just as brief and straightforward as that to the soldiers: Piso spoke with grace, and the senators voiced approval: many of them willingly; those who had opposed the adoption effusively; and the non-aligned majority servilely, moved merely by private ambition and not the public good. During the following four days, those between his adoption and his murder, Piso said and did nothing of public note.

Reports of further defections in Germany arrived daily and, since the public were prone to accept every item of bad news, the senate voted to send envoys to the troops there. There was a discussion in private as to whether Piso should go, to give the initiative greater weight, since the other delegates would merely have authority from the senate, while Piso had the status of a Caesar. They decided to send Laco, prefect of the praetorian cohort, also; but he vetoed the idea. The final selection of candidates having been left to Galba, they were chosen with a shameful lack of consistency, being named, excused, or substituted according to their pleas to go or stay, dictated by their hopes or fears.

## **Book I:XX The state of the finances**

The next priority was the state of the finances; and after full consideration justice demanded that wealth be sought where it had been lost. Nero had squandered twenty-two million gold pieces on gifts. It was agreed that the recipients should be summoned, and that they be allowed to keep only a tenth of what they had been given. But there was scarcely a tenth left, since they had wasted their own resources, as well as those of others, the most avaricious and profligate having neither lands nor capital, except what remained to fuel their vices.

Thirty Roman knights were elected to exact the levy, a new and burdensome task both by number and extent: there were auction-signs and crowds of speculators everywhere, and the city was rife with lawsuits. Nevertheless there was great rejoicing that those who had been enriched by Nero would now be as poor as those he had robbed.

At the same time four tribunes were dismissed: Antonius Taurus and Antonius Naso of the praetorian cohorts, Aemilius Pacensis of the city cohort, and Julius Fronto of the police force. This failed to deal with the remainder, but did instil fear, as though all were under suspicion, to be driven from office one by one craftily and by intimidation.

## **Book I:XXI Otho's ambitions**

Otho, in the meantime, who had nothing to gain from a state of calm, his plans all depending on chaos, was spurred on by many things, an extravagance that would have burdened an emperor, a lack of wealth that even a private citizen could scarcely tolerate, anger towards Galba, and envy of Piso. He conjured up fears that enhanced his greed: that he had wearied Nero, and could not again expect an honourable exile in Lusitania; that tyrants always hated and were suspicious of any man seen as a successor; and that this had already harmed him as regards the aged Galba, and would do him greater harm as regards young Piso, who was harsh by nature and embittered by long exile: an Otho could easily be killed.

Therefore he must be bold and act, while the Emperor's authority was weak, and his successor's not yet deployed. The period of transition was ripe for great deeds, and a man must not delay when inaction is more ruinous than sheer risk. Death comes to all alike, but brings oblivion or glory in the eyes of posterity; and though the same end waits for the guilty and the innocent, the man of greater powers should win merit in dying.

## **Book I:XXII Ptolemy's prophecies**

Otho's mind was not unmanly as his body was. His intimate freedmen and slaves, who were indulged more than is usual in private houses, kept Nero's court before his eager eyes, with its luxury, adulterous marriages, and other royal vices, taunting him that they were his, if he dared, but ordained for others if he were passive. The astrologers also, a treacherous crowd as

regards the powerful, deceiving the ambitious but in this state of ours forever proscribed yet employed, urged him on, announcing that their observations of the stars presaged altered times and a glorious year for Otho.

Many of these astrologers, the worst of instruments for an imperial consort to use, had shared Poppaea's secrets, and one of them, Ptolemy, a companion to Otho in Spain, had promised him that he would outlive Nero. Winning credit for this, he then used his own wits, and the murmurings of those who contrasted Galba's years with Otho's youth, to persuade him that he would be called on to seize power. Otho treated such prophecies as true predictions of the future, obtained through genuine knowledge, so ready is human nature to believe in the arcane. Nor was Ptolemy deficient in effort, already inciting Otho to rebellion, to which the path from such ambitions is most easy.

### **Book I:XXIII Otho foments discontent**

Yet it is unlikely that thoughts of rebellion came new to Otho: in hopes of the succession or in preparation for some initiative, he had applied himself for some time to winning popularity with the soldiers. On the march, at review, or in camp he addressed the most seasoned troops by name, and reminding them they had been followers of Nero together, called them his messmates; he acknowledged others, asked after some, and helped them with cash or favours, frequently complaining of Galba in ambiguous terms, or otherwise stirring up the troops. Wearisome marches, lack of supplies and harsh discipline were badly received by men who were used to being transported aboard ship to the lakes of Campania and the cities of Achaia, but now struggled over the Alps or the Pyrenees under arms, or along the endless high roads.

### **Book I:XXIV His use of bribery**

With the soldier's minds already afire, Maevius Pudens, one of Tigellinus' closest friends, added fuel to the flames. Attracting to him those who were of a rebellious disposition or in need of money, he eventually reached the point, whenever Galba dined with Otho, of handing a gold piece to each of the cohort of guards, as a kind of state gift, while Otho added secret presents to individuals. He was so bold in his corruptions, that when Cocceius Proculus, one of the Imperial bodyguard, quarrelled with his neighbour over land boundaries, Otho bought the whole of the neighbouring farm himself and gave it to Proculus, taking advantage of the laziness of the prefect, who was deceived equally by the visible and the hidden.

### **Book I:XXV The plot against Galba**

Then Otho placed one of his freedmen, Onomastus, at the head of his planned conspiracy, by whom Barbius Proculus, the bodyguard's officer of the watch, and Veturius his second-in-command, were corrupted, once Onomastus had discovered from various soundings that they were clever and daring, had showered them with bribes and promises, and handed them funds

with which to win over more of their men. Hereby, a pair of common soldiers undertook to re-assign the power of the whole Roman people, and did so assign it.

Few were admitted to knowledge of the plot, they increasing the malaise among the rest by various methods; among senior officers by suggesting they were potential suspects because of favours shown them by Nymphidius; among the rank and file by stirring anger and disappointment at the constant deferment of their gratuities. There were some who were fired by the memory of Nero, and a longing for their previous licence: while all had a common fear of a change to their terms of service.

## **Book I:XXVI The eve of revolt**

The infection also corrupted the minds of the legions and auxiliaries, once the questionable loyalty of the army in Germany became well-known. So ready were the disaffected to rebel, with even the loyal prepared to turn a blind eye, that they planned to seize Otho as he returned from a banquet on the fourteenth of January, being deterred only by the uncertainty of a night action, the scattered placements of the military throughout the city, and the difficulty of reaching consensus among drunken men.

They gave no thought to the good of the state, since when sober they were ready to pollute it with the blood of their emperor, but feared that in the darkness some man encountering troops from Germany or Pannonia might be taken for Otho and proclaimed emperor, Otho being unknown to them.

There were a host of indications that a rebellion might erupt, but these were contained by the conspirators. Rumours reached Galba's ears, but the prefect, Laco, made light of them, being unaware of the soldiers' sentiments and opposed to any suggestion, however excellent, that he had not proposed himself, and obstinately hostile to those who knew more than he did.

## **Book I:XXVII Otho proclaimed Emperor by the soldiers**

On the fifteenth of January, when the Emperor was sacrificing before the Temple of Apollo, Umbricius, the seer, declared the omens unfavourable, claiming a plot was afoot and enemies were in Galba's house. On hearing this Otho, who was standing beside Galba, interpreted it in contrast as favourable to himself and the success of his plans. His freedman Onomastus presently announced that his architect and contractors were waiting, signifying by this that the soldiers were already assembled and the conspiracy ripe.

When Otho was asked why he was leaving the temple, he excused himself by saying he was off to buy some properties, needing inspection as they were of uncertain value because of their age. Taking his freedman by the arm he walked through Tiberius' palace to the Velabrum, and then to the gilded distance-stone close by the Temple of Saturn.

There, he was hailed as emperor by twenty-three of the bodyguard, who quickly installed him in a sedan chair and hurried him away, swords drawn, as he was fearful that there were so few to greet him. A similar number of soldiers joined them as they went, some knowingly, more in amazement, many with shouts and weapons, others in silence ready to follow events.

## **Book I:XXVIII The tribunes and centurions acquiesce**

The tribune Julius Martialis was officer of the day in camp. He, given the startling enormity of the action and questioning the depth of the soldiers' disloyalty, fearing death if he opposed it, led the majority to assume his complicity. The rest of the tribunes and the centurions also preferred pragmatism to an uncertain show of honesty. And such was their state of mind that the worst of crimes dared by a few was desired by more and accepted by all.

## **Book I:XXIX Galba learns of the rebellion**

Galba meanwhile unaware of all this, intent on performing the sacred rites, was calling on the gods of an empire already another's when news reached him that a senator, identity unknown, had been carried to the camp, and shortly afterwards that it was Otho. At this point, there arrived from the city those who had encountered the procession, who exaggerated events from fear, and others, not failing even then to flatter, diminishing their importance.

So, after some discussion, the decision was made that someone other than Galba, whose authority as Emperor was to be kept intact in case more serious measures were needed, should test the mood among the troops guarding the palace. Piso, it was, who standing on the palace steps called the soldiers together and spoke in this manner: 'It is five days, comrades, since I was adopted Caesar, ignorant of the future and whether that title was to be desired or shunned. The fate of our house and of the state is in your hands.'

I say this, not because I fear disaster on my own account. I have known adversity, just as I know that success brings no less threat: I grieve for my adopted father's fate, the Senate and the very Empire itself, if we must be killed today or, in an act that for the good means equal sadness, if we must kill.

After the last rebellion we found solace in the city being unstained by blood, the government transferred without dissent: and my adoption seemed to guarantee that there would be no conflict on Galba's death.'

## **Book I:XXX Piso speaks to the palace guards**

'I claim no great character or nobility myself; nor need I speak of my virtues when the comparison is merely with an Otho. His faults, the only thing he glories in, were undermining empire even as he feigned to be the Emperor's friend. Is it his manner, his appearance, or his unmanly dress that seemingly makes him worthy of power? They deceive themselves who are imposed upon by extravagance posing as liberality: he knows how to squander, not how to give. Debauchery and revelry and swarms of women fill his thoughts: these he considers the right of princes; the pleasure and abandon will be his, the shame and disgrace will stain every man. Power gained by doing wrong no man has ever exercised virtuously.'

The consent of all made Galba Caesar, and Galba named me Caesar with your consent. If the state, the Senate, the people are empty names to them, then only you can ensure that those worst of men should not appoint an emperor. For legions to rebel against their leaders has been known: but your loyalty and reputation remain uninjured to the present day. And it was Nero who abandoned you, not you Nero.

Shall less than thirty traitors and deserters, whom no one would even trust to appoint a centurion or a tribune, assign the Imperial power? Will you accept such a precedent, and by inaction make their crime yours? Such licence would spread to the provinces, and the result of their wickedness be ours, the ensuing conflict yours. Those guiltless of desiring their emperor's death shall be guaranteed no less a reward than the assassins have been promised; for you'll receive a greater gift for you loyalty, from us, than you might from others by committing treason.'

# **Book I: XXXI-LX Galba's death, Otho's reign and Vitellius's uprising**

## **Contents**

[Book I:XXXI Galba gathers his forces](#)

[Book I:XXXII Titus Vinius urges Galba to wait](#)

[Book I:XXXIII Others counsel action](#)

[Book I:XXXIV Galba decides](#)

[Book I:XXXV Otho believed dead](#)

[Book I:XXXVI Otho celebrated by the soldiers in camp](#)

[Book I:XXXVII Otho addresses the troops](#)

[Book I:XXXVIII The soldiers arm themselves](#)

[Book I:XXXIX Galba's supporters in confusion](#)

[Book I:XL Otho's troops invade the forum](#)

[Book I:XLI Galba assassinated](#)

[Book I:XLII Titus Vinius killed](#)

[Book I:XLIII Piso also assassinated](#)

[Book I:XLIV Otho rejoices](#)

[Book I:XLV Celsus escapes death](#)

[Book I:XLVI The army exerts its will](#)

[Book I:XLVII Otho consolidates power](#)

[Book I:XLVIII Brief biographies of Piso and Titus Vinius](#)

[Book I:XLIX A brief biography of Galba](#)

[Book I:L The rival generals](#)

[Book I:LI The origins of Vitellius' rebellion](#)

[Book I:LII Fabius Valens urges Vitellius to act](#)

[Book I:LIII The situation in Upper Germany](#)

[Book I:LIV Unrest among the troops](#)

[Book I:LV Attitudes of the various legions](#)

[Book I:LVI Vitellius makes his bid for power](#)

[Book I:LVII Upper Germany claims Vitellius as Emperor](#)

[Book I:LVIII The executions of Pompeius Propinquus and Crispinus](#)

[Book I:LIX Vitellius gathers support](#)

[Book I:LX The situation in Britain](#)

## **Book I:XXXI Galba gathers his forces**

The bodyguard having dispersed, the rest of the cohort did not disdain to hear the remainder of his speech, and as happens in times of disturbance, they took up the standards spontaneously, without as yet any real design, rather than in concealment of their treachery as was later believed.

Celsus Marius was sent to the crack troops from Illyria, encamped in the Vipsanian Colonnade. The chief centurions Amullius Serenus and Domitius Sabinus were ordered to summon the German troops from the Hall of Liberty. The naval companies however were not trusted, being hostile to Galba since he had massacred their comrades on entering the city.

Cetrius Severus, Subrius Dexter and Pompeius Longinus, the tribunes, went to the praetorian camp itself, to see if mutiny was threatened but not yet afoot, in case it could be averted by wiser counsel. The soldiers threatened and opposed Subrius and Cetrius, while Longinus they forcibly restrained and disarmed, he being loyal to the Emperor not because of his rank but due to his friendship for Galba, and so being regarded with greater suspicion. The naval companies joined the praetorians unhesitatingly. The select Illyrian troops turned Celsus out at the point of their spears.

The German detachments however hesitated for a long time, still being physically below par and moreover being kindly disposed to Galba, for Nero had despatched them to Alexandria while Galba, on their return, had smothered them with care, plagued as they were by illness after the lengthy voyage.

## **Book I:XXXII Titus Vinius urges Galba to wait**

Now the whole mass of commoners, together with the slaves, filled the Palatine, and with loud clamour cried out for Otho's death, and the conspirators' execution, just as they used to call for a performance in the Circus or the theatre. There was neither truth nor justice in this, since they would equally have shouted for the opposition, the very same day, but they acted in line with the time-worn tradition of supporting every prince with wild adulation and mindless zeal.

Meanwhile Galba was on the horns of a dilemma. Titus Vinius was all for defending the palace, arming the slaves, blocking the doorways, and ignoring the angry troops: let Galba give the traitors time to repent of their actions and those who were loyal time to unite; crime relied on momentum, wisdom fed on delay, and after all he would easily have the opportunity later to take another course, if that were best, while if he were to act now and repent of it, the power to alter the state of affairs would lie with others.

## **Book I:XXXIII Others counsel action**

The rest thought he should act swiftly before the conspiracy, weak as yet and limited in extent, gathered strength, saying that Otho would waver, a man who had slipped away stealthily, had been carried off to meet those who had no knowledge of him, and only had the chance now to play the prince because of the time-wasting and delay caused by this inertia. The last thing they should do was to wait for Otho to win over the troops, invade the forum, and reach the Capitol while Galba looked on, the noble Emperor and his brave friends barring the doors and defending the threshold, as if prepared for a siege! And a crowd of servants would be a fine help, if the sentiment of the people for unity, and their initial indignation, which is always most intense, regarding the conspiracy, were allowed to diminish!

Therefore the ignoble course held the most risk: if they must die they should go to meet the crisis: bringing more honour to them and greater opprobrium to Otho.

When Vinius opposed this sentiment, Laco attacked him threateningly, spurred on by Icelus, obstinate in his personal hatred of Vinius to the detriment of the state.

## **Book I:XXXIV Galba decides**

Galba, favouring those who offered the more plausible advice, delayed no longer. Yet Piso, who was young, of good name, and enjoyed recent popularity, was first sent to the camp. He was also inimical to Titus Vinius, either in reality, or because Vinius' opponents wished it so and hostility is more readily credited.

Piso had barely left the palace for the camp when a rumour, initially vague and uncertain, had it that Otho had been killed there. Soon, as happens with momentous fictions, those appeared who claimed to have been present and seen it, and thus the tale gained credit with those who were overjoyed through to those who were unmoved by the news. Many though judged it had been invented and embellished by Otho's supporters, already among the crowd, who had spread the false hope abroad in order to lure Galba from the palace.

## **Book I:XXXV Otho believed dead**

Nevertheless it was not merely the ignorant masses who celebrated with wild enthusiasm, but many knights and senators too, who incautiously laying fear aside burst open the palace doors and pushing through gathered before Galba, complaining that Otho's death had robbed them of the chance to execute justice on the man. They were the greatest of cowards, as events proved, lacking all courage at moments of danger, bold only in words, their language full of ferocity. No one knew the facts for certain, but all claimed them as true.

Finally vanquished by the dearth of information and the collective misapprehension, Galba donned his armour, and as his age and infirmity prevented resistance to the gathering

crowds, he was raised aloft in a chair. Julius Atticus, a member of the bodyguard, appeared before him flourishing his blood-stained sword, shouting that he had killed Otho. 'Comrade, who ordered you to do so?' Galba asked, it being a mark of his mind to check any licence by the military, unmoved as he was by threats, and uncorrupted by praise.

### **Book I:XXXVI Otho celebrated by the soldiers in camp**

There was now no doubt of the sentiment in camp. The soldiers' enthusiasm was such that dissatisfied with carrying Otho round on their shoulders, they set him on the platform where Galba's gilded statue had previously stood, surrounded by the ensigns and standards. He warned the crowd of soldiers to beware of their commanders above all, and neither tribune nor centurion were allowed near him.

All was shouts, cries, tumult, mutual exhortation, beyond what is heard in a gathering of the masses, where random voices call out half-hearted praise: here they gazed at all who flocked to the cause, grasped them by the hand, embraced them, placed an arm round their shoulders, and recited the oath of allegiance, now commending the emperor to the soldiers, now the soldiers to their new emperor.

Nor did Otho fail to play his part, stretching out his hands as if to embrace the crowd, scattering kisses, playing the slave throughout in order to become their master. And when the whole legion of marines had sworn their loyalty to him, trusting in his position, and mindful that he must now rouse as a body those whom he had inspired individually, he began to address them, in this manner, from the rampart of the camp:

### **Book I:XXXVII Otho addresses the troops**

'I cannot as yet say what I am, comrades, since I cannot call myself a private citizen now you have named me emperor, nor emperor while another holds power. Your role too is uncertain as long as there is doubt as to whether you support an emperor or an enemy of the Roman people in your camp. Can you not hear how with one voice they shout for my death and your punishment? Thus it is clear that, as one, we must save ourselves or die; for Galba, who is so full of mercy, as one who slaughtered thousands of blameless soldiers when none required it, has doubtless already made great promises of vengeance!

Horror grips my mind when I recall his fatal entry to the city, and his one achievement, the order that those he had granted protection when they asked should be decimated before the citizens' eyes! Such were the auspices at his entry, and what glory has he brought the empire since, unless it be the murders in Spain of Obultronus Sabinus and Cornelius Marcellus; in Gaul of Betuus Cilo; Fonteius Capito in Germany; Clodius Macer in Africa; Cingonius on the road to Rome; Turpilianus in the city, Nymphidius in camp?

What camp, what province anywhere has not been stained with blood or, as Galba has it, corrected and improved? For what others call crimes he calls remedies; names cruelty falsely as severity; avarice as frugality; the insults and punishment you suffer, discipline!

It is seven months since Nero met his end, and Icelus has already stolen more than ever those freedmen Polyclitus, Vatinius, and Aegialus wasted. Titus Vinius could have proceeded with no more greed or licence if he were emperor himself; now he holds us subject as if we were his slaves and worthless as any other. That one house alone could provide the pay that is a daily reproach, and never granted you.'

### **Book I:XXXVIII The soldiers arm themselves**

'And to quell any hopes you might have had in his successor, Galba summoned a man whose gloom and avarice are most like his own. You saw how the gods themselves, comrades, signalled their aversion to his ill-starred adoption with a mighty storm. The senate and the people of Rome are of one mind: they look to your bravery, in whom resides the power for honest action, without whom such action, however worthy, must fail.

I call you not to danger, nor to war, all the armed forces are with us. And that detachment in civilian dress no longer defends him, but detains him: on sight of you, once privy to my signal, your only contest will be to see to whom I'll owe the most. There must be no hesitation to act, where the action is not praised unless performed.'

Galba then ordered the armoury to be opened. The soldiers immediately seized weapons, without regard to rank or military custom, without distinguishing praetorian or legionary by their true insignia, donning auxiliaries' helmets and shields regardless, without tribune or centurion, each man his own master and commander; and the principal motivator of the worst among them that which good men grieved over.

### **Book I:XXXIX Galba's supporters in confusion**

Piso, now terrified by the noise of the growing rebellion, and the shouts echoing through the city, joined Galba, who in the meantime had left the palace and reached the forum. By then Marius Celsus had news which was scarcely joyful, at which some of Galba's followers urged his return to the palace, others that he try for the Capitol, many that he seize the rostra. Most simply argued against the advice of the rest, and as happens with unhelpful suggestions, those seemed best whose moment had passed.

They say that Laco, without Galba's knowledge, thought of murdering Titus Vinius, either so that his execution might calm the soldiers' minds; because he thought him privy to Otho's counsels; or ultimately out of hatred. The time and place however caused his hesitation, since it is hard to end the killing once begun, and then his plans were disturbed by troubling news, and the dispersal of his close supporters, as enthusiasm was fading among those who had been eager at first to show their loyalty and courage.

## **Book I:XL Otho's troops invade the forum**

Galba, was driven to and fro by the varying impulse of the surging crowds who filled the courts and temples, contemplating the mournful prospect. Neither the citizens nor the masses uttered a cry, but their faces showed terror and they strained towards every sound. There was no noise, not even a subdued quiet, but such a silence as great fear and fury bring.

Yet Otho was told the masses were being armed, and ordered his supporters to move quickly and head off the danger. So the soldiers of Rome charged out as though to drive a Vologaesius, or a Pacorus from the ancient throne of the Parthian Arsacidae, not to kill their old defenceless emperor. They scattered the crowds, trampled senators, and burst, fiercely armed, at full gallop into the forum.

Neither the sight of the Capitol, nor reverence for its towering temples, nor the thought of emperors past or to come deterred them from committing a crime an imperial successor must punish, whoever he might be.

## **Book I:XLI Galba assassinated**

The standard-bearer of Galba's bodyguards (who was named Atilius Vergilio, they say) on seeing the armed men closing with them, tore Galba's insignia from the standard, and threw it to the ground. That signalled the evident enthusiasm of the military towards Otho, and the populace swiftly deserted the forum, those who hesitated facing drawn swords.

Close to the Lacus Curtius, Galba was thrown from his chair by his terrified carriers, and rolled on the ground. His last words have been variously reported, according to whether he was hated or admired. Some say he begged to know what wrong he had done, and prayed for a few days longer in which to pay the soldiers' wages: many that he freely offered his throat to his murderers, telling them to strike quickly if they thought it would benefit the state. His killers paid no attention to the words.

Nothing is really known of his assassin: some naming him as Terentius, others Laecanius; the story most repeated being that Camurius, of the Fifteenth legion, pierced his throat with a thrust of the sword. Others, as his chest was protected, badly mutilated his arms and legs, and with savage ferocity continued to inflict many wounds on the torso, even after he had been decapitated.

## **Book I:XLII Titus Vinius killed**

Then Titus Vinius was attacked, about whose last moments there is also uncertainty, as to whether his dread of imminent death robbed him of speech, or whether he had time to cry out that they had no mandate from Otho to kill him. This latter might have been his own

invention out of fear, or a confession of his complicity in the rebellion, though his life and reputation suggest that he was privy to a crime he had instigated.

He fell at the first blow, which struck him behind the knee, before the temple of the deified Caesar, Julius, and was then pierced through and through by the legionary, Julius Carus.

### **Book I:XLIII Piso also assassinated**

Our age beheld a hero that day, in Sempronius Densus. A centurion of the praetorian cohort assigned by Galba to protect Piso, he drew his dagger against the armed men, reproached them for their crime and, though wounded, so distracted the assassins by his words and actions that Piso was granted time to escape.

Fleeing to the Temple of Vesta, Piso met with the pity of one of the public slaves who hid him in his room. The obscurity of his hiding place, and not the sacredness of the site or its rites, delayed his imminent execution, but Sulpicius Florus of the British auxiliaries, recently granted citizenship by Galba, and one of the bodyguard, Staius Murcus, arrived presently, sent by Otho who was filled with desire for this Piso's death, and they dragged him forth and killed him at the doors of the temple.

### **Book I:XLIV Otho rejoices**

They say Otho delighted in no other murder more, nor gazed so insatiably on any other head, because his mind was now free of anxiety and open to joy, or perhaps because in Galba's case the knowledge of his own treason, or in that of Titus Vinus a memory of friendship, stirred even his harsh mind with gloomy thoughts; while he considered it right and lawful to rejoice at the death of Piso, his rival and enemy.

The heads of the victims were fixed on poles, among the cohorts' standards close to the eagle of the legion, while those who had done the murders, those who had been there, those who truly or falsely boasted of their part in what they saw as a fine and memorable act, vied in showing their blood-stained hands.

The Emperor Vitellius later found over a hundred and twenty petitions seeking reward for some outstanding action performed that day: he ordered that all those petitioners be hunted down and killed, not in Galba's honour, but in accord with the custom of previous emperors as a protection for the present, and in anticipation of themselves being avenged.

### **Book I:XLV Celsus escapes death**

You might have thought this a different senate, another populace: rushing en masse to the camp, straining to overtake those around them, and pass those in front, railing against Galba,

praising the soldier's judgement, covering Otho's hands in kisses; the more false their actions, the greater their extravagance in performing them.

Otho rebuffed no one, while seeking to temper the eager and threatening attitudes of the soldiers by word and look. They in turn demanded the execution of Marius Celsus, the consul elect, who had been Galba's loyal friend to the very last; hating his energetic and blameless character, as if those were evil attributes. It appeared that they were set on a trail of murder and plunder, encompassing the death of every honest citizen.

Otho had not yet the authority to forbid their crimes: yet he had power of command. So, feigning anger, he ordered Celsus' arrest, and by proclaiming that the man would suffer more intensely, saved him from immediate execution.

### **Book I:XLVI The army exerts its will**

From now on events were dictated by the soldiers: the praetorians themselves chose their prefects: Plotius Firmus, once a private, then chief of police, a supporter of Otho's faction even while Galba was still alive; and in addition, Licinius Proculus whose intimate association with Otho led to suspicion he had favoured the conspiracy.

They voted for Flavius Sabinus as Prefect of the City, adhering to Nero's choice who had selected him for the same office, while many in doing so had an eye to his brother Vespasian.

The troops also demanded that the payments usually made to centurions to grant leave be abolished, since they amounted to an annual tax on the rank and file. A quarter of each company might be on leave, or even idling about the camp itself, so long as the centurions were paid their dues, and no one cared about the burden it represented, or how a soldier raised the cash, whether he purchased his exemption through performing menial tasks, petty theft, or even highway robbery. The wealthiest of soldiers would be cruelly demoralised by hard labour until they were pleased to buy relief. Thereafter, they would return to their company, impoverished by the expense, and weakened by idleness, exchanging wealth for poverty, and effort for indolence. So ruined, one by one, by the same impoverishment and licence, they were ripe for mutiny and dissent, and ultimately for civil warfare.

Otho, in order not to alienate the centurions by his generosity to their men, promised to pay the dues for the soldiers' annual leave from the emperor's private purse, undoubtedly a matter of expedience, but which was later established by benevolent emperors as a fixed rule of service.

The prefect Laco, in the guise of being banished to some island, was in fact assassinated by a retired soldier, sent by Otho to commit the murder; while Marcianus Icelus, being only a freedman, was publicly executed.

### **Book I:XLVII Otho consolidates power**

The day was spent in criminal activities, whose worst evil was the pleasure taken in them. The city praetor summoned the senate; and the other magistrates vied with each other in their

subservience, while the senators hurried to take their places, voting Otho a tribune's power, the title Augustus, and all the imperial honours.

All did their utmost to erase any memory of their former insults and opposition to Otho, nor did it seem that their occasional utterances had lodged in his mind, whether because he had genuinely forgotten them, or was merely waiting to act on them, his reign being too brief as yet to reveal.

Otho was then carried aloft through the forum, which was stained with blood, between the piles of corpses, first to the Capitol and then the Palatine, after which he allowed the bodies to be given up for cremation and entombment.

Piso was interred by Verania, his wife, and Scribonianus, his brother; Titus Vinius by his daughter Crispina; once they had located and redeemed the heads, which the assassins had seized for profit.

### **Book I:XLVIII Brief biographies of Piso and Titus Vinius**

Piso was at the end of his thirty-first year; his reputation far greater than his good fortune. His brother Magnus had been executed by Claudius, his brother Crassus by Nero. He himself, long an exile, Caesar for a mere four days, by his hasty adoption gained this sole advantage over his remaining elder brother, that he was killed first.

Titus Vinius, a contradictory character, had lived fifty-seven years. His father was of praetorian origins, his maternal grandfather one of the proscribed. He was notorious for his first period of military service under the legate Calvisius Sabinus, when the legate's wife driven by a shameful urge to visit the camp, entered it at night, dressed as a soldier. After she had lewdly seduced both the guard and the other men from their duty, she dared to commit adultery in the general's headquarters. Titus Vinius was implicated in the crime, and so, loaded with chains, was imprisoned by Caligula, to be released later when times changed.

After an uninterrupted progression in office, having served as praetor, he was placed in command of a legion. Though successful he later stained his reputation with an action worthy of a slave, in stealing a gold wine-cup at a banquet given by Claudius, such that Claudius, on the following day, ordered Vinius alone among the other guests to be served with earthenware.

Yet as proconsul of Gallia Narbonensis, Vinius ruled strictly and honestly; it was later, as a friend of Galba, that he was raised to dangerous heights. Bold, clever, effective, crooked or diligent according to inclination, he was always vigorous.

Titus Vinius' will was set aside because of the magnitude of his gains. Piso's poverty, in contrast, ensured that his last wishes were fulfilled.

### **Book I:XLIX A brief biography of Galba**

Galba's body was left to the licence of darkness, and vexed with a thousand insults. Argius, his steward, a former slave, at last gave the corpse humble burial in Galba's private garden.

The head, set on a pole by camp-followers and mistreated, was ultimately discovered the next day, in front of Petrobius' tomb (he being one of Nero's freedmen, whom Galba had punished) and was interred with the previously cremated body.

Such was the end of Servius Galba, who had survived, blessed with good fortune, seventy-three years and five emperors, yet was happier under other's rule than his own. His family noble of old, possessing great wealth, he was of modest ability, free from failings rather than possessing virtue. Neither indifferent to fame nor seeking it, he was not covetous of others' property, frugal with his own, careful with the state's. Long-suffering and indulgent with friends and freedmen alike, when he found them honest, he was blind to a fault regarding their wrongdoings. But his noble birth, and the fear those times inspired, obscured the truth, so that what was really complacency, men called wisdom.

While in his prime, he won praise for his military service in Germany. He ruled Africa with restraint, as proconsul, and already old, showed the same judgement in Nearer Spain. He seemed more than a private citizen even when he was one, and by all accounts capable of imperial office, even if he had never ruled.

## **Book I:L The rival generals**

Fresh news regarding Vitellius now terrified a City alarmed both by the recent atrocities and fears concerning Otho's previous character, news which had been suppressed prior to Galba's death, such that it was thought only the army in Upper Germany had mutinied. Now the idea that these two, Otho and Vitellius, the worst of all men in their shamelessness, idleness and profligacy, had been chosen it seemed, as if by fate, to destroy the Empire, prompted open grief not only among the senators and knights who were part and parcel of the state, but even among the common citizens.

They spoke not only of the recent example of a savage peace, but also of their memories of the civil wars; the many occasions when Rome had been occupied; the devastation of Italy and the rape of the provinces; of Pharsalia, Philippi, Perusia and Mutina, names resonant with communal destruction. Even when honest men contended for power their world had been turned upside down, yet the Empire had survived when Julius Caesar was the victor, and likewise Augustus; the Republic might have survived if Pompey and Brutus had succeeded. Now must they go to the temples and pray for an Otho or a Vitellius? Prayers for either would be impious, desire for either would be execrable, where the only certainty regarding the contest was that whoever won things would be worse.

There were those who augured the coming of Vespasian and his armies of the East, and yet though Vespasian was preferable to the others they were horrified at the thought of further massacre and conflict. And Vespasian's reputation was then mixed; he alone was destined to be altered for the better by power, unlike all the emperors before him.

## **Book I:LI The origins of Vitellius' rebellion**

Now I will speak of the cause and origins of Vitellius' rebellion. Once Julius Vindex and his entire force had been destroyed, his army, proud of its glory and spoils, since it had achieved a highly profitable outcome without danger or effort, chose to continue fighting, for gain rather than mere pay. They had long tolerated a period of service that was harsh and unrewarding, due to the nature of the terrain, the climate, and the strictness of their discipline. But though rigorous in peacetime, discipline is eroded by civil conflict, since there is corruption on all sides, and treachery goes unpunished.

There was an abundance of troops, weapons, and mounts, for use and display; and while, before the conflict, the men knew only their own centuries and squadrons, since armies were deployed within the boundaries of each province, once the legions had mobilised against Vindex they became aware of their and the Gallic provinces' strength. They raised their weapons one more, seeking fresh discord; it was no longer a question of friends, as before, but of conquerors and conquered. Nor did that section of the army of the Gallic provinces along the Rhine fail to align itself to the same faction, or show itself a fierce adversary of the 'Galbans'; coining that name in disdain for Vindex. Thus their spirits craved the storming of towns, ravaging of fields, and looting of houses, beginning with those of the Sequani and Aedui, followed by the other tribes in order of their wealth.

They were not driven simply by arrogance and greed, faults common to the stronger party, but also by Gallic insolence; the Gauls boasting, as an insult to the army, that Galba had remitted a quarter of their tribute monies, and rewarded them from the State coffers.

Rumours were cleverly spread, and mindlessly credited, that the legions were being decimated, and the most resolute centurions dismissed. There was dreadful news from every quarter, and troubling reports from Rome; the colony of Lyon was hostile and, persisting in its loyalty to Nero, a hotbed of rumours. But the most fertile soil for the soldiers' imaginings and false beliefs was within the camp itself, in their own hatreds and fears or, when they regarded their own strength, their self-confidence.

## **Book I:LII Fabius Valens urges Vitellius to act**

Around the first of December in the preceding year, Aulus Vitellius had visited Lower Germany and carried out a thorough inspection of the legions' winter quarters. Many men had their rank restored, their disgrace expunged, and the marks against them erased. Much of this was for his own ends, some through his sense of justice, including the rightful amendment of promotions and demotions in rank which Fronteijs Capito had made through meanness or avarice.

The measures he took were received by all as more significant than those merely of a consular legate. And while the strictest disciplinarians called it demeaning, his supporters called it kindness and affability when he gave away his own wealth, without bound or distinction, and squandered that of others; their desire for power at once translating his very faults into virtues.

There were many in both armies who were quiet and obedient, and many who were active and intent on wrongdoing, the commanders of the legions, Alienus Caecina and Fabius Valens, in particular being men of boundless ambition and unusual temerity, of whom Valens was hostile to Galba, since he considered Galba had displayed ingratitude at the disclosure of Verginius' indecision, and his crushing of Capito's plans. He urged Vitellius on, holding forth regarding the soldiers' ardour, that Vitellius' fame was celebrated everywhere: Flaccus Hordeonius (in Upper Germany) would be no impediment; Britain would be for him, the German auxiliaries would follow his lead: the provinces' loyalty to their Emperor was fragile, the old man's hour of rule precarious and destined soon to pass: let Vitellius but open wide his arms and rush to meet approaching fortune. Verginius had good reason to hesitate, he was of equestrian family but his father was low-born, and he himself, unequal to the office if granted power, was secure in refusing it. But his father's three consulships and censorship as colleague to the Emperor Claudius, had long since granted Vitellius imperial dignity, and denied him the security of being merely a subject.

Vitellius was roused to ambition by this, more than to expectation.

### **Book I:LIII The situation in Upper Germany**

Meanwhile in Upper Germany, Caecina, a handsome young man, of good stature, but extravagant disposition, had roused the soldiers' partisanship, through clever speeches combined with his upright presence. Galba had set him in command of a legion, since he had been swift to join Galba's cause while a quaestor in Baetica, but had ordered him to be prosecuted later for embezzlement, after finding that he had diverted public funds. Caecina was unhappy with this, and decided to make matters more involved by cloaking his private hurt with the state's misfortune.

Nor were the seeds of conflict lacking in an army that had fully engaged in the fight against Vindex, had not adhered to Galba until Nero's assassination, and had been anticipated in its oath of allegiance to Galba by detachments from Lower Germany. Moreover, the Treviri and the Lingones, as well as other tribes punished by Galba with harsh edicts or loss of land, mingled freely with the overwintering legions, such that there were seditious murmurings, the soldiers were demoralized by mixing with the locals, and the support they had given Verginius was liable in future to be granted to another.

### **Book I:LIV Unrest among the troops**

The Lingones, according to ancient custom, sent gifts depicting clasped hands, as a sign of friendship, to the legions. Their envoys, assuming the guise of distressed poverty, and complaining at headquarters and in the messes of the common soldiers, whenever anyone was ready to listen, now about their own ills, now about the grants won by neighbouring tribes, inflamed the minds of the troops with the dangers and insults the army had endured. They were not far from mutiny when Hordeonius Flaccus ordered the envoys to leave the camp, and by night so their exit might be less obvious.

A troubling rumour arose, many asserting the envoys had been killed and that, if the soldiers did not consult their own interests, the most active of those complaining about the present state of affairs would be executed under cover of darkness and without the rest knowing.

So the legions bound themselves by a secret oath, joined by the auxiliaries who at first had been suspected of an intent to attack the legions, since their infantry and cavalry surrounded the camp, but soon showed themselves more eager in the same cause, for there is a greater consensus among the ill-disposed in favour of war, than there is for peace and harmony.

### **Book I:LV Attitudes of the various legions**

After a considerable delay, the legions of Lower Germany had sworn the oath of allegiance to Galba on the first of January, a few in the front ranks giving voice, the rest silently waiting on their neighbours' courage, it being human nature to follow swiftly where one hesitates to begin.

But there was a diversity of views among the various legions of Upper Germany. The First and Fifth were so rebellious that some stoned the depictions of Galba. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth, daring to do no more than grumble and threaten, sought an excuse for mutiny.

Meanwhile the Fourth and Twenty-Second legions, who were over-wintering in the same camp (at Mainz) tore down Galba's portraits, the Fourth taking the lead, the Twenty-Second hesitating, but soon joining them. So as not to seem lacking in respect for the Empire, they swore their oath on the now neglected names of the senate and people of Rome.

None of the tribunes or legates made any effort on Galba's behalf, some, as if in rebellion, were notable in stirring trouble. Yet no one spoke in public, or from the rostrum, nor was there anyone as yet to call on.

### **Book I:LVI Vitellius makes his bid for power**

Hordeonius Flaccus, the consular legate, was a mere bystander, a spectator at this shameful scene, not daring to check the headlong rush, restrain the doubters, or even rouse the loyal, but hesitant through timidity, and apathetic in his powerlessness.

Four centurions of the Twenty-Second, Nonius Receptus, Donatius Valens, Romilius Marcellus and Calpurnius Repentinus, seeking to protect the portraits of Galba, were swept aside by the onrush of soldiers and thrown into chains.

None of the rest showed any loyalty, or remembered their former oath, but as happens in a rebellion, where the majority go all follow.

On the night following the first of January, an eagle-bearer of the Fourth legion in Cologne reported to Vitellius at table that the Fourth and Twenty-Second legions had both thrown down the images of Galba, and sworn allegiance to the senate and people of Rome.

The oath seemed empty: Vitellius resolved to set fortune in the balance and present them with an emperor.

He therefore sent men to the legions and the legates declaring that the army of Upper Germany had mutinied against Galba, so war must be waged on the rebels or, if they wished for peace and concord, they must adopt an emperor: and there was less danger in accepting than in seeking one.

## **Book I:LVII Upper Germany claims Vitellius as Emperor**

The nearest winter quarters were those of the First legion, and the most resolute of the commanders was Fabius Valens. He entered Cologne, on the next day, with the cavalry from the legion and the auxiliaries, and hailed Vitellius as Emperor.

The legions of that province, in intense rivalry, followed suit; and the army of Upper Germany, forsaking their temporary allegiance to the senate and people of Rome, aligned themselves with Vitellius on the third of January, so it was clear they had not been under state control during the previous two days.

The people of Cologne, and the tribes of the Treviri and Lingones, matched the army in enthusiasm, offering aid, money, weapons, or horses according to their bodily strength, wealth or abilities. Not only the leaders of the colonies or camps, who had current riches and hoped for more in the event of victory, but groups or whole companies of common soldiers driven by passion, impulse, or ambition, contributed their own savings, or instead of cash their belts, trappings and the silver insignia from their armour.

## **Book I:LVIII The executions of Pompeius Propinquus and Crispinus**

So, having praised the soldiers' ready support, Vitellius assigned the imperial offices, usually held by freedmen, to Roman knights; and paid the centurions their fees for leave of absence, from his own purse.

In most cases he approved the soldiers' ferocity in demanding that many be punished, occasionally evading it by a show of imprisonment. Pompeius Propinquus, for example, the imperial agent in Belgian Gaul, was immediately executed, while Julius Burdo, admiral of the German fleet, was cleverly removed from danger.

The army was ablaze with anger at Burdo because he had framed charges, and later plotted, against Fonteius Capito. It had fond memories of Capito, and though Vitellius, faced with that anger, might command executions openly, he could only pardon men through deceit.

Burdo was therefore held in custody, and only released after Vitellius' victory, when the soldiers' anger had faded. Crispinus, the centurion, meanwhile, was offered as scapegoat. He was stained by Capito's blood, and he offered Vitellius both a more obvious means of meeting their demands, and a less costly sacrifice.

## **Book I:LIX Vitellius gathers support**

Julius Civilis was the next to be rescued from danger, Vitellius not wishing to alienate the Batavians, a savage tribe among whom he had great influence, by punishing him. There were, moreover, eight cohorts of Batavians in the territory of the Lingones, auxiliaries to the Fourteenth legion, who owing to the discord at that time had separated from the legion. and would carry great weight as friends or enemies, depending on their inclination.

On the other hand, Vitellius ordered the execution of the centurions Nonius, Donatius, Romilius and Calpurnius, mentioned above, who were guilty only of the charge of loyalty to the wrong cause, which is the most serious of all among rebels.

He then won Valerius Asiaticus to his side, the governor of the Belgic province, whom he later received as his son-in-law; and likewise Junius Blaesus, commander in Gallia Lugdunensis, along with the legion *prima Italica* and the Taurian cavalry based at Lyon.

The forces in Raetia joined him no less immediately; nor was there any hesitation from Britain.

## **Book I:LX The situation in Britain**

The governor there was Trebellius Maximus, loathed and despised by his soldiers for his meanness and avarice. Their hatred of him was inflamed by Roscius Coelius, commander of the Twentieth legion, long involved in a mutual conflict with him which, on the occasion of civil war, erupted violently.

Trebellius charged Coelus with sedition and indiscipline in the ranks, while Coelus reproached Trebellius for despoiling and impoverishing the legions. Meanwhile, the soldiers' restraint was eroded by this shameful quarrel, the discord reaching a point where Trebellius, showered with insults not merely by the legions but by the auxiliaries, who deserted men and cavalry to join Coelus, fled to Vitellius for protection.

Though the consular governor had vanished, the province remained quiet: the commanders of the legions were in charge, with equal authority, though Coelius was the more powerful because of his daring.

# **Book I: LXI-XC Otho versus Vitellius**

## **Contents**

- [Book I:LXI Vitellius' plan of campaign](#)
- [Book I:LXII Vitellius advances](#)
- [Book I:LXIII The massacre at Metz](#)
- [Book I:LXIV Fabius Valens at Lyon](#)
- [Book I:LXV The feud between Lyon and Vienne](#)
- [Book I:LXVI Fabius Valens advances to the Alps](#)
- [Book I:LXVII Caecina attacks the Helvetii](#)
- [Book I:LXVIII Massacre of the Helvetii](#)
- [Book I:LXIX The fate of the Helvetian envoys](#)
- [Book I:LXX Caecina crosses the Alps into Italy](#)
- [Book I:LXXI Otho befriends Celsus](#)
- [Book I:LXXII Tigellinus commits suicide](#)
- [Book I:LXXIII Calvia Crispinilla escapes punishment](#)
- [Book I:LXXIV Otho and Vitellius spar with one another](#)
- [Book I:LXXV They deploy their agents](#)
- [Book I:LXXVI The provinces and armies divided](#)
- [Book I:LXXVII Temporary calm in Rome](#)
- [Book I:LXXVIII Otho woos the provinces](#)
- [Book I:LXXIX Conflict with the Sarmatians](#)
- [Book I:LXXX Mutiny in Rome](#)
- [Book I:LXXXI Otho's banquet disrupted](#)
- [Book I:LXXXII The aftermath of the mutiny](#)
- [Book I:LXXXIII Otho addresses the troops](#)
- [Book I:LXXXIV Otho calls for order](#)
- [Book I:LXXXV Deep disquiet in Rome](#)
- [Book I:LXXXVI Signs and Omens](#)
- [Book I:LXXXVII Otho initiates a campaign in Gaul](#)
- [Book I:LXXXVIII Fear in Rome](#)
- [Book I:LXXXIX The City exposed](#)
- [Book I:XC Otho leaves for Gaul with his forces](#)

## **Book I:LXI Vitellius' plan of campaign**

With the army in Britain added to his strength, Vitellius, with ample power and resources, selected two commanders and two fronts for the conflict. He ordered Fabius Valens to win over the Gallic provinces, or if they resisted to devastate their territory and enter Italy forcibly via the Cottian Alps, while Caecina was to descend via the nearer route over the Poenine range.

Valens was assigned picked troops of the Lower army, with the eagle of the Fifth legion, cohorts, and cavalry, to the number in all of forty thousand. Caecina led thirty thousand drawn from the Upper army, his real strength residing in the Twenty-first legion.

Both were also assigned German auxiliaries, from whom Vitellius too supplemented his own forces, to follow on behind with full martial strength.

## **Book I:LXII Vitellius advances**

There was a startling contrast between the army and its leader: the soldiers were eagerly demanding battle since the Gallic provinces were still nervous and the Spanish hesitant: saying that neither winter nor the delay caused by peace-loving cowards need present an obstacle: Italy must be invaded and Rome seized, and nothing can be more beneficial than speed in civil conflict, where one must act rather than debate.

Vitellius however was torpid, anticipating the delights of imperial power by indulging in idle luxury and extravagant banquets, tipsy by midday and heavy with eating, while his soldiers still ardent and vigorous performed their duty more effectively than their general, inspiring the energetic or the lazy with hope or fear, as if their commander were present.

Drawn up in their ranks, they eagerly demanded the signal to advance. Vitellius was, there and then, granted the appellation Germanicus: later refusing that of Caesar even when he had succeeded. Fabius Valens, as he led the army to war, took it as a favourable omen that on the day they started an eagle flew slowly before them as if to guide their march, and for a long while the joyful clamour of the troops was such that the calm untroubled flight of the bird was received as a powerful omen of a successful and magnificent outcome.

## **Book I:LXIII The massacre at Metz**

The army approached the Treviri, as secure allies, but at Dividorum (Metz), a town of the Mediomatrici, though they were welcomed in all friendship, sudden panic gripped them. The soldiers spontaneously raised their weapons to attack innocent civilians, not for plunder or a desire for gain, but wildly and furiously, for no clear reason, and therefore they were less easily constrained.

At last, quietened by their general's appeals, they stopped short of a total destruction of the populace, though about four thousand people were massacred. Such terror swept the Gallic provinces at this, that during the troops later advance entire townships led by their magistrates met them in mass entreaty, women and children lining the roads, as everything likely to appease the enemy's anger, though they were not at war, was offered to secure peace.

## **Book I:LXIV Fabius Valens at Lyon**

Fabius Valens was in the territory of the Leuci when he heard the news of Galba's death and Otho's accession to power. The soldiers were moved neither to joy nor fear: they thought only of battle. The Gauls hesitated no longer: though Otho and Vitellius roused their hatred equally, Vitellius in addition inspired fear.

The neighbouring state of the Lingones was loyal to his faction. There Fabius Valens' men, welcomed warmly, vied with one another in their restraint. Joy was brief however, due to the intemperance of the auxiliaries who, as we said above, had separated from the Fourteenth legion and whom Fabius Valens had attached to his forces. There was first a quarrel, then a brawl between the Batavians and legionaries, then as the soldiers sided with one or the other, there was almost open warfare, until Fabius Valens by censuring a few reminded the Batavians of the authority they had flouted.

The troops also searched in vain for an excuse to fight the Aeduans, who when commanded to provide money and weapons also delivered supplies to the army free of charge. And what the Aeduans did from fear, the citizens of Lyon did from joy.

The Italic legion and Taurian cavalry were withdrawn from the city, Fabius Valens deciding to leave the Eighteenth cohort there, it being their usual winter quarters. Manlius Valens, however, commander of the Italic legion, lacked favour with Vitellius, though he had served his faction well, and Fabius Valens had defamed him in secret accusations, of which Manlius was ignorant, though he praised him openly the more easily to deceive him.

## **Book I:LXV The feud between Lyon and Vienne**

The latest rebellion (of Vindex) had inflamed the long-standing feud between the people of Lyons and Vienne. They had inflicted severe losses on one another, too frequently and savagely to be merely fighting for Nero or Galba. Moreover Galba had shown his displeasure by appropriating the revenues of Lyon, while granting great honours to Vienne. There was therefore rivalry, envy and mutual hatred between two cities separated by a single river (the Rhône).

So the citizens of Lyon began to rouse individual soldiers, and incite them to destroy Vienne, reminding them that its inhabitants has besieged their colony, aided Vindex in his actions, and recently enrolled legions in defence of Galba. And after declaring these reasons for hatred, they pointed to the wealth of potential plunder, no longer in secret exhortation but in public appeals. The soldiers should march as avengers, and raze the seat of war in Gaul;

everything there being foreign and inimical to them: while they themselves, being a Roman colony, a part of the army, friends in prosperity or adversity, must not be abandoned to irate enemies, should fortune prove adverse.

### **Book I:LXVI Fabius Valens advances to the Alps**

With these and similar types of appeal, they had stirred the soldiers to the point where not even the leaders and commanders of the faction judged it possible to reign in the army's discontent, when the citizens of Vienne, aware of their danger, turned the soldiers from their intent, by meeting their advance carrying veils and ribbons, and reaching out to clasp their weapons, knees and feet: Valens, in addition granted each soldier three gold pieces. The value and long-standing of the colony also counted; and a speech of Valens, in which he urged the army to ensure the the citizens of Vienne went safe and unharmed was favourably received. Moreover the citizens, their weapons confiscated en masse, supported the army with public and private resources of every kind.

But speculation has always had it that Valens himself was bought for a huge sum. He had long been poor, now suddenly rich he scarcely hid his change of fortune. His desires increased by years of poverty, he was now unrestrained, and after an impoverished youth became prodigal in his mature years.

He now led the army, at a slow pace, through the lands of the Allobroges and the Vocontii; the marching distances and the changes of camping ground being determined by Valens auctioning of them to the populace, in shameless negotiations detrimental to the landowners and civic magistrates. Indeed, he acted so menacingly, that he was on the verge of torching Lucus (which was a town belonging to the Vocontii), until he was pacified with gifts of cash. Whenever money proved lacking, he was appeased by acts of debauchery and adultery. In this manner, they reached the Alps.

### **Book I:LXVII Caecina attacks the Helvetii**

Caecina meanwhile had extracted even more blood and gain. He had been dangerously provoked by the Helvetii, a Gallic people once illustrious for their strength in battle, now only for the memory of their notoriety. Ignorant of Galba's murder, they refused to recognise Vitellius' authority.

The prime source of conflict was the rashness and greed of the Twenty-first legion, who had stolen cash sent as payment to the garrison of a fort formerly defended by the Helvetians with their own troops and at their own expense. Angered, the Helvetians, intercepting letters in the name of the army in Germany being carried to the Pannonian legions, held the centurions and some of the soldiers in custody.

Caecina, always eager for action, was one to punish any fault before it was even regretted: he swiftly moved camp, laid waste the fields, and devastated a place (Baden on Limmat) that had been established in the form of a spa town during the long peace, and was much frequented for its scenery and health-giving waters.

Orders were also sent to the auxiliaries in Raetia to attack the rear of the Helvetian line that faced the Roman legion.

### **Book I:LXVIII Massacre of the Helvetii**

The Helvetii were daring before a crisis, but filled with fear at the moment of danger. Although they had chosen a leader, Claudius Severus, at the start of the unrest, they had little knowledge of arms, no sense of order, and failed to plan ahead. Battle against veterans would be fatal, even a siege dangerous since their walls had been eroded by neglect. Here was Caecina with a redoubtable force, there the Raetian cavalry and foot soldiers, with young warriors accustomed to arms and trained in war. Slaughter and destruction were on all sides.

Caught between the two armies, the Helvetii flung away their weapons and, the majority of them wounded or struggling, fled towards Mount Vocetius (the Bözberg Pass). A Thracian cohort, dispatched against them immediately, dislodged them and, pursued by the Germans and Raetians through their forests, they were slaughtered in their very hiding places. Thousands were killed, thousands sold as slaves.

After the rout, as the Roman army sought to attack Avenches, the tribal capital, envoys were sent to offer surrender, and the surrender was accepted. Caecina punished one of their principal envoys, Julius Alpinus, as instigator of the conflict: leaving the rest to Vitellius's anger or indulgence.

### **Book I:LXIX The fate of the Helvetian envoys**

It is not easy to say whom the Helvetians found least readily appeased, the general or his soldiers. The latter, shaking their fists and weapons in the envoys' faces, demanded the razing of the city. Not even Vitellius refrained from words and threats, until one envoy, Claudius Cossus, noted for his eloquence but now hiding his skill as an orator behind a needful display of agitation which increased his effectiveness, quenched the soldiers' anger.

As usual, the crowd was prone to sudden changes of mood, as ready to show pity as the extremes of rage. With flowing tears and constant prayers for leniency, the envoys won protection and safety for their city.

### **Book I:LXX Caecina crosses the Alps into Italy**

Caecina, delaying a few days among the Helvetii while he learnt Vitellius' plans, and at the same time preparing for the passage of the Alps, received the good news from Italy that the Silian cavalry, operating along the River Po, had sworn allegiance to Vitellius. The cavalry had served under Vitellius when he was proconsul in Africa; later they were removed by Nero for assignment to Egypt, but had been recalled because of Vindex's rebellion, and were hence in Italy.

Prompted by the cavalry commanders who, knowing nothing of Otho but attached to Vitellius, extolled the strength of the approaching legions and the reputation of the army in Germany, they sided with Vitellius, and as something of a gift to their new emperor they secured for him the most substantial of the towns north of the Po, namely Milan, Novara, Ivrea and Vercelli. Caecina learned this from the citizens themselves.

Since a single cavalry detachment could not hold the broadest region of Italy, he sent forward infantry cohorts of Gauls, Lusitanians and Britons, with some German troops and a squadron of Petra's horse, he himself waiting a while to see whether he should detour over the Arlberg to Noricum to tackle Petronius Urbicus the imperial agent, who was thought loyal to Otho since he had roused the auxiliaries and demolished the bridges over the river.

However, fearing that he might lose the troops and cavalry he had sent forward, and accepting at the same time that there was not only greater glory in securing Italy but that, wherever the decisive action finally took place, the people of Noricum would be one with the other prizes of victory, he led his reserves and the heavily armed legions over the Pass of Poeninus (the Great Saint Bernard) with the Alps still under winter snow.

### **Book I:LXXI Otho befriends Celsus**

Meanwhile, contrary to everyone's expectation, Otho did not descend dully into pleasure and idleness: he deferred his enjoyments, masked his profligacy, and arranged his life as became his imperial role, such that greater dread was inspired by his false show of virtue with its threat of vice to come.

The consul-elect Marius Celsus, whom he had rescued from the soldiers' fury by feigning his imprisonment, he ordered to the Capitol; he sought credit for this clemency towards a distinguished man whom his faction hated.

Celsus pleaded guilty to his firm loyalty to Galba, further claiming it as exemplary. Otho did not behave as if granting him pardon but, rather than having to fear him later as an enemy, chose to be reconciled to him, and immediately counted him among his intimates, and elected him as one of his generals in the looming conflict.

However, Celsus, by some fatality, maintained an unbroken and unfortunate loyalty to Otho. His survival, delighting the leading statesmen and celebrated by the masses, was viewed favourably even by the soldiers, who admired the very virtue that had roused their fury.

### **Book I:LXXII Tigellinus commits suicide**

Equal delight greeted the news of Tigellinus' death, but for different reasons. Ofonius Tigellinus, of obscure descent, was shameless as a youth, profligate in his later years. Through vice, being the quicker route, he gained command of the city watch and the praetorians, with other prizes normally awarded to virtue, and later indulged in cruelty and then greed, the sins of maturity. He also seduced Nero to every kind of wickedness, dared certain vices without Nero's knowledge, and finally deserted and betrayed him.

Thus, for opposite reasons, by those who hated Nero and by those who regretted his death, no one's punishment was more persistently demanded. Under Galba he had been protected by Titus Vinius's influence, he claiming that Tigellinus had saved his daughter's life. Though he had indeed done so, it was not out of clemency, having killed so many others, but as future insurance. The worst of men, mistrusting the present and fearful of change, seek private debts to ward off public hatred, without regard for the right, but simply for self-protection.

The masses, more hostile towards Tigellinus, as a result, their previous hatred inflamed by the recent unpopularity of Titus Vinius, poured into the Palatine and the fora from every corner of the city, filling the circus and the theatres, where they command the greatest licence, giving vent to seditious outbursts, until Tigellinus, who was taking the waters at Sinuessa, received the news that the final sacrifice was required of him. Shamefully delaying his end amongst the kisses and embraces of his mistresses, he ultimately cut his throat with a razor, further defiling an infamous life with a reluctant and ignominious death.

### **Book I:LXXIII Calvia Crispinilla escapes punishment**

Demands were made. at that same time, for the punishment of Calvia Crispinilla. She was protected from persecution however through various dissimulations of the emperor, devices which damaged his reputation. Mistress of vice to Nero, she had then crossed to Africa, roused Clodius Macer to rebellion and brazenly attempted to visit famine on the Roman people. Afterwards gaining favour with the whole city by marrying a former consul, she remained unharmed under the rule of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, wielding influence later because of her wealth coupled with a lack of children, attributes courted in good times and bad alike.

### **Book I:LXXIV Otho and Vitellius spar with one another**

Meanwhile Otho, in letters marred by an unmanly show of flattery, offered Vitellius money, favours and a choice of whatever secluded place he wished to pursue his profligate lifestyle. Vitellius extended a corresponding offer, in an initially pleasant exchange, both employing a foolish and unworthy pretence, but soon, as though in a brawl, charging each other in turn with vice and debauchery, falsely in neither case.

After recalling the delegation Galba had sent to Germany, Otho sent them again, in the senate's name, to both the armies, to the Italic legion, and to the troops stationed at Lyon. These delegates remained with Vitellius too readily for anyone to think they had been detained, while the praetorians Otho had sent with them, as a display of power, were sent back before they could mingle with the legions.

Fabius Valens parried with letters from the army in Germany to the praetorian and city cohorts, boasting of the strength of their faction, and offering terms; he reproached them furthermore, for granting imperial powers to Otho which had been assigned, long before, to Vitellius.

## **Book I:LXXV They deploy their agents**

Thus the praetorians were assailed simultaneously with threats and promises, as being no match in war yet standing to lose nothing by peace. Still they failed to break faith.

Otho sent agents to Germany, Vitellius to Rome. Both were frustrated, though Vitellius' agents travelled with impunity, being neither known to nor knowing any in that vast multitude, while Otho's were revealed by appearing as strangers in an army where everyone knew each other.

Vitellius also wrote to Otho's brother, Titianus, threatening him with the death of his son if Vitellius's own mother and children were harmed. In fact the families of both leaders remained unharmed, possibly from fear under Otho's rule: Vitellius as ultimate victor winning credit for his clemency.

## **Book I:LXXVI The provinces and armies divided**

Early news from Illyricum increased Otho's confidence that the legions in Dalmatia, Pannonia and Moesia were his. The same news from Spain elicited a proclamation praising Cluvius Rufus: but it swiftly became known that Spain had defected to Vitellius. Not even Aquitania, though it had been forced by Julius Cordus to swear allegiance to Otho, remained true.

Nowhere was there either loyalty or affection. Fear and necessity drove men to and fro. That very anxiety led the province of Gallia Narbonensis to support Vitellius, it being easier to join the nearer, stronger faction. The most distant provinces and the armed forces overseas remained in Otho's camp, not out of enthusiasm for his cause, but because the name of Rome and the authority of the senate still carried great weight, while the first-comer still held their allegiance.

Vespasian swore the army in Judaea to Otho's side, Mucianus the legions in Syria. Egypt and all the Eastern provinces were also secured in Otho's name. Africa complied in the same way, led by Carthage without waiting on the authority of Vipstanius Apronianus, the proconsul. One of Nero's freedmen, Crescens, brought forward celebrations for the populace to honour the imperial accession (since in troubled times even freedmen take part in public affairs) and the citizens rushed to these as usual, without restraint. The other cities followed Carthage's example.

## **Book I:LXXVII Temporary calm in Rome**

With the provinces and armies so divided, Vitellius needed to seize the imperial power for himself through warfare, while Otho continued to perform the duties of empire as if in a

profound state of peace, sometimes with the dignity of public office but often in a peremptory way due to the demands of present need.

Otho was himself consul, with his brother Titianus, until the first of March; the following months being allocated to Verginius as a gesture to the army in Germany, Pompeius Vopiscus being appointed with him under the pretext of his former friendship with Otho, though most people interpreted it as a tribute to the citizens of Vienne.

The remaining consulships for the year were as Nero or Galba had decided: Caelius Sabinus with Flavius Sabinus until July; Arrius Antoninus with Marius Celsus till September; nor were their appointments vetoed by Vitellius when he succeeded. But Otho handed out pontificates and augurships as a crowning honour to old men already dignified by office, or to solace young noblemen newly returned from exile with priesthoods their fathers and grandfathers had once held.

Cadius Rufus, Pedius Blaesus and Saevinus P... were restored to senatorial rank, which they had lost under Claudius and Nero due to charges of bribery: altered by their pardoners to charges of apparent treason rather than greed, treason being now a term so lacking in weight that even decent laws were rendered null and void.

### **Book I:LXXVIII Otho woos the provinces**

With an equal largesse, Otho addressed the provinces and cities, adding colonists to Seville and Merida, granting universal Roman citizenship to the Lingones, towns in Mauritania to the province of Baetica, and new constitutions to Africa and Cappadocia, more for show than lasting value. Even amongst the tasks justified by the necessities of his situation, and the pressing nature of his responsibilities, he did not forget the objects of his affections, reinstalling the statues of Poppaea by agreement with the senate and, or so it was believed, raising the question of marking Nero's reign, hoping to win over the masses. And there were indeed individuals who set up statues of Nero: and the soldiers and populace on certain days even acclaimed him as Otho Neroni, as if adding to his nobility and worth, though he himself forbore to do so, fearing to deny or embarrassed to acknowledge the title.

### **Book I:LXXIX Conflict with the Sarmatians**

With minds turned to civil war, external affairs were ignored. As a consequence, a Sarmatian tribe, the Rhoxolani, who had massacred two cohorts the previous winter, invaded Moesia anticipating significant gain. Numbering nine thousand horsemen, their temperament and easy success made them more intent on plunder than war.

While they were thus scattered and inattentive, the third legion with added auxiliaries suddenly attacked. On the Roman side, all was disposed for battle. The Sarmatian forces were either dispersed, or since in their desire for plunder they were weighed under heavy burdens and the treacherous paths robbed their horses of speed, were cut down as easily as if they were fettered and chained. For strange to say, all the Sarmatians' courage seems due to external factors. No nation is so cowardly fighting on foot, whereas when they attack on

horseback scarcely any force can resist them. But the day being wet and the snow melting, they could use neither the lance, nor the longsword that they wield with both hands, for the horses slid about and their coats of mail weighed them down.

This armour, which the princes and nobility wear, is constructed of iron plates or tough hide and though impenetrable to blows prevents them rising once the enemy's charge topples them; and they were simultaneously sinking in the soft, deep snow. Meanwhile the Roman soldiers, in their breastplates, moved easily, hurling javelins or attacking with the lance or, as required, wielding the short sword and felling the Sarmatians at close quarters (they not being accustomed to using shields to defend themselves), those few of the enemy who escaped the battlefield hiding themselves in the marshes.

When news of this reached Rome, the governor of Moesia, Marcus Aponius, was awarded a triumphal statue, while the commanders of the legions, Fulvius Aurelius, Julianus Tettius, and Numisius Lupus, were granted consular decorations, Otho meanwhile being delighted and claiming glory for himself, as both fortunate in war and in strengthening the state by use of his generals and armed forces.

### **Book I:LXXX Mutiny in Rome**

Meanwhile, from small and unthreatening beginnings, a mutiny began which almost destroyed Rome. Otho had ordered the Seventeenth cohort to the city, from the colony at Ostia. One of the praetorian tribunes, Varius Crispinus, had been given the task of equipping these troops. So as to be free to execute his orders when the camp was quiet, he had the armoury opened and the cohorts' wagons loaded at nightfall. The hour raising suspicions, the motive suggesting deceit, the attempt to act quietly ended in uproar, while to drunken men the sight of weapons stirred a desire to use them.

The soldiers muttered and accused the centurions and tribunes of treachery, saying the senators' slaves were being armed in order to eliminate Otho. Some were heavy with wine and hardly aware; the worst saw an opportunity for plunder; the mass, as ever, were ready for anything novel, and the discipline of the better part was nullified by the darkness.

When a tribune tried to end the sedition, they killed him, along with the most authoritarian of the centurions, then seized weapons, mounted their horses, and headed for Rome and the palace.

### **Book I:LXXXI Otho's banquet disrupted**

Otho was giving a banquet for the leading men and women of the city; who, terrified as to whether there might be random violence by the military, or some treachery on the part of the Emperor, and unsure whether it was riskier to stay and be trapped or depart and scatter, now pretended courage and now were unmasked by fear, according as they interpreted Otho's expression; and as generally happens in minds tuned to suspicion, were fearful whenever he seemed afraid.

Yet he was as terrified by the threat to the senate as to himself, and immediately despatched the prefects of the praetorian guard to calm the soldiers' mood, while telling everyone to leave the banquet quickly. Then, indeed, the magistrates who were present fled in every direction, casting off their badges of office, shunning the attention of their friends and servants, women and old men threading diverse routes through the darkness, mostly not to their own homes, but seeking their friends' houses, and the obscurest hiding places of their humblest followers.

## **Book I:LXXXII The aftermath of the mutiny**

Not even the solid doors of the palace prevented the soldiers' onrush interrupting the banquet. They insisted Otho be shown to them, wounding the tribune Julius Martalius and the prefect of the legion Vitellius Saturninus, who opposed their entry. Weapons and threats were directed from every side now at the centurions and tribunes, now at the senators en masse, whose minds were filled with blind panic; and unable to fix on any one target for their anger, they claimed the right to act against all, until Otho, sacrificing his imperial dignity by standing on his couch, managed to restrain them by means of his prayers and tears, and they guiltily and unwillingly returned to camp.

The next day private houses were locked and bolted, as if the city were occupied, few people navigated the streets, and all were gloomy; the soldiers' faces were downcast more in sorrow than in penitence. The prefects Licinius Proculus and Plotius Firmus addressed their companies, one mildly the other severely according to their natures. They ended their speeches by saying that fifty gold pieces would be paid to each soldier: only then did Otho dare to enter the camp.

He was surrounded by tribunes and centurions, who tore away their military insignia, demanding their discharge and his protection. The soldiers felt the displeasure, and returned to duty, further requesting that the leaders of the mutiny be punished.

## **Book I:LXXXIII Otho addresses the troops**

Otho realised, despite the turmoil and the differing attitudes of the soldiers (since the best of them demanded a check to the present licence, while the greater mass of troops, easily roused to civil war by riots and disturbance, delighted in mutiny and the dependence of the powerful on winning their support) that leadership won through force is not retained by immediate moderation or a show of dignity as before, yet, anxious as to the danger facing the city, and the risk to the senate, he finally spoke to them in this manner: 'My fellow soldiers, I have not come to swell your affections for me, or exhort you to courage (since you show both qualities in boundless excess) but to ask that you restrain your boldness, and limit your enthusiasm for my person.

The recent turmoil owed its origin not to greed or hatred, which are what drive most armies to rebellion, nor to any dereliction of duty, or fear of danger: it was your outstanding loyalty that roused you to action more violent than is wise: for unless one employs judgement, honourable motives often produce fatal results.

We are destined for war. Now, does the nature of our situation or the speed of events lend itself to the broadcasting of every item of news openly, or the making of plans with every man present? It is as vital for soldiers not to know certain things, as to know others: a leader's authority requires such strict discipline to be maintained that often even centurions and tribunes must simply obey orders. If every individual is allowed to query their orders, with discipline gone power itself is ended.

Suppose you have to take up arms in the dead of night? Shall one or two reckless and drunken men (since I cannot believe the recent madness due to more than mere disorder) stain their hands with a centurion's or a tribune's blood, or burst into their general's tent?'

### **Book I:LXXXIV Otho calls for order**

'It is true that you did so for my sake: but in times of confusion, in the darkness and general uproar, it might have given the opportunity for an attack on me also. If Vitellius and his followers could choose the attitude and feelings by which we are possessed, would they not elect for discord and sedition? No soldier to obey his centurion, nor centurion his tribune, so that infantry and cavalry both might hurtle to their ruin? It is in obedience, my fellow soldiers, rather than in questioning the leaders' orders that success in war resides, and the strongest army in a crisis is that which is the most disciplined prior to it.

Let yours be the weapons and the courage: leave me to plan and direct our forces. A few were at fault, and two in particular of them must pay: let the rest of you erase the memory of a dreadful night. And may no army ever again hear such outcries against the senate. They are the mind of empire, and the glory of the provinces. By Hercules, not even the Germans, whom Vitellius is now rousing against us, would dare to harm them! Shall any scion of Italy, any true Roman warrior, call for the blood, the very destruction, of that order by means of whose splendour and worth we outshine the base obscurity of Vitellius' party?

Vitellius has won to himself certain tribes, it is true, but the senate is ours: so is the state therefore, while its very enemies support him. What? Do you think the finest city is built of houses, roof-tiles, heaps of stone? Such mute, inanimate things can perish, yet readily be replaced: our continuity of power, the peace of the world, my security and yours, depend on the stability of the senate. Let us leave to posterity this senate, founded by the father and creator of our city, succeeding in unbroken line from the age of kings to that of the emperors, as we received it from our fathers; for as senators rise from your ranks, so emperors rise from the ranks of senators.'

### **Book I:LXXXV Deep disquiet in Rome**

This speech, designed to censure yet calm the soldiers, and his measured approach (since he had only ordered two of the mutineers punished) were gratefully acknowledged, and those whom force would not have restrained were quiet for the present. Yet the city was still disquieted: it betrayed the murmur of weapons, and the aspect of war, for the troops while not involved in wide disturbance were scattered in disguise among the houses, and kept a questioning eye on those whom birth, wealth, or high distinction made the object of gossip.

Most people thought that Vitellius' soldiers too were in Rome to test support for the various parties, such that suspicion was everywhere and not even the privacy of the home was free from fear. But the greatest disquiet was in public, where men altered their views and expressions according to the news spread by rumour, so as not to seem downcast at unfavourable nor joyful at favourable news.

Indeed, when the senate assembled, it was hard to strike a balance, between avoiding sullen silence and exercising a suspicious licence, Otho soon perceiving flattery, he who had recently been a private citizen, and using the very terms himself. Thus the senators twisted and turned this way and that in their statements, while naming Vitellius an enemy and a traitor to the homeland, the most prescient making only a generalised protest, though some indeed hurled real abuse, yet only amidst the uproar and the mass of voices, or hiding their meaning in the tumult of their own words.

### **Book I:LXXXVI Signs and Omens**

Strange events, reported by various sources, added to the fears: that the chariot reins had fallen from the goddess Victory's hands, where her statue stood, at the entrance to the Capitol; that a more than human form had rushed from Juno's chapel; that a statue of the deified Julius on an island in the Tiber had turned from west to east on a clear calm day; that an ox in Etruria had spoken, animals had produced weird offspring, and other events occurred that in more primitive ages it seems were observed even in peacetime but now are only heard of in times of anxiety.

Yet the greatest concern, a present problem and future danger, was the sudden overflow of the Tiber. Risen to a great height the river shattered the Pons Sublicius and, its current dammed by the bridge's remnants, inundated not merely the low-lying areas of the city, but also those usually free of such problems. Many people in the streets were swept away, while more were trapped in their bedrooms or above shops. Famine overtook the masses denied work, food being scarce. The foundations of apartment blocks were undermined by the standing water, and collapsed when the flood ebbed.

And the fact that, at the very moment when people's minds were freed from this danger, Otho's route through the Campus Martius and the Flaminian Way was blocked, as he was preparing a military expedition, that too was interpreted not as simply unfortunate and due to natural causes but as a sign and an omen.

### **Book I:LXXXVII Otho initiates a campaign in Gaul**

Otho had the city cleansed and pondered his plan of campaign. As the Poenine and Cottian Alps and the other routes into Gaul were held by Vitellius' forces, he decided to attack Gallia Narbonensis with his loyal and formidable navy, whose sailors had hopes of a more desirable role in future, Otho having accorded full legionary status to the men who had survived the massacre at the Mulvian Bridge and been cruelly detained by Galba. He added the city cohorts and many praetorians to this navy, to give the force strength and solidity, and as advisors to, and guardians of, the commanders themselves.

He appointed two centurions of highest rank, Antonius Novellus and Suedius Clemens, to head the expedition, with Aemilius Pacensis, to whom he had restored the tribunate removed from him by Galba. Moschus, his freedman, retained command of the fleet, with his previous rank, in order to monitor the loyalty of the higher ranking officers. He further designated Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Annius Gallus to lead the infantry and cavalry, while placing greatest trust in Licinius Proculus, prefect of the praetorian guard.

Proculus, active in the city militia, but inexperienced in warfare, made Paulinus' natural authority, Celsus' energy, and Gallus' mature ability, the traits which each respectively displayed, reasons for complaint, and with perverse cunning outmanoeuvred the virtuous and the unassuming.

### **Book I:LXXXVIII Fear in Rome**

It was about this time that Cornelius Dolabella was banished to the colony of Aquinum, not secretly or under close watch, and not as a criminal, but due to his prominence, he being of ancient lineage and close to Galba.

Otho also commanded many of the magistrates and a large number of ex-consuls to join the expedition, not to participate or serve during the war but as a kind of retinue, and among them Lucius Vitellius, whom he treated not as an enemy due to his brother's pretensions to rule, but in exactly the same manner as all the rest.

There was then anxiety in Rome; and no class was safe from fear and danger. The leading senators were old and weak, inactive after the long period of peace, while the idle nobility had forgotten the arts of war, and the knights were unused to military service. The more they all tried to hide or banish their misgivings, the more obvious these appeared.

Yet, in contrast, there were some foolish attention-seekers who bought fine armour and pedigree horses, others the trappings for luxurious banquets and the means to satisfy their desires, as provisions against time of war.

The wise cared for peace and the state; the light-minded, ignoring what was to come, were filled with idle hopes; for many of questionable loyalty in peacetime were eager for turbulent times, and felt more secure despite the instability.

### **Book I:LXXXIX The City exposed**

But increasingly the great mass of the people, playing no part in the offices of state, began to feel the evils of conflict, since the finances were diverted to military use, and the price of food rose, something which had barely affected the populace during Vindex's rebellion, since the city was secure and the fighting, considered an external conflict between the legions and the Gauls, was in the provinces,

Indeed, since the time when the now-deified Augustus had established the rule of the Caesars the Roman people had waged war abroad, bringing concern or glory to the Emperor alone; only under Tiberius and Caligula had peacetime disturbances affected the state; for

Scribonianus's rebellion against Claudius had been suppressed as soon as it was reported, while Nero was driven from power by rumour and report rather than by arms. But now the ships and legions, and, in a rare act, the praetorians and urban militia had been led away to war, and both East and West, with whatever forces they might have behind them, held the means for extended conflict had there been other generals intent on trouble.

Some called for a halt on religious grounds, the sacred shields not having been returned yet to their sanctuary, but Otho refused a delay such as had caused Nero's ruin; and he was roused to action now Caecina had crossed the Alps.

## **Book I:XC Otho leaves for Gaul with his forces**

On the fourteenth of March, entrusting the care of the state to the senate, Otho returned to those recalled from exile the residue of any property confiscated by Nero but not yet paid to the treasury; a just and seemingly generous award, though of scant benefit since the bulk of its value had been quickly realised long before.

He then called an assembly and extolled the greatness of Rome and the solidarity on his behalf shown by the senate and people, speaking with moderation against Vitellius' supporters and blaming the legionaries for not being fully informed rather than for their audacity, while making no mention of Vitellius personally.

This may show restraint on his part or that his speechwriter, fearing for himself, may have omitted all disparagement of Vitellius, since it was thought that Otho employed Galerius Trachalus's skills in such matters, as he did those of Suetonius Paulinus and Marius Celsus in military affairs, and there were those who recognised Trachalus's style of oratory, known from his many court appearances, which was full and sonorous enough to fill the ears of the populace.

The customary clamour and cries of adulation from the crowd were markedly insincere: as though they were applauding the dictator Caesar, or the Emperor Augustus, contending in their enthusiasm and prayers not out of love or fear but from a passion for servitude. As in household slaves, each was driven by a private motive, while the good of the state seemed of no account.

As he set out, Otho entrusted the tranquillity of the city and the cares of the empire to his brother, Salvius Titianus.

# **Book II: I-XXXI Continuing conflict, the Flavians in the East**

## **Contents**

[Book II:I Titus sets out for Rome](#)

[Book II:II Titus turns back, sailing via Cyprus](#)

[Book II:III The worship of Venus-Aphrodite at Cyprus](#)

[Book II:IV Titus consults the oracle](#)

[Book II:V Vespasian and Mucianus](#)

[Book II:VI The mood among their troops](#)

[Book II:VII Vespasian and Mucianus bide their time](#)

[Book II:VIII The false Nero](#)

[Book II:IX Calpurnius Asprenas intervenes](#)

[Book II:X The trial of Annius Faustus](#)

[Book II:XI Otho campaigns on the coast of Italy](#)

[Book II:XII The failure of his generals](#)

[Book II:XIII Otho's troops ravage Ventimiglia](#)

[Book II:XIV The rival armies give battle](#)

[Book II:XV Otho's troops achieve a costly victory](#)

[Book II:XVI A short-lived revolt in Corsica](#)

[Book II:XVII The conflict in northern Italy](#)

[Book II:XVIII Mutiny in Piacenza](#)

[Book II:XIX Spurrina regains control](#)

[Book II:XX Caecina advances to Piacenza](#)

[Book II:XXI The initial attack on the town](#)

[Book II:XXII Caecina repulsed](#)

[Book II:XXIII Further setbacks for Caecina](#)

[Book II:XXIV The armies engage](#)

[Book II:XXV Vitellian retreat](#)

[Book II:XXVI Suetonius Paulinus wins an incomplete victory for Otho](#)

[Book II:XXVII Previous mutiny among Fabius Valens' Vitellian troops](#)

[Book II:XXVIII Progress of the mutiny](#)

[Book II:XXIX The mutiny subsides](#)

[Book II:XXX Caecina's and Valens' forces combine](#)

Book II:XXXI Otho's and Vitellius's reputation

## **Book II:I Titus sets out for Rome**

In a separate part of the empire, fate was already preparing the basis and opportunity for power, which through the vagaries of fortune would bring joy or dread to the state, and to the principals themselves prosperity or ruin.

Titus, son of Vespasian, had been sent from Judea to Rome while Galba ruled, the ostensible reason being to pay his respects to the emperor, and as a mature individual to seek office, though the masses, always ready to speculate, gave out that he had been summoned in order to be adopted. The basis for this gossip was the emperor's age and childlessness, combined with the public propensity for nominating successors until one was chosen.

The rumour gained credence from Titus's own character which was fitted for the highest destiny, from his handsome person and a certain majesty he possessed, from his father Vespasian's good fortune, and from prophetic oracles, and even chance events which to minds inclined to credulity were received as omens.

When, on reaching Corinth in Achaia, he received the certain news of Galba's death, and met with those who affirmed that Vitellius was in arms and at war, he anxiously summoned a few friends and fully considered his alternative courses of action. If he headed for Rome, he would be a hostage to Vitellius or Otho, receiving scant gratitude for a courtesy intended for Galba. If he returned to his father, however, the victor would certainly be offended, though if his father joined the successful party while success was still in the balance the son would be forgiven. And if Vespasian accepted imperial power, offences would be forgotten in the turmoil of war.

## **Book II:II Titus turns back, sailing via Cyprus**

Though tossed in this way between hope and fear, hope finally won. Some believe that he turned back through his burning desire for Queen Berenice; nor was the young man's heart averse to her, though that was no obstacle to action. True, he spent his youth in the pleasures of self-indulgence, but in power he was more temperate than his father.

Thus he sailed south-west along the coasts of Achaia and Asia Minor, heading for Rhodes and Cyprus then striking out boldly for Syria. While at Cyprus, he was seized by a desire to visit and inspect the temple of Paphian Venus, famed among residents and strangers. It may be worth briefly describing the origins of her worship, the rites of her temple, and the form she takes there (since she is not otherwise so represented).

## **Book II:III The worship of Venus-Aphrodite at Cyprus**

An ancient tradition holds that the temple was founded by a king, Aerias, others say that this was a name for the goddess herself. More recently, it has been claimed the temple was

consecrated by Cinyras, and that the goddess herself, born of the waves, was blown there by the winds; yet as the arts and skills of divination were imported by Tamiras, the Cilician, it was agreed the descendants of Tamiras and Cinyras should jointly preside over the sacred rites. Later, the immigrants relinquished the art they had brought, so that the royal stock might take precedence over that from outside: thus only a scion of Cinyras might be consulted as priest.

Sacrificial animals are as the worshipper chooses, though males are preferred: with the greatest belief placed in divination from the entrails of young goats. It is forbidden to shed blood on the altar: offerings there are of prayers and naked flames, and though in the open air it is never wet by rain.

The image of the goddess is not in human form, rather it is a cone, like a turning-post in the arena, broad at the base and tapering towards the top, though the reason is hidden.

## **Book II:IV Titus consults the oracle**

Having viewed the treasures there, gifts dedicated by kings, and other things attributed to remote ages by the Greeks who delight in antiquities, Titus consulted the oracle regarding his journey. On learning his course was clear and the seas favourable, he offered up many animal sacrifices, then asked indirectly about himself. Sostratus (such was the priest's name), seeing that the entrails were wholly favourable and the goddess favoured great projects, gave a customary brief response on the instant, but in private audience then revealed the future. His spirits raised, Titus sailed home to his father, bringing a great access of confidence to the anxious minds of the troops and inhabitants of the province (Judea).

Vespasian, meanwhile, had almost ended the Jewish conflict, all but for the siege of Jerusalem, a task made difficult and arduous more by the nature of the hilltop citadel and the degree of religious fanaticism than any resources guaranteeing survival possessed by the besieged. As I have indicated, Vespasian possessed three legions, all hardened in warfare. Mucianus, commanded four in the neighbouring province (Syria), which was quiet, though a desire to emulate the achievements of Vespasian's forces nearby had banished indolence; and just as effort and danger had increased the powers of resistance shown by Vespasian's men, so Mucianus' troops were fresh from an unbroken peace, with that desire for battle found among the as yet inexperienced.

Both generals had auxiliary cohorts and cavalry, naval forces and royal allies, and a famous name though differing reputations.

## **Book II:V Vespasian and Mucianus**

Vespasian, energetic in military matters, marched with the vanguard; chose the places to camp; opposed the enemy, night and day, tactically and, if necessary, with his own hands; ate whatever chance brought; and in dress and bearing scarcely differed from a common soldier. In short, if he had lacked avarice, he would have been equal to the generals of old.

Mucianus, in contrast, was remarkable for his wealth and his magnificent life-style, much superior to that of a private citizen. He was readier of speech, and knowledgeable in arranging and anticipating civil matters.

If their faults could have been rectified and their virtues combined, that would have constituted a recipe for an outstanding emperor. Since Mucianus governed Syria and Vespasian Judea, neighbouring provinces, their jealousy had caused discord, but after Nero's death they abandoned hostilities and consulted together, via friends at first; Titus, the chief agent of this concord, ending a dangerous quarrel by means of their mutual interest, he being suited by nature and ability to winning over even a character like Mucianus.

The tribunes, centurions and common soldiers were then co-opted, through their sense of duty or by being indulged, by means that is of their virtue or pleasures, according to their propensities.

## **Book II:VI The mood among their troops**

Before Titus returned, both armies had sworn allegiance to Otho, since news arrived swiftly as ever, while civil conflict which the East now prepared for after a lengthy and harmonious peace, took time to initiate. Previously, the most significant civil wars had started in Italy or Gaul, involving western armies, while Pompey, Cassius, Brutus and Mark Antony, all of whom civil conflict had followed overseas, had come to no good end. Moreover, in Syria and Judea the Caesars were more often heard about than seen, and there had been no sign of sedition among the legions, only some threats against the Parthians, with varied outcomes. And then in the most recent civil disturbances, while others were shaken, here all was peaceful, hence the allegiance to Galba.

But when it shortly became known, that Otho and Vitellius were intending to seize Rome's assets, illegally and by force, the soldiers began to murmur among themselves, and assess their own strength, lest the spoils of power accrued to others, leaving them obliged to serve.

They had seven legions to hand, as well as the extensive auxiliary forces of Syria and Judea; then there was Egypt to the west with two legions, and to the east Cappadocia, Pontus, and the garrisons on the Armenian border. Asia Minor and the other provinces were not short of men, and were rich in funds. Then there were the many islands the sea surrounded, and the sea itself, which was a welcome protection to them as they prepared for war.

## **Book II:VII Vespasian and Mucianus bide their time**

The enthusiasm of the troops was not lost on the leaders, but they decided to await events while others fought. They knew that the winners and losers in civil wars are never reconciled again in perfect trust, regardless of whether fate allowed Otho or Vitellius to survive. Even great generals are spoiled by success: one of the two would perish in the field from the argumentativeness, cowardice and indiscipline of his soldiers, as well as his own shortcomings; the other would be ruined by victory.

So, Vespasian and Mucianus agreed to await the moment to deploy, though the rest of their troops were already intent on war; the finest of them were motivated by their concern for the state, many by the desire for plunder, others by their domestic embarrassments: thus good men and bad, for different reasons but with equal zeal, were all eager for war.

## **Book II:VIII The false Nero**

Around this time, Asia and Achaia were made fearful by the appearance of a false Nero, the reports of that emperor's death having been so many and varied that numbers of people speculated as to whether he was still alive, or indeed believed that he was. We will speak of the efforts and fortunes of other pretenders in context: but in this case a slave from Pontus, or as others claim, a freedman from Italy, skilled in the cithara and song and so, given his resemblance to Nero, gaining greater credibility for his deceit, recruited some deserters, penniless wanderers whom he corrupted by means of extravagant promises, and took to the high seas.

Driven to the island of Cythnus by a tempest, he co-opted soldiers from a military convoy returning from the East, ordering them killed if they refused to join him, robbed the traders and armed the most capable of the slaves. He made devious approaches to Sisenna, a centurion, who in the name of the army in Syria was carrying an emblem of friendship (worked in the form of clasped right hands) to the praetorians, until Sisenna, in trepidation and fearing violence, fled the island secretly and made good his escape. Then the disturbance spread more widely: many gathered to the celebrated name out of hatred for the present state of things and desire for something new.

The false Nero's fame was growing day by day, until events dispelled it.

## **Book II:IX Calpurnius Asprenas intervenes**

Galba had entrusted the provinces of Galatia and Pamphylia to Calpurnius Asprenas. As pursuit ships he had been given two triremes from the fleet at Misenum, with which he secured the island of Cythnus, where there was no lack of those who might try to win over the captains in Nero's name.

The pretender, feigning grief, called on these soldiers, once Nero's own, to defend him, and begged the captains to land him in Syria or Egypt. They, agreeing in order to deceive, insisted that they must speak to the soldiers and would return when all were ready. But instead they recounted everything faithfully to Asprenas, with whose encouragement they then stormed the pretender's ship and killed him, regardless of his true identity.

The corpse, remarkable for its eyes, hair and wild expression, was transported to Asia Minor and then to Rome.

## **Book II:X The trial of Annius Faustus**

In a state in conflict, on the borderline between freedom and lawlessness due to the rapid changes of emperor, even minor things caused a stir. Vibius Crispus, ranked by his wealth, power, and ability among the prominent if not the good, summoned Annius Faustus to trial before the senate: he, a knight, had been one of the informers in Nero's reign, and the senators had recently voted under Galba that their accusers might file charges.

This senate ruling produced a variable outcome, being effective or not according to the poverty or wealth of the defendant, yet still retained some of its threat. Crispus, moreover, who had previously relied on his influence to ruin a man who had informed against his brother, now persuaded a large number of senators to demand Annius be sentenced to execution, undefended and unheard, though to counteract that nothing recommended the defendant to other senators more than his accuser's excessive power. The latter group voted that time be granted, the charges published, and that however detested and seemingly guilty the defendant might be he must still be heard according to custom.

They succeeded initially, and the case was delayed a few days: but Faustus was subsequently condemned to death, though without that popular assent which his vile character merited: for the citizens knew Crispus himself as an informer for gain, and were displeased with the accuser if not the penalty.

## **Book II:XI Otho campaigns on the coast of Italy**

Meanwhile the war had begun well for Otho, the armies in Dalmatia and Pannonia having been transferred to Italy at his command. There were four legions, of which two thousand men formed the advance party, the legions themselves following no great distance behind, consisting of the Seventh which had been raised by Galba, and the veterans comprising the Eleventh, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth, this last famed for crushing the revolt in Britain (AD61, Boadicea).

Nero had added to their reputation by electing them his crack troops, such that they had shown enduring loyalty to him, and were strong in support of Otho. However they advanced somewhat slowly with the self-confidence born of their strength in depth.

The main body of troops was preceded by cavalry and infantry, and there was a force drawn from the City which was not to be scorned, consisting of praetorian cohorts and detachments of cavalry from the First legion, as well as a force of irregulars, namely two thousand gladiators, a resource for even the most stringent of leaders in time of civil war.

Annius Gallus was placed in command of these forces, having been sent forward with Vestricius Spinna to occupy the banks of the River Po, Otho's initial strategy having been frustrated, Caecina having already crossed the Alps while Otho had hoped to confine him to Gaul.

Otho himself was accompanied by a hand-picked bodyguard, the remainder of the praetorian cohorts, praetorian veterans, and a large number of marines. His advance was

neither slow nor marked by excess, instead he preceded the standards on foot, wearing an iron breastplate and, counter to his usual image, was ungroomed and unshaven.

## **Book II:XII The failure of his generals**

Fortune smiled on him to begin with, his fleets commanding the sea making him master of the better part of Italy as far as the maritime Alps, the task of forcing which and attacking the province of Narbonensis he gave to his generals, Aemilius Pacensis, Antonius Novellus, and Suedius Clemens.

But Pacensis was clapped in chains by his mutinous soldiers, Antonius Novellus lacked authority, and Suedius Clemens ruled by means of currying favour with his men, as bad at maintaining discipline as he was eager to fight.

They behaved not as though they were approaching Italy and their native sites and settlements but, as if on a foreign shore among enemy townships, they looted, burned and laid all waste, the more terribly in that nowhere had any measures been taken to oppose them. The crops were ripe, the homesteads unsecured; the owners running with wives and children to meet them, thinking themselves safely at peace, were surrounded by the evils of war.

The procurator of the Maritime Alps at this time was Marius Maturus. Summoning the people to fight (there being no lack of young men), he tried to hold back Otho's men at the border, but at the first encounter his mountaineers were slain or scattered, as irregular troops often are, unaccustomed to being led, unfamiliar with fortifications, and seeing neither glory in battle or shame in flight.

## **Book II:XIII Otho's troops ravage Ventimiglia**

Enraged by this action, since they had gained no plunder in the field, the people being poor, and their weapons worthless, and since they had failed to take captives as they were quick to scatter and knew the area, Otho's troops vented their rage on the town of Ventimiglia (Albintimilium), satisfying their avarice by ruining the innocent.

Their abuses were highlighted by the noble example of a Ligurian woman who had hidden her son. When the soldiers, in the belief she had also concealed money, interrogated her under torture as to where she had hidden the boy, pointing to her own body she answered, 'it is this that hides him', after which neither threats of torment nor death could alter the magnificent resolve evidenced by her reply.

## **Book II:XIV The rival armies give battle**

Meanwhile disturbing news was brought to Fabius Valens that Otho's fleet threatened the province of Narbonensis, which had sworn allegiance to Vitellius; and envoys from the colonies came asking for help.

He sent off two cohorts of Tungrian infantry, four squadrons of cavalry, and the whole of the cavalry of the Treviri, under Julius Classicus's command, part of this force to be stationed in the colony of Fréjus (Forum Julii), lest in sending all the force by an inland route Otho's navy were to mount a swift attack on an undefended coastline.

Twelve squadrons of cavalry and hand-picked infantry moved against the enemy, reinforced by a cohort of Ligurians, an established force of local auxiliaries, and by five hundred Pannonians not yet fully enrolled. Battle was joined without delay: Otho's lines were ordered so that mixed ranks comprising peasants and some of his marines held the high ground on the hills by the coast, while his force of praetorians filled the level ground between hills and shore, and the fleet itself, inshore and cleared for action, facing the land offered a threatening front.

The Vitellians, less strong in infantry, but with elite cavalry, stationed their Ligurian Alpine force on the nearby heights, with the infantry in dense ranks behind the cavalry. Their squadrons of Treviri charged the enemy wildly, were received by veteran troops, and simultaneously assailed on their flanks by showers of stones skilfully hurled by the peasants scattered among the regulars, who daring or cowardly proved equally brave in victory.

Fear was added to consternation when, during the fight, the fleet attacked the Vitellians' rear. Hemmed in on all sides, their whole force might have been destroyed had not the darkness of nightfall checked the victorious enemy and concealed the fugitives.

## **Book II:XV Otho's troops achieve a costly victory**

The Vitellians, though defeated, did not rest: using their auxiliary forces they attacked the enemy, who thought themselves secure, and were less effective, because of their previous success, killed their pickets, invaded their camp, and raised fears amongst the fleet, until Otho's troops, as their initial alarm subsided, occupying a nearby hill for defensive purposes, engaged them once more.

The slaughter there was terrible, the Tungrian infantry whose commanders maintained formation for some time being overwhelmed by showers of missiles. Nor was it a bloodless victory for those of Otho's men who incautiously pursued the enemy, since the Vitellian cavalry returned to encircle them.

Ultimately, as if a pact had been agreed whereby neither the Vitellian cavalry nor the Othonian fleet might cause sudden panic, the Vitellians withdrew to Antibes (Antipolis), the coastal town in Gallia Narbonensis, Otho's forces to Albenga (Albingaunum) beyond the border, on the Ligurian shore.

## **Book II:XVI A short-lived revolt in Corsica**

With news of his naval victory, Corsica, Sardinia and the other neighbouring islands stayed loyal to Otho's cause. But Corsica was almost lost through the rashness of the procurator, Decumus Pacarius, which rashness contributed little to the outcome of the greater conflict, but caused his own death.

Hating Otho, he decided to use his Corsican forces to aid Vitellius, a pointless effort even if it had succeeded. Summoning the island's leaders, he revealed his intent, and when the admiral of the Liburnian vessels there, Claudius Pyrrichus, and a Roman knight, Quintius Certus, dared to challenge him, he ordered their deaths. This terrified those present, and led them, along with the unknowing populace, who shared in ignorance others' fears, to swear allegiance to Vitellius.

However, when Pacarius began to raise a levy and burden untrained men with military duties, they, hating the unfamiliar labour, considered the weakness of their position: they lived on an island, the German legions were a distant force, and even those protected by infantry and cavalry had been ravaged and plundered by Otho's fleet. Suddenly repenting of their decision, they did not immediately resort to violence, but chose a fitting time to lay an ambush, waiting till those who attended on Pacarius had left him, naked and helpless, in his bath, then killing him. After which they slaughtered his followers.

The assassins carried the heads of the corpses to Otho, as if they were those of his enemies; yet Otho granted them no reward for this, nor did Vitellius later punish it, lost as it was in the sordid depths of greater crimes.

## **Book II:XVII The conflict in northern Italy**

As I have said above, Silius's cavalry had already entered Italy, bringing civil war. Though no one favoured Otho there, neither did they prefer Vitellius, rather the lengthy peace had accustomed them to every kind of servitude, leaving them open to the first comers and indifferent to the merit of the occupiers' cause. Thus, with the arrival of the cohorts that Caecina had sent on ahead, the fairest region of Italy, all the cities and plains between the River Po and the Alps, was now held by Vitellius's forces.

They captured a company of Pannonian infantry at Cremona, and a thousand marines and a hundred horsemen were intercepted between Piacenza (Placentia) and Pavia (Ticinum), with which successes Vitellius's men were no longer to be thwarted by a river; in fact the very sight of the Po itself roused the Batavians and those from beyond the Rhine to a sudden crossing at Piacenza, whereby they captured some scouts and so terrified the rest that Otho's troops claimed falsely, in their anxiety, that Caecina's whole force had arrived.

## **Book II:XVIII Mutiny in Piacenza**

Spurinna (he being the commander in Piacenza) was certain that Caecina had not yet arrived, and that if he did approach the men should stand to the defences and not oppose Caecina's force of veterans with only three praetorian cohorts, a thousand reserves, and a few cavalry.

However his troops, ungovernable and inexperienced in warfare, seized the standards and colours and advanced, and when their commander attempted to restrain them, they ignored the centurions and tribunes, and threatened him with their weapons.

Moreover, they shouted that Caecina had been invited there, and Otho was betrayed. Spurinna therefore, at first under coercion, was made a party to others' rashness and thereafter acted as though it were his wish, so that his advice might possess the more authority if the mutiny subsided.

## **Book II:XIX Spurinna regains control**

With the river in sight and night at hand, he decided to make camp and throw up fortifications. The effort involved, strange to urban troops, depressed their spirits, and the older among them began to question their own readiness to believe every rumour, and revealed their concern, pointing to the risk of Caecina surrounding their small force in open country.

More moderate views soon filled the camp, and the centurions and tribunes mingled with the men, praising their general's foresight for selecting so substantial a colony as his base, one possessing robust defences on a site with innate strength.

Finally Spurinna, not so much decrying their error as expounding his strategy, himself led the men, less mutinous now and susceptible to direction, back to Piacenza, leaving a few scouts behind. The city walls were strengthened, bulwarks added, towers raised, and not only were weapons readied and in evidence, but also a new respect for obedience and discipline, the only thing previously lacking, since there was no deficit of courage.

## **Book II:XX Caecina advances to Piacenza**

Meanwhile Caecina, having it seemed left cruelty and licence behind in crossing the Alps, advanced through Italy in sober order. The colonies and towns interpreted his manner of dress as due to arrogance, because he spoke to the toga-wearing citizens in a Gallic cloak of multi-coloured weave and trousers. They also took great offence at his wife, Salonina, for riding a fine horse with purple trappings, though it did none of them any harm, provoked by that trait in human nature whereby we look sourly at others' recent good fortune, and demand restraint from none more than those whom we once viewed as our equals.

Caecina, having crossed the River Po, tested the loyalty of Otho's followers by speaking with them and promising much, but was simply met with the same. Finally, after the words 'peace' and 'harmony' had been tossed to and fro in vain and ineffectual phrases, Caecina set his thoughts and intent on storming Piacenza with a mighty show of force, knowing that an early success in the conflict would establish his reputation as regards the future.

## **Book II:XXI The initial attack on the town**

The first day's fighting was a major attack, rather than skilful sorties by veterans: the troops heavy with food and wine manoeuvring beneath the walls openly and incautiously. During the conflict the fine amphitheatre, sited outside the walls, was set on fire either by the besiegers hurling burning brands, shot and missiles at the besieged, or by the besieged themselves making their reply. The populace, given to suspicion, thought that fuel for the flames had been introduced secretly by men from the neighbouring colonies, who had viewed the amphitheatre with envy and rivalry, no other structure in Italy being of such capacity. Regardless of the cause, though the loss was considered minor while they feared still worse disaster, when security was regained they mourned it as though none greater could have occurred.

Caecina, however, was driven back with great losses to his troops, and the night was spent in fresh preparatory works. The Vitellians readied trench lining, roof-posts and roofing to protect them while undermining the walls, while the Othonians piled stakes and great masses of stone, lead, and bronze together, to shatter and destroy the enemy.

There was shame and pride on both sides, and contrasting exhortations, with the Vitellians praising the power of the legions and the army of Germany, the Othonians the heroism of their urban militia and the praetorian cohorts. The Vitellians attacked their enemy as idle and degenerate, corrupted by the circus games and theatricals, while they in turn called the Vitellians foreigners, invaders. Simultaneously celebrating or decrying Otho or Vitellius, they were roused to mutual insults more enthusiastically than to praise.

## **Book II:XXII Caecina repulsed**

Not long before dawn the battlements were filled with defenders, and the plains glittered with armed men. The legionaries in dense ranks and the auxiliaries in sparse array attacked the higher parts of the walls with stones or arrows, and closed on the parts which were neglected and weakened by time.

Otho's men hurled a shower of javelins, with more accurate and effective aim, at the German cohorts below, who approached rashly, singing wildly, their bodies naked as customary, brandishing their shields above their heads.

The legionaries, defended by their trench linings and wooden roofing, undermined the walls, raised banks of earth, and attacked the gates. The praetorians ranged against them, however, rolled down the great millstones they had prepared, which fell with a heavy crash. Many below were crushed, many pierced, bloodied and lacerated. As their panic added to the

massacre, and the damage dealt from the battlements grew more severe, they retreated, dealing a blow to their cause.

Caecina, ashamed of this rash attempt to take the city, and not wishing to maintain a ridiculous and ineffectual position, crossed the River Po once more, aiming to attack Cremona. As he left, Turullius Cerialis with a large force of marines, and Julius Briganticus with a few horsemen, surrendered to him, the latter a Batavian by birth and commander of a cavalry squadron, the former a leading centurion, and no stranger to Caecina, since he had exercised a command in Germany.

## **Book II:XXIII Further setbacks for Caecina**

Spurinna, learning of the enemy's direction of march, informed Annius Gallus by despatch of the defence of Piacenza, the various events, and Caecina's intentions. Gallus had been leading the First legion to the aid of Piacenza, fearing that its few cohorts might not be able to endure a long siege or the power of the army of Germany. When the news arrived that Caecina had been driven off, and was marching on Cremona, he could barely restrain his legionaries and with their ardour for battle almost mutinous halted them at Bedriacum, the village between Verona and Cremona now notorious for two defeats of Romans by Romans.

At this same time, Martius Macer (the Othonian general) fought a successful engagement not far from Cremona, through presence of mind transporting gladiators across the River Po in boats and releasing them suddenly against the enemy. This caused chaos among the Vitellian auxiliaries, those who resisted being killed, the rest fleeing to Cremona.

However, Martius checked the thrust of his victorious troops lest the enemy's being strengthened by fresh reinforcements might sway the fortunes of war. His motives seemed suspect to his Othonians who placed a sinister interpretation on their leaders' every act. Full of the effrontery that matched their cowardly spirits, they made various accusations against Annius Gallus, Suetonius Paulus and Marius Celsus (since Otho had appointed the latter two also as commanders).

Galba's assassins were the most active in sowing discord and sedition, and filled with guilt and fear they wrought utter confusion, now by openly dangerous speeches, now in secret despatches to Otho. He wavered, believing the shallowest of men and fearing the virtuous, uncertain when things went well though better in adversity. As a result, summoning his brother Titianus he appointed him commander-in-chief.

## **Book II:XXIV The armies engage**

Meanwhile, great things were achieved by the Othonian generals Paulinus and Celsus.

Tormented by the failure of his plans and his army's waning reputation, thwarted at Piacenza, his auxiliaries cut down, and the skirmishing of his scouts, which was more frequent than worthwhile, proving ineffective, and fearing that on the approach of his rival Fabius Valens all the honour of the campaign must be conceded to that general, Caecina raced to recover his glory, with more eagerness than wisdom.

Twelve miles from Cremona (at a location known as Castors) he positioned the bravest of his auxiliaries in ambush among the woods that overhung the road, ordering the cavalry to advance further and provoke a fight then retreat of their own accord drawing the enemy into a hasty pursuit, whereby the hidden force could spring their trap. This plan was betrayed to Otho's generals.

Paulinus commanding the infantry, Celsus the cavalry, they stationed a detachment from the Thirteenth legion on the left flank, with four cohorts of auxiliaries and five hundred cavalry; the centre of the roadway was occupied by three praetorian cohorts in column; while on the right flank they advanced the First legion with two auxiliary cohorts and five hundred horse. Besides these, they assembled a thousand praetorian and auxiliary cavalry, to add weight to victory or support any in difficulty.

## **Book II:XXV Vitellian retreat**

Before the forces fully engaged, the Vitellian cavalry retreated, but Celsus aware of the tactic restrained his troops. Thus the Vitellians rashly sprang their ambush as Celsus gradually withdrew, pursued too far, and fell into a trap themselves. For the auxiliary cohorts pressed them on their flanks, the legions opposed them in front, and a sudden cavalry manoeuvre cut them off to the rear.

Suetonius Paulinus gave no immediate signal for the infantry to engage as he was cautious by nature, and preferred considered and well thought out tactics to chance successes. He ordered ditches to be completed, the field of battle cleared, and his lines extended, thinking it soon enough to achieve victory once he had provided against defeat.

His delay gave the Vitellians time to retreat into the vineyards, obstructed by a network of vines, and a small wood close by from which they dared to sally, killing the nearest of the praetorian cavalry. Prince Epiphanes (of Commagene) was wounded as he furthered the fight in the name of Otho.

## **Book II:XXVI Suetonius Paulinus wins an incomplete victory for Otho**

Then the Othonian infantry charged, drove in the enemy line, and even put the reinforcements to flight, since Caecina had not sent in his cohorts together but one after another, adding to the confusion of the conflict, as his troops, scattered and weakened, were swept away by those fleeing in panic. And there were signs of sedition in the Vitellian camp because their attack was not unified: they clapped the prefect, Julius Gratus, in irons for planning treachery with his brother, the tribune Julius Fronto, who was with Otho's men, while the Othonians imprisoned that same brother on an identical charge.

Fear was now so universal among the Vitellians, among those attacking and those fleeing in the fight before the entrenchments, that it was claimed on both sides that Caecina's whole army would have been destroyed if Suetonius Paulinus had not signalled a withdrawal.

Paulinus claimed he had feared that in the midst of a laborious pursuit Vitellians fresh from camp might attack his weary troops, and that if demoralised his men would lack supporting forces. Amongst the few there was approval of their leader's action, but in general there was adverse comment.

## **Book II:XXVII Previous mutiny among Fabius Valens' Vitellian troops**

This disaster for the Vitellians did not so much instil dread in them as awaken their sense of discipline; not only in those with Caecina, who himself blamed the men as readier for mutiny than battle, but also in the soldiers under Fabius Valens, now arrived at Pavia (Ticinum), who swallowed their scorn of their opponents, and eager to restore their reputation obeyed their commander with greater respect and consistency.

A serious mutiny had broken out among these previously, the account of which (not having wished to interrupt the sequence of Caecina's activities) I shall now relate from that earlier time. As I have said elsewhere the Batavian cohorts, who on the uprising against Nero had withdrawn from the Fourteenth legion, hearing while on their way to Britain of Vitellius's revolt, had joined Fabius Valens in the territory of the Lingones.

These cohorts, acting with insolence, approached each legion's quarters boasting that they had checked the actions of the Fourteenth legion, taken Italy from Nero, and that the whole outcome of the war lay in their hands. This was insulting to the legionaries and offensive to their leader; discipline was ruined by their quarrelling and brawling; and finally given such impudence Valens even began to suspect their loyalty.

## **Book II:XXVIII Progress of the mutiny**

Thus, when news arrived that a squadron of Treviran cavalry and Tungrian infantry had been defeated, and the province of Gallia Narbonensis was now blockaded by the Othonian navy, Valens ordered a detachment of Batavians to march to its aid, anxious to both assist his allies and, with military astuteness, disperse those mutinous troops who might prove too powerful if acting as one.

When the mass of his army heard of this, his allies were saddened, and the legionaries complained that they had been robbed of the help of the bravest troops; that the Batavian veterans, victorious in so many campaigns, were being withdrawn from the line while the enemy was in sight; and that if the province counted for more than Rome and the empire's safety, they should all go with them, but if the thrust for victory was focused on Italy, the strongest limbs of the army must not be torn from its body.

## **Book II:XXIX The mutiny subsides**

The soldiers, protesting fiercely even after Valens had sent his lictors among them to try and quell the mutiny, then attacked Valens himself, hurling stones, and pursuing him as he retreated. Crying out that he had hidden the spoils from the Gallic provinces and the gold from Vienne, the prize of their own efforts, they ransacked the goods in his tent, probing the very ground with their spears and lances, while Valens, disguised in slave's clothing, hid in a cavalry officer's quarters.

Then Alfenus Varus, the camp prefect, seeing their mutinous temper cooling, added to the process by forbidding the centurions to make their rounds of the pickets, and cancelling the usual trumpet call summoning the men to their duties. They all seemed astounded, gazing at each other in amazement, fearful of the very fact that no one appeared in command: in silence, submissively, and ultimately with pleas and tears, they begged forgiveness.

When Valens appeared, in rags, shedding tears, but beyond their expectation unharmed, joy, commiserations, and even acclaim ensued. Showing their delight, with a crowd's tendency to extremes, they praised and lauded him, and carried him to the tribunal surrounded by the eagles and colours.

He, with a wise moderation, demanded no punishment for anyone, knowing that in civil conflicts more is allowed to the soldiers than their leaders, but laid the blame on a few, lest ignoring the matter might seem suspicious.

## **Book II:XXX Caecina's and Valens' forces combine**

While the camp at Pavia was being fortified, news of Caecina's defeat arrived, and the troops almost mutinied again, thinking they had missed the battle through deceit and delay on Valens' part. Without rest or awaiting their general, they marched before the standards, urging on the standard-bearers, moving swiftly to join Caecina.

Valens had no good reputation among Caecina's men who complained that he had left them open to an enemy whose strength was intact, while at the same time they lauded the force that had joined them not wishing to be thought of as cowards who had met with a defeat. Though Valens led the greater force, almost double the number of legionaries and auxiliaries, the troops were inclined to support Caecina, not only for a generosity of spirit which he showed more readily, but also because of his youthful vigour, his noble stature, and in truth a certain groundless popularity he enjoyed.

This prompted rivalry between the generals: Caecina mocking Valens as shamefully flawed, Valens calling Caecina vain and conceited. Nevertheless they set aside their mutual dislike for the sake of expediency, and in a host of despatches heaped unpardonable insults on Otho, though on Otho's side the generals ignored the many grounds they had for abusing Vitellius.

## **Book II:XXXI Otho's and Vitellius's reputation**

Indeed, before Otho and Vitellius met their deaths, Otho adding nobly to his reputation while Vitellius suffered an infamous end, Vitellius's idle pleasures were less feared than Otho's blazing passions. Also there was the matter of the terror and hatred inspired by Galba's murder, while no one blamed Vitellius for starting the ensuing conflict. Vitellius's greed and indulgence were a personal disgrace, while Otho's extravagance, savagery and impudence brought more danger to the state.

Once Valens and Caecina had joined forces they no longer hesitated to engage with all their strength, while Otho on the other hand considered whether to drag out the war or try his fortune now.

# **Book II: XXXII-LXIV Otho's death, Vitellius seizes power**

## **Contents**

- [Book II:XXXII Suetonius Paulinus gives his opinion](#)
- [Book II:XXXIII Otho is persuaded to leave the front](#)
- [Book II:XXXIV The Vitellians bridge the River Po](#)
- [Book II:XXXV Macer defeated by the Germans](#)
- [Book II:XXXVI Flavius Sabinus takes command](#)
- [Book II:XXXVII Did Paulinus have imperial ambitions?](#)
- [Book II:XXXVIII The roots of civil war](#)
- [Book II:XXXIX Othonian lack of strategy](#)
- [Book II:XL Titianus overrules his generals](#)
- [Book II:XLI The two armies fight](#)
- [Book II:XLII The Vitellians charge](#)
- [Book II:XLIII The battle beside the river](#)
- [Book II:XLIV The defeated Othonians retreat to Bedriacum](#)
- [Book II:XLV The Vitellians grant terms](#)
- [Book II:XLVI Otho is exhorted to continue the war](#)
- [Book II:XLVII He decides otherwise](#)
- [Book II:XLVIII Otho dismisses his court](#)
- [Book II:XLIX His death](#)
- [Book II:L A brief biography of Otho](#)
- [Book II:LI Otho's troops grant allegiance to Vitellius](#)
- [Book II:LII The Senators stranded at Modena](#)
- [Book II:LIII They return to Bologna](#)
- [Book II:LIV Rumour and confusion](#)
- [Book II:LV Vitellius celebrated as emperor in Rome](#)
- [Book II:LVI The aftermath of war in Italy](#)
- [Book II:LVII Vitellius realises his success](#)
- [Book II:LVIII The situation in North Africa](#)
- [Book II:LIX Vitellius at Lyon](#)
- [Book II:LX The fate of Otho's adherents](#)
- [Book II:LXI Mariccus the Pretender](#)
- [Book II:LXII Vitellius begins his reign](#)

[Book II:LXIII The charges against Dolabella](#)

[Book II:LXIV The death of Dolabella](#)

## **Book II:XXXII Suetonius Paulinus gives his opinion**

Now Suetonius Paulinus thought it due his reputation, none being more skilled in military affairs, to comment on the whole progress of the war, explaining that the enemy's advantage lay in haste, their own in delay, saying that Vitellius's whole force was there, with nothing in reserve, since the Gallic provinces were restless and there was no sense in his abandoning the banks of the Rhine with so many hostile tribes ready to cross; that the troops in Britain were constrained by the enemy and the sea, and Spain had none to spare; that Gallia Narbonensis had been shaken by the fleet's attack and their own failure in battle; that Italy north of the River Po, bordered by the Alps and with no means of relief by sea, had been devastated by the mere transit of an army; that there was no grain for an army, and no army could be maintained without resources; and that the Germans who were the fiercest tribe among their foes would soon be physically weakened, if the war extended into the summer, unable to tolerate the change of country and climate. Many wars, he argued, great at first came to nothing through tedium and inaction.

On the other hand with themselves all was security and plenty; Pannonia, Moesia, Dalmatia and the East, their armies intact; Italy and the centre of all things, Rome, with the senate and people, powers never hidden though sometimes in shadow; public and private capital, immense wealth, more weighty than the sword as regards civil strife; soldiers inured to Italy and the heat; the obstacle of the River Po; towns defended by walls and garrisons, which would never surrender to the enemy as was learned at Piacenza. Therefore the war should be prolonged. In a few days the Fourteenth legion, of great renown, would be there, and troops from Moesia also: then deliberations could resume, and if battle was sought there would be men to add to the fight.

## **Book II:XXXIII Otho is persuaded to leave the front**

Marius Celsus supported Paulinus' judgement, Annius Gallus also. Though the latter had been incapacitated by a fall from his horse a few days previously, a delegation had been sent to elicit and report his opinion.

Otho was inclined to fight, and his brother Titianus with Proculus, the praetorian prefect, rash as they were through inexperience, declared that fortune, the gods, and Otho's own powers supported his decision, and would support its enactment, taking refuge in flattery lest any dared to oppose their stance.

After choosing to fight, they questioned whether it was not better for the emperor to leave the front rather than be involved himself in the conflict. Paulinus and Celsus now offered no opposition, lest they seemed to be exposing their leader to danger, and urged him to that same inferior strategy of withdrawing to Bresscello (Brixellum) where free from the vagaries of battle he might devote himself to the overall control of the empire.

This was the moment that first doomed Otho's cause, since a strong force of praetorian infantry, cavalry and scouts departed with him, dampening the spirits of the remainder, who

doubted their generals, while Otho, in whom alone the troops had confidence just as he believed in none but the troops, had left their authority in doubt.

### **Book II:XXXIV The Vitellians bridge the River Po**

None of this escaped the Vitellians, receiving, as is usual in civil war, many deserters; while the enemy scouts seeking to know the other side's plans failed to conceal their own. Caecina and Valens, with a quiet intent, waited to profit from their opponent's foolishness whenever his rashness should lead to disaster, a strategy which passes for wisdom.

Not wishing their own soldiers to waste their time idling, they began bridgeworks and made a feint of crossing the River Po to attack the band of gladiators opposite. They spaced out boats at equal distances, pointing upstream, linked together by strong spars at each end, and also deployed anchors to moor them firmly, but slackening the anchor cables not tightening them too much, so that as the river rose the boats were lifted without disturbance.

They secured the bridgehead by raising a tower on the last boat, from which they could repel the enemy with artillery and catapults, while the Othonians, constructing a tower on the opposite bank, hurled stones and burning brands at them.

### **Book II:XXXV Macer defeated by the Germans**

There was an island in the centre of the river that the gladiators were trying to reach aboard boats, the Germans anticipating them by swimming across. When many had managed the passage, Macer filled some of Otho's Liburnian galleys with the bravest of his gladiators and attacked.

But gladiators lack the steadiness in battle shown by regulars, and could not aim accurately enough from their swaying boats to cause damage, as the Germans could with a firm footing on the shore. As the anxious men fell against one another and fighters and oarsmen were thrown into confusion, the Germans leapt into the shallows, grasped the boats, and climbed aboard or dragged them under.

All this was visible to both armies, and the more the Vitellians rejoiced the greater the acrimony the Othonians felt against Macer the moving force and creator of the disaster.

### **Book II:XXXVI Flavius Sabinus takes command**

And indeed the skirmish ended with the gladiators fleeing after rescuing the remaining boats. They called for Macer's death, and had already attacked him with naked swords, he having been wounded by a lance hurled at him, when he was saved by the intervention of the centurions and tribunes.

Not long afterwards, Vestricius Spurinna arrived with his auxiliaries, having been sent by Otho, leaving a small garrison behind at Piacenza. Otho then despatched Flavius Sabinus, consul designate, as commander of the forces Macer had led, the soldiers showing delight at the change of generals, the generals disliking a command so marred by endless sedition.

## **Book II:XXXVII Did Paulinus have imperial ambitions?**

I find in certain authors the idea that the armies, due to the terrors of warfare, or their aversion to both the candidates for emperor, whose shameful vices were daily more apparent and more notorious, wondered whether to abandon the fight and select an emperor through consultation among themselves or by allowing the senate to do so, which is why the Othonian generals advised a period of delay, Paulinus having the greatest aspiration, as the senior ex-consul, and one whose distinguished service in his British campaigns had won him fame and glory.

Now while I concede that a minority silently prayed for peace in place of discord, and desired a virtuous and blameless man for leader instead of the worst and most profligate, I think Paulinus, known for his caution, would never have expected in so corrupt an age such a degree of restraint by the masses that those who had destroyed the peace through their love of conflict might then abandon conflict through a liking for peace.

Nor do I think that the soldiers, differing in speech and manners, could ever have reached such a consensus, nor that the generals and their lieutenants most of whom were only too well aware of their own excesses, wants and vices would have tolerated an emperor untainted by sin and free of obligation to them.

## **Book II:XXXVIII The roots of civil war**

The old desire for power, innate in humankind, flared with imperial greatness and then erupted. When means were modest equality was easy to maintain, but once the known world was subjugated, rival kings and states diminished, and wealth freely coveted then the first conflicts arose between patrician and plebeian. Now it was the tribunes who caused trouble, now the consuls became too strong, and civil war stirred in the forum and throughout the city.

Later Marius, of humblest plebeian birth, and Sulla, the cruellest of nobles, turned liberty, conquered by force, to tyranny. Pompey followed, stealthier but no better than they, and from then on the only aim was power. Legions of civilians kept their weapons from Pharsalia and Philippi; nor were the armies of Vitellius and Otho likely to choose peace of their own accord. The same divine anger, the same human madness, the same roots of crime drove them to conflict. That these wars were each ended at a single blow, as it were, was simply due to the ineffectuality of leaders.

But my thoughts on the character of ancient times and modern has led me far afield, and now I must again tell of things in their correct order.

## **Book II:XXXIX Othonian lack of strategy**

With Otho off to Brescello (Brixellum) nominal command was held by his brother Titianus while real power lay with Proculus, the prefect. As for Celsus and Paulinus, whose experience no one made use of, their roles as generals were empty titles cloaking others' faults. The tribunes and centurions lacked direction, better men being despised and the worst valued. The soldiers were in good spirits, but chose to criticise their leaders' orders rather than perform them.

It was decided to transfer camp to a site four miles from Bedriacum, but the move was so organised that despite the spring weather and the many nearby rivers they were distressed by lack of water. There they pondered giving battle, Otho's despatches demanding haste, the soldiers demanding that their emperor join the fight: many calling for the troops stationed across the River Po to be summoned.

Thus it is less easy to know what the best action might be than to know, after the fact, that the worst course has been taken.

## **Book II:XL Titianus overrules his generals**

As if setting out on campaign rather than to fight a battle, they headed for the confluence of the Adda with the River Po, sixteen miles distant (near Cremona). Celsus and Paulinus refused to expose men, fatigued by marching and weighed down with baggage, to an enemy who, free of encumbrances and having advanced barely four miles, would not hesitate to attack while they themselves were marching in irregular order, or were dispersed while fortifying their encampment. Titianus and Proculus, though defeated in argument, referred to imperial authority. Indeed a Numidian arrived post-haste with direct orders from Otho who, tired of delay and refusing to wait on expectation, rebuked his generals for their inaction, and ordered them to initiate events.

## **Book II:XLI The two armies fight**

On the same day that Caecina was preoccupied with bridge-construction, two tribunes of the praetorian cohorts came to request an interview. He was preparing to listen and respond to their proposals when his scouts suddenly announced the arrival of the enemy. The discussion with the tribunes being interrupted, it was uncertain whether it was some deceit or betrayal they were initiating or a matter for honest debate. Caecina, dismissing the tribunes, returned to camp where he found that Fabius Valens had ordered the signal for battle, and the troops were under arms.

While the legions were still casting lots to determine their position in line, the cavalry charged, but strange to relate only the courageous action of the Italian legion prevented them

from being driven back to their entrenchments by an inferior force of Othonians, and forced the beaten cavalry at sword-point to turn and renew the fight. Meanwhile the Vitellian legions formed orderly lines despite the proximity of the enemy whose weaponry was hidden by dense thickets.

The generals on Otho's side though were anxious, the soldiers were hostile to their generals, and there was a confusion of troops, camp-followers and wagons, the road with its deep ditches on either side being too narrow for the army to make a quiet approach. While some men were grouped around their proper standard, others were out of position; and there was a confused clamour on all sides as men called out and ran to their places, rushing to the front or slipping to the rear as courage or fear prompted.

## **Book II:XLII The Vitellians charge**

The consternation caused by sudden apprehension on Otho's side was quelled by false cheer, at the unwarranted news that Vitellius had been deserted by his men. It is not known whether Vitellius' scouts deliberately spread the rumour, or whether it arose on Otho's side by chance or treachery. The Othonians lost all zeal for battle and even cheered the enemy, who received their cries with hostile murmurs, which led to fear of treachery, many of Otho's men being unaware of any cause for celebration.

Then the Vitellians charged in force, their lines intact and superior in strength and numbers, the Othonians resisting fiercely despite their lesser numbers, fatigue and disorder. The fighting revealed more than one aspect, the field of battle being obstructed by groves and vineyards, now being hand to hand, now at a distance, meeting by detachments or in column.

On the causeway (of the Via Postumia) they closed together, shields and bodies pressed against each other, unable to raise a spear but shattering helms and breastplates with axe and sword. They recognised one another, were visible to all the rest, fighting to decide the outcome of the entire war.

## **Book II:XLIII The battle beside the river**

Two legions chanced to be engaged on the open plain between the River Po and the road; on the Vitellian side the Twenty-first, called Rapax, of long and glorious renown, and on the Othonian side the First Adiutrix, never before engaged in battle but spirited and eager for a first success.

The front ranks of the Twenty-First were cut down by the First and their eagle captured; the shame of which so incensed the legion that they drove the First backwards, killing their commander Orfidius Benignus and capturing many of the enemy colours and standards.

In another sector, the Othonian Fifth were routed by a charge of the Thirteenth, and the Fourth were attacked and surround by a superior force. Otho's generals having fled long before, Caecina and Valens strengthened their troops with reserves. Fresh help arrived with Varus Alfenus and his Batavians, who had routed the gladiators in boats, meeting them with

their cohorts as they crossed and slaughtering them, there and then, in the water; thus victorious they attacked the enemy flank.

## **Book II:XLIV The defeated Othonians retreat to Bedriacum**

The Othonian centre once broken fled in disorder, making for Bedriacum. The distance was great, and piles of corpses obstructed the roads, which added to the carnage, there being no profit in captives in civil warfare.

Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus took different routes, avoiding the camp. Vedius Aquila, commander of the Thirteenth legion, was so panicked however that he foolishly entered the camp in broad daylight, encountered angry troops, and was quickly surrounded by a clamorous mob of mutinous fugitives, sparing him neither blows nor insults; calling him traitor and deserter, not because of any fault of his own but, as crowds do, imputing their own crimes to others.

Night came to the aid of Titianus and Celsus, for by then Annius Gallus had settled the troops and posted sentinels, persuading the men by a show of decisiveness, pleas, and authority, not to add to the disaster of their defeat by massacring their own leaders; arguing that whether they had ended their fight or chose to take up arms again, their only recourse having lost lay in unity.

Most were broken in spirit, but the praetorians complained they had been defeated by treachery not the enemy's bravery, nor had the Vitellians won a bloodless victory, their cavalry having been repulsed, and the legion's eagle captured; Otho with his force, on the far bank of the Po, remained unbeaten, the Moesian legions were on the way, and a large part of the army was still intact at Bedriacum, had certainly not been overcome, and that if it came to it, it was more honourable to die in battle.

By such comments, the furious and panic-stricken were roused more to anger than to terror.

## **Book II:XLV The Vitellians grant terms**

But the Vitellian army took up position five miles from Bedriacum, their commanders not daring to storm the opposing troops on the same day; hoping too that they might surrender voluntarily: and while they themselves had set out ready for action and intent on battle, their victorious arms served now as their defence.

The following day, the wishes of Otho's army being unambiguous, with even those who had been most vociferous inclined to compromise, a deputation was sent, and the Vitellian leaders did not hesitate for long before granting terms. However the deputation were detained for a time, and this created uncertainty for those who were as yet unaware whether peace had been achieved, until they returned when the gates of the camp were thrown open.

Then victors and vanquished shed tears, deploring, with a joy tinged with sadness, their involvement in civil war; and under the same canvas they tended the wounds of brothers and

relations with no expectation of reward, and none so free of misfortune as not to mourn some loss, aware only of death and lamentation.

The corpse of Orfidius the legate having been found, he was cremated with the customary honours; a few others were interred by their relatives, the mass of the fallen were left on the field.

## **Book II:XLVI Otho is exhorted to continue the war**

Calmly and with a certain resolve, Otho (at Brixellum) awaited news of the battle. First came gloomy reports, then the appearance of fugitives from the fighting announced the day was lost. The troops in their ardour would not let their emperor speak, insisting that he be of good cheer: there were yet fresh forces, and they themselves would dare and suffer all. Nor was this mere talk: afire with madness, well-nigh inspired, they burned for action to revive the fortunes of their party.

The soldiers near him clasped his knees, those further from him stretched out their hands. Plotius Firmus, prefect of the praetorian guard, was the most eager, begging Otho endlessly not to desert the most faithful of armies, the worthiest soldiers of all: saying that it was braver to endure adversity than to yield and moreover that the strong and resolute set hope against fate, it is the weak and cowardly who are soon driven to despair.

In the midst of these appeals, cheers or groans arose, according as Otho's expression softened or hardened again. Not only the praetorians, Otho's personal guard, but the advance troops from Moesia, reported that the contingents on their way were just as steadfast, and that the legions had entered Aquileia. So no one can doubt that the dreadful and disastrous conflict might well have been renewed, with uncertain outcome for the current victors and vanquished.

## **Book II:XLVII He decides otherwise**

Otho himself was opposed to such thoughts of battle: 'I think it too great a price to pay for my survival to expose such spirits as yours, such courage as yours, to further danger.' My death will be the finer the greater the hope, if only life had been my choice, that you have offered. We know each other well Fortune and I. Do not count the days: it is hard to control the success one cannot long rely on.

Vitellius began the conflict, he began our contest in arms for power: but we shall not so contend again, for I shall set the example; let posterity judge Otho by this. Let Vitellius delight in brother, wife and heirs: I ask for neither vengeance nor solace. Others may rule the empire for longer, none shall relinquish it more bravely.

Should I again let so great a portion of Rome's youth, so many fine troops, be massacred and lost to the state? I cherish the thought that you are ready to die for me, but you must live. Let us no longer linger, I speaking of your survival, you of my decision. It is cowardly to talk at length of death. Let the strongest proof of my determination be that I make complaint of none; it is for he who chooses to live to find fault with gods or men.'

## **Book II:XLVIII Otho dismisses his court**

So saying, he urged them all, courteously, according to their age or rank, to leave swiftly and not incite the victor to anger, compelling the young men by his authority, urging their elders by his prayers. His expression was calm, his voice firm, as he checked his followers unseemly tears.

He then ordered boats and carriages be given to those who were leaving; destroyed all letters and documents displaying marked loyalty to himself or abuse of Vitellius; and distributed funds sparingly, not as if he were about to die.

Next he lovingly consoled his brother Titianus' young son, Salvius Cocceianus, who was anxious and mournful, praising his dutiful feelings but reproving his fears: asking if he really thought Vitellius would prove so ungentle as to deny him like gratitude for protecting Vitellius's own family; saying that by this swift ending, which saved the state fresh misfortune, and not ultimately in desperation but with an army yet demanding battle, he would earn the victor's clemency.

He said also that he had won fame enough, nobility enough for his scions, being the first to confer power on a new family since the Julians, the Claudians and before them the Servii, therefore, with a resolute spirit, Salvius should grasp life, never forgetting that Otho was his uncle, nor meditating on that same fact to excess.

## **Book II:XLIX His death**

Otho now dismissed them all and rested awhile. As his thoughts turned towards his last concerns, he was disturbed by a sudden uproar, announcing consternation and mutiny among the soldiers, who were threatening all those leaving with death, most forcefully Verginius, the Consul Suffectus, whom they had besieged in his shuttered house. Rebuking the authors of this sedition, Otho returned to grant audiences to those who were departing until all had left unharmed.

As evening fell, he quenched his thirst with a draught of cold water. Then two daggers being brought to him, he tested their sharpness, and placed one beneath his pillow. Once satisfied that his friends had left, he passed a quiet night, as is affirmed, and not without sleep.

At first light he leaned heavily on the steel: hearing his dying groans his freedmen and slaves entered, along with Plotius Firmus, prefect of the praetorian guard, to discover but the single wound.

His cremation was hastily arranged, a thing he had requested earnestly, lest his severed head be made sport of later. Praetorian guards carried his body, with shouts of praise and tears, kissing his hands and his solitary wound. Soldiers killed themselves beside the pyre, not through shame or fear, but to emulate his noble end, and through affection for their emperor. And afterwards this manner of death was practised, widely, at Bedriacum, Piacenza, and in other camps.

The tomb erected for Otho was modest and enduring. Thus he took leave of life, in his thirty-seventh year.

### **Book II:L A brief biography of Otho**

Otho was born in the municipality of Ferento (Ferentinum), his father having been consul, his grandfather praetor: his maternal ancestry of lesser note, yet still respectable. His boyhood and youth were as we have described. Through two of his actions, the one murderous, the other noble, he won as great a reputation for evil as for good among posterity.

Though I would consider it detrimental to the seriousness of this work I have undertaken if I were to search out fabulous and fictitious stories to amuse my readers, I dare not deny consistent and traditional beliefs. Thus, on the day of the battle at Bedriacum, the locals say that a bird of unknown species settled in a much-frequented grove near Reggio (Regium Lepidum), and neither the crowd of people nor the other birds circling it scared the bird away, until after Otho's suicide when it disappeared from sight: when the interval was computed from beginning to end of this marvel it had spanned the period of Otho's death.

### **Book II:LI Otho's troops grant allegiance to Vitellius**

The tears and lamentations at Otho's funeral drove the soldiers to fresh mutiny, with none to check it. The troops turned to Verginius, requesting in a threatening manner now that he accept imperial powers, now that he act as their ambassador to Caecina and Valens. Verginius however slipped away through the back door of his house in secret, and escaped as they broke in.

It was Rubrius Gallus who carried the appeals of the cohorts stationed at Brescello (Brixellum), and their immunity was swiftly granted, the troops Flavius Sabinus had commanded signalling through him their support for the victor.

### **Book II:LII The Senators stranded at Modena**

Though the fighting had ceased everywhere, a large group of senators who had set out from Rome with Otho and remained at Modena (Mutina) met with extreme danger. Their news that the war was over arrived, only to be scorned by the soldiers as a false rumour, and judging the senators hostile to Otho they monitored their conversations, interpreting their looks and bearing adversely. Resorting, in the end, to insults and abuse, they then looked for reasons to kill them, while another further threat oppressed the senators, that if Vitellius' cause was in the ascendant they might be seen as slow in accepting his victory.

Thus the senators gathered together, anxious and fearful on both accounts, none ready with a plan, but each more secure from accusation in the larger group. The rank and file of

Modena added their weight of cares to the frightened men by offering them money and weapons, and addressing them with the unfortunate title of Patricians Elect.

### **Book II:LIII They return to Bologna**

A notable quarrel ensued when Licinius Caecina attacked Marcellus Epius for propounding ambiguities. None of the others had ventured an opinion, but the name of Marcellus, who was known to have been an informer, being hateful to them and open to ill-comment, had provoked Caecina, a newcomer recently appointed to the senate, into seeking fame by making an enemy of the great. The wiser and more moderate senators parted them.

They all then returned to Bologna (Bononia) to continue their discussions, hoping for further news in the meantime. There, they posted men on the various roads to question newcomers, until one of Otho's freedmen arrived, and on being asked why he was there, replied that he brought Otho's last commands; that Otho had still been alive when he left, the emperor's sole care being for posterity having renounced the blandishments of life.

At this, in admiration and ashamed to question further, all their support shifted to Vitellius.

### **Book II:LIV Rumour and confusion**

His brother, Lucius Vitellius, now involved in their discussions, was already offering himself to their adulation, when one of Nero's freedmen, Coenus, suddenly unnerved them all, by means of a downright lie, claiming that the victors had been crushed by the Fourteenth legion arriving to join the forces from Brescello, and that the fortunes of the armies had been reversed.

His reason for this invention was to renew by this joyful news the force of Otho's letters of authority which were being treated as null and void. In fact, Coenus, hurriedly conveyed to Rome a few days later on Vitellius's orders, paid the penalty for his deceit, but it had placed the senators in grave danger from the soldiers who had believed the news to be true.

That their departure from Modena and their desertion from Otho's cause had the appearance of a formal decision only added to their alarm. They no longer gathered together, each thinking only of himself, until despatches from Fabius Valens banished their fears. And the laudable nature of Otho's death spread the news of it all the quicker.

### **Book II:LV Vitellius celebrated as emperor in Rome**

But there was no alarm in Rome; and the festival of Ceres (April 12-19) was celebrated in the usual way. When it was announced in the theatre on good authority that Otho was dead, and that Flavius Sabinus, the city prefect, had administered the oath of allegiance to Vitellius

involving all the soldiers in the city, Vitellius was applauded; and people carried images of Galba, laurels, and flowers from temple to temple; piling wreaths, as if to form a burial mound, beside the Lacus Curtius, which the dying Galba had stained with his blood.

In the Senate, all that had been decreed by a long line of emperors was conferred on Vitellius; praise and gratitude towards the troops from Germany was added, and a legation sent to deliver this expression of joy. Letters from Fabius Valens to the consuls were read out, modestly written: though there was appreciation for Caecina's greater modesty in not writing at all.

## **Book II:LVI The aftermath of war in Italy**

Elsewhere Italy's distress was harsher and more painful than that inflicted by the war. Dispersed throughout the municipalities and colonies, the Vitellian troops despoiled, pillaged, and defiled all with their violence and debauchery: in everything, whether sacred or profane, their greed and venality proved indifferent to right or wrong.

There were men who, in the guise of soldiers, murdered their personal enemies; and the soldiers themselves, knowing the country round about, marked out the best land, the richest owners for plunder or, should they resist, for slaughter; the generals, being beholden to the troops, not daring to stop them. Valens, notorious for his greed and acquisitiveness, was the more indifferent to the crimes of others, while Caecina though showing less avarice revealed his desire for popularity.

Italy, its wealth long since exhausted, could scarcely endure the violence, damage and injury caused by all this mass of horsemen and infantry.

## **Book II:LVII Vitellius realises his success**

Meanwhile, Vitellius, unaware of victory, was leading his remaining forces from Germany as if to an uncertain outcome. Leaving only a few veterans in the winter quarters he was raising levies throughout the Gallic provinces to fill the ranks of the legions left behind.

He assigned the guardianship of the Rhine to Hordeonius Flaccus; while he himself added eight thousand select troops from the army of Britain to his own forces. A few days into his advance he learned of the success at Bedriacum and that with Otho's death the civil war was over. Calling his men together, he heaped praise on his brave troops. When the army demanded he grant equestrian status to his freedman Asiaticus, a vile and servile creature, popular only with imperial greatness because of his dark arts, Vitellius checked their ignoble adulation; but later, at a private banquet, out of the fickleness of his nature, he honoured Asiaticus with the gold ring, which he had refused to do openly.

## **Book II:LVIII The situation in North Africa**

At this time, news arrived that after the killing of the procurator, Lucceius Albinus, the two Mauretanian provinces had joined the Vitellian cause. Albinus, whom Nero had appointed governor of Mauretania Caesariensis (to the east), Galba then adding the administration of Tingitana (to the west), had controlled a sizeable body of men. It comprised nineteen infantry cohorts, five cavalry squadrons, and a large number of Mauri, apt for warfare being thieves and brigands.

Following Galba's assassination, favouring Otho and not content with ruling North Africa, Albinus set his sights on Spain, over the narrow strait. This troubled Cluvius Rufus, and he ordered the Tenth legion to the coast as if to effect a crossing of their own, and sent centurions ahead to win the Mauri to the Vitellian cause. This was not difficult as the army of Germany had an outstanding reputation in the provinces, moreover rumour had it that Albinus, scorning the name procurator, had usurped Juba's royal insignia and title.

## **Book II:LIX Vitellius at Lyon**

Upon this reversal of sentiment, Asinius Pollio, prefect of cavalry and one of those most loyal to Albinus, was assassinated, along with Festus and Scipio, the cohort commanders. Albinus himself was killed as he landed, while trying to reach Caesariensis from Tingitana by sea, his wife choosing to die with him at the hands of the assassins. Vitellius made no enquiry into these events; unequal to such serious matters, he dismissed them, however grave, after a brief hearing.

Ordering his army to proceed by an inland route, he himself sailed down the Saône, without imperial magnificence, but rather displaying his old poverty, until the governor of Gallia Lugudunensis, Junius Blaesus, of illustrious ancestry, generous spirit and matching wealth, surrounded him with an imperial retinue, liberally staffed, earning himself resentment, though Vitellius cloaked his antipathy in clever blandishments.

At Lyon, the generals on both sides, the conquerors and the conquered, were present. In a public speech he praised Valens and Caecina, placed on either side of his official chair. Then he ordered the whole army to parade before his infant son, who wrapped in a general's cloak he held in his arms, calling him Germanicus, and surrounding him with all the insignia of imperial power. The granting of these excessive honours in prosperity remained a solace in misfortune.

## **Book II:LX The fate of Otho's adherents**

Then the centurions who had supported Otho most readily were executed, which was a primary factor in turning the army in Illyricum against Vitellius. The other legions were likewise affected and being ill-disposed to the army of Germany began to think of war.

Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus were held in squalid conditions, anxiously awaiting an audience, during which they subsequently employed a defence born of necessity rather than honour. Charging themselves with treachery against Otho, they blamed themselves for the long march before the battle and the weariness of Otho's troops, for the entanglement with the baggage train, and a host of other misfortunes. And Vitellius, crediting them with treachery, dismissed the charge of loyalty laid against them.

Otho's brother, Salvius Titianus, was never in danger, forgiven on the grounds of duty to his brother, and his own ineffectiveness. Marius Celsus kept his consulship: but a widely accepted tale later led to the charge in the Senate against Caecilius Simplex that he had been prepared to buy the consulship if only Celsus were executed. Vitellius though had refrained, and afterwards gave Simplex a consulship involving neither cost nor ill-intent. Trachalus was protected from his accusers by Vitellius's wife, Galeria.

## **Book II:LXI Mariccus the Pretender**

While the great were in danger, it is shameful to say, a certain Mariccus, a commoner from the tribe of the Boii, pretending divine authority, dared to chance his fortune and challenge the Roman forces. This self-styled god and liberator of the Gallic provinces, gathering eight thousand men, was already plundering the Aeduan cantons nearby, when the finest youth of that vital state, with cohorts assigned by Vitellius, scattered that fanatical host. Mariccus was captured during the battle. The foolish rabble continued to think him inviolable, because he was not torn apart when exposed to wild beasts, until he met death in Vitellius's sight.

## **Book II:LXII Vitellius begins his reign**

No further severity was shown concerning the defeated or their assets. Wills, and the law regarding intestacy, were upheld. Indeed fear of Vitellius's avarice might have been quelled, if he had tempered his desire for pleasure. His love of feasting was insatiable and shameful. Gourmet items to tempt his palate were ferried from Rome and wider Italy, the roads from the coasts alive with traffic; the banquet preparations ruined whole communities along with their leading citizens; and the soldiers shirked all duty and effort, accustomed now to indulging their pleasures and despising their leader.

Vitellius issued an edict in Rome, ahead of his arrival, declining the title Augustus and the name of Caesar, though rejecting none of the imperial powers. Astrologers were banished

from Italy; strict measures were enacted barring knights from degrading involvement in gladiatorial schools or the arena. Past emperors had driven such men to participate, by bribery or more often force, and most municipalities and colonies seduced the most immoral of their youths with prize-money, in emulation.

## **Book II:LXIII The charges against Dolabella**

But Vitellius, on his brother's arrival and at the prompting of his instructors in tyranny, growing in arrogance and savagery, ordered Dolabella's execution. Dolabella, whose banishment by Otho to the colony of Aquino we previously related, had returned to Rome after hearing of Otho's death: he was charged on this account by an ex-praetor, Plancius Varus, who had been one of Dolabella's closest intimates, before the city prefect, Flavius Sabinus. To the charge of absconding from custody and offering himself as leader to the defeated party, Varus added that of trying to win over the cohort stationed at Ostia, but being unable to provide proof of such criminality and repenting of his actions he sought pardon for Dolabella, too late and after the fact.

While Flavius Sabinus hesitated over so serious a matter, Triaria, Vitellius's sister-in-law, ferocious beyond her gender, warned Sabinus not to seek a reputation for clemency at the emperor's expense. Sabinus, gentle by disposition, wavered all too readily when gripped by fear and, frightened for himself when danger threatened another, not to be seen to be aiding him precipitated Dolabella's ruin.

## **Book II:LXIV The death of Dolabella**

Vitellius, who feared and hated Dolabella because the latter had married Vitellius's ex-wife, Petronia, therefore summoned him by letter telling him to avoid the busy Flaminian Road and stop at Terni (Interamnium), where he had secretly ordered Dolabella killed. His assassin, thinking the journey too long, reaching a roadside inn, threw Dolabella to the ground and slit his throat, an action causing great ill-will to be felt towards to the new emperor, it being regarded as a first indication of his disposition.

Triaria's excess was weighed against the examples of moderation from within her close circle, since the Emperor's wife, Galeria, never involved herself in such horrors, while Sextilla, his mother, was of equal probity, upholding the morality of former days. Indeed, it is said, that on receiving the first letter signed by her son as Emperor she commented that she had borne a Vitellius, but no Germanicus. She never afterwards evinced joy at fortune's glitter or popular support, feeling only the great misfortunes of her house.

# **Book II: LXV-CI Vespasian prepares his bid**

## **Contents**

- [Book II:LXV The fate of Cluvius and others](#)
- [Book II:LXVI The troublesome Fourteenth legion](#)
- [Book II:LXVII The re-assignment of other forces](#)
- [Book II:LXVIII Further mutiny](#)
- [Book II:LXIX Military policy](#)
- [Book II:LXX Vitellius visits the battlefield at Bedriacum](#)
- [Book II:LXXI Vitellius approaches Rome](#)
- [Book II:LXXII Geta the Pretender](#)
- [Book II:LXXIII Rumours concerning Vespasian](#)
- [Book II:LXXIV Vespasian assesses the situation](#)
- [Book II:LXXV Vespasian's vulnerability to assassination](#)
- [Book II:LXXVI Mucianus argues for action](#)
- [Book II:LXXVII Mucianus concludes his exhortation](#)
- [Book II:LXXVIII Favourable omens](#)
- [Book II:LXXIX Vespasian's troops take the oath](#)
- [Book II:LXXX Mucianus administers the oath at Antioch](#)
- [Book II:LXXXI Support for Vespasian in the East](#)
- [Book II:LXXXII Vespasian prepares for war](#)
- [Book II:LXXXIII Mucianus advances](#)
- [Book II:LXXXIV Funding the civil war](#)
- [Book II:LXXXV The situation in Moesia](#)
- [Book II:LXXXVI The gathering storm](#)
- [Book II:LXXXVII Vitellius's degenerate army](#)
- [Book II:LXXXVIII The army on the rampage](#)
- [Book II:LXXXIX Vitellius enters Rome](#)
- [Book II:XC Vitellius speaks to the people](#)
- [Book II:XCI Vitellius's behaviour as emperor](#)
- [Book II:XCII Where real power lay](#)
- [Book II:XCIII Disorganisation in the army](#)
- [Book II:XCIV Vitellius indulges his troops](#)
- [Book II:XCV Vitellius's profligacy](#)

[Book II:XCVI The defection of the Third legion](#)

[Book II:XCVII Vitellius summons auxiliaries](#)

[Book II:XCVIII Vitellius's preparations become known](#)

[Book II:XCIX Vitellius orders his generals to prepare for war](#)

[Book II:C Caecina prepares to change sides](#)

[Book II:CI Caecina and Bassus defect](#)

## **Book II:LXV The fate of Cluvius and others**

After leaving Lyon, Vitellius was overtaken by Cluvius Rufus who had quit Spain and who gave the appearance of a man filled with delight, offering congratulations, though he was anxious at heart, knowing that accusations were being made against him. Hilarus, an imperial freedman, had denounced him, claiming that on hearing of both Otho and then Vitellius being made emperor he had tried to take power and possession in Spain for himself, omitting the emperor's name from his directives; and that comments in his speeches could be interpreted as derogatory to Vitellius and populist as regarded himself.

Cluvius's influence prevailed, such that Vitellius ordered his own freedman punished. Cluvius was admitted to the emperor's retinue and not deprived of Spain, which he governed in absentia after the example of Lucius Arruntius. However Tiberius had kept Arruntius near him out of fear, while Vitellius had no such fear of Cluvius.

Trebellius Maximus failed to receive the same honour: he had fled Britain to escape the army's anger; one of Vitellius's entourage, Vettius Bolanus, replaced him.

## **Book II:LXVI The troublesome Fourteenth legion**

Vitellius was disturbed by the spirit of the defeated legionaries, who were by no means cowed. Dispersed throughout Italy and mingling with his victorious troops, their speech was hostile, the men of the Fourteenth legion being particularly forthright in denying they had been conquered, saying that at Bedriacum only a few ranks of their veterans had been repulsed, and the legion's full force had been absent.

Vitellius decided to send them back to Britain, from which Nero had withdrawn them, while having the Batavians camp with them, they having a long-standing grudge against the Fourteenth. Peace is short-lived when soldiers hate one another so deeply, and at Turin a Batavian called a workman, whom a legionary defended as his host, a thief, upon which their comrades rallied to their support, and harsh words changed to blows. A fierce battle would have ensued, if two Praetorian cohorts had not sided with the Fourteenth, bolstering their confidence and scaring off the Batavians. Vitellius, considering the Batavians loyal, ordered them to join his progress, while the Fourteenth were to cross the Graian Alps by a circuitous route avoiding Vienne, since the mood there also gave cause for concern.

On the night the legion set out, the soldiers left fires burning everywhere, and part of the colony of Turin went up in flames, which loss, like most ills of the war, was eclipsed by the greater disasters overtaking other cities. After the Fourteenth had crossed the Alps, the most mutinous among them were all for an attack on Vienne, but they were restrained by the better part of them acting in concert, and the legion was transported to Britain.

## **Book II:LXVII The re-assignment of other forces**

The next concern for Vitellius were the Praetorian cohorts. At first they were kept apart and, with the added sop of honourable discharge, they began to turn their weapons over to the tribunes, until Vespasian's war effort gathered pace, when they took up service again to become the backbone of the Flavian cause.

The First legion of marines Vitellius sent to Spain, to be calmed by its peace and quiet; the Seventh and Eleventh were returned to winter quarters (in Pannonia and Dalmatia), while the Thirteenth were ordered to work building amphitheatres, since Caecina was preparing to mount gladiatorial shows in Cremona, and Valens likewise in Bologna. Vitellius was never so intent on business that he neglected pleasure.

## **Book II:LXVIII Further mutiny**

Vitellius had now dismantled the defeated faction without great show: but mutiny broke out among the victors, it began playfully but the resulting deaths added to Vitellius's unpopularity. He was dining at Pavia (Ticinum) and Verginius was his guest at table. Legates and tribunes either imitate a commander's character in severity or delight in extravagant banquets; and likewise the soldiers exhibit self-control or licence. In Vitellius's army all was disorder, intoxication, night revels and bacchanalian orgies, rather than the discipline proper to a military camp.

Thus, two soldiers, a legionary of the Fifth and a Gallic auxiliary, challenged each other to a wrestling match, in sport, but when the legionary was thrown and mocked at by the Gaul the crowd who had gathered to watch took sides, the legionaries began killing auxiliaries, and two cohorts were massacred. The result of this riot was a second riot. Armed men and a cloud of dust were spied in the distance: and a sudden cry arose that the Fourteenth legion had retraced its line of march and was set for a fight: however it was simply the rear-guard, recognition of which quelled the panic.

Meanwhile one of Verginius's slaves who chanced to be passing was taken for an assassin, Vitellius being the target, and the soldiers ran to the banquet to demand Verginius's death. Though even Vitellius, who was fearful and suspicious of everything, never doubted his innocence. It was difficult nevertheless to calm those who called for the execution of this ex-consul who had once been their own commander. No one was so often threatened on every riotous occasion than Verginius: admiration for the man and his reputation remained strong, but the troops hated him for disdaining their offer of power.

## **Book II:LXIX Military policy**

On the following day, Vitellius received the Senate delegation that he had ordered to attend him there, then went to the camp and praised the soldiers' selfless devotion, to shouts of complaint from the auxiliaries regarding the legionaries' arrogance and impunity.

Lest the Batavians run wild, he sent them back to Germany, for fate was preparing the scene for both civil and foreign conflict. The Gallic auxiliaries were dismissed to their homes, their numbers being great as they had been drafted at the very start of the revolt, one among the inanities of warfare.

Then, so that the imperial resources, depleted by largesse, might prove sufficient, he ordered a reduction in the numbers of legionaries and auxiliaries, with a ban on recruitment and an open offer of discharge. This was fatal to the state and unpopular with the men, the same workload being assigned to fewer troops so that danger and effort weighed more heavily on each. Their vigour was also impaired by pleasure, contrary to the former discipline and principles of our ancestors, among whom virtue rather than gold better upheld the state.

## **Book II:LXX Vitellius visits the battlefield at Bedriacum**

Vitellius next detoured to Cremona and after watching the gladiatorial show presented by Caecina wished to visit the field of Bedriacum and view the aftermath of the recent victory with his own eyes. It was a vile and atrocious sight: almost forty days after the battle mutilated corpses, severed limbs, the rotting forms of men and horses, blood-soaked earth, toppled trees and trampled crops bore witness to foul devastation.

No less barbaric was a stretch of road which the citizens of Cremona had strewn with roses and laurels, erecting altars and performing sacrifices, as if for a king; which present rejoicing would soon provoke their ruin. Valens and Caecina were there, explaining the battle site, here the ranks of legionaries had charged, there the cavalry squadrons, and over there the auxiliaries surrounded the enemy. Tribunes and prefects also, each man praising his own actions, mixed truth with falsehood or at least exaggeration.

The mass of soldiers too, with victory cries, turned aside from the road, recognising the extent of the fighting, wondering at the piles of weapons and mounds of corpses. And some were moved to tears of pity by the vicissitudes of fate, but Vitellius never glanced away in horror at the sight of so many thousands of fellow citizens robbed of burial: rather he rejoiced, and unaware of his approaching fate, offered sacrifice to the local gods.

## **Book II:LXXI Vitellius approaches Rome**

At Bologna, Fabius Valens presented his gladiatorial show, with equipment brought from Rome. The nearer Vitellius came to the latter, the greater the corruption; actors and crowds of

eunuchs joining the procession, with every kind of creature that Nero's court had contained. For Vitellius praised and admired that very Nero, whose singing tours he had accompanied, not under duress as so many honourable men had been, but like a slave bought with licence and gluttony.

Next, he shortened the terms of various consulships to free up sundry months in order to so honour Valens and Caecina, ignoring Marcus Macer as having been a leader of Otho's faction. And he deferred Valerius Marinus's consulship, he having been chosen by Galba, not because of any fault, but because he was mild-mannered and would suffer any slight without protest. Pedanius Costa was omitted also, being out of favour with Vitellius having dared to oppose Nero and urge Verginius to act, though other reasons were given. Gratitude was nevertheless expressed to Vitellius, as is the custom among the servile.

## **Book II:LXXII Geta the Pretender**

A deception that met with a lively reception at first lasted only a few days. A man appeared pretending to be Scribonianus Camerinus and maintaining that during Nero's reign he had been in hiding in Istria where his family the Crassi still had followers, lands and popular support. To bolster this tale he gathered a crew of villains, and the gullible masses and various soldiers, either believing it true or eager for trouble, were rallying to him when he was dragged before Vitellius and questioned as to his real identity.

No credence being placed in his answers, once he had been recognised by his master as a runaway slave, named Geta, a slave's punishment was enacted on him.

## **Book II:LXXIII Rumours concerning Vespasian**

It is scarcely believable to relate how greatly Vitellius's arrogance and complacency increased after informants from Syria and Judea reported that the East had sworn allegiance to him; for though the sources of rumour were vague and uncertain as yet, Vespasian was much talked of, and Vitellius was often disturbed to hear his name.

Nevertheless, Vitellius and his soldiers, as if free of rivals, erupted in bouts of savagery, sensuality and plunder, in the manner of barbarians.

## **Book II:LXXIV Vespasian assesses the situation**

Vespasian however was reflecting on warfare, weapons and the situation of the armed forces far and near. His own soldiers were in such a state of readiness that when he administered the oaths and prayed for Vitellius's good fortune, they listened in total silence.

Mucianus's attitude to Vespasian was not hostile, and more favourable still to Titus; Tiberius Alexander the prefect of Egypt was attuned to Vespasian's plans; the Third legion

which had been transferred from Syria to Moesia would support him; and it was hoped other legions in Illyricum would follow their lead; for the whole army had been incensed at the arrogance of Vitellius's men whenever they appeared who, savage in looks and barbarous in speech, mocked the rest as inferior.

But hesitation generally precedes such weighty conflicts; and Vespasian at one moment filled with hope, at the next pondered the difficulties: what would that day portend on which he committed his sixty years and those of his two young sons to war? Private purpose may make a move, and according as it wishes, accept more or less of what fate grants; but in the desire for supreme power there is no middle way between the summit and the abyss.

## **Book II:LXXV Vespasian's vulnerability to assassination**

Vespasian reflected on the strength of the troops from Germany, with the knowledge of a military man: his own legions were untested in civil conflict, Vitellius's men knew victory, and there was more discontent than strength among the defeated. A soldier's loyalty fluctuates in periods of disorder, while danger comes from individuals: what profit is there in ranks of soldiers, squadrons of cavalry, if one or two are ready to act in person and seek reward from the enemy?

So Scribonianus died in Claudius's reign, so his assassin Volaginius was promoted from a common private to the highest rank: it is easier to impel many than evade the lone man.

## **Book II:LXXVI Mucianus argues for action**

Hesitating among such fears, he was urged to a decision by his officers and friends, among them Mucianus, who after many conversations in private spoke out openly: 'All those who take it upon themselves to plan great enterprises should consider whether what they are about to begin is beneficial to the state, will bring glory to themselves, and is readily or at least potentially achievable; and at the same time should consider who advises them, will those advisors share the risk as well as the counsel, and if fortune favours the undertaking, who are they to seek the highest honour?

I summon you to the throne, Vespasian, in whose hands, after the gods, lies the question of how beneficial to the state, and glorious to you that will prove. Fear no kind of flattery here: to be chosen to succeed Vitellius is more a cause for grief than celebration. We are not rising to oppose the all-powerful mind of a now-deified Augustus, nor the ever-wary nature of an aged Tiberius, nor even the long-established imperial house of a Caligula, a Claudius, or a Nero: you tolerated the presence even of Galba's statues: but to indulge in torpor now and leave the state to ruin and corruption would seem like cowardice and indifference, even if subservience rendered you as secure as it would render you dishonourable. The time when you could appear without desire for power is past and gone: your only safety is as emperor. Have you forgotten Corbulo, murdered by Nero? His origins were greater than ours, but so was Nero more nobly born than Vitellius. Anyone feared it seems is deemed noble enough by the fearful.

Then you have proof from Vitellius's own rise that an army can make an emperor, not through campaigns and military fame, in his case, but through its hatred of Galba. Already Vitellius has turned even Otho into a great and memorable emperor, defeated not by his rival's skill or military strength but by his own headlong despair. Meanwhile Vitellius scatters his legions, disarms his auxiliaries, and sows new seeds of conflict day by day. All the courage and ardour of his soldiers is dissipated through gluttony and debauchery, in imitation of their emperor.

You have nine full legions in Judea, Syria and Egypt, nine legions not exhausted by battle or rife with dissent, but soldiers strengthened by action, victors of a foreign conflict; strong fleets, cavalry and auxiliary cohorts; princes loyal to you; and, above all, experience.'

## **Book II:LXXVII Mucianus concludes his exhortation**

'I ask nothing for myself save not to be counted less than Valens or Caecina: yet do not scorn Mucianus as a partner in this merely because you find in him no rival. I set myself above Vitellius, and you above me. Your house has had the honour of a triumph, and possesses two warriors, the other of whom is already capable of wielding power and having spent his first years of service in Germany is known to the forces there. It would be absurd of me not to yield power to one whose son I would adopt if I held power myself. For the rest, success and failure will have differing results where we are concerned; if we win I shall accept the honours you grant, risks and dangers will be shared alike. Or, better still, you direct the forces, and leave the fighting and the vicissitudes of battle to me.

At this moment, the conquered rather than the conquerors show better discipline. The defeated are roused to bold action by anger, hatred and eagerness for revenge: the victors are weakened by pride and obstinacy. War itself will open and lay bare the hidden swollen wounds of the victorious party. I have no less confidence in your vigilance, caution and wisdom than in Vitellius's torpor, carelessness and savagery. Besides, our cause is better served by war than peace; for those who plan rebellion, are already rebels.'

## **Book II:LXXVIII Favourable omens**

After Mucianus's speech the others were emboldened and crowded round Vespasian, exhorting him, recalling the seers' prophecies and the aspects of the constellations. Nor was he free of such superstitions, who later as emperor openly retained a certain astrologer, Seleucus, as his oracle and guide. Previous omens sprang to mind: a cypress tree of great height on his estate had suddenly collapsed, but rose as tall the next day, at the same spot, spreading wider than before.

This, the soothsayers agreed, was a great and favourable omen, and promised the highest honour for Vespasian, still then a youth. His glorious success in Judea, his triumph, and the consulship seemed to him at first to have fulfilled the omen's promise: yet having so achieved, he then believed himself destined for imperial power.

Between Syria and Judea lies Carmel: so they name the mountain and the god. The god has neither image nor temple – such is the ancient tradition – simply an altar and due reverence. When Vespasian made sacrifice there, as he was pondering his secret hopes, Basilides the priest, after carefully inspecting the entrails proclaimed: ‘Vespasian, should you plan to raise your house, enlarge your estate, or increase the number of your servants, a mighty dwelling will be granted you, wide boundaries, and a host of men.’ This oracle which rumour had seized upon at the time, now bore interpretation; and nothing sprang to the lips of the masses more readily. The talk was still more open in his presence, as speech is freer to those with hopes.

With uncertainty dispelled, Mucianus left for Antioch, Vespasian for Caesarea: the former being the headquarters in Syria, the latter in Judea.

## **Book II:LXXIX Vespasian’s troops take the oath**

The transfer to Vespasian of imperial power began at Alexandria, hastened by Tiberius Alexander who administered the oath of allegiance to his troops on the first of July. This day was celebrated later as the first of Vespasian’s reign, though the army in Judea were to swear the oath in front of Vespasian himself only on the third of July, he being too impatient nevertheless to wait for his son Titus, the medium of communication between Mucianus and his father, to arrive back from Syria. The whole thing was done at the urging of the soldiers without prepared speeches or a parade of the legions.

## **Book II:LXXX Mucianus administers the oath at Antioch**

The time and place and, the most difficult thing in such situations, the person to give the opening speech were still being discussed, all minds filled with hopes, fears, plans and possibilities, when Vespasian left his quarters, whereupon a few soldiers drawn up in their usual order to salute him as their leader, saluted him as emperor. Then the rest gathered swiftly, celebrating him as Caesar, Augustus and bestowing on him all the imperial titles. Their thoughts turned from apprehension to belief in their success: Vespasian himself showed no pride or arrogance nor any sign of alteration despite his altered role.

As soon as he had shaken off the mist spread before his eyes by so great an elevation, and had spoken like the soldier he was, he received good news in abundance since, waiting only for this moment, Mucianus administered to his own eager troops the oath of allegiance to Vespasian. Then moving to the theatre where the people of Antioch held their public gatherings, he spoke to those who had hurried there, and were effusive in their adulation. He spoke well, even in Greek, knowing how to give a certain stylishness to all he said and did.

Nothing incensed the people and the soldiers as much as his assertion that Vitellius was determined to transfer the Syrian troops to Germany, with its wintry climate and onerous duties, while conversely the German legions would be assigned to wealthy and peaceful Syria; for these provincial citizens were used to, and delighted in the military presence and many were bound to the soldiers by ties of friendship and marriage, while the soldiers in turn from long service there prized their customary encampment as if it were their own home.

## **Book II:LXXXI Support for Vespasian in the East**

By the fifteenth of July all Syria had likewise sworn allegiance. He was supported also by Sohaemus (King of Sophene, on the Euphrates), the strength of whose kingdom was not be despised, and by Antiochus (King of Commagene) the richest of the subject princes, with vast inherited wealth. Soon, Agrippa (the son of Herod Agrippa), summoned from Rome at the behest of private messages from his friends, swiftly sailed to join the cause, unbeknown to Vitellius.

Queen Berenice (Agrippa's sister), in the flower of her youth and beauty, showed no less enthusiasm for his faction, and commended herself to him, for all his years, by the fine gifts she made him. Whatever provinces, washed by the seas, Asia and Achaëa held, and whatever provinces were revealed inland as far as Pontus and Armenia, all swore allegiance; but they were devoid of military power, with no legions as yet present in Cappadocia.

A summit meeting convened at Beirut (Berytus). Mucianus attended with all his legates and tribunes, as well as his finest soldiers and centurions; and the army in Judea sent its foremost representatives. So great a gathering of infantry and cavalry, with princes emulating one another in royal display, crowned the emperor's success.

## **Book II:LXXXII Vespasian prepares for war**

The first concern in readiness for war was to raise levies and recall the veterans. Fortified towns were chosen to manufacture weapons; gold and silver coins were minted at Antioch, and all in turn was quickly executed by skilled agents.

Vespasian himself was there, exhorting them, spurring on the active with praise, the idle by example rather than coercion, glossing over his friends' faults but not their virtues. Many he rewarded making them prefects and procurators, and many he raised to senatorial rank, outstanding individuals who later attained highest office; though in some cases it was a stroke of good fortune rather than a sign of merit.

Mucianus, in his first speeches, offered the soldiers hopes of only a modest bounty, not even Vespasian offering more in times of civil war than in peacetime, being firmly opposed to extravagant promises to the men, and on that account possessing finer troops.

Ambassadors were sent to the Parthians and Armenians, and provisions made for a rear-guard, to avoid exposure once the legions were deployed in the civil war. It was decided that Titus should pursue the conflict in Judea, while Vespasian barred the gateways to Egypt: it was deemed sufficient for only a section of the army, if led by Mucianus in Vespasian's name, to oppose Vitellius, nothing being difficult where fate takes a hand.

Letters were despatched to all the armies and their legates, commanding them to tempt those praetorians who hated Vitellius with the promise of re-entering Vespasian's service.

## **Book II:LXXXIII Mucianus advances**

Mucianus, with a lightly-armed force, and acting more as a man sharing power than a subordinate, advanced neither too slowly, lest it convey uncertainty, nor too hastily, so as to allow time for rumour to spread, knowing his forces to be modest in size, for what is unseen is believed greater. Nevertheless the Sixth legion and thirteen thousand veterans followed in dense array.

He had ordered the Black Sea fleet to gather at Byzantium (Istanbul), uncertain as yet whether to bypass Moesia and occupy Dyrrachium (Durrës) with infantry and cavalry, at the same time blockading Italian waters with his warships so as to protect Achaëa and Asia to his rear which would be defenceless against Vitellius unless strongly guarded; while Vitellius would be unsure which parts of Italy to protect if he himself initiated a naval attack on Brindisi (Brundisium), Taranto (Tarentum) or the coasts of Calabria and Lucania.

## **Book II:LXXXIV Funding the civil war**

Thus the provinces rang to the readying of ships, soldiers and weapons, though nothing troubled them as much as the difficulty of amassing funds: 'they are the sinews of civil war', Mucianus would say, neither truth nor justice in his sights but only the value of a defendant's assets. Denunciations were frequent, and the wealthiest seized as prey. Heavy and intolerable as such things were when excused by the necessities of war, they continued even in peacetime, Vespasian himself at the start of his reign being less insistent on gain from such iniquities but eventually learning, through the indulgence of fortune and the depravity of his teachers, to dare likewise.

Mucianus contributed generously to the war from his own fortune, as free with his private means as he was greedy in acquiring public ones. The others followed his example in donating money, but it was a rare individual who possessed the same freedom in replenishing the same.

## **Book II:LXXXV The situation in Moesia**

Meanwhile, Vespasian's campaign was furthered by the eagerness with which the army in Illyricum changed sides; the Third legion setting an example to the other legions in Moesia, the Eighth and the Seventh Claudiana. Both imbued with loyalty to Otho, though they were not involved at Bedriacum, they had turned away the messengers bringing news of Otho's defeat and, after advancing as far as Aquileia, torn down the banners proclaiming Vitellius's name, and finally, seizing and dividing the military funds, initiated hostilities.

From this came apprehension, and from apprehension the thought that what might require Vitellius's pardon might win credit with Vespasian. Thus these three legions in Moesia

attempted to win over the army in Pannonia by diplomacy while preparing to use force if they refused. With that aim, the governor of Moesia, Aponius Saturninus, initiated a shameful attempt, prompted by a feud but presented as a blow for the cause, on the life of Tettius Julianus, legate of the Seventh legion. He sent a centurion, but Julianus, learning of the danger, fled accompanied by local guides. through the wilds of Moesia to the lands beyond Mount Haemus (Balkan Mountains).

He took no further part in the civil war, undertaking with sundry delays to join Vespasian, advancing then hesitating according to the latest news.

## **Book II:LXXXVI The gathering storm**

However, in Pannonia the Thirteenth legion and the Seventh Galbiana, still angry and resentful over the fighting at Bedriacum, did not hesitate to support Vespasian, with visible impetus from their commander, Primus Antonius. He had been found guilty by the courts and condemned for fraud in Nero's reign, but one among the many evils of war had been his recovery of senatorial rank.

Though Galba had placed him in charge of the Seventh legion, he is thought to have written to Otho offering his services as a general in Otho's cause, but overlooked by Otho played no role in that war. Now Vitellius's fortunes were in doubt, he sided with Vespasian and added significant momentum to his cause, being energetic in action, ready of speech, skilful at sowing animosity among others, prone to stirring discord and sedition, a robber, active in bribery, the worst of men in peacetime, but not to be scorned in war.

The alliance of the armies in Moesia and Pannonia won over the troops in Dalmatia, though the ex-consuls who governed the provinces were uninvolved. Tampius Flavianus ruled Pannonia, while Pompeius Silvanus held Dalmatia, both old men and wealthy; but the imperial agent Cornelius Fuscus was there too, he being vigorous in years and noble in birth.

In his youth he had relinquished senatorial rank out of the desire for a quiet life; at the same time he led his colony in supporting Galba, and thereby became a procurator. Espousing Vespasian's cause he now brought all his fiery energy to the war: rather than the rewards danger might bring it was the danger itself that delighted him, preferring whatever was new, uncertain and filled with risk to old established interests.

So the movers and shakers began to rouse the discontented everywhere. They wrote to the Fourteenth legion in Britain, and the First legion in Spain, both having supported Otho against Vitellius; and letters were sown widely throughout the Gallic provinces. In a moment, a great war was alight, the army in Illyricum rebelling openly, the rest following on Fortune.

## **Book II:LXXXVII Vitellius's degenerate army**

While Vespasian and the leaders of his faction were achieving this in the provinces, Vitellius, daily more indolent and more despised, halting at every pleasant town and villa, neared Rome with his ponderous army.

Sixty thousand armed men followed him, tainted with indiscipline; the mass of camp-followers was greater still, and even amongst servants those of the soldiers' were the most insolent; and there were countless officers and courtiers, a tribe incapable of obedience, even under the strictest of regimes. This multitude was swollen by the senators and knights from Rome who came out to meet him, some from fear, many to ingratiate themselves, the remainder, down to the last man, to avoid being left behind when the rest had gone. And the dregs of society gathered to him, known to Vitellius for their shameful and servile behaviour, jesters, actors, chariot racers, whose scurrilous friendship delighted him greatly.

Not only were the municipal towns and colonies plundered, as if this army were on foreign soil, but the farmers and their fields, on the point of harvest.

## **Book II:LXXXVIII The army on the rampage**

There were many savage incidents among the soldiers; since after the first quarrel at Pavia the conflict between legionaries and auxiliaries continued, though they were united in their brawls with the country folk. However the worst massacre took place seven miles from Rome.

There, Vitellius distributed dressed meats to the soldiers as if he were nurturing gladiators; and crowds had streamed from Rome to fill the whole camp. Unknown to the soldiers – in a display of native wit – these visitors disarmed a few of them, slicing through their belts furtively, then asking where their weapons were. Spirits unused to insult cannot bear ridicule: the soldiers attacked the unarmed crowd with their swords. Among others the father of one of the soldiers was killed while accompanying his son; on this becoming widely known, the innocent were saved from further slaughter.

In Rome there was yet more trepidation with soldiers from the vanguard everywhere; they sought the forum first, eager to see the place where Galba's corpse had lain. They presented no less savage a sight themselves; shaggy with the pelts of wild creatures and bristling with enormous spears, they unwittingly failed to avoid the crowds and, downed by slippery streets or collisions with citizens, fell to cursing and then fists and swords.

Even the tribunes and prefects swept through, their armed bands bringing terror.

## **Book II:LXXXIX Vitellius enters Rome**

Vitellius himself, on a pedigree horse and wearing a general's cloak, had set off from the Mulvian Bridge with the senate and people streaming before him, but dissuaded by his advisors from entering Rome as if it were a captured city he donned a senator's toga and entered on foot with his columns of troops.

The eagles of four legions went in front, while the banners of four more were ranged around, then the standards of twelve cavalry squadrons and after them the foot and horse; next were thirty-four cohorts, distinguished by the names of their tribes or their assortment of weapons.

Before the eagles went the prefects of the camp, the tribunes and the leading centurions, dressed in white, and the remaining centurions, each with their men, their armour and decorations gleaming. And the soldiers' medals and torques shone too: a fine sight but an army deserving of a finer emperor than Vitellius.

Thus he mounted the Capitol, and there embraced his mother (Sextilia) and bestowed on her the title Augusta.

## **Book II:XC Vitellius speaks to the people**

Next day, Vitellius made a pompous speech about himself, as if to the senate and people of some foreign state, lauding his own hard work and moderation, though his audience and indeed all Italy, through which he had progressed in shameful idleness and debauchery, were perfectly well aware of his failings.

Nevertheless, as ever, his hearers, mindlessly and with an inability to separate truth from falsehood, cried aloud in adulation as they had been taught to do; and despite his protestations forced him to adopt the title of Augustus, his acceptance as empty as his reluctance.

## **Book II:XCI Vitellius's behaviour as emperor**

In a city where everything was subjected to interpretation, it was naturally regarded as an evil omen that Vitellius, in his role of high priest, issued a proclamation, regarding public ceremonies, on the eighteenth of July. This was the date, long held to be unlucky, of the disasters at the River Cremera (477BC) and at the Allia (386BC). Thus, ignorant of all law, human and divine, he lived, as if among drunkards, as foolish a life as his freedmen and courtiers.

Yet he canvassed alongside his candidates at the consular elections like an ordinary citizen, repeated every cry in the theatre like a mere spectator, and sought to win at the races like any other patron: all of which would have proved welcome and popular if it had been prompted by virtue, but with the memory of his life to date still fresh it was seen as base and indecorous.

He often attended the senate, even when the senators were discussing minor issues. On occasion, Helvidius Priscus, praetor-elect, opposed Vitellius's proposals. Vitellius was agitated, but did nothing more than call on the tribunes of the people in support of his slighted authority. Later, when his allies, fearing his anger might run deeper, sought mitigation, he replied that there was nothing strange in two senators disagreeing about public affairs; and that he indeed had spoken out against Thrasea (Helvidius's father-in-law, executed by Nero in 66AD).

Many ridiculed this shameless comparison, while others were delighted that Vitellius himself had chosen not a man of power, but instead Thrasea as a model of true glory.

## **Book II:XCII Where real power lay**

Vitellius appointed Publilius Sabinus, a cohort prefect, and Julius Priscus, a centurion, as prefects of the praetorian guard. Priscus owed his promotion to Valens, Sabinus to Caecina; over their disputes Vitellius had no authority, all imperial duties being performed by Caecina and Valens.

These two had a long-held hatred each other, barely concealed in camp or at war, which was fuelled by mischievous friends and civil affairs, always a fertile breeding-ground for enmity. As they contended, and their efforts in gathering followers and long lines of well-wishers were compared, Vitellius leaned now towards the one, now the other; where there is excessive power, there can never be complete trust: and at the same time they feared or despised that same Vitellius, so changeable in his manifestations of sudden offence or inappropriate flattery.

Not that this had made them slow to seize houses, gardens, and imperial wealth, while a lamentable crowd of poverty-stricken noblemen and their children, whom Galba had restored to the city, received no sympathy from their emperor.

Welcomed by the foremost citizens and approved even by the plebeian was the concession to the returnees from exile of power over their freedmen, though this was evaded by the freedmen, with the cunning of servants, in every way possible, placing their money with obscure friends or with ambitious patrons, with some entering Caesar's household to become more powerful than their masters.

## **Book II:XCIII Disorganisation in the army**

Meanwhile the soldiers, their camps full to overflowing with their numbers, wandered about among the porticos and temples, and throughout the entire city, unknown to headquarters, performing no guard-duties, and without beneficial employment. Through the shameful seductions of city life, their bodies were weakened by idleness, their minds by debauchery.

Moreover, with scant regard for their health, the majority of them camped in the pestilential Vatican quarter, with a host of deaths among their crew: with the Tiber nearby, the bodies of the Gauls and Germans in particular, who were unable to bear the heat and desperate for the river-water, were weakened and exposed to disease. Besides all this, military discipline was eroded by corrupt and self-serving actions.

Sixteen praetorian and four city cohorts, of a thousand men each, were enrolled. Valens ventured further to suggest, when selecting them, that he had rescued Caecina from great danger. It is true that the arrival of his forces had strengthened their side, and that success in the battle had quelled the unfortunate rumour that he had lingered en route. All the troops from Lower Germany adhered to Valens, and from that moment on it is thought Caecina's loyalty to Vitellius wavered.

## **Book II:XCIV Vitellius indulges his troops**

For the rest, Vitellius did not thus indulge his generals, without allowing the soldiers even greater licence. Every man entered whichever branch of the service he chose. However unsuited he might be, he was enrolled for service in the city, if that was what he wished. On the other hand, fine soldiers were permitted to remain voluntarily with the legions or cavalry. There was no lack of men, exhausted by disease and blaming the climate of Rome, who chose to do so; the strength of the legions and cavalry reduced all the same, and the praetorian camp's prestige was impaired, its twenty thousand strong troop, taken from the whole army, being more a random mix than a picked body of men.

On being addressed by Vitellius, they demanded the execution of the Gallic chieftains who had fought for Vindex, namely Asiaticus, Flavius, and Rufinus. Vitellius did not dismiss such demands: not only being cowardly by nature, but aware that he must soon pay his soldiers and lacking the means he indulged them in every other way.

The imperial freedmen were ordered to contribute funds based on the number of slaves they possessed; the emperor himself whose only concern was to spend those funds, built racing stables, filled the arena with gladiatorial and wild beast shows, and entertained himself to the full extent of his wealth.

## **Book II:XCIV Vitellius's profligacy**

Indeed, Caecina and Valens celebrated his birthday with gladiatorial exhibitions throughout the city precincts, on a vast scale unheard of before their time. When Vitellius erected altars on the Campus Martius to make offerings to the dead Nero, the worst elements were delighted, while virtuous citizens were horrified. The sacrificial beasts were killed and burned on behalf of the state; and the flames were lit by the Augustales, a priesthood devoted by Tiberius to the Julian clan, as Romulus had devoted one to King Tatius (Titus Tatius, King of the Sabines).

It was not yet four months since Vitellius's victory, and one freedmen of his, Asiaticus was already a match for Polyclitus or Petrobius (Nero's freedmen) and other odious names from the past. No one at his court rose through honesty or hard work: the one road to power was to attempt to satisfy Vitellius's insatiable greed with prodigious banquets and extravagant suppers. Vitellius himself was more than happy to enjoy the present moment without thought for the future, and is thought to have squandered nine million gold pieces in those few months.

Our mighty and yet wretched state, enduring an Otho and a Vitellius in the very same year, suffered shameful vicissitudes of fate at the hands of Vinius, Fabius, Icelus and Asiaticus, until Mucianus and Marcellus replaced them; other men, but not other morals.

## **Book II:XCVI The defection of the Third legion**

The first defection of a legion was that of the Third, reported to Vitellius in a letter sent by Aponius Saturninus (Governor of Moesia) before he too joined Vespasian's faction; though Aponius, in his sudden excitement, had not written a full report, and the news was interpreted more favourably by obsequious courtiers: saying that the mutiny involved only one legion and the rest of the army remained loyal.

Vitellius relayed the news to his troops in the same manner, criticising the praetorians recently discharged as having spread false rumours, strongly asserting that there was no fear at all of civil war and suppressing Vespasian's name, while soldiers roamed the city prohibiting people from commenting on the matter. This latter action above all fed the rumours.

## **Book II:XCVII Vitellius summons auxiliaries**

Vitellius nevertheless summoned auxiliary troops from Germany, Britain and the Spanish provinces, but progressively, and hiding the necessity for his action. The governors and provinces moved ponderously in the same manner. Hordeonius Rufus, already suspicious of the Batavians, was concerned about a rebellion of his own, while Vettius Bolanus governed a Britain that was never fully quiet, and both were of uncertain loyalty. Nor were troops instantly sent from the Spanish provinces, which lacked a governor: their three legion commanders, equal in authority, who would have vied with each other in obedience if Vitellius's affairs had been prospering, shrank equally from sharing in his waning fortunes.

In Africa, the legions and cohorts, raised by Clodius Macer, and later discharged by Galba, returned to the service on Vitellius's orders, while the rest of its young men freely gave their names. Indeed Vitellius when pro-consul there had proved honest and popular, while Vespasian's rule was notorious and hated: from this the allies had made assumptions about each as emperor, though experience revealed the reverse.

## **Book II:XCVIII Vitellius's preparations become known**

The commander of the Third legion in Africa, Valerius Festus, at first faithfully sided with the provincials, but soon wavered, openly favouring Vitellius in his public despatches and edicts, showing support for Vespasian in secret missives, furthering this interest or that, according to whichever gained in strength.

Various centurions and soldiers, despatched by Vespasian to Rhaetia and the Gallic provinces carrying despatches and proclamations, were sent to Vitellius and executed. The majority however evaded capture, escaping by their own devices, or concealed by allies. Thereby Vitellius's actions became known, while much of Vespasian's planning was hidden.

This was primarily due to Vitellius's foolishness, and secondly to the guards stationed in the Pannonian Alps detaining messengers. Furthermore with the Etesian winds blowing, the sea favoured navigation eastwards, but not the reverse.

## **Book II:XCIX Vitellius orders his generals to prepare for war**

At last, Vitellius, fearful of enemy incursions and the dreadful news from every quarter, ordered Caecina and Valens to prepare for war. Caecina was sent forward, while Valens, only just recovered from a serious illness, was forced by physical weakness to delay.

Leaving the city, the army of Germany showed a very different appearance to that with which it had arrived; the soldiers' bodies lacked vigour and their spirits ardour; their march was slow and strung out, their armour slack, their horses dull; yet the more these men, unable to withstand heat, dust or rain, were reluctant to endure toil, the readier they were to quarrel.

Add to that Caecina's enduring ambition, and his recent torpor, an excess of good fortune having corrupted him with luxuries, or, while planning treachery, his scheming perhaps to destroy the army's morale. It is generally believed that Flavius Sabinus's advice swayed Caecina's mind, Rubrius Gallus furthering the conversation, saying that the terms on which he might join them would be approved by Vespasian.

He was reminded at the same time of his dislike of, and envy towards, Fabius Valens, and advised that given the inequality in their influence with Vitellius he should seek power serving a new emperor.

## **Book II:C Caecina prepares to change sides**

Caecina, leaving the embrace of Vitellius amidst great honours, sent a squadron of cavalry ahead to Cremona. Soon detachments of the First, the Fourth, the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth legions, and then the Fifth and the Twenty-Second followed; the Twenty-First Rapax and the First Italic formed the rear-guard, with detachments from the three legions of Britain and picked auxiliaries.

After Caecina had left, Fabius Valens wrote to those troops once under his command, ordering them to wait for him on the way: saying that he and Caecina had so agreed. But Caecina, being on the spot and thus advantaged, pretended that the plan had changed to one of waging all-out war on the enemy. The legions were therefore ordered to push on, some to Cremona, the rest to Hostilia (Ostiglia), while he himself diverted to Ravenna, on the pretext of addressing the fleet; shortly thereafter seeking the privacy of Padua to compound his treachery.

For, Lucilius Bassus, formerly merely the prefect of a cavalry squadron, had been given command of the fleets at Ravenna and Miseno (Misenum) by Vitellius. But because he had not promptly been made prefect of the praetorian guard, his unjust resentment indulged in shameful and treacherous revenge.

It is not known whether Bassus influenced Caecina or, given that men who do wrong often share a likeness, whether the same perversity drove them both.

## **Book II:CI Caecina and Bassus defect**

The writers of the time, who composed their accounts of the war while the Flavian house held power, interpreted the actions of these two men as due to a concern for peace and a love of the state, and concealed the real motives out of a desire to flatter. However, it seems to me that the pair of them, beside possessing fickle natures and treating loyalty as an empty concept once they had betrayed Galba, overthrew Vitellius himself out of a sense of rivalry and envy, lest others surpass them in the emperor's sight.

Caecina now renewed contact with his legions, and by various tactics undermined the centurions' and soldiers' steadfast support for Vitellius: Bassus found it easier still to achieve the same with the fleet, the sailors, fresh from their recent service to Otho, being already primed to shift their allegiance.

# **Book III: I-XXXI The Flavian forces invade Italy**

## **Contents**

- [Book III:I The Flavian campaign](#)
- [Book III:II Antonius Primus urges haste](#)
- [Book III:III Antonius Primus inspires the troops](#)
- [Book III:IV Cornelius Fuscus adds his weight to the argument](#)
- [Book III:V Vespasian neutralises the forces in Raetia](#)
- [Book III:VI Antonius Primus and Arrius Varus advance](#)
- [Book III:VII The Flavians reach Padua](#)
- [Book III:VIII The Flavians take Vicenza and Verona](#)
- [Book III:IX Hostilities around Verona](#)
- [Book III:X Antonius quells a mutiny](#)
- [Book III:XI A second mutiny leaves Antonius in sole command](#)
- [Book III:XII Mutiny also on Vitellius' side](#)
- [Book III:XIII Caecina tries to instigate a mass defection](#)
- [Book III:XIV Caecina's attempt fails](#)
- [Book III:XV Antonius takes up position near Bedriacum](#)
- [Book III:XVI Initial skirmish near Bedriacum](#)
- [Book III:XVII Antonius inspires a Flavian victory](#)
- [Book III:XVIII Antonius reins in his troops](#)
- [Book III:XIX The Flavian troops clamour to storm Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XX Antonius calms his men](#)
- [Book III:XXI The Vitellians make a night assault](#)
- [Book III:XXII Stalemate in the darkness](#)
- [Book III:XXIII Battle by moonlight](#)
- [Book III:XXIV Antonius rouses his men](#)
- [Book III:XXV The Flavians clear the path to Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXVI The Flavians reach Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXVII Attack on Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXVIII Mass slaughter](#)
- [Book III:XXIX The Flavians take the earthworks](#)
- [Book III:XXX The Flavians assault Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXXI Cremona is taken](#)

## **Book III:I The Flavian campaign**

The military commanders on the Flavian side drew up their plan of campaign under greater auspices and with greater loyalty. They had gathered at Poetovio in Styria (Ptuj, Slovenia) the winter quarters of the Thirteenth legion (Gemina). There they deliberated whether to hold the passes over the Pannonian Alps until they had the whole of their forces at their backs, or whether it was not more logical to go immediately on the offensive and contest possession of Italy.

Those minded to wait for the auxiliaries and prolong the war, stressed the strength and reputation of the German legions, and that the troops from Britain had recently arrived in strength to join Vitellius. They also spoke of the inferior number of recently defeated legions on their side, and that although the soldiers talked fiercely enough, there is always less courage among those who have lost. Holding the Alps would allow Mucianus to arrive in the meantime with troops from the East.

Vespasian possessed a navy and ruled the waves, and had provincial support allowing him virtually to wage war on a second front and thus, they declared, delay was beneficial, while new forces would strengthen them, and none of their present advantages be lost.

## **Book III:II Antonius Primus urges haste**

To this, Antonius Primus (commander of the Seventh legion, Galbiana, and the most passionate advocate for war) replied that speed favoured their cause, but would be ruinous to Vitellius: the victorious party had increased in idleness rather than gained confidence, nor were their soldiers confined to camp and on the alert: rather they were quartered throughout all the municipalities of Italy, objects of fear to their hosts, the ferocity they had once shown matched only by the avidity with which they had drunk of unaccustomed pleasures.

They had been weakened too by the theatres, the Circus, and the other delights of Rome or exhausted by the effects of disease; but given time even they would recover their strength and be ready for action. Germany, the fount of their strength, was not far off; Britain separated from them only by the straits; Gaul and Spain were neighbours, providing tributes of men and horses; and they held Italy itself and Rome's wealth; and if they chose to advance beyond those limits they had twin fleets (at Miseno and Ravenna) and the Illyrian Sea lay open to them.

What profit was there then in blocking the mountain passes? What would be gained by extending the war a further summer? Where in the meantime would funds and supplies be found? It was better to make use of the fact that the Pannonian legions, deceived rather than conquered, were ready to rise in revenge; and the troops in Moesia had contributed their whole strength intact. If soldiers were numbered rather than legions, here was the greater force, free of dissipation; its discipline strengthened by feelings of shame over Bedriacum. Even there the cavalry had not been defeated; amidst the disaster they broke Vitellius's line.

‘That day,’ Antonius Primus declared, ‘two squadrons of horse, from Pannonia and Moesia, shattered the enemy: now sixteen squadrons charging as one, with the noise and dust they raise, will overwhelm the men and horses of an enemy that has forgotten how to fight. Unless you restrain me, I shall not merely advise, but act on that advice. You, if you wish, resources still intact, hold back your legions: the light brigade will be enough for me. Soon you will hear that Italy lies open, Vitellius’s rule overthrown. May you delight in following, treading in the victor’s footsteps.’

### **Book III:III Antonius Primus inspires the troops**

In this manner, eyes flashing, and in such fierce tones as to be more widely heard (since centurions and their men had infiltrated the council) Antonius Primus poured out his eloquence, inspiring even the cautious and most prudent, while a group of men and then the rest cheered him as the only true man and leader there, scornful of the other generals’ reluctance.

Primus had already won a prompt reputation at the rostrum, when after reading aloud a letter from Vespasian he had not argued in vague and general terms, leaning to this or that interpretation according to how it profited him, but seemed openly to have joined the cause, so carrying more weight with the soldiers as a partner in their guilt or in their glory.

### **Book III:IV Cornelius Fuscus adds his weight to the argument**

Cornelius Fuscus, the procurator, held most influence after Primus. He had also been accustomed to attack Vitellius harshly, leaving himself with little to hope for in opposition. Tampus Flavianus (the Governor of Pannonia), though, by years and nature more cautious, roused the soldiers’ suspicions, his family ties to Vitellius being recalled. Moreover, since he had departed at the first signs of rebellion among the legions, then returned of his own volition, it was thought he sought occasion for treachery.

Now Flavianus had left Pannonia for Italy and so avoided the issue, but felt impelled by his desire for a change of government to resume his title of governor and become involved in the civil conflict. He was urged to do so by Cornelius Fuscus not because he needed Flavianus’s contribution, but in order to add a consular name to their rising party in a shining display of virtue.

### **Book III:V Vespasian neutralises the forces in Raetia**

In order to cross into Italy with impunity and gain the advantage, word was now sent to Aponius Saturninus (the Governor of Moesia) to make haste with his Moesian troops. And lest undefended provinces be exposed to the barbarian tribes, the princes of the Sarmatian Iazuges who held power over their people were admitted to serve with the army. They offered

also their men and horses, their only strength: but this gift was refused, lest amid the conflict they might initiate other hostilities, or abandon right and justice if greater rewards promised elsewhere.

Sido and Italicus, kings of the Suevi, were drawn to Vespasian's party, they having been faithful to the Romans for some time, a people more inclined to loyalty than taking orders. They stationed auxiliaries on their flank, since Raetia was hostile, Porcus Septimius, its procurator, being genuinely pro-Vitellius. Sextilius Felix, with the Aurian horse and eight infantry cohorts was therefore sent to hold the banks of the River Inn, which flows between Raetia and Noricum.

Neither side being inclined to test their strength, the fate of the parties was decided elsewhere.

### **Book III:VI Antonius Primus and Arrius Varus advance**

Antonius advanced rapidly to the invasion of Italy, with his detachments of auxiliaries and cavalry, in collaboration with Arrius Varus, energetic in warfare, whose fame had grown as a general under Corbulo and through success in Armenia. This same Varus, rumour had it, had questioned Corbulo's integrity, privately before Nero; his reward for this shameful act was the rank of leading centurion, which delighted him at the time but was later a cause of his ruin.

Be that as it may, Primus and Varus, having occupied Aquileia, were received with joy in the neighbouring region at Oderzo (Opitergium) and Altino (Altinum). A force was left at Altino to counter any initiative on the part of the fleet at Ravenna, as they were unaware as yet of its defection. They next won the support of Padua and Este (Ateste). At Este they learned that three Vitellian cohorts and a squadron of cavalry, the Sebosian, had occupied Forum Alieni and built a bridge there.

Primus and Varus thought it an opportunity to attack an enemy that appeared complacent, this being also reported to them. At first light, they killed many of the unarmed men. It had been suggested that if they did away with a few the rest might be forced in fear to change their allegiance. And there were some who surrendered immediately: the majority remaining however destroyed the bridge and blocked the road, so thwarting the enemy.

The opening of the campaign had brought success to the Flavians.

### **Book III:VII The Flavians reach Padua**

With the victory common knowledge, the legions Seventh Galbiana and Tenth Gemina, under the command of Vedius Aquila, advanced rapidly to Padua. There they rested a few days, during which the prefect of the Seventh legion's camp, Mincius Justus, whose discipline was more strict than troops in a civil war could tolerate, was spared the soldiers' anger by being sent to Vespasian.

One action, long desired, but wrongly interpreted, won excessive credit: Antonius ordered that in every town where Galba's statues had been toppled during the discord they should be rededicated, his real motive being the belief that it would further their cause to endorse Galba's principate and revive his interests.

### **Book III:VIII The Flavians take Vicenza and Verona**

The Flavians then debated where their wartime headquarters should be. Verona seemed best, surrounded by open country suitable for cavalry operations, in which they were strongest, while to deny a colony, so rich in assets, to Vitellius seemed expedient as regarded their own reputation.

Advancing, they took Vicenza (Vicetia), an action of little account in itself (it being a town with modest resources) yet a place of great significance considering it was Caecina's birthplace and thus an enemy general's native town had been seized.

Verona was the real prize: useful as a landmark gain with a wealth of resources; and the army, positioned between Raetia and the Julian Alps, could prevent the movement of forces from Germany (over the Brenner Pass).

All this was unknown to Vespasian or had been expressly forbidden by him: in fact he had ordered operations not to extend beyond Aquileia, pending Mucianus's arrival; and he had given the reason for this, that holding Egypt and controlling the grain supply, while possessing the revenues also of the other two wealthiest provinces (Syria and Asia), Vitellius's armies could be forced to surrender for want of food and pay.

Mucianus counselled this also in frequent despatches, on the pretext of seeking a bloodless and painless victory or variations on that theme, though in fact avid for glory and wanting all the military honours for himself. However his advice arrived after the event due to the distances involved.

### **Book III:IX Hostilities around Verona**

Antonius then, at once rushed to attack the enemy positions: but after testing their courage in a minor skirmish withdrew with no advantage gained. Caecina soon finished fortifying his camp, between Ostiglia (Hostilia), in the region ruled by Verona, and the swamps of the River Tartaro, a defensible site, with the river at his back, and flanked on both sides by the marshes.

If Caecina had remained loyal, the combined forces of the Vitellians might have crushed the two legions at Verona still lacking the Moesian troops, or repulsed them such that they might have taken to a shameful flight, abandoning Italy. But by various delaying tactics he handed the military initiative to his enemies, whom his army might easily have driven off, writing them reproving letters, while concluding a treasonous pact via go-betweens.

In the meantime, Aponius Saturninus had arrived from Moesia with the Seventh legion Claudiana, commanded by the tribune, Vipstanus Messala, of distinguished ancestry and

himself eminent, who alone brought integrity to the field of battle. Caecina sent missives to all the enemy troops, who were no match for the Vitellians (since as yet there were only three legions at Verona), accusing them of rashness in taking up arms after their defeat. He simultaneously praised the courage of the army of Germany, with slight passing mention of Vitellius, no abuse of Vespasian, and with absolutely no attempt to bribe or intimidate his opponents.

The leaders of the Flavian faction, omitting any reference to their past defeats, spoke out boldly in support of Vespasian, resolute in his cause, and confident of their men. They attacked Vitellius in a hostile manner, while raising an expectation among the enemy's tribunes and centurions that they would retain the benefits with which Vitellius had favoured them, and openly urged Caecina to change sides.

Recited to the assembled Flavian soldiers, this exchange of letters gave them added confidence, for Caecina had written in a deferential manner, as if fearing to offend Vespasian, while their leaders had replied contemptuously as if in scorn of Vitellius.

### **Book III:X Antonius quells a mutiny**

Two further legions then arrived, the Third commanded by Dillius Aponianus, the Eighth by Numisius Lupus, and the Flavians decided on a show of strength whereby Verona would be surrounded by a rampart. The Galbiana legion chanced to be assigned a section of the works facing the enemy, and catching sight of some allied cavalry in the distance took them wrongly, in a moment of panic, to be hostile. Fearing betrayal, they seized their weapons, and their anger fell on Tampius Flavianus (Governor of Pannonia), not because of any evidence of guilt on his part but because of their prior hatred of him.

In a show of rage, they demanded his death, shouting out that he was a relative of Vitellius's, had betrayed Otho, and had diverted their gratuity. He had no chance to defend himself, though he raised his arms in supplication, repeatedly fell flat on the ground, and tore at his clothes, his mouth and chest convulsed with sobs. This itself incited them to further anger, thinking his terror a proof of guilt. When Aponius Saturninus (Governor of Moesia) tried to speak he was interrupted by the soldiers' cries; others were greeted with groans and howls of scorn.

Only Antonius won a hearing; since he possessed the authority and eloquence to calm a mob. Seeing that the mutiny was growing, and the men were about to add violence to their noise and abuse, he ordered Flavianus clapped in irons. But the troops, sensing a ruse, pushed aside those guarding the platform, and prepared to use extreme force. Antonius, drawing his sword and pointing it at his breast, swore he would die by his own hand not theirs, and called by name to everyone in sight whom he knew or who bore a battle honour to come to his aid.

Then, turning towards the eagles and the images of the gods of war, he prayed that they might inspire this madness and discord in the enemy's army rather than their own, until at last the mutiny died away, and as twilight fell, the soldiers slipped away each to their own quarters.

On setting off from the camp, that very night, Flavianus met with a despatch from Vespasian absolving him of all such charges.

## **Book III:XI A second mutiny leaves Antonius in sole command**

The legions, as if tainted with the plague, now attacked Aponius Saturninus, the commander of the army of Moesia, and with the greater violence because they were not wearied by work and toil but inflamed at noon by rumours of some letters that Saturninus was thought to have written to Vitellius. Previously vying with each other in courage and discipline, they now competed in insolence and impudence, so that they might be seen as no less insistent in demanding Aponius's punishment than that of Flavianus.

The legions from Moesia, having aided the Pannonian troops in their sedition, and the Pannonians, acting as if absolved by the others' fresh mutiny, delighted in repeating the crime. They rushed to the gardens in which Saturninus had his quarters. It was not however Primus, Aponianus and Messala who saved him, despite all their efforts, but rather the obscurity of the hiding-place where he lay concealed, closeted in the furnace-room of a bath-house that chanced to be unused: shortly after that, dismissing his attendants, he fled to Padua.

Once the ex-consuls had departed, all power and authority over both armies lay with Antonius alone, his fellow-officers yielding to him, and the soldiers' affections enthusiastically his. Nor were their lacking those who thought Antonius had instigated both mutinies deceitfully, so that he alone would profit from the war.

## **Book III:XII Mutiny also on Vitellius' side**

Neither were spirits calm on Vitellius's side: there the discord was more fatal, arising not from the soldiers' suspicions but their commanders' treachery. The admiral of the fleet at Ravenna, Lucilius Bassus, had persuaded those of uncertain loyalty among his men, of whom the majority came from Dalmatia and Pannonia, provinces held by Vespasian, to support his faction. Night was elected for the hour of betrayal, in order for the defectors to gather at headquarters, alone, without the others knowing. Bassus waited in his quarters, through shame or fear regarding the outcome.

The trireme captains, with a great shout, attacked the images of Vitellius, and a few of the crowd who resisted this being killed, the rest, eager for a change of power, favoured Vespasian. Then Bassus revealed himself openly as the initiator of the revolt. Cornelius Fuscus was chosen by the fleet themselves to be their admiral however, and he hastened to Ravenna. Bassus having been conducted to Atri (Adria), guarded in honourable fashion and with an escort of light frigates, was confined to his cabin there by the cavalry prefect, Vibennius Rufus, who commanded the garrison, but was immediately released from his confinement through the intervention of Hormus, one of Vespasian's freedmen, who was also numbered among the Flavian leadership.

### **Book III:XIII Caecina tries to instigate a mass defection**

Once the fleet's defection was known, Caecina summoned the leading centurions and a few of their men to headquarters, taking advantage of the empty camp, the remainder being dispersed on military duty. There he extolled Vespasian's virtues and the strength of his party: the fleet having deserted Vitellius, supplies running short, the Gallic provinces and Spain hostile, and nothing in Rome certain; and everything he said about Vitellius being of the worst.

Then, having begun with those in the know, he administered the oath of allegiance to Vespasian while the rest were still dazed by the turn of affairs. At the same time they tore down the images of Vitellius and sent news of the events to Antonius.

When news of this defection spread through the camp, however, the soldiers rushed to headquarters where they saw Vespasian's name on the standards and the statues of Vitellius thrown down. There was total silence at first, and then a simultaneous and unanimous outburst. 'Has the glory of our German army sunk so low,' they cried, 'that without a fight, without a drop of blood shed, we surrender our weapons and ourselves, in chains? Who are these enemy legions? Surely, the defeated; and though the prime force of Otho's army, the First and the Fourteenth are absent, those too we overthrew and routed on that field. Shall all our armed thousands be gifted to that exile Antonius, like a crowd of slaves? Why not indeed add our eight legions to their solitary fleet! This Bassus, this Caecina, it seems, who rob our emperor of houses, gardens, wealth, want even his soldiers too! Without a wound, without a spot of blood upon us, reviled even by the Flavian faction, what shall we say to those who ask was this disaster or success?'

### **Book III:XIV Caecina's attempt fails**

Now individually, now as one, as indignation moved them, with such cries, and inspired by the men of the Fifth legion, they re-erected the statues of Vitellius, and clapped Caecina in irons. They chose as their commanders the legate of the Fifth, Fabius Fabullus, and the prefect of the camp, Cassius Longus.

Leaving camp, and meeting by chance with the marines from three light frigates, who had neither knowledge of nor involvement in the events, they killed them; then broke down the bridge and rushed back to Ostiglia (Hostilia), continuing on to Cremona to join the two legions Caecina had sent, along with a cavalry detachment, to secure the town, namely the First Italian and the Twenty-First Rapax.

### **Book III:XV Antonius takes up position near Bedriacum**

When Antonius learned of this, he decided to attack the enemy army while they were distracted and their strength divided, before their leaders could recover their authority, the troops their discipline, and the legions a confidence derived from unity. He suspected that Fabius Valens had already left Rome and would move more swiftly once he heard of Caecina's treachery; moreover Fabius was loyal to Vitellius and experienced in warfare.

At the same time, Antonius feared a major incursion of Germans via Raetia, while Vitellius had summoned auxiliaries from Britain, Gaul and Spain, with disastrous effect on the outcome, if Antonius had not feared this very thing and precipitated victory by preempting battle. He now moved his whole army from Verona to Bedriacum in two days.

Next day, retaining his legionaries to work on his defences, he sent auxiliary cohorts into the countryside around Cremona, under the pretext of replenishing military supplies, to assess the local wealth: he himself advanced eight miles beyond Bedriacum with four thousand horsemen so they might plunder more freely. His scouts as usual took soundings further off.

### **Book III:XVI Initial skirmish near Bedriacum**

At the fifth hour of daylight, an express messenger announced that the enemy were in sight, led by a small advance party, the noise of their movement widely audible. While Antonius was considering what he should do, Arrius Varus, eager for vigorous action, charged with the boldest cavalymen and drove back the Vitellians, though inflicting slight losses since fortunes reversed when larger numbers of the enemy arrived, and those who had pursued the Vitellians furthest now formed the rear of the retreat. Nor had Antonius, expecting such an outcome, desired this spontaneous initiative.

However he now urged his men to engage and fight with spirit, while withdrawing his squadrons to the flanks and leaving open ground in the centre to receive Varus and his cavalry. He ordered the legions to arm, and signalled to the field for his men to abandon their plunder, and hurry to the fight, at the nearest point of engagement. Meanwhile Varus, in panic, re-joined the main body, spreading fear and confusion. Wounded and whole alike were driven back, hindered by their own distress and the narrow roadways.

### **Book III:XVII Antonius inspires a Flavian victory**

Amid this consternation, Antonius neglected no duty of the clear-headed general and brave military man. He checked the fearful, restrained those trying to flee, and wherever there was most trouble, wherever there was a glimpse of hope, by orders, actions, words of encouragement, he was apparent to the enemy, visible to his men.

Finally, urged to the heights of ardour, he transfixed a fleeing standard-bearer with a spear, and gripping the standard turned to face the enemy. Seized with shame, a group of no more than a hundred horsemen pressed the enemy hard: the ground was favourable, the road there narrow, and a bridge over an intervening stream shattered, so that flight was impeded by the steep banks and uncertain shallows. Necessity or good fortune thus rescued those who had almost met defeat.

Forming a solid echelon, they met with a wildly disordered Vitellian advance, and threw it into confusion. Antonius pursued those who fled, killed those who resisted, while his men, according to their nature, despoiled the dead, captured the living, and took possession of arms and horses. And those of his men who were, but now, openly fleeing the field, summoned by the shouts of success, now joined in the victory.

### **Book III:XVIII Antonius reins in his troops**

At the fourth milestone from Cremona, the standards of the Rapax and Italica legions gleamed, they having hastened there after the initially successful cavalry skirmish. But when fate turned against them, the Vitellians did not change formation to receive the fugitives, nor did they advance to further threaten an enemy weary from their long march and the battle. Now ruled by fortune, they realised their need for leadership in adversity as they had failed to feel the lack of it in success. The enemy cavalry attacked their wavering lines; while Vipstanus Messala, the tribune, followed with their Moesian auxiliaries, whom many legionaries kept pace with despite their rapid advance: thus the Flavian cavalry and infantry broke the Vitellian legions, to whom the closeness of Cremona as a refuge gave hope while sapping their willingness to resist.

Yet Antonius did not press further, given the effort and the injuries incurred during a battle so uncertain in its progress despite its successful outcome, afflicting both the men and their mounts.

### **Book III:XIX The Flavian troops clamour to storm Cremona**

As the shadows of evening fell, the main body of the Flavian force arrived. As they advanced through the piles of corpses, amidst the recent signs of slaughter thinking the conflict over, they demanded to march on to Cremona and receive the enemy surrender or storm the town. So they said in public, in fine words: but what each himself considered best was the latter option, that they could take the colony by force, situated as it was in the plain. Their courage would be no less if they attacked in darkness, and their freedom to plunder would be greater. Whereas if they waited for the light, there would be a truce, prayers for mercy, and in return for effort and injury they would bear away those empty prizes clemency and glory, while Cremona's wealth would fill the prefects' and legates' purses, since if it is stormed a city's plunder belongs to the soldier, it if surrenders to his officers.

They ignored their centurions and tribunes, rattling their weapons to drown out commands, ready to disobey orders if not led forward.

### **Book III:XX Antonius calms his men**

Then Antonius made his way through the ranks, where his aspect and authority won silence, telling them that he would snatch no rewards or honours from those who had earned merit, but that soldiers and generals had differing responsibilities: it was fitting for soldiers to show eagerness for battle, but generals benefited them by foresight, deliberation, and more often by delay rather than rashness. Just as victory had been achieved through his efforts and wielding weapons to the best of his ability, he would now help them through wisdom and forethought, the skills of a leader. For there could be no doubt of the obstacles: night and the location of this city strange to them, an enemy in situ, and every opportunity for ambush. Even if the gates were open it should not be entered without reconnaissance and in daylight. Or a siege would be started without essential information, how level the ground was, how high the walls, whether to attack the city with artillery and missiles or siege-works and shelters.

Then directing himself to individuals, he asked whether they carried axes, picks, and the other tools with which to storm this city. When they said not, he asked: 'Can anyone undermine, or hack through, walls with spears and swords? If earthworks need raising, or we need to defend ourselves with hurdles and roofing, must we stand here a useless improvident crew, admiring the enemy's high towers and battlements? Or shall we, at the cost of a single night, assemble artillery and engines, and bring power and victory with us?'

At this same time he had sent servants and sutlers with the freshest cavalry to Bedriacum, to muster supplies and all they needed.

### **Book III:XXI The Vitellians make a night assault**

The soldiers were finding it truly hard to accept the situation, and were near mutiny, when a cavalry squad who had ridden beneath the very walls of Cremona caught some stragglers, from whom they learnt that six Vitellian legions and the whole force from Ostiglia, having marched thirty miles that day and hearing of their comrades' losses, were preparing for battle and would soon be there. This alarm opened minds previously closed to their general's advice.

Antonius ordered the Thirteenth legion to take up position on the raised causeway of the Postumian road, flanked on the left by the Seventh Galbiana in open country, and then the Seventh Claudiana protected (as the ground lay) by a ditch. To the right flank were the Eighth legion on an open field-boundary, then the Third among dense thickets.

The order of the eagles and standards was as follows, the soldiers drawn up in the darkness as chance placed them; the praetorian standard was close to the Third legion, the auxiliary cohorts were on the wings, and the cavalry covered their flanks and rear; the Suebian princes Sido and Italicus with the chosen warriors of their tribes were in the front ranks.

### **Book III:XXII Stalemate in the darkness**

Now it would have been wise for the Vitellian troops to remain at Cremona, and renew their strength with food and rest, then on the following day rout and destroy an enemy wearied by cold and hunger. But, leaderless, they made an unplanned attack on the opposition forces at about the third hour of darkness, the Flavians being ready and on the alert.

I would hesitate to give the Vitellian order of battle, their ranks being dispersed in their rage among the shadows of nightfall, though others state that the Fourth Macedonian legion formed their right; the Fifth, the Fifteenth and detachments of the Ninth, the Second and Twentieth British the centre; and the Sixteenth, Twenty-second and First their left. The Rapax and Italica merged ranks throughout, while the cavalry and auxiliaries made their own dispositions.

A savage and uncertain battle raged throughout the night, deadly now to one side now the other. Neither strength nor courage availed, in the absence of visibility to anticipate danger. Both side were armed alike, the watchwords were soon known through frequent challenge, and the standards confused, as some band or other captured them and carried them hither and thither.

The Seventh legion, lately enrolled by Galba, was the hardest pressed. Six of their first-rank centurions were lost, and various standards captured: the eagle itself being saved by Atilius Verus, a leading centurion, who killed many opponents before dying in turn.

### **Book III:XXIII Battle by moonlight**

Antonius now strengthened his wavering line with the praetorians, who wherever they engaged drove back the enemy, to be driven back themselves, for the Vitellians had positioned artillery on the raised roadway so they might have free and open line of sight for their missiles, earlier shots dispersing and striking the trees without damage to the enemy.

A giant ballista worked by the Fifteenth legion shattered the Flavian line with its huge stones and would have caused widespread destruction if not for the outstanding bravery of two soldiers who, hidden behind two shields snatched from the dead, severed the springs and bindings of the machine. They were soon pierced through and through, their names forgotten but not so their deed.

Fortune favoured neither side, though with night the full moon rising revealed and deceived the Vitellian troops. It favoured the Flavians, ascending behind them, extending the shadows of men and horses, leading the enemy spears, aimed at what appeared to be their bodies, to fall short: while the Vitellians lit by the rays opposite offered themselves unwittingly to missiles hurled as if from darkness.

### **Book III:XXIV Antonius rouses his men**

So Antonius, once he could distinguish his men in the shadows and be distinguished, roused them, reproaching and shaming the few, praising and encouraging the many, with promises and hope for all. He reminded the Pannonian legions why they had taken up arms once more: was this not the field on which they could erase the stains of their former disgrace, and regain their glory? Then, turning to the Moesian troops he called on them as the leaders and instigators of the struggles: challenging the Vitellians with words and threats was in vain if they could not endure their gaze and blows.

These words he spoke as he passed each legion, but he spoke at length to the men of the Third, recalling ancient and recent victories, their conquest of the Parthians under Mark Antony (36BC), the Armenians under Corbulo (63AD), and recently of the Sarmatians. Then to the praetorians he shouted fiercely: 'And if you fail to win today, you clods, what other general, what other army will have you? There are your standards and your weapons, and death in defeat, for dishonour you have done with.'

There was a great clamour on all sides, and the Third (as is the custom in Syria) hailed the rising sun.

### **Book III:XXV The Flavians clear the path to Cremona**

This led to a rumour, started deliberately perhaps by their general, that Mucianus had arrived, and their two forces had exchanged greetings. The Flavians then advanced as if reinforced by fresh troops, while the Vitellian line showed more ragged as, lacking leadership, the ranks parted or closed together driven by courage or fear. Once Antonius perceived their disruption, he attacked en masse. Their weakened lines were broken, and impeded by the wagons and artillery could not re-form. The victorious troops in swift pursuit were strung out along the road.

The slaughter was notable for the death of a father at the hands of his son. The names and facts I give on the authority of Vipstanus Messala. A certain Julius Mansuetus of Spain, enrolling in the legion Rapax, left behind him a young son. He as an adult was conscripted by Galba into the Seventh. He chanced unknowingly to come up against his father whom he wounded and struck down, then gazing at the man, who was near to death, he recognised and was recognised by him. Finally, embracing the corpse, his voice filled with tears, he begged his father's shade to forgive him, not reject him as a parricide; calling it the State's doing; asking what the individual counted for in a civil war, while raising up his father's body. Then he dug a grave and performed the last rites for his parent.

Those nearby saw him, then others heard of it: until there came cries of horror and grief throughout the ranks, as they cursed against this cruellest of wars. Yet they were no less ready to slaughter and despoil their kith and kin, their brothers: they called the deed a crime, and still they did it.

### **Book III:XXVI The Flavians reach Cremona**

On reaching Cremona, they encountered a new and immense task. During the war against Otho, the army of Germany had camped beneath Cremona's walls, and built earthworks round their camp, defences which they had further strengthened. On seeing these, the victorious Flavians hesitated, their leaders being unsure of what orders to give.

To begin an arduous attack on the town, with troops wearied by a day and night of fighting, meant an uncertain outcome given the lack of reserves. But if they returned to Bedriacum, with the intolerable burden of a lengthy march, their victory would be in vain. Even to fortify a camp with the enemy nearby was a terrifying prospect, since scattered and involved with its construction they might be thrown into disarray by a sudden sortie.

Above and beyond all this, the Flavian generals feared their soldiers' mood, they being readier for danger than delay, disregarding of their own safety and setting their hopes on bold action. Their desire for plunder outweighed all thought of death and disaster.

### **Book III:XXVII Attack on Cremona**

This situation inclined Antonius towards an attack, and he ordered the enemy earthworks to be besieged. At first the Flavians fought at a distance, hurling stones and firing arrows, with greater loss to their own ranks, at whom missiles were thrown from above. Then Antonius assigned each legion a stretch of the wall, or the gateway, so that individual effort might distinguish the brave from the cowardly, and inflame their rivalry in winning glory.

The Third and the Seventh were positioned next to the Bedriacum road, the Eighth and the Seventh Claudiana took the section further to the right, while the Thirteenth spent their efforts on the gateway towards Brescia (Brixia). After a brief delay, while the men collected pickaxes and hoes from the neighbouring fields, while others brought up hooks and ladders, they advanced on the fortifications, shields above their heads in overlapping 'tortoise' formation.

Both sides were using Roman tactics: the Vitellians rolling down ponderous stones, and parting and loosening the cover of shields, prodding with pikes and lances, until they broke through the tight defence, hurling the dead and wounded to the ground in widespread slaughter. The attack would have faltered, if the Flavian commanders, seeing the soldiers growing weary and near to the point where exhortations might prove vain, had not pointed towards Cremona.

### **Book III:XXVIII Mass slaughter**

Whether this was Hormus's idea as Messala has it, or whether Gaius Pliny is right in blaming Antonius, I cannot easily judge, except to say that neither Antonius or Hormus was incapable,

by history or reputation, of this worst of crimes. Neither wounds nor bloodshed further deterred the soldiers from their attempts to undermine the walls and break down the gates. Men renewed the 'tortoise', climbed it via their comrades' shoulders, and seized their enemies' weapons and forearms. The wounded and whole, the half-dead and dying rolled together, succumbing in every way to every form of death.

### **Book III:XXIX The Flavians take the earthworks**

The fiercest assault was made by the Third and Seventh legions; and general Antonius with picked auxiliaries attacked at the same point. When the Vitellians could no longer endure the sustained attack on them, their weapons thrown from above sliding uselessly over the 'tortoise', they finally propelled their ballista itself onto those beneath, whom it crushed or momentarily scattered while toppling the upper earthworks and parapet, at the very moment the neighbouring turret gave way under a shower of stones.

While the Seventh drove forward in wedge formation, the Third broke the gate down with their axes and swords. All the sources agree that Gaius Volusius, a private of the Third, was the first to rush through. He climbed the rampart, hurling down those who resisted, and raising his arm and voice aloft called out that the camp was taken; at which the rest burst in while the Vitellians in panic threw themselves from the ramparts.

All the open ground between the camp and the walls of Cremona was covered by the dead.

### **Book III:XXX The Flavians assault Cremona**

But now fresh problems again presented themselves: namely the high city walls, its stone turrets, its iron-barred gates, defenders brandishing spears, and the massed population of citizens committed to the Vitellian cause. A great crowd of Italians were also gathered there for the market held at that time, their numbers assisting the defenders, though inciting the attackers to greater plunder.

Antonius ordered his troops to swiftly torch the finest buildings outside the walls, hoping that the citizens of Cremona might alter their allegiance faced by the loss of their properties. He also stationed his bravest men on the roofs of houses nearest the battlements and overtopping them, who dislodged the defenders with beams, tiles and firebrands.

### **Book III:XXXI Cremona is taken**

With the Flavian legionaries now massing in 'tortoise' formation as others hurled spears and stones, the courage of the Vitellians slowly ebbed away. The higher the rank, the readier to yield, since when Cremona fell there would be no quarter given, the rage of the victors falling not on the masses, but on the tribunes and centurions themselves, whose death meant gain. The common soldiers however, foreseeing nothing and safer through their lowly status, held

out: even when they gave up the fight they scattered through the streets, hid themselves in the houses, but would not beg for peace.

Their officers removed Vitellius's name and images from their headquarters. They struck off Caecina's fetters (even then he was still in chains) and begged him to intercede in pleading their cause. They wearied that proud disdainful general with their tears, all those bravest of the brave, in the extremity of distress, begging the traitor for help. Then as signs of surrender they spread wall-hangings and ribbons over the battlements.

Once Antonius had ordered the assault to cease, the defenders brought out their standards and eagles, followed by sorrowful lines of men their eyes on the ground. The victors stood around at first, hurling insults and threatening blows: then, as the defeated, enduring all, offered themselves to this invective without a spark of pride, the Flavians recalled to mind that these were the very men who had shown mercy after their recent victory at Bedriacum.

Nevertheless, when Caecina appeared dressed in his consular robe of office, the toga praetexta, escorted by lictors parting the crowd, they were enraged, taunting him for his arrogance, cruelty and (so hated is the crime) furthermore with treachery.

Antonius though intervened, granted him an armed escort, and sent him to Vespasian.

# **Book III: XXXII-LVIII Events in Rome, Gaul and Germany**

## **Contents**

- [Book III:XXXII Antonius addresses the troops](#)
- [Book III:XXXIII The sacking of Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXXIV The subsequent fate of Cremona](#)
- [Book III:XXXV The Flavians advertise their victory](#)
- [Book III:XXXVI Events in Rome](#)
- [Book III:XXXVII Consul for a day](#)
- [Book III:XXXVIII Junius Blaesus condemned](#)
- [Book III:XXXIX The death of Blaesus](#)
- [Book III:XL Fabius Valens delays](#)
- [Book III:XLI Valens plans to rouse Gaul and Germany](#)
- [Book III:XLII Italy divided](#)
- [Book III:XLIII The capture of Fabius Valens](#)
- [Book III:XLIV Events in Gaul, Spain and Britain](#)
- [Book III:XLV Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes](#)
- [Book III:XLVI Germany and Moesia](#)
- [Book III:XLVII Uprising in Pontus](#)
- [Book III:XLVIII Viridius Geminus defeats the rebels](#)
- [Book III:XLIX Events in Italy](#)
- [Book III:L Flavian troop movements](#)
- [Book III:LI Moral bankruptcy in the Flavian army](#)
- [Book III:LII Rivalry between Antonius and Mucianus](#)
- [Book III:LIII Antonius tries to undermine Mucianus](#)
- [Book III:LIV Vitellius in denial](#)
- [Book III:LV Vitellius rouses himself](#)
- [Book III:LVI The emperor's ineffectiveness](#)
- [Book III:LVII Defection and re-alignment](#)
- [Book III:LVIII Vitellius fails to command Equestrian loyalty](#)

### **Book III:XXXII Antonius addresses the troops**

Meanwhile the populace of Cremona were being harassed by the troops and were close to being massacred, until the generals with their pleas calmed the soldiers. Calling them together, Antonius spoke warmly of the victors, mildly of the defeated, and neutrally as regards Cremona.

The soldiers, with their innate desire for plunder and their abiding hatred, contemplated destroying the townspeople, believing that they had taken Vitellius' side in the war with Otho, and moreover had later with insolent jibes, the urban mob being of an impudent nature, insulted the soldiers of the Thirteenth legion left behind to complete the amphitheatre. The troops' anger was increased by Caecina's having mounted a gladiatorial display there, by the town having twice been the site of the enemy headquarters, and having provided supplies to the Vitellian lines, with some of their women so eager for the cause they had been drawn into the battle and slaughtered. Moreover the market had filled the town, always wealthy, with a greater array of goods.

The other generals being relatively unknown, Antonius was brought by success and reputation to the notice of all. He quickly sought the baths to wash away the blood. On his complaining of their coolness, a voice was heard saying they would soon be hot enough: and this remark by a servant turned all the odium against him, as though he himself had given the order to burn Cremona, which was now in flames.

### **Book III:XXXIII The sacking of Cremona**

Forty thousand armed men burst into the town, the number of camp-followers and servants being greater still, and they being readier to indulge in rape and savagery. Neither status nor age gave protection from those who mixed lust with slaughter, slaughter with lust. The oldest of old men, and women near their end, useless as slaves, were dragged away for sport: whenever they came across a mature woman or an outstandingly handsome youth, these were torn apart by the strength and violence of their warring captors until in the end their assailants even brought about their own destruction.

While some carried off masses of coin or gold donated to the temples, they were hacked at by others who were stronger. Those who scorned the obvious, flogged and tortured the owners of hidden wealth, to find and uncover their treasure. The firebrands in their hands, once their prize was assured, they threw wantonly into the unoccupied houses and empty sanctuaries. For in this army, composed of citizens, allies and foreigners, there was such a variety of languages and manners, with diverse forms of lust and greed, that everything seeming right to someone, nothing was unlawful.

Four days sufficed to destroy Cremona. When everything, sacred and profane, had fed the flames, the temple of Mefitis (Goddess of Malaria and Poisonous Vapours) stood alone outside the walls, protected by its location or its deity.

### **Book III:XXXIV The subsequent fate of Cremona**

This was the end of Cremona, in the two hundred and eighty sixth year from its foundation, when Tiberius Sempronius and Publius Cornelius were consuls and Hannibal was attacking Italy, as a defence against the Gauls across the River Po, and any other force that might invade over the Alps. Then due to the large number of colonists, the usefulness of its streams, its fertile fields, and by the connections and intermarriage of its peoples, it grew and flourished, untouched by foreign wars, unhappy only by reason of civil conflict.

Now Antonius, ashamed of his crime, as indignation mounted, proclaimed that no one should detain a citizen of Cremona. The consensus throughout Italy, despising the purchase of such people as slaves, rendered the soldiers' prizes useless to them: and so they began killing them; which led, as soon as it was known, to their kith and kin ransoming them.

Later, a remnant of the population returned to the site: the fora and the temples were restored through the munificence of the citizens, Vespasian encouraging this.

### **Book III:XXXV The Flavians advertise their victory**

Now the risk of the soil harbouring infection did not allow the army to camp by the ruined city for long. The Flavians moved three miles off, the scattered and fearful Vitellians re-assembled, each to his standard, and the defeated legions were then dispersed throughout Illyricum lest they indulge in dubious activities, with the civil war still ongoing.

Messengers were sent to broadcast news of the victory to Britain and Spain, while Julius Calenus, a tribune, was sent to Gaul, and Apinius Montanus, a cohort prefect, to Germany, the latter being of the Treviri, while Calenus was of the Aedui, but both of Vitellius's party.

At the same time, Flavian forces occupied the Alpine passes, given the suspicion that support for Vitellius was preparing in Germany.

### **Book III:XXXVI Events in Rome**

Vitellius, once Caecina had departed, and after he had a few days later despatched Fabius Valens to the front, drowned his cares in pleasure. He issued no weapons, failed to inspire the troops by addressing them or exercising their skills, nor did he show his face to the masses, but hid in the garden shade, like those lazy creatures that lie torpid as long as you feed them, and dismissed to the same oblivion past, present and future. Indeed, he was idling away his time languishing in the Arician grove when he was startled to hear of Lucilius Bassus' treachery and the defection of the fleet at Ravenna. Not long after, he was stirred to sorrow then delight by the news that Caecina had deserted to Vespasian but had been arrested by his troops.

His joy had more effect on his sluggish spirits than his anxiety, and he rode back to the City in great exultation, and in a crowded assembly heaped praise on his brave troops; then ordered Publilius Sabinus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard, imprisoned because of his friendship for Caecina, replacing him with Alfenus Varus.

### **Book III:XXXVII Consul for a day**

He later addressed the Senate in a grandiloquent speech, and was extolled by the Senators in terms of the utmost servility. Lucius Vitellius was the first to render harsh judgement against Caecina, the others following with a display of indignation, claiming that as consul he had betrayed the State, and as a general his emperor, who as a friend had loaded him with wealth and honours, expressing their own resentment under the guise of their complaints on behalf of Vitellius. But none spoke in disparagement of the Flavian leaders. While they blamed the troops for their errors and imprudence, they cautiously, with circumlocutions, avoided uttering Vespasian's name.

Nor was there lacking one senator, Rosius Regulus, to coax from Vitellius the single day remaining of Caecina's consulship, to great derision regarding both he who granted it and he who received it. Regulus began and ended his consulship therefore that thirty-first day of October. Knowledgeable people remarked that never before had a consul been appointed to replace another without the office falling vacant and a law being passed; for Caninius Rebilus had once been consul for a day (*after the death in office of Quintus Fabius Maximus*) during Julius Caesar's dictatorship, Caesar hastening to reward him for his part in the civil war.

### **Book III:XXXVIII Junius Blaesus condemned**

The news, at that time, of the death of Junius Blaesus caused much comment, of which we have learned the following: Vitellius, being afflicted with a painful illness, while in the gardens of Servilius noticed that a neighbouring tower was brightly lit at night. On asking the reason, he was informed that Caecina Tuscus was giving a large banquet at which Junius Blaesus was the guest of honour, exaggerating moreover its elaborateness and the wild nature of the entertainment.

There was no lack of those eager to condemn Tuscus and others, but especially Blaesus, who spent his days in pleasure while his emperor was ill. When Vitellius' exasperation became clear to those with a keen eye for their prince's displeasure and they saw that Blaesus could be destroyed, Lucius Vitellius, the emperor's brother, was handed the role of informant. His hatred towards Blaesus sprang from the basest envy, since stained as he was by every vice, Blaesus' reputation far surpassed his.

Entering the emperor's chamber, he fell to his knees and embraced Vitellius' son. When Vitellius asked the reason for the disturbance, Lucius replied that he had no fears for his own safety, but his prayers and tears were for his brother and his brother's children. 'It is idle to fear Vespasian,' he said, 'whose forces are held back by the weight of German legions, the brave and loyal provinces, and the immense stretches of sea and land. Beware the enemy in Rome, in your own heartland, who boasts that the Junii and Antonii are his ancestors, who

claiming imperial descent displays his affability and magnificence to his men. All minds are drawn to him, while you, Vitellius, careless of friend and foe, nurture a rival who looks out from his banquets on his emperor's distress. Repay his untimely joy with a night of pain and fatal suffering, that he might know and feel that Vitellius lives and rules, and should misfortune befall him, has a son.'

### **Book III:XXXIX The death of Blaesus**

Hesitating between crime and fear; the fear that delaying Blaesus' murder might bring immediate harm, and if ordered openly lasting hatred, Vitellius decided to employ poison; but added to a wide belief in his guilt by his obvious delight on visiting the stricken Blaesus. A vicious remark of his was overheard, in which (I quote the very words) he boasted of 'feasting his eyes on the sight of a dying enemy'.

Blaesus was not only a man of distinguished descent but also of impeccable morals and unshakable loyalty. Even while the State was still united, he had been courted by Caecina and the party leaders dismissive of Vitellius, but Blaesus persistently refused their advances. Virtuous, peace-loving, with no sudden eagerness for honours, least of all an imperial throne, he could not escape being thought worthy of such.

### **Book III:XL Fabius Valens delays**

Meanwhile, Fabius Valens, with his vast self-indulgent entourage of concubines and eunuchs, progressed too slowly for a general advancing to war, receiving news by express messenger on the way that Lucius Bassus had betrayed the Ravenna fleet to the Flavians. Even then, if he had hastened, he might have prevented Caecina's defection, that traitor still wavering, or might have overtaken the legions before the decisive battle.

There were those who advised him to take a less obvious route to Hostilia or Cremona with his most loyal troops, so avoiding Ravenna. Others favoured his summoning the praetorian cohorts from Rome, and breaking through with a strong force. He himself, with vain delay, wasted the time for action in consultation, quickly scorning both suggestions, and taking a neutral course, the worst in times of doubt, showed a lack of courage and foresight.

### **Book III:XLI Valens plans to rouse Gaul and Germany**

Valens sent despatches to Vitellius asking for help. Three cohorts and a squadron of British cavalry arrived, a force neither capable of escaping observation nor of forcing a passage. Even in such difficulties, Valens did not shun infamy, snatching illicit pleasures and with liaisons and debauchery polluting the homes of his hosts: holding to wealth and power and, though fortune failed, lust at the last.

Once those infantry and cavalry detachments finally appeared, his plans were evidently ruined, since so small a force, however loyal and their loyalty was not wholly unshaken, could not penetrate the enemy lines. Yet shame and respect for their commander restrained them, though those are weak constraints on those fearful of danger and careless of dishonour. He therefore sent the cohorts on to Rimini (Ariminum), ordering the cavalry to protect the rear, while he himself, with a few men whom adversity did not alter, detoured into Umbria and then Etruria.

There, learning the outcome of the battle of Cremona, he formed a daring plan, devastating if it had succeeded, to seize ships, make a landing somewhere in the province of Narbonne, and open a new front by rousing the Gallic provinces, their armies, and the German tribes.

### **Book III:XLII Italy divided**

Valens' digression unsettled the troops at Rimini. Cornelius Fuscus (now the Flavian admiral), advanced his forces and sent frigates along the neighbouring coastline, so cutting off the defenders by land and sea.

The Flavians now held the Umbrian plains and that area of Picenum bordering the Adriatic, such that the Apennine range divided Italy between Vespasian and Vitellius.

Fabius Valens now sailed from the harbour at Pisa, but a calm or adverse winds led him to anchor at the port of Monaco (Hercules Monoecus). Marius Maturus, procurator of the Maritime Alps, based not far off, was loyal to Vitellius, not having broken his oath of allegiance yet though all around him were hostile.

Marius received Valens courteously, and deterred him, by his warnings, from risking an incursion into Gallia Narbonensis while the loyalty of others was shaken by fear.

### **Book III:XLIII The capture of Fabius Valens**

For Valerius Paulinus, the procurator, an energetic military man and a friend of Vespasian even before the latter's rise, had bound the surrounding communities by an oath of allegiance. He had also recalled the veterans discharged by Vitellius who now freely re-armed, and had garrisoned Fréjus (Forum Julii), where Paulinus held the greater authority since it was his native city. He was respected by the praetorians whose tribune he had been and the locals, filled with support for a fellow citizen and expectations of his future power, favoured his faction.

When these preparations had been effected and, exaggerated by rumour, were widely reported to the wavering Vitellians, Fabius Valens returned aboard his flagship with four sea-pilots, three friends, and the same number of centurions; Maturus and the rest remained behind and chose to swear allegiance to Vespasian.

For all that the sea seemed safer to Valens than city or shore, the future was uncertain and therefore what to avoid being clearer than what to trust in he was driven by adverse winds to

the Stoechadae islands (Îles de Hyères) belonging to Marseilles. There he was captured by the frigates Paulinus sent after him.

### **Book III:XLIV Events in Gaul, Spain and Britain**

Once Valens was captured, everything turned to the victors' advantage, beginning in Spain with the First legion Adiutrix which, devoted to Otho therefore hostile to Vitellius, brought over the Tenth and Sixth legions also. Nor did the Gallic provinces hesitate. And sentiment in Britain inclined towards Vespasian, since Claudius had appointed him to command the Second legion there, where he had distinguished himself in battle. This won Vespasian the island, though not without resistance from the other legions, which contained numerous centurions and infantrymen promoted under Vitellius and now concerned at deserting an emperor whom they knew.

### **Book III:XLV Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes**

The Britons, led by Venutius, were roused by the many rumours of discord and civil war. He, in addition to his innate courage and hatred of the Roman name, was stirred by his personal resentment of Queen Cartimandua. She ruled the Brigantes, empowered by her ancestry, increasing her power after she was thought to have captured King Caratacus through treachery, and providing thereby a trophy for the emperor Claudius' triumph (51AD). From this she derived wealth and a wantonness bred by success.

Casting off Venutius (who was her husband), she took his squire Vellocatus as her consort and co-ruler. Her power was immediately threatened by this flagrant act: her husband favoured by the people, her lover by the queen's fierce passion for him.

So Venutius summoning external aid, at the same time as the Brigantes were in rebellion, placed Cartimandua in a serious position. She then sought Rome's protection. And our infantry and cavalry squadrons, after various encounters, finally rescued the queen from danger: the throne being left to Venutius, the fighting to us.

### **Book III:XLVI Germany and Moesia**

At the same time, there was trouble in Germany, and Roman affairs almost met with disaster due to the idleness of the generals, mutinous legionaries, foreign incursions, and the treachery of our allies. The course of that war, with its causes and outcome, we shall describe later (since the conflict was extensive).

The Dacians, a people never trustworthy, were also active and without fear, our army in Moesia having been withdrawn. Though at first they observed events peacefully, once they heard Italy was beset by war, and the empire divided in hostility, they attacked our auxiliary infantry and cavalry in winter quarters, and occupied both banks of the Danube.

They were preparing to destroy the legionary encampments, but Mucianus brought the Sixth legion into play, having learned of the success at Cremona, and fearing that if the Germans and the Dacians broke through separately both those alien hordes might fall upon them. As so often before, fortune now favoured the Romans, in bringing Mucianus and the forces from the East to bear while also securing the victory at Cremona.

Fonteius Agrippa was now transferred from Asia Minor (where he had governed the province for a year as pro-consul) and entrusted with Moesia, being given additional troops from Vitellius's forces, which for purposes of strategy and peace-keeping were distributed throughout the provinces, many being tied down in external conflict.

### **Book III:XLVII Uprising in Pontus**

Nor were the other nations quiet. There was a sudden uprising in Pontus, led by a barbarian, who had once been admiral of the royal fleet, a freedman of Polemo II, named Anicetus, who having formerly held power was impatient of the change when the kingdom became a Roman province. As a result, he roused the tribes who inhabited Pontus, in the name of Vitellius, seducing the poorest with hopes of plunder. Commanding a not insignificant force, he suddenly attacked Trebizond (Trapezus), founded by Greeks at the far end of the Black Sea coast, and a city of ancient renown.

There he massacred a cohort, formerly auxiliaries of the king but later granted Roman citizenship, adopting Roman manners and weapons while retaining their Greek idleness and licence. Anicetus also set fire to the fleet, escaping over the sea, which was unpatrolled by Mucianus who had gathered the swiftest frigates and all their seamen at Byzantium. The barbarians, contemptuous of Rome and quickly constructing vessels, roamed at will.

They call such vessels *camarae*, broad-beamed but shallow, fastened together without bronze or iron spikes. In rough seas, the sailors raise the bulwarks with planking to counter the height of the waves, until they are enclosed as if by a roof. Protected thus they roll about in the water. Both ends are raised in a prow and the oars can be shifted, so they can be propelled here or there at will, and in safety.

### **Book III:XLVIII Viridius Geminus defeats the rebels**

These events came to Vespasian's attention, such that he dispatched legionary veterans there, led by Viridius Geminus, a well-trying military man. Attacking the enemy while they were in a state of disorder, having scattered in their search for plunder, he forced them to their boats, then swiftly assembling some light galleys he followed Anicetus to the mouth of the River Enguri (Chobus), where he was under the protection of the King of the Sedochezi, having secured his support with money and gifts.

The king at first defended his suppliant with weapons and menaces: later, having been offered a reward for treachery with war as the alternative, and being of uncertain loyalty as barbarians are, having agreed to the death of Anicetus he betrayed the fugitives, and that was an end of this slaves' war.

While Vespasian was rejoicing in this victory, all things succeeding beyond expectations, news of the Battle of Cremona reached him in Egypt. He moved, as swiftly as possible, to Alexandria, so that he might bring famine on Vitellius's shattered troops, and on a Rome needful of external resources. For he was ready to invade all that region of North Africa, by land and sea, and foster hardship and discord among his enemies by denying them the grain supply.

### **Book III:XLIX Events in Italy**

Whilst imperial fortune was changing with these world-shaking events, Primus Antonius behaved less well after Cremona than he had before that battle, believing he had done enough to resolve the conflict and so the rest would be easy, or because success revealed, in a nature like his, avarice, pride and other previously hidden evils. He strutted about as if Italy had been taken captive, nurturing the legions as if they were his own, and with every word and action constructing his path to power.

To imbue the soldiers with a spirit of lawlessness, he offered the posts of fallen centurions to the rank and file. By their vote the most troublesome were elected; the soldiers were no longer ruled by their officers, rather the officers were subject to the soldiers' whims. Antonius quickly turned sedition and the erosion of discipline to profit, free from fear of Mucianus's arrival, which was ultimately more fatal to him than his scorn of Vespasian.

### **Book III:L Flavian troop movements**

Meanwhile, with winter approaching and the plains flooded by the River Po, the Flavian troops travelled light. They left behind at Verona the standards and eagles of the victorious legions, soldiers burdened by wounds or age, and even a number who were fit to march; the auxiliary horse and foot along with picked legionaries seemed sufficient now that an end to the war seemed imminent.

The Eleventh legion had joined them, hesitating initially but, now things were going well, anxious that it was failing in its duty; a new levy of six thousand Dalmatians accompanied them, led by an ex-consul, Pompeius Silvanus, with advisory power vested in Annius Bassus, the legionary legate. Bassus directed Silvanus, who was apathetic in military matters and wasted the days of action in mere talk, by feigning deference while attending quietly but energetically to what needed doing. In addition, many of the marines at Ravenna sought service with the legions, and the best were enrolled, Dalmatians replacing them in the fleet.

The troops and their officers halted at Fano (Fanum Fortunae), hesitating as to their course of action, hearing that six praetorian cohorts had left Rome, and thinking the Apennine passes guarded; the commanders were also concerned at the lack of supplies in a region devastated by war and the mutinous demands of the soldiers for their gratuities, or their *clavarium* as they called it. The commanders had with them neither cash nor provisions, and were embarrassed by the haste and greed with which they had seized for themselves what might now have been welcome.

### **Book III:LI Moral bankruptcy in the Flavian army**

I have it on the best authority that such disrespect for right and wrong had arisen in victory that a common trooper, confessing to have killed his own brother in the recent conflict, sought a reward from his commanders. The laws of humanity preventing them honouring such an atrocity, or the logic of war from punishing it, they deferred his request on the grounds that he merited a greater reward than could be immediately conferred; and nothing more was heard of the matter. Yet a similar iniquity occurred in a previous civil war. For one of Pompey's men, during the struggle with Cinna on the Janiculum (87BC), killed his brother, then realising his transgression slew himself: so much keener was repentance for crime among our ancestors as well as the glorying in courageous action.

These and other things drawn from previous history I shall record without impropriety whenever the action or situation beg examples of virtue or relief from wrong.

### **Book III:LII Rivalry between Antonius and Mucianus**

Antonius and the Flavian commanders resolved to send cavalry forward to reconnoitre through all Umbria to see whether the Apennine ridge could be approached quietly; and they also determined to summon the eagles and standards with their troops from Verona, and fill the sea and the River Po with supply convoys.

There were those among the commanders who contrived to delay: since Antonius was now above himself, and they hoped for more advantage from Mucianus, who taken aback by the swiftness of the victory, and thinking he would be denied his share of the glory gained from this war if he did not himself conquer Rome, kept writing to Primus and Varus, speaking, ambiguously, of the need to maintain the initiative yet benefit from delay, so proceeding that depending on the outcome he might repudiate failure or claim success.

He wrote more openly to Plotius Gryphus, lately made a senator by Vespasian and given a legion to command, and to others loyal to himself, admonishing them, and all replied unfavourably as to the haste shown by Primus and Varus, and favourably as to Mucianus himself. Sending these letters on to Vespasian, Mucianus ensured that Antonius' actions and proposals were not valued as highly as the latter hoped.

### **Book III:LIII Antonius tries to undermine Mucianus**

Antonius was angered, and blamed Mucianus for belittling the dangers he had run, by means of the latter's slanders; nor was he temperate of speech, being a man extreme in his use of language and unaccustomed to deferring. He composed a letter to Vespasian, over-boastful to a commander-in-chief, covertly attacking Mucianus, saying that he himself had armed the Pannonian legions, he it was who had roused the Moesian commanders to action, and his

firmness of purpose it was that had penetrated the Alps, seized Italy, and prevented intervention by Vitellian auxiliaries from Germany and Raetia.

As for the rout and dispersal of the Vitellian legions by a storm of cavalry, and their prompt pursuit throughout a day and a night by an infantry force, these were glorious actions of his own. The fate of Cremona he imputed to the necessities of war, maintaining that previous civil conflicts had caused greater loss and destroyed more cities. He was not one, he said, who fought for his emperor in letters and despatches but by force of arms; nor did he seek to tarnish the glory of those meanwhile who had calmed Dacia; they had desired to bring peace to Moesia, he safety and security to Italy. Due to his exhortations, he claimed, the Gallic Provinces and Spain, the most powerful provinces of the empire, had turned to Vespasian, but all his efforts would be null and void if the only reward for dangers run went to those who had experienced no danger.

None of this escaped the notice of Mucianus, the result of which was deep enmity, furthered openly by Antonius, and craftily and more implacably by Mucianus.

### **Book III:LIV Vitellius in denial**

Meanwhile, Vitellius, weakened at Cremona, concealing news of the disaster, deferred the remedy for his misfortune, not the misfortune itself, by foolish dissimulation. For if he had acknowledged events and taken counsel he would have seen that he still had both hope and resources: while by pretending, on the contrary, that all was well, he worsened matters through self-deception. There was a wondrous silence, in his presence, regarding the war; and prohibiting talk of it in the city only resulted in more talk. If it had been allowed the truth would have been told, but since it was forbidden rumours even more terrifying were circulated.

Nor did the Flavian leaders fail to add to these by conducting the Vitellian spies they captured around their camp, showing them the victorious army's strength, and then sending them back to Rome. All, having been questioned in secret, Vitellius ordered to be executed.

Julius Agrestis, a centurion, who with remarkable persistence had tried to rouse Vitellius to action but all in vain, persuaded the emperor to send him in person to view the enemy forces and investigate the action at Cremona. He did not attempt to deceive Antonius by visiting in secret, but openly professed to his imperial mandate, and his own purpose, and asked to see everything.

Having been shown the battlefield, the ruins of Cremona, and the captured legionaries, Agrestis returned to Vitellius. When the emperor rejected his report as untrue, and accused him of having been seduced by the enemy, he replied: 'Since substantial evidence is required, and my life or death cannot serve you otherwise, I will provide you with something you can believe in.' Saying this he departed, and made good his words by committing suicide. Some say he was executed by order of Vitellius, all attest to his loyalty and steadfastness.

### **Book III:LV Vitellius rouses himself**

Vitellius, like a man now waking from sleep, ordered Julius Priscus and Alfenus Varus with fourteen praetorian cohorts and all the cavalry to block the Apennine passes: they were followed by a legion of marines. These many thousands of armed men, picked infantry and cavalry, under another leader would have provided sufficient strength to promote the war.

The remaining cohorts Vitellius gave to his brother Lucius to defend Rome. He himself, in no way abating his life of pleasure and diffident regarding what was to come, brought forward the elections, appointing consuls for multiple years; readily made treaties with allies or granted Latin rights to foreigners; was pleased to reduce various tributes and abolish others completely; in short without regard to the future he severely damaged the empire, though the mob assisted in this flow of privileges, the most foolish buying for money what the wise regarded as worthless, things which if the state were to survive should neither have been granted nor accepted.

In the end, Vitellius, under pressure from the army which was in camp at Bevagna (Mevania) in Perugia, joined them with a long line of senators, many drawn by ambition, most by fear, himself filled with uncertainty and wide open to treacherous advice.

### **Book III:LVI The emperor's ineffectiveness**

As Vitellius was speaking to the troops, such a flock of birds of ill-omen flew over him that, marvellous to say, they hid the sky like a dark cloud. A dire omen followed, a sacrificial bull fled from the altar, overthrew the paraphernalia of sacrifice, and was despatched some distance off, and not in the manner of a sacrificial victim.

But the most noticeable portent of things to come was Vitellius himself who, incompetent in military matters, lacking in foresight and in knowledge of the order of march, in the need for reconnaissance or the limits within which a campaign should be contracted or extended, endlessly interrogated others, showing concern in his gaze and unsteady walk at every item of news then drinking heavily.

Finally, tiring of the camp and learning of the defection of the fleet at Misenum (Miseno) he returned to Rome, fearful as ever at the latest blow, and indifferent as to the greatest source of risk. For when the Apennines might have been crossed with his army's strength intact and the enemy wearied by winter weather and supply shortages, as it was open to him to command, by scattering his forces he delivered his best troops, loyal to the last, to death and captivity, though the most experienced centurions dissented and if asked would have spoken truly.

But Vitellius' intimates kept them from him, so distorting his hearing that good advice sounded discordant, and he heard nothing but what was pleasing and therefore harmful.

### **Book III:LVII Defection and re-alignment**

Meanwhile (such is the weight of individual initiative in a civil conflict) Claudius Flaventinus, a centurion handed a dishonourable discharge by Galba, prompted the fleet to defect by forging letters from Vespasian promising a reward for their treason. The then admiral of the fleet was Claudius Apollinaris who though uncertain in his loyalty had not determined on rebellion, and it was Apinius Tiro, an ex-praetor, then by chance at Minturnae (Minturno) who offered himself as acting leader of the defectors.

The municipalities and colonies were roused by them, Pozzuoli (Puetoli) for example eagerly supporting Vespasian, Capua in contrast remaining loyal to Vitellius, such that rivalry between them all became a feature of the civil war.

Vitellius appointed Claudius Julianus (who shortly before had commanded the fleet at Misenum with a light rein) to pacify the men, supporting him with a city cohort and the gladiators he was then in charge of. But the two camps being adjacent, Julianus joined Vespasian's party with scant delay, and they occupied Terracina (Tarracina), better protected by its site and fortifications than its defenders' skills.

### **Book III:LVIII Vitellius fails to command Equestrian loyalty**

Learning of this, Vitellius left part of his force with the prefects of the praetorian guard at Terni (Narnia) and sent Lucius Vitellius, his brother, with six infantry cohorts and five hundred cavalry to oppose any outbreak of fighting in Campania.

He himself was troubled in mind, but the enthusiasm of the soldiers and the clamour of the populace demanding arms (as he addressed that cowardly mob, daring only in words, in lieu of legions and an army) restored him. Exhorted to do so by his freedmen (for the nobler his friends the less he trusted them) he ordered the people to assemble in tribes and administered the oath as they enrolled. The numbers being so great, he divided the selection of recruits between the consuls, imposing a levy of slaves and cash on the senators. The Equestrian order freely offered money and assistance, and even the freedmen demanded the same privilege.

This pretence of devotion, prompted by fear, proved supportive, yet it was born less out of concern for Vitellius than for the empire in its perilous state. He himself took every opportunity to elicit their sympathy, with tearful speech and gaze, and by copious and extravagant promises, as is the nature of the fearful. He now wished to be called Caesar, a title which he had indeed previously rejected, but which was now welcome because of its associations for the superstitious, for in time of fear the murmurs of the crowd are given equal weight with the counsels of the wise.

Yet, as all directives that spring from ill-conceived motives are strong at first but later weaken, the senators and knights gradually became dilatory, hesitating at first then, shortly, when Vitellius was not present, showing contempt and indifference, until in shame at the ineffectiveness of his dictum he excused them from an effort they failed to make.

# **Book III: LIX-LXXXVI The battle for Rome, the death of Vitellius**

## **Contents**

- [Book III:LIX The Flavians cross the Apennines](#)
- [Book III:LX Antonius counsels patience](#)
- [Book III:LXI Vitellian defeat at Interamna](#)
- [Book III:LXII The execution of Fabius Valens](#)
- [Book III:LXIII The Vitellians at Terni surrender](#)
- [Book III:LXIV Flavius Sabinus exhorted to seek his share of glory](#)
- [Book III:LXV Sabinus declines to act](#)
- [Book III:LXVI Vitellius is exhorted to action](#)
- [Book III:LXVII Vitellius prepares to surrender power](#)
- [Book III:LXVIII Vitellius seeks to abdicate](#)
- [Book III:LXIX Flavius Sabinus under threat](#)
- [Book III:LXX Flavius Sabinus sends Vitellius a message](#)
- [Book III:LXXI The Vitellian troops attack the Capitol](#)
- [Book III:LXXII The Capitol in flames](#)
- [Book III:LXXIII Vitellian forces take the Capitol](#)
- [Book III:LXXIV Domitian escapes, Flavius Sabinus is killed](#)
- [Book III:LXXV The character of Sabinus](#)
- [Book III:LXXVI Lucius threatens Terracina](#)
- [Book III:LXXVII Massacre at Terracina](#)
- [Book III:LXXVIII Flavian delay](#)
- [Book III:LXXIX The Vitellians defend Rome](#)
- [Book III:LXXX The Vitellians send envoys to the Flavians](#)
- [Book III:LXXXI Vitellius' approaches rejected](#)
- [Book III:LXXXII The Flavians begin the battle for Rome](#)
- [Book III:LXXXIII Chaos in the city](#)
- [Book III:LXXXIV Rome, and Vitellius, captured](#)
- [Book III:LXXXV Vitellius killed](#)
- [Book III:LXXXVI Domitian returns home](#)

### **Book III:LIX The Flavians cross the Apennines**

While the occupation of Bevagna (Mevania) had terrified Italy and had seemed to begin the war afresh, there is no doubt that Vitellius' timid retreat to Rome had increased support for the Flavian party. Excited by jealousy because Campania had pre-empted them, the Samnites Paelignians and Marsians were ready for all the tasks demanded by war, as with a fresh devotion.

Nevertheless when the army, contending with severe winter weather in crossing the Apennines, found difficulty in struggling through the snow even though untroubled by the enemy, it was clear what a risk it would have been if the good luck which served the Flavians as much as their planning had not caused Vitellius to return to Rome.

They had come across Petilius Cerialis who, disguised as a peasant and knowing the terrain, had escaped Vitellius' pickets. Closely connected to Vespasian and not without military reputation himself, Cerialis was appointed as one of the commanders. Many say that Flavius Sabinus (Vespasian's brother) and Domitian were offered a way to escape also; messengers sent by Antonius reached them, using diverse covert methods, and revealed a possible place of safety. However Sabinus gave the excuse that his state of health rendered him unequal to the effort and daring required. Domitian was spirited enough, but though the guards appointed to watch him promised to accompany his flight, he feared treachery. Besides, Vitellius himself had no terrible fate in mind for Domitian, out of concern for his own relatives.

### **Book III:LX Antonius counsels patience**

The Flavian leaders, arriving at Casigliano (Carsulae), rested a few days, until the legionary eagles and standards arrived (from Verona). The site of their camp pleased them, offering a wide prospect, and secure sources of supply with prosperous towns at their back; and with Vitellius' forces only ten miles away (at Terni) they hoped to speak with them and secure their defection. The Flavian troops however received this badly and preferred victory to peace-talks, opposed to waiting even for their own side's legionaries to appear, who would share the profits not merely the risk.

Antonius, addressing the men, explained that Vitellius' troops would waver in their allegiance if allowed to deliberate, but would be fierce in retaliation if rendered desperate. 'How a civil war begins,' he said, 'is in the hands of fortune: but victory is achieved by strategy and wise counsel. The fleet at Misenum with the fair region of Campania have already defected, no more is left to Vitellius of all the wide world than what lies between Terracina and Terni. We gained glory enough in the battle for Cremona, but greater unpopularity through its destruction. We should not long to capture Rome, rather to save it. Greater reward will be yours and the highest honour if, without bloodshed, you ensure the safety of the senate and the people of Rome.'

These and similar arguments quieted their spirits.

### **Book III:LXI Vitellian defeat at Interamna**

Not long after, the legionaries arrived at Casigliano. The terrifying news that the Flavian army had been reinforced caused Vitellius' cohorts to waver, no one exhorted them to fight, many to desert, and they rivalled one another in handing over the centuries and cavalry squadrons as a present to the victors and as security for their own reward later.

The Flavians learned from them that Interamna (Interamna Nahars was the lowland site 'between the two rivers' while Narnia was the fortified hilltop site, modern Narni, both in close proximity to modern Terni) in the neighbouring plain was defended by only four hundred cavalry. Varus was sent with a lightly-armed detachment, and killed the few who resisted, the rest throwing away their weapons and seeking pardon.

Some of the Vitellians, fleeing back to the main camp, caused utter panic with exaggerated tales of the enemy's bravery and numbers to ease their shame in having deserted their post. There was no punishment for cowardice among the Vitellians, defectors were rewarded for changing sides, and the only rivalry remaining was in the degree of treachery. Desertion was common among the tribunes and centurions, the ordinary soldiers remaining loyal to Vitellius until Priscus and Alfenus (the prefects of the praetorian guard) abandoned their post and, fleeing to Rome and Vitellius, absolved them of the shame of defection.

### **Book III:LXII The execution of Fabius Valens**

At this time, Fabius Valens was executed while in custody at Urbino (Urbinum). His severed head was shown to the Vitellian troops to quench their hopes, since they had believed Valens had made his way to the German provinces where he was gathering forces old and new: the sight of the head drove them to despair, while the Flavian troops were hugely inspired by Valens' execution, regarding it as putting an end to the war.

Valens was born at Anagni (Anagnina) of an Equestrian family. Bold in manner, he lacked nothing in intellect, only that he sought a reputation for wit through his impudence. During Nero's Festival of Youth, he acted in mimes, at first it seems under compulsion, and then of his own free will, but more cleverly than well.

As a legionary legate he supported Verginius and then denounced him. He put Fonteius Capito to death after tempting him, or perhaps because he could not tempt him. A traitor to Galba he was loyal to Vitellius and gained glory through the disloyalty of others.

### **Book III:LXIII The Vitellians at Terni surrender**

Now all hope was lost, the Vitellian troops were ready to defect, but without loss of honour, so they descended to the plain below Narnia under the sign of their banners and standards. The Flavian soldiers, equipped and prepared for battle, were drawn up in close order along

the roadside. The Vitellians having been received in their midst, and surrounded, Antonius addressed them in terms of clemency: some being ordered to remain at Narnia, the rest at Interamna. Some of the victorious legions were also left there, not to oppress the Vitellians but sufficient to counter any rebellion.

Antonius and Varus did not omit sending frequent messages at this time to Vitellius, offering him refuge, money and a safe haven in Campania if he would forgo arms and surrender himself and his children to Vespasian. Mucianus also wrote him letters in the same vein; in all of which Vitellius tended to place his trust, speaking of the safe haven he might select, and the servants he might take with him. Such lethargy had invaded his spirit that if others had not remembered he was still emperor he himself would have forgotten.

### **Book III:LXIV Flavius Sabinus exhorted to seek his share of glory**

However, the leading citizens of Rome, in secret, were urging Flavius Sabinus, the city prefect, to claim his share of glory and success. ‘You have your own force in the city militia, together with the fire and police cohorts and your slaves who will not fail you, nor will the good-fortune of our Flavian party and the subservience of all to the winning side. Do not yield your glory to Antonius and Varus.

Vitellius has only a few infantry, anxious at the gloomy news from all sides: the people are fickle and if you offer yourself as their leader, they will show the same adulation for Vespasian as emperor that they have for Vitellius; and Vitellius himself, unequal to success, is weakened by disasters.

Gratitude for ending the war will belong to the man who takes control of Rome: it is for you, Sabinus, to hold imperial power for your brother, for Vespasian to rank the rest below you, Sabinus.’

### **Book III:LXV Sabinus declines to act**

Sabinus however, unfit through age, received such calls unmoved; though some people, with their own private suspicions, attacked him for hindering his brother’s rise. For Sabinus was the elder brother, and while they were private citizens he was the superior in wealth and authority. And, it was thought that when Vespasian had been in difficulties, Sabinus had given him only modest help, Vespasian’s house and land being pledged as security; so that, in spite of their apparent friendship, there was the fear of a hidden sense of injury.

A kinder interpretation of his reluctance, is that he was a gentle soul who abhorred bloodshed and slaughter, such that he had frequent conversations with Vitellius about peace, and abandoning force given certain conditions. They had often met privately, and finally, as rumour has it, made an agreement in the temple of Apollo. Their voices and statements were witnessed by Cluvius Rufus (the governor of Spain) and Silicus Italicus (the author of *Punica*): but distant bystanders noted their expressions, Vitellius with the downcast look of humiliation, Sabinus with that of pity rather than triumph.

### **Book III:LXVI Vitellius is exhorted to action**

Now if Vitellius could have convinced his followers to remain inactive as easily as he had convinced himself, Vespasian's troops would have entered Rome without bloodshed. As it was, those loyal to Vitellius rejected peace under any conditions, a peace where danger lay and dishonour, requiring faith in a capricious victor. 'Vespasian is not confident enough,' they told Vitellius, 'to allow you to live as a private citizen, not even the defeated will suffer it: so there is risk for him in showing clemency. True you are old and have seen enough of success and adversity, but what will your son Germanicus's status be? Now Vespasian promises you wealth and slaves and a delightful refuge in Campania: but once he has seized the imperium neither he, his friends, nor even the army will feel secure until his rival is destroyed.'

Fabius Valens, though held as a hostage against unknown eventualities, was too great a burden to them, Will Primus, or Fuscus, or that exemplar of party Mucianus have any choice but to kill you? Pompey was not exempted from harm by Caesar, nor Antony by Augustus, yet perhaps Vespasian has a nobler soul, who was once the client of a Vitellius when that Vitellius was a colleague of the emperor Claudius?

No, you must prove worthy of a father who held the censorship and three consulships, and of all the honours granted your great house. In despair, at least rouse yourself to action. The soldiers are steadfast, the people still supportive; and then, nothing worse can come to those who rush willingly to their ruin, than that defeated they must die, surrendering they must die: all that matters is whether their last breath is taken amidst ridicule and insult, or with courage.'

### **Book III:LXVII Vitellius prepares to surrender power**

Vitellius was deaf to bold advice: he was overwhelmed by anxiety and pity for his wife and children, fearing that stubborn conflict might render the victor less merciful to them. He also had a mother bowed down by her years, though her timely death anticipated the fall of her house by a few days, she gaining nothing by her son's rise to emperor but grief and a reputation for virtue.

On the eighteenth of December, Vitellius, on hearing of the defection of the legions and cohorts that had surrendered at Narnia, descended from the Palatine wearing mourning clothes, surrounded by his sorrowful family, his little son being borne in a litter as if in funeral procession. The shouts of the crowd were strangely flattering, the soldiers ominously silent.

### **Book III:LXVIII Vitellius seeks to abdicate**

There was no one so indifferent to human affairs as to remain unmoved by the sight. An emperor of Rome, but a moment before lord of all mankind, abandoned the heights of fortune, moving through the crowds in the heart of that city, to relinquish power. None had seen or heard of the like before. A stroke of violence had overthrown the dictator Julius Caesar, a secret plot Caligula, while darkness and hidden paths concealed Nero's flight, Piso and Galba had fallen so to speak in battle: but Vitellius, in his own assembly, among his own men, the women watching, spoke briefly in a manner befitting his sad state – saying he yielded power for the sake of peace and the public good, asking them to remember him and have pity for his brother, and his wife and innocent young children – and as he did so holding out his young son, commending him now to one, now to all.

Finally, in tears, taking out the dagger at his side, he offered it to the consul standing beside him (Caecilius Simplex by name) as if surrendering the power of life and death over the citizens. When the consul refused, and those assembled shouted in agreement, Vitellius left them, intending to place the imperial insignia in the Temple of Concord, and retire to his brother's home. A louder clamour then opposed his entering a private house, calling to him to re-enter the palace. Every other path was closed, except that leading to the Sacred Way, so he returned, his intentions thwarted, to the Palatine.

### **Book III:LXIX Flavius Sabinus under threat**

The rumour that he was abdicating had already spread, and Flavius Sabinus had written to the cohort tribunes asking them to restrain the troops. Thus, the leading senators, most of the Equestrian order, and all the city guards and watchmen filled his house, as if the whole state had fallen into Vespasian's hands. Word was brought concerning the mood of the people and the threats of the German cohorts. But he had already gone too far to retreat, and everyone urged the reluctant prefect to take up arms, fearing lest the Vitellians attack the Flavian forces while scattered and weak: though, as usually happens in such situations, advice was offered by all but few took up the challenge.

As Sabinus and his armed guard were descending by the reservoir of Fundanus, they were met by the most forward of the Vitellians. This sudden skirmish was of little account, but favoured the Vitellians. Things being uncertain, Sabinus took the safest course in the circumstances, and occupied the Capitoline citadel, with a mixed force, and various senators and knights, whose identity is doubtful since, following Vespasian's victory, so many claimed this service to his party. Some women also endured the ensuing siege, the most noted being Verulana Gratilla, following neither children nor relatives but the war.

The Vitellian troops besieging them kept careless watch, and at night Sabinus summoned his sons and his nephew Domitian to the Capitol, and sent a messenger through the inattentive picket lines to the Flavian commanders, to report that they were under siege, and in difficulties unless reinforced. In truth the night was so free of conflict, that Sabinus could have left without risk: since Vitellius's men whilst spirited when in danger, had scant regard

for hard work or picket duty, and a sudden wintry downpour made it hard for them to see or hear.

### **Book III:LXX Flavius Sabinus sends Vitellius a message**

At first light, before mutual hostilities could begin, Sabinus sent a leading centurion, Cornelius Martialis, to Vitellius with a mandate to complain that their agreement had been broken: 'You have merely made a show and pretence of relinquishing power to deceive all these illustrious men. Why else did you go from the rostra to your brother's house, which overlooks the Forum and attracts men's eyes, rather than your wife's house on the Aventine? That would have befitted a private citizen who wished to avoid all the trappings of power. On the contrary Vitellius returns to the Palace, the very citadel of that power, whence an armed force issued, and the most crowded place in Rome was strewn with the corpses of the innocent, not even the Capitol being safe!

I, Sabinus, am a mere civilian, and only one senator of many: while there was legionary conflict between Vespasian and Vitellius, the capture of cities, the surrender of cohorts, and though the Spanish, German and British provinces defected, and though I am Vespasian's own brother, I remained loyal to you while I was called on to sit voluntarily in conference. It is the defeated whom Peace and concord benefit, they add mere glory to the victors.

If you regret our agreement do not seek to attack me, whom your treachery has deceived, or Vespasian's son who is scarcely a youth – what benefit is there in killing an old man and a child? – you should rather go and face the legions and fight there for supremacy: everything depends on the outcome of that battle.'

Troubled by all this, Vitellius made a brief reply in excuse of his actions, laying the blame on his soldiers, his own moderation being unequal to their excessive ardour. And he warned Martialis to take a secret exit from the Palace in leaving, so that he would not be killed by the soldiers as the proposer of a peace they detested. For himself, he was powerless to command or forbid, being no longer emperor but a source of conflict.

### **Book III:LXXI The Vitellian troops attack the Capitol**

Martialis had barely returned to the Capitol when the soldiers arrived in fury, leaderless, each his own general. Marching rapidly through the Forum, its temples looming above, they advanced uphill in column as far as the outer gates of the Capitoline citadel. There were some ancient colonnades on the right as you climb, on whose roof the defenders made a stand showering tiles and stones on the Vitellians.

The latter were unarmed except for swords, and realising it would take too long to fetch artillery and missiles they threw firebrands onto the projecting portico, followed the flames and, burning the gates of the Capitol, would have penetrated, if Sabinus had not ordered the statues everywhere, raised in honour of our ancestors, toppled and piled up to barricade the entrance. They then tried various routes to the hill, one by the Grove of Asylum, one by the hundred steps up the Tarpeian Rock. Both attacks were improvised; but that by the Asylum

was closer and more menacing. Nor could the defenders prevent men climbing over neighbouring houses, built in peacetime to the level of the Capitol itself.

It is uncertain whether the besiegers set fire to the roofs, or the besieged, the more solid tradition claiming it was the latter, as they repelled the climbers and the advancing forces. From there the fire spread to the porticoes adjoining the temple; and soon the old eagle-shaped wooden supports for the roof burst into flame. So, its doors firmly shut, undefended and un-plundered, the Capitol burned.

### **Book III:LXXII The Capitol in flames**

This was the most grievous and shameful event, in public life, to befall the people of Rome since the founding of the city. With no external enemy and the gods propitious, if our behaviour had allowed, the home of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, founded by our ancestors with due auspices as a pledge of empire, which neither Lars Porsenna when the city yielded to him (507BC) nor the Gauls when they captured it (387BC) could violate, was destroyed by the inanities of power.

True, the Capitol had been torched before in civil war (83BC), but that was the crime of private individuals (Marius and Sulla): now it was attacked publicly, burned publicly, and what was the cause of conflict, what was the price for so great a disaster? Yet it had stood firm while we fought for our country.

Our king, Tarquinius Priscus, at war with the Sabines, vowed its creation, and laid its foundations in hope of future greatness rather than according to the, as yet modest, means of the Roman people. Its later construction was due to Servius Tullius with help from eager allies, and then to Tarquinius Superbus with the proceeds of spoils taken when Suessa Pometia (the Volscian city) was captured from the enemy. But the glory of completion was reserved for liberty. After the expulsion of the kings, Horatius Pulvillus dedicated it, in his second consulship (507BC); its magnificence such that the vast later wealth of the Roman people served rather to adorn than increase its splendour.

After an interval of four hundred and twenty five years, it was burned to the ground in the consulship (83BC) of Lucius Scipio and Gaius Norbanus, but was rebuilt on the same spot, the victorious Sulla undertaking the work but not dedicating it: 'the only thing denied his happiness'. That was left to Lutatius Catulus (in 69BC) whose name remained inscribed there, amidst the great works of the Caesars, down to Vitellius's day. This then was the temple consumed in the flames.

### **Book III:LXXIII Vitellian forces take the Capitol**

The fire did bring terror to the besieged however more than to the besiegers. Indeed, the Vitellian troops lacked neither skill nor steadfastness in the face of uncertainty: on the opposing side the men were fearful, the commander as if dumbfounded could not speak, nor could he hear, nor be guided by others' counsel or his own, but was swayed this way and that by the hostile clamour, countermanding what he had ordered, ordering what he had forbidden

and, as happens in desperate moments, soon all were shouting orders and none obeying, until in the end they threw down their weapons and looked for any means of flight or concealment.

The Vitellians broke through, and committed utter carnage with fire and sword. A few military men, among whom Cornelius Martialis, Aemilius Pacensis, Casperius Niger, and Didius Scaeva were the most distinguished, dared to fight and were killed. Flavius Sabinus, unarmed and not attempting to flee, was surrounded by the Vitellians, as was Quintus Atticus, the consul, who was marked by the emptiness of his title and his own foolishness in issuing edicts to the populace exorbitant in praising Vespasian while insulting to Vitellius.

The remaining defenders escaped by various means, some dressed as slaves, others protected by loyal clients and hidden among the baggage, while there were a few who learnt the password by which the Vitellians recognised one another, and themselves demanding it or giving it though unasked took refuge in audacity.

### **Book III:LXXIV Domitian escapes, Flavius Sabinus is killed**

When the besiegers broke into the citadel, Domitian was concealed in a temple attendant's rooms. Through the cleverness of a freedman and dressed in a linen robe he joined a crowd of devotees undetected, and took shelter in a house near the Velabrum, belonging to Cornelius Primus, one of his father's clients.

After his father, Vespasian, came to power, Domitian had the temple attendant's lodgings demolished, and built a small chapel to Jupiter the Preserver, with an altar showing his escape in marble relief: and when he himself inherited the imperium, he dedicated a vast temple to Jupiter the Guardian, with his own effigy in the lap of the god.

Sabinus and Atticus, loaded with chains, were dragged before Vitellius, who gave them neither a word or look in anger, though the right to kill them and be rewarded for the deed was demanded by the noisy mob. Those nearest began the cry, then the lowest plebeians shouted for Sabinus' death, with a mixture of supplications and threats.

Vitellius standing on the palace steps tried to appeal to them but was forced to leave: then they ran Sabinus through, mutilated his flesh, and cutting off his head dragged the body to the Gemonian Stairs.

### **Book III:LXXV The character of Sabinus**

So ended a man far from deserving of scorn. He had been involved in public affairs for thirty-five years, distinguished in domestic and military matters. His fairness and integrity were beyond question; though he spoke too effusively, which during his seven years governing Moesia, and his twelve as city prefect, was the only accusation against him.

At the end of his life, some thought him lethargic, many that he was a moderate, sparing of his country's blood. All however agree that, until the time Vespasian won power, he was the glory of their house. We hear that his death gave pleasure to Mucianus. The majority did

think it in the interests of peace since it eliminated the rivalry between the two, one who foresaw his role as the emperor's brother, the other himself as partner in imperial power.

But Vitellius resisted the crowd's demand to punish the consul, Quintus Atticus, since he felt well-disposed towards him and wished to repay his assumption of guilt when it was asked who had set fire to the Capitol. By this confession, or possibly deception to meet the circumstances, he seems to have acknowledged condemnation of the crime, and freed Vitellius' faction from blame.

### **Book III:LXXVI Lucius threatens Terracina**

During this time, Lucius Vitellius, camped at Feronia, threatened to destroy nearby Terracina (Tarracina), where he was besieging the Flavian gladiators and marines, the former led by Julianus the latter by Apollinaris as I have mentioned above, both leaders, through laziness and irresponsibility, being more gladiator than leader.

No watch was kept, nor effort made to strengthen the fragile walls: day and night they filled the pleasant coves with their echoes, the soldiers scattered in the service of their pleasure, and never spoke of war except over dinner.

A few days earlier, Apinius Tiro, the Flavian, had left Terracina and by his harshness in extracting gifts and money won unpopularity for his faction rather than adding to its strength.

### **Book III:LXXVII Massacre at Terracina**

Meanwhile, one of Verginius Capito's slaves had fled to Lucius' camp saying he could deliver them an emptied citadel if given sufficient men. In the depths of night he guided a lightly-armed cohort onto the heights above their enemies, whence they rushed down to commit slaughter rather than fight.

They killed men armed, or arming, roused from sleep, confused by darkness, terror, the blare of trumpets and hostile cries. A few gladiators resisted and fell exacting vengeance: the rest ran to the ships, where equal panic gripped all, the Vitellians massacring soldiers and townsfolk alike. Six Liburnian galleys escaped at the first alarm, with their admiral of the fleet Apollinaris: the remainder were captured at anchor, or swamped by the weight of those who leapt aboard. Julianus was dragged before Lucius Vitellius, flogged, and executed before Lucius' very eyes.

There were those who accused Lucius' wife, Triaria, of behaving savagely and despotically, as if she had girded herself with a soldier's sword, amongst the grief and slaughter when Terracina was taken. Lucius himself sent laurels to his brother to mark their success, asking there and then whether he ordered him to return to Rome, or press on and conquer Campania.

The attendant delay though helpful to Vespasian also helped the state, since if the troops, fresh from victory, and with pride at their success added to their native intransigence, had hastened to Rome, there would have been no slight conflict nor would the city have escaped

destruction. For all his poor reputation Lucius had energy, drawing strength not like the good from his virtues, but like the worst of men from his vices.

### **Book III:LXXVIII Flavian delay**

While these events were occurring on the Vitellian side, Vespasian's army left Narni (Narnia) and celebrated the Saturnalia (17th-2nd December) quietly at Otricoli (Otriculum, 12 miles south). The excuse for such untimely delay was that they were awaiting Mucianus.

Nor were those lacking who suspected Antonius also of a deceitful delay, he having received secret letters from Vitellius offering him a consulship, marriage with his daughter, and a large dowry for her as a reward for treachery.

Others considered these mere fictions devised for Mucianus' benefit, some that all the leaders had been in league to threaten Rome with war rather than actually wage war, since the strongest cohorts had already abandoned Vitellius and it seemed likely that he would relinquish power if all his resources were exhausted: but their plans had been ruined by Sabinus' haste and subsequent ineffectiveness, since he had armed rashly but then been unable to defend, against a mere trio of cohorts, the fortified Capitol whose strong defences should have been safe from the attacks of a much greater force.

However, it is not easy to attribute to any one person the blame that attached to all. For Mucianus delayed victory in letters filled with ambiguity, while Antonius, by too ready a compliance to them and shifting of the blame from himself, was worthy of condemnation; the rest of the generals also, thinking the war was over, guaranteed it an infamous end.

Not even Petilius Cerialis, sent forward with a thousand cavalry to ride by road across the Sabine country and enter Rome along the Salarian Way (from the north-east), advanced swiftly enough, until news the Capitol was under siege spurred all simultaneously to action.

### **Book III:LXXIX The Vitellians defend Rome**

Antonius reached Saxa Rubra (nine miles north of Rome) by the Flaminian Way late at night but now too late to bring relief. There he heard only gloomy news, that Sabinus had been killed, the Capitol burned, and the city in panic; the populace too and the slaves were arming to support Vitellius. Moreover Petilius Cerialis' cavalry had fought a losing battle. Advancing incautiously as if moving swiftly against a defeated force, he was intercepted by the Vitellians on foot and horseback.

A skirmish took place on the outskirts of the city, among houses and gardens in the winding lanes known to the Vitellians but strange to their nervous enemies. Nor were all the Flavian cavalry of a mind, some of those assigned having lately surrendered at Narni still speculating inwardly on the likely fortunes of the two factions.

Julius Flavianus, leading a cavalry squadron, was captured; the rest were shamefully scattered in flight, though the Vitellians did not chase them beyond Fidenae.

### **Book III:LXXX The Vitellians send envoys to the Flavians**

This success increased the people's enthusiasm; the urban populace took up arms. A few with shields, most seizing whatever weapons came to hand, they demanded the signal for battle. Vitellius thanked them, and ordered them to go out and defend the city. Later, the senate convened and delegated envoys to the Flavian forces to persuade them to agree to peace in the interests of the state. The fortunes of these envoys varied.

Those who met Petilius Cerialis ran the greatest risk, since his men rejected all peace terms, and indeed they wounded Arulenus Rusticus, the praetor; his being a man of great personal honour only adding to the indignation at this violence done to an envoy and a praetor. His attendants were pushed aside, the lictor at his side being killed as he ventured to make a path through the crowd: and if Cerialis had not provided a guard for the envoys, diplomatic protection, that even foreign countries afford us, would have been violated in the madness of civil conflict, and the envoys killed before the walls of their native city.

Those who went to meet Antonius were granted a more equitable hearing, not because his soldiers were more restrained, but because of his greater authority as leader.

### **Book III:LXXXI Vitellius' approaches rejected**

Musonius Rufus, the devoted philosopher and proponent of the Stoic doctrine, and a member of the Equestrian order, was among these envoys. He mixed with the men, and began admonishing those in arms, talking of the virtue of peace and the danger of war. Many found this ludicrous, more still considered it tedious: some would have knocked him down and trampled on him, if he had not heeded the warnings of the moderates, and the threats of others, and ceased his untimely preaching.

Vestal Virgins also went to meet the troops, bearing letters from Vitellius to Antonius asking that the ultimate conflict be postponed for a day, saying that if they only delayed a while they could reach a comprehensive agreement. The Vestals were sent back again with honour; but the answer to Vitellius was that in killing Sabinus and burning the Capitol he had put an end to all discussion of a treaty.

### **Book III:LXXXII The Flavians begin the battle for Rome**

Nevertheless, Antonius still summoned his legions to an assembly, to try and reconcile them to camping by the Mulvian Bridge (where the Flaminian Way crossed the Tiber) and only entering the city on the following day. Delay seemed right to him, lest his troops exasperated by fighting might fail to respect the populace, senate, or even the shrines and temples of the gods. His men though were suspicious of any such delay as inimical to victory; and at that

very moment standards gleaming among the hills, though followed by a crowd without weapons, gave the appearance of a hostile force.

So the Flavian forces advanced, in triple column; one column continuing south along the Flaminian Way and a second in parallel along the Tiber (both running to the west of the city), and the third approaching the Colline Gate (from due north) by the Salarian Way. The masses were dispersed by a cavalry charge; but Vitellian soldiers met the Flavians with their own triple defence.

There engagements before the walls were many and varied, but the Flavians being better-led triumphed more often. The only troops of theirs to be troubled had advanced west (from the Salarian Way) towards the Gardens of Sallust through the narrow slippery streets. The Vitellians, scrambling onto the perimeter walls of the Gardens, thwarted them with showers of stones and missiles until late in the day, when they were surrounded by the cavalry who had entered through the Colline Gate. Hostile forces also engaged on the Campus Martius (to the west, by the Tiber).

Fortune was with the Flavians who won many of the encounters. The Vitellians charged in sheer desperation and though driven back re-grouped within the city.

### **Book III:LXXXIII Chaos in the city**

The populace looked on as spectators to the conflict, as if at the fights in the Circus, cheering on each party in turn with shouts and applause. If one side retreated, hiding or taking refuge in shops and private houses, the crowd demanded they be dragged out and killed: gaining for them a greater share of the plunder, since the soldiers were deep in blood and slaughter while the spoils were left to the mob.

Foul and hideous acts were witnessed throughout the city: here were conflict and wounds, there bath-houses and taverns were laid bare; beside the blood and corpses mingled whores and their clients alike; all the debauchery of the most dissolute peacetime, all the crimes of a most savage conquest; such that it seemed the city was at once mad with rage and lasciviousness.

True, armed men had fought their way through the city before this, twice when Lucius Sulla, and once when Cinna prevailed, with no less savagery: but now with an inhuman indifference, never pausing an instant in their wickedness: as if it were a fresh entertainment added to some festival, exulting, joyful, supporting neither side, revelling in civil disaster.

### **Book III:LXXXIV Rome, and Vitellius, captured**

The greatest difficulty was found in taking the Praetorian Camp, which the bravest of the Vitellians defended as their last hope. At this the Flavians were rendered even more determined, especially former praetorians in their ranks. They promptly brought into play every device invented for the destruction of the strongest of defences; artillery, earthworks, the tortoise shield-formation, and lighted brands; crying out that all the toil and danger they had endured in a host of battles would be crowned by this effort. 'The city will be returned to

the senate and people of Rome, the shrines to their gods. A soldier's glory is in his camp: that is his city, there are his household deities. We must spend the night in arms if the Camp is not swiftly taken.'

As against this, the Vitellians, though unequal in strength or good fortune, by troubling the victors, delaying the peace, and defiling the houses and altars with blood, took refuge in that last solace of the defeated. Many, mortally-stricken, breathed their last on the towers and battlements. When the gates were finally destroyed, a solid mass of survivors opposed the victors, and fell dealing blow for blow, facing the enemy, so anxious were they in dying to win a glorious end.

On the city being captured, Vitellius was carried in a sedan chair through the rear of the Palace to his wife's house on the Aventine, so that if he survived the day without being discovered he might escape to his brother and his forces at Terracina. But his inconstant mind and the nature of great fear, which always makes the present situation seem most threatening to those who fear everything, drew him back to the empty Palace, seemingly deserted by even the lowliest servants who had slipped away or perhaps took care to avoid meeting him.

He feared the solitude and the silent spaces; trying the closed doors, he shuddered to find only echoing rooms; weary of wandering in a state of gloom, he hid himself in shameful concealment, but was dragged forth by Julius Placidus, the cohort tribune. With his arms tied behind his back, his clothes torn, he was led away, a melancholy sight, many crying out against him, none in tears: the distastefulness of the final scene dispelling pity.

A soldier from Germany came upon him and struck at him, perhaps in anger, perhaps to remove him more swiftly from insult, perhaps aiming at the tribune, it is uncertain: but he sliced off the tribune's ear and was immediately run through.

### **Book III:LXXXV Vitellius killed**

At sword-point, Vitellius was forced now to offer his face to his captors' insults, now to witness the toppling of his statues and gaze again and again at the rostra and the place of Galba's death, until finally the soldiers propelled him to the Gemonian Stairs, where Flavius Sabinus' body had lain.

One utterance saved him from the charge of lack of nobility when, on being insulted by the tribune, he replied that: yet, he had been his emperor. Then he fell under a hail of blows. And the mob attacked him when dead with the same perversity as they fawned on him while living.

### **Book III:LXXXVI Domitian returns home**

Vitellius' native city was Luceria (Nuceria in Apulia, according to Suetonius): he was then fifty four years old (September AD15- December AD69). He attained the consulate, priesthood, and a name and place among the leading men of his day not through his own efforts but wholly because of his father's distinction.

Those who brought him to power did not know him: seldom has an army's support been won by great courage to the extent that he achieved through cowardice. Yet he showed qualities of simplicity and liberality, qualities which if unmodified prove disastrous. Thinking that friendship is maintained by lavish gifts rather than loyal behaviour, he bought more friends than he kept.

It was certainly to the state's advantage that Vitellius fell, but the men who betrayed him to Vespasian can take no credit for that act of treachery, being those who had previously deserted Galba.

The day hastened to its end without the senate being summoned, due to the terror exhibited by the senators and officials who had slipped out of the city or hidden themselves in their clients' houses. Domitian, with no enemies now to fear, presenting himself to the leaders of the Flavian party and being acclaimed as of the house of Caesar, was escorted to his ancestral hearth, by a crowd of soldiers as yet still under arms.

# **Book IV: I-XXXI The Batavian uprising led by Civilis**

## **Contents**

[Book IV:I Rome in chaos](#)

[Book IV:II The execution of Lucius](#)

[Book IV:III Order restored](#)

[Book IV:IV Mucianus and other Flavian leaders honoured](#)

[Book IV:V Helvidius Priscus, his early life](#)

[Book IV:VI Helvidius Priscus, his later actions](#)

[Book IV:VII Helvidius speaks on the choice of delegates](#)

[Book IV:VIII Marcellus responds](#)

[Book IV:IX An empty treasury](#)

[Book IV:X Accusations against Publius Celer](#)

[Book IV:XI Mucianus takes control](#)

[Book IV:XII Batavian unrest](#)

[Book IV:XIII Julius Civilis](#)

[Book IV:XIV Civilis rouses the Batavians](#)

[Book IV:XV The uprising begins](#)

[Book IV:XVI Civilis proceeds by cunning and treachery](#)

[Book IV:XVII Civilis champions freedom from Rome](#)

[Book IV:XVIII The Romans forced to retreat](#)

[Book IV:XIX Hordeonius Flaccus hesitates](#)

[Book IV:XX Roman defeat at Bonn](#)

[Book IV:XXI Civilis is roused to all-out war](#)

[Book IV:XXII The Romans prepare their defences](#)

[Book IV:XXIII The Siege of Vetera commences](#)

[Book IV:XXIV Unrest among Flaccus' troops](#)

[Book IV:XXV Flaccus yields command to Vocula](#)

[Book IV:XXVI The Romans make camp at Gelduba \(Gellep\)](#)

[Book IV:XXVII Further mutiny among the troops](#)

[Book IV:XXVIII The Romans under siege](#)

[Book IV:XXIX A night-action](#)

[Book IV:XXX Civilis renews the passive siege](#)

[Book IV:XXXI News of the outcome at Cremona](#)

## **Book IV:I Rome in chaos**

Vitellius' death was the end of war rather than the start of peace. The victors, armed, pursued the defeated through the city streets with implacable hatred, the thoroughfares choked with corpses, the fora and the temples stained with blood, slaughtering everyone chance placed in their way. As their licence increased, they swiftly dragged out those in hiding; killing any who appeared young and fit, whether soldier or civilian.

Their savagery, sated by blood while their hatred was roused, then turned to avarice. No building was allowed to remain locked and bolted, on the pretext that Vitellians might be hiding there. This led to private houses being entered, with resistance an excuse for murder. And there was no lack of impoverished individuals among the mob, or base slaves, ready to betray their masters, while other victims were revealed by their friends.

There were cries of lamentation everywhere, accompanying the ills of a captured city, so that the people longed for the mere arrogance of Otho's and Vitellius's soldiers which they had loathed before. The Flavian leaders who had been eager to fan the flames of civil war, were unable to rein in their success, for in times of violence and discord the worst elements wield most power, it is peace and quiet that demand the practice of virtue.

## **Book IV:II The execution of Lucius**

Domitian accepted the appellation of Caesar and imperial residence with as yet no attention to duty, but played the part of an emperor's son in debauchery and adultery. The prefecture of the Praetorian guard went to Arrius Varus, the supreme authority being vested in Antonius Primus. He appropriated money and servants from the imperial palace as if they were the spoils of Cremona: the rest who had remained in obscurity during the war through modesty or low birth, thus gained no share of the prize.

The citizens of Rome, in a state of fear and bent on subservience, demanded that Lucius Vitellius, who was returning from Terracina with his troops, be arrested and the last embers of conflict extinguished. The cavalry was therefore sent forward as far as Aricia (modern Ariccia, sixteen miles south-east of Rome on the Appian Way), while the infantry halted before Bovillae (eleven miles south-east, likewise on the Appian Way).

Lucius was not slow to surrender himself and his legions to the victors' authority, but his troops threw down their fateful weapons as much in anger as fear. A long column of vanquished men, hedged in by armed guards, entered the city; not with the look of suppliants, but with dark and grim faces, unmoved by the shouts and mocking insults of the crowd. A few who dared to break ranks were overwhelmed by the guards, the rest were led away to prison. None uttered an ignoble word, and amidst adversity maintained their reputation for courage.

Lucius was later executed: his brother's equal in vice: though the more vigilant of the two while the latter was in power, he was less a partner in his prosperity than a victim of his ruin.

## **Book IV:III Order restored**

During this period, Lucilius Bassus was sent with a light cavalry force to calm Campania, where the towns were more in conflict with one another than rebellious towards the emperor. The sight of the military brought calm, and the lesser settlements escaped punishment.

Capua (loyal to Vitellius) had the Third legion quartered there for the winter, and its distinguished families were ruined, though Terracina (which favoured Vespasian) received no benefit, so much readier are we to repay harm than help, gratitude being regarded as a burden, revenge as a gain. It may however have proved a solace to the inhabitants of Terracina that Verginius Capito's slave who had betrayed them was crucified wearing the very rings of the Equestrian order he had accepted from Vitellius.

Meanwhile the senate in Rome, filled with hope and joy, decreed that all the usual powers be bestowed on Vespasian, since they considered that the civil war, which had begun in Gaul and Spain, roused the German provinces then Illyricum, and subsequently involved Egypt, Judea, Syria, every army and province, as if the whole known world had needed purifying by that bloodletting, had reached its end.

Letters from Vespasian added to their readiness, written as though the war was still in progress, that at least being the first impression, though he already spoke as emperor, modestly of himself, fulsomely of the state. Nor did the senate fail to pay homage, electing him as consul with his son Titus, and granting a praetorship with consular powers to Domitian.

## **Book IV:IV Mucianus and other Flavian leaders honoured**

Mucianus had also sent a letter to the senate that gave cause for comment. 'If he was a private citizen why the official language?' they said. He could certainly have waited a few days before uttering his message. His invective against Vitellius too was tardy and lacked initiative, and it was truly an act of pride as regards the state and insolence as regards their new emperor to boast that he had held the empire in his hand and had bestowed it on Vespasian. However, they hid their discontent while openly praising him, granting him triumphal regalia with a host of speeches in his honour, his campaign against the Sarmatians being the pretext, the reality his role in the civil war.

They also granted consular insignia to Antonius Primus, praetorian insignia to Cornelius Fuscus and Arrius Varus. Then they considered the respect due the gods; voting to restore the Capitol. All these measures were proposed by the consul elect, Valerius Asiaticus; the rest gave their assent by looks and gestures, though a few of noble rank or with natural skill in diplomacy gave formal speeches.

When it came to Helvidius Priscus, praetor elect, he offered his thoughts as if in compliment of a fine leader, but without false flattery, being received enthusiastically by the senate. This notable day in his career ushered in a period for him of intense disfavour and great glory.

## **Book IV:V Helvidius Priscus, his early life**

Having again spoken of a man whom I will often need to mention, I am required to say something briefly about his life and interests, and the changes of fortune he experienced. Helvidius Priscus was born in the town of Cluviae (in the Caracina region of ancient Samnium, now modern Casoli in the Abruzzo). His father had been a centurion of the first rank.

In his early youth, Helvidius devoted his outstanding gifts to the higher studies, not as most youths do to hide their idle leisure behind a pretentiousness name, but in order to enter the public arena better equipped against the vicissitudes of fortune. He followed those teachers of philosophy (the Stoics) who hold that moral virtue is the only good, while the bad is simply that which lacks moral virtue, treating as neither good nor bad innate strength, high birth or whatever else is beyond the mind's control.

After holding the quaestorship only, he was chosen by Paetus Thrasea to be his son-in-law, and from the father-in-law's character he derived above all his love of liberty. As citizen, senator, husband, son-in-law, and friend he was equal to all of life's duties, contemptuous of wealth, obstinate in pursuing right, and unmoved by fear.

## **Book IV:VI Helvidius Priscus, his later actions**

There were those who thought him over-eager for fame, since desire for glory is the last thing renounced, even by philosophers. Driven into exile by his father-in-law's ruin, with Galba as emperor Helvidius returned, bringing charges against Marcellus Eprius, who had informed on Thrasea. Regarding this attempt to exact revenge, in itself highly noble and just, senate support was divided: since if Marcellus fell, a host of guilty men would be ruined.

At first conflict threatened, as witnessed by the eloquent speeches on both sides, but as Galba's wishes in the matter were evidently uncertain, Priscus gave way to the senators' many appeals, eliciting various comments according to the speaker's nature praising his moderation or questioning his strength of purpose.

However at this senate meeting, where Vespasian was voted imperial honours, it was decided that a delegation be sent to the new emperor. This led to a sharp encounter between Helvidius and Eprius: Priscus demanding the delegates be chosen by the magistrates under oath, Marcellus insisting on lots being drawn as the consul designate had proposed.

## **Book IV:VII Helvidius speaks on the choice of delegates**

Now Marcellus' concern was prompted by self-interest lest if others were selected he would be seen to have been overlooked. Gradually, the two were led by their altercation into lengthy and bitter speeches, Helvidius querying why Marcellus was so fearful of the magistrates'

decision: ‘You have wealth and eloquence, which would place you above others, if you were not burdened by their memory of your crimes. Lots rattled in an urn cannot discern character: the senators’ votes and their assessment were the means devised to judge lives and reputations. It is in the interests of the state, and touches on Vespasian’s honour, that those the senate considers of greatest integrity should meet with him, men who might fill his ears with honest counsel.

Vespasian was a friend to Thrasea, Soranus and Sentius: and even though it is not appropriate to punish their accusers, we should not promote them. By its judgement, the senate is like to warn the emperor whom he should approve of, and whom he should shun. There is no greater instrument of good government than good friends. Be satisfied, Marcellus, in having impelled Nero to kill so many innocents: enjoy the rewards of that, and your immunity, and leave Vespasian to finer men.’

### **Book IV:VIII Marcellus responds**

Marcellus replied that the proposal under attack was not his but that of the consul designate, and was in accord with the former precedent that delegates should be chosen by lot, to avoid the scope for ambition or enmity. Nothing had given cause for abandoning ancient custom, or transmuting an honour due to the emperor into an insult to any man; compliance with it satisfied everyone. Rather they should avoid the unbiased mind of their new emperor being provoked by a wilful few, while he yet takes note of every word and glance.’

Marcellus then recalled the times in which he was born, and the form of government his forefathers had established; he admired the past, he said, but adhered to the present; he prayed for good governance, but tolerated whatever came. Thrasea had not been ruined by his orations any more than by the senate’s judgement; Nero’s cruelty took delight in such games, and friendship with him caused him no less anxiety than exile did others.

Let them by all means equate Helvidius’ courage and fortitude to that of Cato and Brutus: he himself was only one senator among many who would all serve alike. He would also suggest that Priscus not set himself above the emperor, nor try to influence Vespasian, a mature man in his triumph and with sons independent of their father. Those leaders may be the worst who desire limitless power, but even the best must set a bound to liberty.

These contentions, tossed back and forth with great vehemence, were received variously. But the group favouring selection of the envoys by lot prevailed, the less prominent senators being eager to follow precedent, while even the most prominent inclined to that course, fearing to arouse envy if they themselves were chosen.

### **Book IV:IX An empty treasury**

Another argument ensued. The praetors of the treasury (at a time when it was still handled by praetors) proclaimed the state’s indigence, asking that expenses be curtailed. The consul designate wished to refer this matter to the emperor given the magnitude of the problem and the difficulty of remedy: Helvidius maintained that the decision lay with the senate. As the

consuls sought to ask the senators their views, Vulcacius Tertullinus, tribune of the people, resisted any decision being taken in the emperor's absence regarding so important an issue.

Helvidius proposed that the Capitol be restored at public expense, with Vespasian merely assisting. This proposal the more cautious senators condemned to silence, and then oblivion: there were others however who committed this incident to memory.

## **Book IV:X Accusations against Publius Celer**

Then Musonius Rufus launched an attack on Publius Celer, charging him with ruining Barea Soranus through false testimony. The case appeared to renew hatred of such accusations by informers, but it was impossible to defend so vile and guilty an accused since the memory of Soranus was revered. Celer, having been his tutor in philosophy, then testifying against him, had betrayed and profaned the very idea of friendship which he preached.

The earliest possible day was appointed for the hearing; with minds set on vengeance, it was less the speeches by Musonius Rufus and Publius Celer which were eagerly awaited than those of Priscus, Marcellus and others.

## **Book IV:XI Mucianus takes control**

In this state of affairs, with discord among the senators, anger among the defeated, no authority among the victors, and neither law nor governance in public affairs, Mucianus entered Rome and at once took everything upon himself.

The power of Primus Antonius and Varus Arrius was dissolved, Mucianus concealing his fury against them though, hiding it in his glances. The citizens, quick to realise their rulers' offences, turned to Mucianus, transferring their affection: he alone was honoured and courted. Nor did he fail, surrounded by an armed retinue, to embrace the power of an emperor, acquiring fresh dwellings and gardens, enjoying the pomp, processions and bodyguards, while sacrificing only the title.

Maximum fear was instilled by the execution of Calpurnius Galerianus, the son of Gaius Piso. He was in no way venturesome, yet his famous name and his own handsome appearance made him the subject of public gossip, and there were those among the citizens who, still restless and happy to murmur of revolution, were ready to surround him with idle talk of the principate. Mucianus ordered him arrested by the militia, and fearing his execution within the city itself would attract too much attention, had him put to death beside the Appian Way, at the fortieth milestone, where his veins were opened.

Julius Priscus, who had been prefect of the praetorian guards under Vitellius, committed suicide, more from shame than necessity. Alfenus Varus survived his cowardice and infamy. Asiaticus paid for his baneful influence with a slave's punishment (being only a freedman, in fact).

## **Book IV:XII Batavian unrest**

At this very time, the citizens heard growing rumours from Germany of disaster, yet without their causing gloom; men spoke as though the slaughter of armies, the capture of the legions' winter quarters, and the revolt of the Gallic provinces were not defeats. As to the conflict there, I will treat of its origins in some depth, and the extent to which foreign or allied tribes were involved in the conflagration.

The Batavians, while they lived beyond the Rhine, formed a section of the Chatti, but expelled after an internal uprising they now inhabited the furthest boundary of the uncultivated region of the Gallic provinces, and occupied an islanded area nearby, fronting the ocean while washed by the Rhine on the remaining sides. They provided the empire only with men and arms, and without their wealth being exhausted (a thing rare when allied to a stronger people).

They were well-trained in our German wars, and later added to their glory in Britain, to which various cohorts were transferred, led by their noblemen in accord with ancient custom. They also had a select cavalry force back home, excellent in river crossings, such that they could transit the Rhine, men and horses, while keeping their formation intact.

## **Book IV:XIII Julius Civilis**

Julius Civilis and Julius Paulus, both of royal stock, had at one time shared the leadership. Paulus however had been executed by Fonteius Capito on a trumped-up charge of rebellion. Civilis was sent to Nero in chains, and though acquitted by Galba, was once more at risk under Vitellius, the army clamouring for his punishment. This was the root of his anger against us, and his hopes rose with our disasters.

Now Civilis, who bore himself like a Hannibal or a Sertorius, disfigured like them also by the loss of an eye, was cleverer than barbarians usually are, and feigned to be friendly towards Vespasian and a follower of his faction in order to avoid attack by a Roman army if he had been seen to rebel openly. Indeed Primus Antonius had sent despatches to him, in which he was commanded to divert the auxiliaries raised by Vitellius and maintain the legions in situ, on the pretext of tackling any disturbances arising in Germany. Hordeonius Flaccus (the Governor of Upper Germany) who was on the spot, had offered the same advice, favouring Vespasian and anxious for the state whose ruin was certain if war were renewed and many thousands of armed men poured into Italy.

## **Book IV:XIV Civilis rouses the Batavians**

Civilis, while determined to rebel, therefore hid his deeper purpose in the interim, ready to decide his tactics based on events, and began to stir trouble as follows. A levy of Batavian

youth was being raised on Vitellius's orders, and this burden naturally heavy was made more onerous by the greed and licence of those in charge, who searched out the old and inadequate in order to release them for a price: dragging away the young and handsome (and the Batavian children are generally well-formed beyond their years) to satisfy their lust.

At this, resentment arose and the leaders, determined on sedition, persuaded the people to resist the levy. On the pretext of holding a banquet, Civilis summoned the tribal leaders and the boldest of the people to the sacred grove, and once he had seen their spirits fired by night and revelry, after extolling the honour and glory of the tribe he enumerated the wrongs done to them, through extortion and the other evils of oppression.

'We are not, as we once were, treated as allies, but as slaves. When are we blessed with a legate with full powers, arrogant and burdensome though such a one might prove? Instead, we are condemned to prefects or centurions, and when one such crew are sated with executions and plunder, they are moved on, and new purses are then to be filled and new depredations enacted. Now comes a levy, to divide parent and child, brother from brother, as if forever.

The Roman state has never been more vulnerable than now, with only old men and plunder left behind in their winter camps. Lift your sights a little, have no fear of the empty title of legion. We have strong troops and cavalry on our side: the Germans who share our blood, the Gallic provinces who share our aims. Nor will our fight be unwelcome even to the Romans should uncertain fortune favour Vespasian: in victory no one is asked to render an account.'

## **Book IV:XV The uprising begins**

His words won a mighty assent, and he bound them all by barbarous rites and their oaths as a tribe. Men were also sent to the Canninefates, to gain their support for the plan, they being a tribe inhabiting part of that island sharing the same origins and language, and with the same bravery, as the Batavians, though inferior in numbers. Employing envoys in secret, he soon won over the British auxiliaries also, and the Batavian cohorts who had been sent into Germany as I mentioned above, then stationed at Mainz (Mogontiacum).

Now among the Canninefates was the madly courageous Brinno, of noted and illustrious descent; his father had, with impunity, dared many attacks on the Romans during Caligula's foolish campaigns. Thus the very name of this family of rebels delighted them, and setting him on a shield and raising him on their shoulders according to tribal custom, they chose him as leader.

He immediately brought in the Frisians (a tribe from across the Rhine) and launched a seaborne attack on the nearby winter camp of the two cohorts. The Romans had not anticipated an assault, and had they done so still had insufficient strength to ward off the enemy: thus the camp was captured and plundered.

He then attacked the Roman traders and camp-followers, who were wandering a country supposedly at peace. Simultaneously he threatened to destroy the Roman forts, which the cohort prefects were forced to burn being unable to defend them.

The troops, with their Roman banners and standards, gathered in the upper part of the island, with Aquilius, a centurion of the first rank as their leader; but of a force with the name

rather than strength of an army: for Vitellius after withdrawing the most powerful cohorts had armed an indifferent crew of Nervii and Germans from the nearest cantons with their burden of weapons.

### **Book IV:XVI Civilis proceeds by cunning and treachery**

Deciding to proceed cunningly, Civilis rebuked the prefects for abandoning the forts, declaring that he would suppress the Canninefates' revolt with the force he commanded, while they were to return to their respective winter quarters. Treachery underlay his advice, with the cohorts more easily destroyed once dispersed, nor evidently was Brinno the real leader in this war but Civilis. Indications of all this gradually appeared, since the Germans, a people who delight in conflict, could not conceal it for long.

When treachery proved insufficient, Civilis thus turned to force, drawing up the Canninefates, Frisians and Batavians each in their own formation. The Roman lines were immediately opposite, not far from the Rhine, where their vessels which had been drawn up after the forts were burnt, now faced the enemy.

The battle was not long begun when a cohort of Tingri transferred its allegiance to Civilis, and the Romans, unnerved by their betrayal, were slaughtered by allies and enemy alike. There was a similar act of treachery in the fleet: a group of Batavian oarsmen by seeming awkwardness in navigation impeded both crew and combatants, then quickly reversed direction to line up by the stern along the enemy shore, finally killing the helmsmen and centurions who opposed their actions, until the whole set of twenty-four vessels passed to the enemy or were captured.

### **Book IV:XVII Civilis champions freedom from Rome**

Their victory was glorious at the time, and of great benefit thereafter, since they gained boats and weapons they lacked, and were greatly celebrated as champions of freedom throughout Germany and the Gallic provinces. The Germans at once sent envoys to offer help: while Civilis sought to win over the Gallic provinces by bribery and cunning, sending the captured prefects back to their own states, while granting the soldiers composing their cohorts permission to go or stay as they preferred.

Those who stayed were offered honourable military service, those who left plunder taken from the Romans: at the same time Civilis reminded them in private of the ills they had suffered for so many years, in mistaking a wretched servitude for peace. 'The Batavians,' he said, 'though free from paying tribute, have nevertheless taken arms against our mutual oppressors; these Romans were defeated and routed in the first encounter.'

If the Gallic provinces were to throw off the yoke, what strength remains to Italy? The provinces are ever won with provincial blood. Lest any think of Vindex's rebellion: the Aedui and Averni were crushed by Batavian cavalry. There were Belgians among Virginius' auxiliaries and, if considered truly, Gaul fell to its own forces.

Now we are all on the same side. Added to which, is the vigour gained by military training in the Roman camps. The veteran cohorts are with me, to which Otho's legions recently succumbed. Syria, Asia and an Orient ruled by kings may play the slave, but many are still alive in Gaul born before tribute was paid. Indeed, not long since, Germany rid itself of servitude with the defeat of Quintilius Varus, and the challenge there was not to some Vitellius but to Augustus Caesar himself.

Nature has granted even dumb animals freedom, courage is man's proper virtue; the gods favour those who show the greater bravery: let the free seize upon the burdened, the fresh the weary. While some favour Vitellius, others Vespasian, action against both is open to us.'

### **Book IV:XVIII The Romans forced to retreat**

Thus, intent on Germany and the Gallic provinces, Civilis was preparing, if his plans bore fruit, to rule the strongest and wealthiest tribes. At first Hordeonius Flaccus furthered this enterprise through ignoring it: but when anxious messengers brought news of the taking of camps, the destruction of cohorts, and the expulsion of the Roman presence from the Batavians' island, he ordered Munius Lupercus (who commanded the two legions in winter quarters) to march against the enemy.

Lupercus swiftly transferred his legionaries, the Ubii nearby, and the Treviran cavalry who were not far off, to the island, adding a squadron of Batavian cavalry who pretended loyalty though already contemplating treachery, so that they might win a greater prize by betraying the Romans on the very field of battle.

Civilis surrounded himself with the standards of the defeated cohorts, so that his own men might have the signs of recent glory before their eyes while tokens of that disaster would unnerve the enemy. And he ordered his mother and sisters, and similarly the wives and young children of his warriors, to stand firm behind them to encourage the troops to conquer, or shame them if they were driven back.

While their ranks resounded to the chanting of men and the cries of the women, the clamour of our legions and cohorts in response was far from equal. Our left flank was laid bare by the immediate desertion of the Batavian cavalry. However the legionaries grasped their weapons and maintained formation, despite their anxiety. But the auxiliary forces of the Ubii and Treveri fled shamefully and were scattered over the plain: these the Germans attacked fiercely, allowing the legionaries to escape to the camp at Vetera (Birten).

Claudius Labeo, commander of the Batavian cavalry, who had been a rival of Civilis in local matters, was sent off to the Frisii lest if he remained he might sow the seeds of discord, while if he were done away with the act would cause resentment among his tribesmen.

### **Book IV:XIX Hordeonius Flaccus hesitates**

At about this time, a messenger sent by Civilis overtook those cohorts of Batavians and Canninefates marching to Rome on Vitellius' orders. Immediately, full of pride and insolence, they demanded recompense for completing the march, a doubling of their pay, and

more promotions to the cavalry, things promised indeed by Vitellius, though their demands were not genuine but a pretext for rebellion. And in granting them Flaccus achieved nothing but to increase their insistence on whatever they knew he must refuse. Treating him with scorn, they headed for Lower Germany to join Civilis.

Flaccus, summoning the tribunes and centurions, consulted with them whether to coerce the recalcitrant troops by force; but through innate cowardice and the anxiety of his officers, troubled by the auxiliaries' fickle mood and the excessive haste with which the levy had been raised to fill the legions' ranks, he initially decided to keep the soldiers in camp: then repenting of his decision and influenced by the very men who had persuaded him to it, he wrote to Herennius Gallus, commander of the First legion stationed at Bonn, indicating that he would follow the despatch close behind, ordering him to stop the Batavians from passing, while he and his troops would soon be at the enemy's back.

And if Flaccus behind and Gallus in front had indeed both advanced and caught the Batavians between them, the rebels would have been crushed. But Flaccus abandoned the move, and in a further despatch advised Gallus not to threaten the Batavians as they departed. This created the suspicion among his men that rebellion was being incited by the Roman commanders, and that all that happened or was feared was not due to their inertia or the enemy's strength, but treachery on the part of their leaders.

### **Book IV:XX Roman defeat at Bonn**

Approaching the camp at Bonn, the Batavians sent a messenger on to Herennius Gallus, setting out the cohorts' demands. They were not at war with the Romans, they said, for whom they had often fought, but were weary of their long and unrewarding service and longed for home and quiet. If no one obstructed them, they would pass by harmlessly: if however weapons were raised, they would forge a path with their swords.

When Gallus hesitated, his soldiers urged him to try the fortune of war. There burst from the gates together three thousand legionaries, the hastily levied Belgian cohorts, and a band of villagers and camp-followers unwarlike but brave in the face of danger, to surround a lesser number of Batavians. But the latter being veteran soldiers in tight formation, closing ranks on all sides and therefore well-defended to front, sides and rear, broke through our sparse lines.

As the Belgians gave way, the legion was driven back, and ran in fear for the gates and rampart. There was the greatest slaughter: the ditch heaped high with corpses, the men dying not only by sword-thrusts but by falling onto their own side's weapons.

The victorious Batavians avoided Cologne (Agrippinensium) and any hostile move during their remaining march, excusing the action at Bonn on the grounds that they had sought peace, and when this was refused had consulted their own interests.

### **Book IV:XXI Civilis is roused to all-out war**

With the arrival of these veteran cohorts, Civilis was in command of a real army, but uncertain of his course and aware of the Romans' strength, he had all his warriors swear

allegiance to Vespasian, and sent envoys to the two legions who had retreated to Vetera after their recent defeat, asking them to take the same oath.

They replied: 'We do not follow the path of treachery or that of our enemies; Vitellius is our emperor, for whom we will maintain our loyalty and our weapons to the last breath. No Batavian deserter shall determine Rome's affairs: let him instead anticipate the punishment his crime deserves!'

On receiving this, Civilis, aflame with anger, drove the whole Batavian tribe to war; and was joined by the Bructeri, and the Tencteri, and those Germans summoned by messenger to share the glory and the plunder.

### **Book IV:XXII The Romans prepare their defences**

To meet this combined threat of war, the commanders of the two legions, Munius Lupercus and Numisius Rufus, began to strengthen the ramparts and palisade. They tore down the work of the long peace, a whole township which had grown up not far from the camp, lest it serve the enemy. But they made insufficient effort to provision the camp, permitting plunder, so that a few days licence exhausted what would have served their needs for some time.

Civilis took up position in the centre of his line with the pick of the Batavians, and in order to appear more threatening filled both banks of the Rhine with German units, while his cavalry roamed the plains, and his vessels were shifted upstream.

Over there, were the standards of the veteran cohorts, and there, images of the beasts of the woods and groves, which it is the custom of each tribe to carry into battle, emblems of both internal and external conflict to terrify the besieged Romans. And the hopes of the attackers were raised by the length of the Roman ramparts, built for two full legions but with barely five thousand Romans capable of defending them; though a crowd of camp-followers had gathered there at the first threat to peace and were now involved in war.

### **Book IV:XXIII The Siege of Vetera commences**

One section of the camp lay on a gentle slope, the other could be approached on level ground. Since the emperor Augustus had considered these winter quarters sufficient to defend and control the German provinces, not imagining that the disaster of an attack on our legions might arise, no further effort had been spent on the site and its fortifications: strength of arms was considered enough.

The Batavians and their allies from across the Rhine took up position tribe by tribe, to display their individual skills, opening fire from a distance. Since however their missiles merely dotted the towers and battlements in vain, and they suffered wounds from the stones hurled down on them, they attacked the ramparts in full cry, many raising scaling-ladders, others climbing onto the raised shields of their comrades. Those who succeeded in clambering up, over-bold at first and bolder still with success, were struck down by shields and weapons, and buried under a shower of javelins and stakes.

Yet now, in their greed for plunder, the enemy were ready to suffer reverses also, even resorting to siege engines which they rarely employed, having no skill in their use, deserters and prisoners having taught them how to build a kind of timber pontoon, propelled forward by wheels fitted beneath, so that men on its platform could fight as they would from a hillock, while others hidden below undermined the rampart. However ballistae stones shattered the primitive structure. When they began to assemble screens and roofing for their artillery, the Romans sent down blazing arrows threatening the engineers themselves with fire, until the enemy, despairing of force, turned to delaying tactics. They were well aware that the camp contained only a few days provisions, and a crowd of non-combatants; they counted also on treachery as a result of starvation, the wavering loyalty of those who served, and the accidents of war.

### **Book IV:XXIV Unrest among Flaccus' troops**

Meanwhile, Flaccus, hearing that the Vetera camp was under siege sent men to raise auxiliaries from the Gallic provinces. He also ordered Dillius Vocula, commander of the Twenty-second legion, to lead picked troops from their two legions (stationed at his headquarters at Mainz) to march swiftly along the bank of the Rhine, while he himself, being in poor health, and unpopular with the men, travelled by boat.

The troops indeed complained, in no uncertain terms, that he had allowed the Batavians to leave Mainz, concealed what he knew of Civilis, and was forging an alliance with the Germans. 'Not Primus or Mucianus have added more to Vespasian's strength than Flaccus,' they cried, 'open enmity and naked weapons can be repelled: but treachery and deceit are hidden and insidious. Civilis is there at the front, positioning his battle-line, while Flaccus Hordeonius issues orders, from his dining room or even his bedroom, that help the enemy. So many of the bravest of armed men at the mercy of one weak and senile old man: let us rather kill the traitor and purge our fortune and our virtues of this ill omen!'

Having stirred one another with such exhortations, they were now inflamed further by a letter from Vespasian, which Flaccus was obliged to read aloud to the assembled men being unable to conceal it. However he sent those who had brought it to Vitellius in chains.

### **Book IV:XXV Flaccus yields command to Vocula**

Thus the soldiers' mood was calmed, and they reached Bonn, the winter quarters of the First legion. There the men became more menacing, placing the blame for the disaster at Vetera on Flaccus. They claimed they had given battle to the Batavians, on his orders, on a promise that the legions from Mainz were close behind; that their comrades' slaughter was due to his treachery, since no reinforcements had arrived; that all this was unknown to the rest of the army and had not been reported to the emperor, when fresh betrayal might have been thwarted by swift action on the part of all the provinces.

Flaccus, in turn, read aloud to them copies of all his despatches, asking for aid, sent to the Gallic provinces, Britain and the Spanish provinces, and established the worst of precedents by handing all new despatches to the legions' standard-bearers to read to the men before they

were seen by their commanders. He then ordered a single leader of the mutiny arrested, more to exercise his authority than because one single individual was responsible.

The army now marched from Bonn to Cologne, as Gallic auxiliaries poured in, giving a strong boost initially to the Roman cause. Later, as German strength increased, many tribes took arms against us, in hope of freedom, and the desire, once liberated, for an empire of their own.

The legions' angry mood worsened, unmoved by fear at that single soldier's arrest, he indeed arguing that their general was in the know and that, having been a messenger between Flaccus and Civilis, as a witness to it all, he was now being hounded on a false charge. Vocula, showing admirable resilience, mounted the tribunal, and ordered the soldier seized and led away, despite his cries, for punishment.

While the ill-intentioned were cowed, the most loyal obeyed his order. Then, with a universal demand for Vocula to lead, Flaccus yielded command to him.

### **Book IV:XXVI The Romans make camp at Gelduba (Gellep)**

But many things aggravated the soldiers' rebellious mood: pay and supplies were lacking, and the Gallic provinces at the same time scorned to supply the levy and the tribute: the Rhine could barely be navigated owing to a drought rare to that climate; lines of communication were restricted, and detachments posted all along the river to prevent the Germans crossing; and for the same reason, there was less grain collected and more men consuming that which was. Among the ignorant, even the lack of water was regarded as a prodigy, as if the rivers themselves, our empire's former defences, were failing us: and what in peacetime they would have attributed to chance or nature, they now attributed to fate and the anger of the gods.

Entering Novaesium (Neuss), they were joined by the Sixteenth legion. Vocula now had Herennius Gallus to share command; not daring to move against the enemy they pitched camp, the name of the place being Gelduba (Gellep). There they strengthened morale by drilling the troops, erecting a palisade and defences, and by other military exercises. In order to fire their bravery, Vocula led a raiding force into the nearest cantons of the Cugerni, allies of Civilis, while the rest of the men remained with Herennius Gallus.

### **Book IV:XXVII Further mutiny among the troops**

It so happened that, not far from the camp, a group of Germans began hauling a vessel loaded with grain, grounded in the shallows, to their side of the river. Gallus could not endure this and sent a cohort to the rescue: the Germans too added to their numbers, and as the reinforcements gradually accumulated a battle began. The Germans dragged the boat away with severe losses to our forces. The defeated, as was now their wont, blamed the loss not on their own cowardice but on their leader's treachery.

Dragging him from his tent, they beat him and tore his clothing, demanding to know what bribe Gallus had taken, and who his accomplices were in betraying his men. Their anger

towards Flaccus was renewed: they called him the instigator and Gallus his instrument, until Gallus, cowed by their threats of execution, charged Flaccus himself with treachery; Flaccus was clapped in chains and only released on Vocula's arrival.

On the following day, Vocula had the ringleaders in the mutiny put to death: such were the wild swings in this army between licence and obedience. Indeed, the lower ranks were loyal to Vitellius, while the officers leaned towards Vespasian, and that led to cycles of crime and punishment, anger and submission, whereby the men could not be controlled, only punished.

### **Book IV:XXVIII The Romans under siege**

Yet Civilis was buoyed by extensive reinforcements from the whole of Germany, alliances guaranteed by hostages from the highest nobility. He ordered those who were nearest those tribes to ravage the Ubii and Treviri, and another force he sent across the Meuse to threaten the Menapii and Morini and the borders of the Gallic provinces. Plunder was seized from the tribes, but most aggressively from the Ubii, because though Germanic by origin they had forsworn their native land and adopted the Roman name of Agrippinenses.

Some of their cohorts had been slaughtered in the region of Marcodurum (Duren) while acting incautiously far from the banks of the Rhine. For the Ubii were no less restrained in seeking to raid Germany, at first with impunity, though they were later circumvented, their loyalty to us being greater than their good fortune throughout the entire conflict.

With the Ubii crushed, Civilis, strengthened and emboldened by success, pressed on with his siege of the legions, keeping strict watch that no secret messenger might carry news of approaching aid. He delegated the building of siege-engines and digging of earthworks to the Batavi: while the forces from across the Rhine, who demanded battle, were sent to tear down the Roman defences, and on being repulsed were ordered to renew the conflict, their numbers being great and the losses tolerable.

### **Book IV:XXIX A night-action**

Nor did night restrict their efforts: piles of wood were set alight all around, and while the besiegers feasted, as men became fired with wine, they rushed to battle, though with vain abandon since their missiles hurled in the dark had no effect, while the Romans aimed at the barbarian lines which were clearly visible, and in particular at any man notable for his insignia or his bravado.

Civilis, realising this, ordered his men to douse the fires and shroud the battlefield in darkness. Then indeed all was discordant shouting, uncertain of outcome, without light by which to strike or defend. Wherever the cry was raised, the enemy turned and lunged; courage was useless, chance ruled all, and often the bravest fell to the blow of a coward. Thus the Germans were driven by blind fury, but the Romans, experienced in adversity, aimed their iron-tipped pikes and hurled heavy stones with precision.

When the sound of men raising ladders and climbing the walls delivered their enemy into their hands, they beat them back with their shields, and followed through with their spears; many who scaled the walls they stabbed with their daggers.

And when the night was done, the day revealed fresh conflict.

### **Book IV:XXX Civilis renews the passive siege**

The Batavi had constructed a two-storied tower, which they propelled close to the praetorian gate (the ground being flattest there), and which was repelled by thrusts from strong poles, and shattered by repeated blows from beams, with heavy losses to those mounted on it. With their attackers in chaos, the Romans rushed upon them suddenly and with success.

Simultaneously the legionaries who were superior in the arts and craft of warfare deployed further means. Predominant in instilling fear was a balance-arm poised above the enemy, which on being suddenly lowered caught up one or more men before their comrades' eyes and by application of a counterweight plucked them inside the defences.

Civilis abandoned hope of storming the camp, and returned to a passive siege, while trying to shake the loyalty of the legionaries through messages filled with promises.

### **Book IV:XXXI News of the outcome at Cremona**

All this occurred in Germany before the battle of Cremona (end-October 69AD), the outcome of which was learned from a letter written by Primus Antonius, with an edict of Caecina's added; and from the personal testimony of Alpinus Montanus, a prefect of cohort on the losing side, who acknowledged the defeat of his party.

Diverse feelings were aroused: the Gallic auxiliaries, possessing neither factional attachment nor hatred, serving without enthusiasm but at the exhortation of their officers, immediately abandoned Vitellius: while the veteran soldiers hesitated.

However, at the command of Hordeonius Flaccus, and on the urging of their tribunes, they took an oath, though confirmed neither by look nor desire, uttering the words in their prescribed form but with a hesitation at Vespasian's name, it either being murmured faintly or for the most part passed over in silence.

# **Book IV: XXXII-LXV Events in Rome, conflict in Germany**

## **Contents**

- [Book IV:XXXII Montanus sent as an envoy to Civilis](#)
- [Book IV:XXXIII Assault on Vocula's camp at Gellep \(Gelduba\)](#)
- [Book IV:XXXIV The Batavians thwarted](#)
- [Book IV:XXXV Further mutiny among the Romans](#)
- [Book IV:XXXVI Flaccus killed by the mutineers](#)
- [Book IV:XXXVII A new oath of allegiance to Vespasian](#)
- [Book IV:XXXVIII The situation in Rome in early 70AD](#)
- [Book IV:XXXIX Political rivalries](#)
- [Book IV:XL Domitian active in the senate](#)
- [Book IV:XLI The senate oath and purge](#)
- [Book IV:XLII Montanus attacks Aquilius Regulus](#)
- [Book IV:XLIII Helvidius Priscus attacks Marcellus](#)
- [Book IV:XLIV Mucianus placates the senate](#)
- [Book IV:XLV Sundry lesser charges](#)
- [Book IV:XLVI Mucianus quells further mutiny](#)
- [Book IV:XLVII Flavius Sabinus honoured with a censor's funeral](#)
- [Book IV:XLVIII Background to Piso's murder](#)
- [Book IV:XLIX The action against Piso](#)
- [Book IV:L Valerius Festus and the death of Piso](#)
- [Book IV:LI Vespasian entrusts Titus with pacifying Judaea](#)
- [Book IV:LII Titus defends Domitian](#)
- [Book IV:LIII The restoration of the Capitol](#)
- [Book IV:LIV Conflict in the German and Gallic provinces continues](#)
- [Book IV:LV The meeting at Cologne](#)
- [Book IV:LVI Vocula counters the conspiracy](#)
- [Book IV:LVII Vocula withdraws to Neuss \(Novaesium\)](#)
- [Book IV:LVIII Vocula's speech to the troops](#)
- [Book IV:LIX The legions defect, Vocula is murdered](#)
- [Book IV:LX The end of the siege](#)
- [Book IV:LXI Veleda](#)

[Book IV:LXII The captive Romans are marched to Trier](#)

[Book IV:LXIII Civilis and Classicus discuss the fate of Cologne](#)

[Book IV:LXIV The Tencteri demand Cologne return to the fold](#)

[Book IV:LXV Cologne asserts its independence](#)

## **Book IV:XXXII Montanus sent as an envoy to Civilis**

Letters from Antonius to Civilis read before the troops, written as if to an ally and seemingly hostile towards the army in Germany, roused their suspicions. When the news reached the Roman camp at Gelduba (Gellep) later, it led to similar words and actions, and Montanus was sent to Civilis with orders to him to abstain from conflict and from cloaking hostile acts with lies: saying that if Civilis had attacked them in order to assist Vespasian's party, his efforts were quite sufficient.

Civilis showed caution at first: but later realising that Montanus was impetuous by nature, and open to rebellion, he began to complain of the twenty-five uncertain years he had spent in the camps of the Romans. 'I have won a prize for my trials indeed,' he said, 'my brother's murder, my own fetters, and the fierce calls from their army for my punishment, for all of which by the rights of nations I am called upon to seek vengeance. You Treviri, also, and the rest of you subservient spirits, what can you expect for the blood you so often shed, but unrewarding military service, the payment of endless tributes, floggings, the axe, and the other inventions of your masters? Behold how, as prefect of a single cohort, with the Canninefates and the Batavi, a mere fraction of the Gauls, I have destroyed their useless far-flung camps or am crushing them with force and famine. Be bold then, and let freedom ensue or let us be joined in defeat!'

He roused Montanus in this manner, while sending him back bearing a milder reply. Montanus returned as if his embassy had been in vain, hiding what later came to light.

## **Book IV:XXXIII Assault on Vocula's camp at Gellep (Gelduba)**

Civilis, retaining part of his forces, sent the veteran cohorts and the best of the Germans, led by Julius Maximus and Claudius Victor his own nephew, against Vocula and his men. On the way, they ravaged the winter quarters of the cavalry squadron at Asberg (Asciburgium), and attacked Vocula's camp (at Gellep) so unexpectedly that he had no time to speak to the troops or form line: he was only able to warn them, amidst the confusion, to strengthen the centre with the reserves: the auxiliaries were scattered about randomly.

The Roman cavalry charged, but received by the enemy in good order fled to their own lines. Slaughter not battle followed. And the Nervian cohorts, through fear or treachery, left our flanks naked: thus our defence rested on the legions who, their standards lost, were being cut down inside the ramparts when fresh reinforcements suddenly altered the outcome of the conflict.

Cohorts of Vascones, raised in the past by Galba and summoned earlier, on nearing the camp and hearing the noise of battle had attacked the enemy, engaging them from the rear, causing wider terror than their numbers justified, some of their opponents believing that the whole force from Neuss (Novaesium), others that the troops from Mainz (Mogantiacum) had appeared.

This error on the part of the enemy inspired the Romans, and trusting in the strength of others, they regained their own. The best of the Batavians, their infantry, were cut down: their cavalry fled with the standards and captives they had seized in their initial attack. While a larger number of our men were killed that day, they were the least effective, while the Germans lost their strongest force.

### **Book IV:XXXIV The Batavians thwarted**

The leaders on both sides, equally at fault, deserved their failure and wasted their success. If Civilis had increased the strength of his lines he would not have been outflanked by a few cohorts, but would have penetrated and destroyed the Roman camp. While Vocula, failing to detect the enemy's approach, was beaten the moment he left camp; then lacking confidence in victory spent useless days before moving against the enemy, while if he had been quick to press on and follow the flow of events, he could have raised the siege of the legions at a blow.

In the meantime, Civilis tested the spirits of the besieged, feigning that all was lost with the Romans and victory was his, parading Roman banners and standards, and even exhibiting prisoners. One of these, with outstanding courage, called out and exposed the reality, only to be killed by the Germans, which act of theirs was the greater witness to his loyalty; while the devastation and flames of burning farms announced the approach of the victorious Roman troops.

Though in sight of camp, Vocula ordered the standards to be set in place and surrounded by a ditch and rampart, and the baggage and kit to be deposited there, so as to fight unencumbered. There was an immediate outcry against the general, demanding battle; and threatening him as they had become accustomed to do.

Without even waiting to form line, subject still to disorder and fatigue, they took up the fight; while Civilis was prepared also, trusting no less in the enemy's failings than his own warriors' bravery. Fortune fluctuated on the Roman side, for though the most seditious proved cowards there were those who, remembering their recent success, held fast. They struck at the enemy, encouraged each other and those nearest, and reforming their line signalled to their besieged comrades to seize the moment. The latter, watching all this from the ramparts, now launched themselves from every gate.

By chance Civilis' horse slipped and threw him, both sides believing the news that he had been wounded or killed, inspiring immense fear in his men and firing the Romans with fresh energy. But Vocula, ignoring the fleeing enemy, proceeded to re-build the camp's walls and turrets, as if he were still under siege, by the wasted victory being suspected rightly of preferring extended conflict.

### **Book IV:XXXV Further mutiny among the Romans**

Nothing troubled our troops as much as the lack of provisions. The legions' baggage-train, with those men who were unfit for service, was sent off to Neuss (Novaesium) to bring back

provisions from there overland, as the enemy controlled the river. The first convoy passed without problem, since Civilis was not yet recovered.

When he heard however that those in charge of the re-provisioning, and the cohorts escorting them, sent again to Neuss, were travelling as if in peacetime, only a few soldiers with the standards, their weapons carried in carts, and all wandering about at ease, he gathered to the attack, sending men ahead to occupy the bridges and narrow stretches of road. They fought on a wide front, with uncertain outcome, until nightfall ended the conflict.

The cohorts reached Gellep (Gelduba), where the defences were still as they were, having been held by the force which had been left there. There was no doubt of the grave danger they would run if they returned with a heavily-loaded and anxiously-defended supply column, so Vocula reinforced his army with a thousand men of the Fifth and Fifteenth legions, who had been under siege at Vetera, untameable troops hostile to their leaders, and set out on the march with more men than requisitioned, who murmured openly on the way that they would no longer tolerate hunger and their officers' underhand dealings: while those left behind complained that they were being abandoned by this withdrawal of a part of their strength.

Thus a twofold mutiny arose, some calling on Vocula, others refusing, to return to camp.

### **Book IV:XXXVI Flaccus killed by the mutineers**

While Civilis besieged Vetera, Vocula withdrew to Gellep and then Neuss, later fighting a cavalry battle near Neuss with success. But success or failure alike fired the soldiers to the murder of their leaders; and when the arrival of the Fifth and Fifteenth reinforced the legionaries they demanded their payment, learning that Vitellius had despatched the money.

Hordeonius Flaccus granted them the gift without delay, but in Vespasian's name, and this more than anything else fostered the mutiny. The soldiers abandoned themselves to feasting and debauchery, and renewing their anger against Flaccus in midnight meetings, the legates and tribunes not daring to oppose them, they dragged him from his bed (since the darkness removed all sense of shame) and killed him.

They were ready to deal likewise with Vocula, but dressed as a slave he escaped, unrecognised in the darkness.

### **Book IV:XXXVII A new oath of allegiance to Vespasian**

Once this first impulse had ebbed, anxiety returned. The men sent centurions with letters to the Gallic communities asking for auxiliaries and pecuniary aid: they themselves, on the approach of Civilis snatching up their weapons and hastily dropping them again, took to flight, as a crowd without leadership is always precipitate, fearful yet disinclined to action.

Adversity bred discord, and the soldiers of Upper Germany dissociated themselves and their cause from the rest: nevertheless the images of Vitellius in the camp and in the nearby Belgian communities were reinstated, even though by this time (early 70AD) he was already

dead. Then, repenting of the action, the soldiers of the First, Fourth and Twenty-second legions followed Vocula's lead, he making them swear again their allegiance to Vespasian and then breaking the siege of Mainz.

In fact the besiegers, a mix of Chatti, Usipi and Mattiaci had already withdrawn, satisfied with their plunder, though not without some loss of life, since our soldiers attacked them while they were dispersing carelessly. The Treviri by contrast built ramparts and palisades along their borders and fought the Germans with great slaughter on both sides, until their outstanding service to the Roman cause was sullied by their subsequent rebellion.

## **Book IV:XXXVIII The situation in Rome in early 70AD**

During this time Vespasian was again consul, with Titus who was absent from Rome. The citizens, gloomy and made anxious by their many fears, embraced illusory threats over and above the evils that afflicted them, saying that Lucius Piso rebelling had brought about a revolt in Africa. He, the pro-consul for that province, was far from being a turbulent spirit; but because the grain ships were delayed by a harsh winter, the people of Rome, used to purchasing their food supplies daily, and whose only interest in public affairs was the grain convoy, believed in their anxiety that the ports were closed and the transports halted.

Those Vitellians who had still not abandoned their factional interest, fostered the rumour, which was not unwelcome even to the victors, whose greed unsated by foreign wars no civil war could every satisfy.

## **Book IV:XXXIX Political rivalries**

On the first of January, Julius Frontinus, the city praetor had summoned a session of the senate and votes were passed praising and thanking the legates, armies and allied princes. Tettius Julianus was deprived of his praetorship for deserting his legion when it allied itself with Vespasian, and the praetorship was therefore transferred to Plotius Grypus. Hormus was granted equestrian rank.

Thereafter, Domitian received a praetorship, Frontinus having resigned. His name introduced the letters and edicts, though the real power was with Mucianus, except in that Domitian dared many actions at his friends' instigation or prompted by his own desires. Mucianus however mainly feared Primus Antonius and Varus Arrius, distinguished by their recent victories and popular with the troops. Even the populace favoured them, since they had never attacked anyone except in war.

There was a rumour, too, that Antonius had urged Scribonianus Crassus (brother of Piso), given his illustrious ancestors and his brother's eminence, to seize control of public affairs, there being no lack of support, had Scribonianus not refused, he not easily being seduced by their readiness, and indeed fearful of the outcome.

Mucianus, therefore, unable to destroy Antonius openly, praised him fulsomely in the senate while overwhelming him with a weight of secret promises, pointing to the

governorship of Nearer Spain vacant due to Cluvius Rufus' withdrawal. At the same time, he showered tribune-ships and prefecture-ships on Antonius' friends.

Once Antonius' foolish thoughts were filled with hopes and desires, Mucianus nullified the man's power by sending the Seventh legion, which was passionately devoted to Antonius, to winter quarters. And Arrius Varus' personal force, the Third legion, was returned to Syria; while part of the army marched away to the German provinces.

Thus, Rome, free of turbulence, regained its old appearance, and the magistrates and law their functions.

## **Book IV:XL Domitian active in the senate**

On the day Domitian entered the senate he briefly and humbly referred to his father's and brother's absence and his own lack of years, while showing nobility in his bearing; and since his character was as yet unknown, the diffidence he showed in his looks was taken as a sign of genuine modesty. On his raising the matter of restoring Galba's honours, Curtius Montanus suggested that Piso's memory should also be celebrated. The senators assented to both proposals: though that with regard to Piso was never implemented.

Next a commission was appointed, chosen by lot, to restore property stolen during the war; document and replace the bronze tablets of laws worn out with age; purge the statutes defiled by the adulatory excesses of the times, and draw up the accounts of public expenditure. Tettius Julianus' praetorship was renewed after it became known that he had merely fled to join Vespasian: Grypus remained in office.

Then the senate decided to re-address the case involving Musonius Rufus and Publius Celer, with Publius being condemned and the shades of Soranus appeased. The day marked by this act of public severity was not without its private merit too. Though Musonius was held to have furthered justice, a different view was taken of Demetrius the Cynic, because he showed more ambition than honour in defending the manifestly guilty Publius, who had neither courage nor eloquence adequate to meet this threat to himself.

Now that the signal had been given to take vengeance on past informers, Junius Mauricus asked Domitian to grant the senate powers to search the imperial records, in order to establish who had made each former accusation. He replied however that on so important an issue the emperor must be consulted.

## **Book IV:XLI The senate oath and purge**

The senate drew up an oath, inspired by its leading members, whereby all the magistrates and the other senators, their names being called in order, eagerly invoked the gods to witness that no one's safety had been threatened by any act of theirs, nor had they received gifts or honours through any citizen's misfortunes. Those with a guilty conscience repeated it hesitantly, modifying the words in various ways. The senators approved any religious scruples shown but disapproved of any perjury.

This method of censure affected Sarioleus Vocula, Nonius Attianus, and Cestius Severus most severely, they being notorious for their many denunciations in Nero's time. Vocula was also burdened by more recent charges for pursuing the same course under Vitellius: nor did the senators desist from threatening violence against him until he left the senate house.

They then moved against Paccius Africanus and expelled him too, because he had pointed Nero the way to eliminating the Scribonii brothers, who were noted both for their fraternal ties and their wealth. Africanus did not dare confess or deny his crime: but turning on Vibius Crispus, who was wearying him with questions, implicated him without hope of defence, as a partner in crime, thereby deflecting the senate's anger.

## **Book IV:XLII Montanus attacks Aquilius Regulus**

It was on that day Vipstanus Messala gained his reputation for fraternal loyalty and eloquence, daring to appeal on behalf of his brother, Aquilius Regulus, though himself not yet old enough to enter the senate. Regulus was deeply hated for undermining the houses of the Crassi and Orfitus: though a mere youth he had accepted the charge of his own accord, appearing not to shy from risk in hopes of gaining power. Crassus' wife, Sulpicia Praetexta, and her four children attended, to demand vengeance if the senate took up the case.

Messala offered no defence for the accused or his actions, but swayed some of the senators by sharing his brother's predicament. However Curtius Montanus spoke bitterly, going so far as to accuse Regulus of rewarding Piso's assassin, after Galba's murder, and of savaging Piso's head with his teeth. 'That is not something, surely,' he said, 'Nero forced you to, that savage act in no way procured your life and safety. Shall we accept the defence of those who would rather ruin others than risk themselves? Your father's exile and the division of his estate among his creditors left you secure, not old enough to hold office and with nothing of yours Nero might covet, nothing for him to fear from you. Through lust for slaughter and hunger for reward you stained your record with his noble blood, seizing the consular spoils, fattening yourself on seventy thousand gold pieces, and with priestly splendour involving in that same ruin innocent children, eminent men and noble women.

You accused Nero himself of lack of effort, of wearying himself and his informers with attacking lone houses, when the whole senate could be overthrown with a single word. Gentlemen of the senate, let us preserve this fellow with his ready counsel, let us enlist his services, that every age may be instructed by his example, and let our youths imitate Regulus as their elders did a Marcellus or a Crispus! Wrongdoing finds its emulators, even in misfortune: what then if it should flourish and grow strong? If we do not dare touch this fellow as a mere quaestor, how will we dare do so when he is praetor, or consul? Think you that Nero will be the last tyrant? Those who outlived Tiberius and Caligula thought the same, while one more cruel, more infamous, rose to view! We do not fear Vespasian, such is his maturity, his moderation, but precedents endure longer than morals. We grow weak, fellow-senators, we are no longer that senate which on the death of Nero demanded punishment for his minions and informers, in the manner of our ancestors. The best moment to seize, after a worthless emperor's reign, is the first.'

## **Book IV:XLIII Helvidius Priscus attacks Marcellus**

The senate heard Montanus with such approval that Helvidius Priscus even had hopes of Marcellus himself being toppled. So, beginning by praising Cluvius Rufus, who though just as wealthy and noted for eloquence under Nero put no man in jeopardy, he pressed Marcellus with accusations and extolled Rufus' example, firing the senators' enthusiasm.

Marcellus, sensing this, made as if to leave the house, saying, "I go, Priscus, leaving you your senate: play then at ruling in Caesar Domitian's presence." Vibius Crispus made as if to follow, both showing anger but in a different manner, Marcellus with menacing looks, Crispus seeming to smile, till they were drawn back again by a bevy of their friends.

As the discord spread, the honourable majority ranged on one side, a few strong characters on the other, they contended with one another in mutual and obstinate hatred, consuming the daylight hours in conflict.

## **Book IV:XLIV Mucianus placates the senate**

When the senate next met, Domitian commenced with the need to forget the wrongs, resentments and exigencies of the past; Mucianus then spoke at length on behalf of the informers, while admonishing in mild terms and almost with a note of appeal those who were raising accusations they had previously made and dropped. Meeting opposition, the senators relinquished their newfound liberty.

Mucianus, lest he seem to be scorning the senate's judgement or granting immunity regarding all the wrongs committed under Nero, returned two of the senatorial order who had emerged from exile, Octavius Sagitta and Antistius Sosianus, to their prison-islands. Octavius had killed Pontia Postumina in a frenzy of desire, having raped her, she refusing to marry him. Sosianus had ruined many by the depravity of his behaviour.

Both had been condemned and exiled by an overwhelming vote of the senate, and though others were permitted to return, their punishment was upheld. Yet the unpopularity of Mucianus was not lessened by this action: since even if they had been allowed to return Sagitta and Sosianus were insignificant. It was the informers' ingenuity and resources, their power exercised to evil ends, that was so feared.

## **Book IV:XLV Sundry lesser charges**

The senators' partisan feelings were allayed for a time by an investigation undertaken according to ancient custom. A senator, Manlius Patruitus, complained that at the command of the local magistrates he had been beaten by a mob in the colony of Siena (Sena); nor had the injury stopped there: they had wept, and wailed, and conducted a mock funeral, accompanying it with insults and abuse aimed at the whole senate.

The accused were summoned, the case was heard and those convicted sentenced, the senate also adding a judgement that the people of Siena be warned against further disorder. At that time also Antonius Flamma was found guilty, according to the laws regarding extortion, the Cyrenians being his accusers, and was exiled for his barbaric actions.

### **Book IV:XLVI Mucianus quells further mutiny**

Meanwhile rebellion was close to breaking out among the military. Those men who had been dismissed by Vitellius and had gathered to Vespasian sought to re-enlist in the praetorian cohorts. And the legionaries who had been selected, having that same expectation, demanded the pay promised. Even the Vitellians who had surrendered could not be expelled without much bloodshed, but it would have cost a large amount to maintain such a vast force.

Mucianus visited the camp to review each man's service, parading the victors with their correct insignia and weapons and leaving a modest space between the separate companies. Then the Vitellians, we mentioned, whose surrender had been accepted at Bovillae, and the rest who had been hunted down throughout the city and its suburbs, were brought forward virtually unclothed. Mucianus ordered them to be led to one side, the men from Germany and Britain, and those from other armies to be positioned apart.

They were at once dumbfounded by the grim sight of what at first seemed the enemy line opposing them with weapons and armour, while they were cornered, naked, filthy and disgusting. Then, as they began to be placed apart, all became fearful, the German soldiers being the most affected, thinking themselves by this manoeuvre destined for slaughter. They threw themselves on the breasts of their erstwhile comrades, clasped their necks, sought a parting embrace, begged them not to abandon them nor, as men sharing their cause, allow them to suffer a different fate.

They appealed now to Mucianus, now to the absent emperor, and then to the heavens and the gods, until Mucianus, saying they were all bound by the same oath, soldiers of the same emperor, condemned their needless panic, while the cheers of the victors were added to the tears of the rest. So the day ended.

A few days later, when Domitian addressed them, they received him with new confidence, scorning the offer of land, praying for military service and their pay. Prayers indeed, but ones which could not be gainsaid: thus they were received into the ranks of the praetorians.

Then those whose age and length of service so justified were dismissed with honour. Others, who were at fault, were released progressively, one by one, the safest way of dispersing a large and like-minded crew.

### **Book IV:XLVII Flavius Sabinus honoured with a censor's funeral**

Now, whether the state was really in need of money or it was useful for it to appear so, the senate voted to accept a loan of six hundred thousand gold pieces from private sources, with

Pompeius Silvanus being charged with its administration. Not long afterwards, the pretence was dropped or the need abated.

Then, on a motion tabled by Domitian, the consulships Vitellius had conferred were withdrawn, while the honours of a censor's funeral were granted to Flavius Sabinus, a true testament to the vagaries of fortune, with its heights and depths.

## **Book IV:XLVIII Background to Piso's murder**

At this time, Lucius Piso, the proconsul was put to death. I will give as faithful account as I can of his murder, after speaking of a number of earlier matters relevant to the origin of, and motive for, such crimes.

The legion and auxiliaries stationed in Africa to defend the empire's borders, were commanded, during the reigns of the deified Augustus and Tiberius, by a proconsul. Later Caligula, disturbed in mind and afraid of Marcus Silanus, took the command of the legion from the proconsul and granted it to a legate sent there for the purpose.

Favours were granted equally by both, and grounds for discord were found in their conflicting orders, discord added to by their vile quarrels. The power of the legate's role increased, through its length of term, or because in the lesser role there is more ambition to play the greater, while the most illustrious of the proconsuls sought safety rather than power.

## **Book IV:XLIX The action against Piso**

Valerius Festus was then in command of the African legion, an extravagant youth of immodest ambition made uneasy by being related to Vitellius. Whether he tempted Piso, in their many conversations, to revolt or himself resisted being tempted by Piso, is uncertain, since no one was present at their private talks, and after Piso's assassination most people were inclined to take the murderer's side.

There is no doubt that the province and the military were hostile to Vespasian, and Vitellians who had fled Rome pointed out that the Gallic provinces were wavering, Germany was preparing, he himself was in danger, and that for a man suspected in peacetime war is safest. Meanwhile Claudius Sagitta, prefect of the Petrian Horse, after a favourable voyage arrived before Papirius, the centurion sent by Mucianus.

Sagitta asserted that the centurion was under orders to murder Piso, and that Piso's cousin and son-in-law Galerianus had already been killed; the only hope of safety was in boldness, but there were two bold courses open to him; he might choose immediate war, or sail for Gaul and offer himself as leader of the Vitellian troops. Piso was moved to neither course of action. When the centurion sent by Mucianus arrived in the port of Carthage, however, the man kept shouting out his delight as if Piso were emperor, exhorting those he met, who were amazed at this strange and sudden event, to acclaim Piso in a like manner.

The ever-credulous mob rushed to the forum, demanding Piso's presence; all shouting with joy, indifferent to the truth, extravagant in their adulation. Piso, influenced by Sagitta's

testimony, or promoted by natural modesty, did not show himself in public, not trusting to the enthusiastic crowd. The centurion on being put to the question, Piso learned that the man had sought to accuse him and bring about his death, he ordered him to be executed, not so much out of regard for himself but anger against this man, one of the very assassins who had murdered Clodius Macer, now come, hands stained with the blood of the legate, to murder a proconsul.

Then he rebuked the Carthaginians, in an edict that betrayed his anxiety, even neglecting his usual duties, remaining indoors, lest a fresh outbreak might arise by chance or on some pretext or other.

## **Book IV:L Valerius Festus and the death of Piso**

When news of the excited populace, of the centurion's death, and other things both true and false, with the usual exaggerations, reached Festus, he sent horsemen to kill Piso. Riding swiftly they entered the proconsul's house, swords drawn, in the dawn half-light. Festus having chosen Moors and Carthaginian auxiliaries to effect the murder, for the most part Piso was unknown to them. They chanced to come across a servant near Piso's chamber, and interrogated him as to Piso's appearance and whereabouts.

The servant, with outstanding bravery, answered with a lie: that he was Piso; and was immediately killed. Nevertheless Piso himself was murdered shortly afterwards, for Baebius Massa, one of the imperial agents in Africa, who knew him, was present, fatal even then to the best among us, his name recurring only too often amongst the instigators of the evils we later suffered.

Festus marched quickly from Soussa (Adrumetum or Susa, south of Carthage), where he had waited on events, to the legionary camp and ordered the prefect, Caetronius Pisanus, arrested, on the pretext of his being Piso's accomplice, though actually because of a personal vendetta. He punished various centurions and soldiers, rewarding others, in neither case according to their deserts, but simply in order to be seen to crush any uprising.

He was later responsible for settling a dispute between the people of Tripoli (Oea) and Lebda (Leptis Magna) which having a modest origin among the farmers in thefts of grain and cattle, had developed into armed conflict. Now the inhabitants of Tripoli, being of lesser number, had called on the Garamantes for aid, they being an untamed tribe always ready to prey on their neighbours. Their fortunes curtailed, their fields ravaged far and wide, the inhabitants of Lebda, in fear, kept behind their walls, until with the arrival of the Roman cohorts and cavalry the Garamantes were driven off and the substance of their thefts recovered, other than that which they had sold to distant tribes in their wanderings among the remote villages.

## **Book IV:LI Vespasian entrusts Titus with pacifying Judaea**

Now Vespasian, after the battle of Cremona, with news of his success everywhere, heard of Vitellius' death from many men of every class who had crossed the wintry waves (to Alexandria) blessed with both courage and good fortune.

Also envoys from King Vologaesus (the First, of Parthia) arrived offering forty thousand Parthian horsemen. It was fine and pleasant to be courted with such assistance from his allies, and not require it: thanking Vologaesus, he assured him all was peaceful, and to send envoys to the senate.

While Vespasian was reflecting on the situation in Italy and Rome itself, he received unfavourable tidings of Domitian, who was transgressing the bounds set by youth, and his authority as the emperor's son: Vespasian therefore handed command of the main body of his forces to his son Titus to resolve the remaining conflict with the Jews.

## **Book IV:LII Titus defends Domitian**

They say that Titus, in a long conversation with his father before leaving, begged him not to be incensed by the slanderous reports regarding Domitian, and to show himself unbiased and forgiving towards his son. 'Neither ships nor legions,' he said, 'are a stronger defence of the realm than your children; for friendships, through time, fate, or perhaps ambition or error, are diminished, altered, or lost; while the ties of blood are indissoluble, and most of all among princes, whose successes others also enjoy, while their misfortunes touch only those closest. Concord will not hold sway even among brothers, if their father does not set the example.'

Vespasian, not so much softened towards Domitian as delighted by Titus' brotherly affection, ordered Titus to be of good spirit, and exalt the state by force of arms, while he himself took care of peace at home. Then he entrusted his swiftest ships laden with grain to the as yet still savage waves: for Rome was in such crisis that there was no more than ten days' supply in the granaries when Vespasian's convoy relieved the city.

## **Book IV:LIII The restoration of the Capitol**

He charged Lucius Vestinus, a member of the equestrian order but by influence and reputation one who was counted among the nobility, with restoring the Capitol. The diviners, whom he brought together in conclave, advised that the remains of the former shrine be carried to the marshes, and a new temple erected on the same site as the old: the gods not wishing the former layout altered.

On the twenty-first of June, under a cloudless sky, the whole area designated for the building was surrounded with ribbons and garlands; soldiers with auspicious names entered,

carrying appropriate branches; then the Vestal Virgins, accompanied by boys and girls whose parents were yet living, sprinkled water drawn from the fountains and streams.

Next Helvidius Priscus, the praetor, guided by Plautius Aelianus, the pontifex, purified the area by the sacrifice of a boar, ram and bull (the *suovetaurilia*) setting the entrails of the victims on a turf altar. After praying that Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, and the other gods who protect the empire, might favour the undertaking, and raise again by divine aid their home which men's devotion had begun, he touched the ribbons, wound about the foundation stone and entwined with its ropes, while at the same time the other magistrates, the priests, senators, knights and the majority of the population, joined in joyful and enthusiastic effort, hauled the huge stone into place.

Lumps of gold and silver, and other metallic ores never smelted in a furnace but in the same crude state as they were mined, were thrown at random into the foundation trenches: the diviners had warned against the profanation of the work by stone or gold intended for another purpose.

The temple was made taller than before: this was the sole change allowed by religious scruple, and the only thing thought to have detracted from the former temple's magnificence.

## **Book IV:LIV Conflict in the German and Gallic provinces continues**

Meanwhile news of Vitellius' death spreading through the Gallic and German provinces had initiated further conflict. For Civilis, ending all pretence, now attacked the Romans, with the Vitellian legions preferring foreign service to Vespasian's rule.

The Gauls' spirits rose, on rumours that our winter quarters in Moesia and Pannonia were under siege from the Sarmatians and Dacians, in the fond belief that all our armies were in the same dire state; similar stories emerged from Britain.

But nothing drove them to believe that our rule was nearing its end more than the burning of the Capitol. 'Long ago,' chanted the Druids, in vain superstition, 'we, the Gauls, captured Rome, but with Jupiter's temple unharmed Rome's authority survived: now this fire marks the sign of divine anger, and portends a transfer to us, the Transalpine peoples, of control over human affairs.'

Moreover, report was rife that the Gallic chieftains sent against Vitellius by Otho, had sworn before leaving not to fail the cause of liberty should a continuous series of civil wars, and their internal ills, sap the strength of the Roman people.

## **Book IV:LV The meeting at Cologne**

Prior to the murder of Hordeonius Flaccus, nothing had emerged to reveal the conspiracy: but after his death messages passed between Civilis and the prefect of Treviran cavalry, Classicus. Superior in birth and wealth, Classicus was of the royal line, his ancestors illustrious in peace and war, and he himself boasted that more of them had been enemies of the Romans than allies.

Julius Tutor and Julius Sabinus also joined the conspiracy, the former a member of the Treviri, the latter of the Lingones. Vitellius had appointed Tutor prefect of the Rhine shore; Sabinus was driven by innate vanity and pride in a fiction concerning his descent: claiming that when the deified Julius Caesar had campaigned in Gaul his great-grandmother had pleased him by her beauty and complaisance.

These three, in private conversation, sounded out the views of the rest. Having stirred the consciences of those whose thoughts echoed their own, they met at Cologne in private, since publicly the tribes shrank from such action, though representatives of the Ubii and Tungri were there. Regardless of that, the Treviri and the Lingones, who held the greater authority, allowed no prevarication in the matter.

They emulated each other in proclaiming that the Romans were in wild disarray, the legions decimated, Italy laid waste, Rome on the point of capture, all the Roman forces engaged in separate battles of their own, and that if they strengthened their positions in the Alpine passes, the Gallic territories, joined in liberty, could set what limits they wished to their power.

### **Book IV:LVI Vocula counters the conspiracy**

These things were no sooner said than agreed: but there was debate concerning the survivors of Vitellius's army. The majority voted that being troublesome, treacherous, and stained with their officers' blood, they be put to death: the proposal that they be spared was however successful, lest robbing them of all hope of mercy might incite resistance, when they might rather be won over to their side. By killing only their commanders, the bulk of the troops, conscious of guilt and hopeful of amnesty, might easily be converted.

This was the outcome of their first meeting, and they sent messengers to incite war among the Gauls, their ringleaders pretending deference to Vocula the more easily to catch him off guard. Though he suffered from no lack of information regarding the insurrection, Vocula had insufficient forces to quell it, the legions being undermanned and untrustworthy. With suspect legions and hidden enemies, he thought it best for the present to dissemble in turn, and seeking to proceed in a similar manner, descended on Cologne.

Claudius Labeo, of whose capture and exile among the Frisians I have spoken, having bribed his guards, had fled there. He now promised that, given sufficient men, he would go to the Batavians and return the majority of the tribe to their alliance with Rome. Having received command of a small infantry and cavalry force, while not daring anything with regard to the Batavians he did draw some of the Nervii and Baetasii into the conflict, and more by stealth than open warfare harried the Canninefates and Marsaci.

### **Book IV:LVII Vocula withdraws to Neuss (Novaesium)**

Vocula, misled by Gallic cunning, marched against the enemy. He was not far from Vetera when Classicus and Tutor, who had preceded the main force on the pretext of reconnoitring,

concluded their pact with the German chieftains. They then parted company with the legions, for the first time, fortifying their own camp with a rampart.

Vocula called his men to witness that as yet the Roman state was not so ruined by civil conflict that even the Treviri and Lingones might despise it. 'Loyal provinces and victorious forces remain', he said, 'our imperial good fortune and the avenging gods. So, once, Julius Sacrovir and his Aeduans, and later Vindex and warriors from all of the Gallic provinces, were destroyed in a single battle. Those who break treaties will face the same power, and meet the same fate.'

The deified Julius and Augustus had a deeper understanding of their nature: Galba and his lack of enforcement of the tribute have filled them with animosity. Now their servitude is lighter, they are hostile; when we have plundered and despoiled them they will be more amenable.'

Following this fierce speech, and seeing that Classicus and Tutor persisted in their treachery, Vocula changed course and retreated to Neuss (Novaesium), while the Gauls took up position two miles away. There, the centurions and soldiers often passed to and fro, and were won over to the idea of a Roman army (in an unprecedented act) swearing loyalty to foreigners, and pledging themselves to that evil course by killing or imprisoning their officers.

Though many advised Vocula to flee, he boldly summoned an assembly, and spoke in this manner:

### **Book IV:LVIII Vocula's speech to the troops**

'I have never spoken to you with greater concern for you, or less for myself. I am happy to hear that my death is intended, and I await it, given my present ills, as putting an end to my suffering. You it is that I feel shame and pity for: you, against whom no battle-lines are drawn. They would signify only the laws of conflict and the rights of enemies. But it is with your arms that Classicus hopes to wage war on the Roman people, and it is a Gallic oath and a Gallic empire he offers you.

Have we forgotten then, though fortune and courage fail us now, how often the Roman legions have chosen death rather than retreat? How often our allies endured the ruin of their townships, burned to death with their wives and children, though death's sole reward was the triumph of loyalty? Just as the legions in Vetera are enduring siege and famine, unmoved by threats or promises.

We have not only arms and men, and the brave defences of our camp, but food and supplies equal to any stretch of warfare. We even had money enough lately for your gratuity, a gift from a Roman emperor no matter whether you choose to view it as Vespasian's or Vitellius's. If you, the victors in so many wars, who have so often routed the enemy, at Gelduba, at Vetera, feared open battle, though that would be unworthy of you yet you have walls and ramparts too, and delaying tactics, while troops rush to your aid from the neighbouring provinces.

What matter if I displease you: you have other officers, tribunes, or even some centurion or soldier to save this dread news filling the whole empire, that you will follow Civilis and Classicus in invading Italy. When Germans and Gauls have led you to the gates of Rome, will

you raise arms against your native land? My mind rebels at the thought of such a crime. Will you mount guard for Tutor, for one of the Treviri? Will some Batavian give the sign for battle? Will you fill your ranks with a crowd of Germans? What will be the end of such a crime, when Roman legions have ranged themselves against *you*? Deserters from desertion, betrayers of betrayal, will you waver between new oath and old, loathed by the gods?

To you, Jupiter both great and good, whom we have honoured with so many triumphs through a span of eight hundred and twenty years, and to you, Quirinus father of Rome, I devoutly pray, that even if it has not pleased you to keep this camp pure and inviolate under my leadership, let it at least not be polluted and defiled by a Tutor or a Classicus: grant the soldiers of Rome, if not innocence, a prompt and peaceable repentance.'

### **Book IV:LIX The legions defect, Vocula is murdered**

His speech had been variously received, with hope, fear, or shame. Vocula had left them and was deliberating on his final moments, his freedmen and slaves preventing him from voluntarily anticipating the worst of deaths. But Classicus sent Aemilius Longinus, a deserter from the First legion, who hastened his end. Classicus, satisfied with merely placing Herennius and Numisius, the legates, in chains, then assumed the insignia of a Roman general and entered the camp.

Hardened as he was by every sort of crime, he spoke not a word beyond reciting the oath: those present swearing allegiance to 'the empire of the Gauls'. He promoted Vocula's assassin to high rank, granting rewards to the rest according to the crimes they had committed.

Tutor and Classicus now divided the leadership between them. Tutor laid siege to Cologne with a large force, compelling its citizens and the soldiers on the upper Rhine to take the self-same oath. He killed the tribunes and expelled the prefect from the camp at Mainz when they refused. Classicus ordered those who had been easiest to sway among the men who had surrendered to go to those besieged (at Vetera) and offer them pardon if they would follow in person: otherwise hope was lost, and they would endure famine, the sword, and death. Those who were sent cited their own actions as precedent.

### **Book IV:LX The end of the siege at Vetera**

Here starvation, there loyalty, left the besieged torn between honour and disgrace. While they wavered, both regular and irregular supplies failed them, since necessity had forced them to consume their packhorses, chargers, and other animals however foul and unsanctioned. In the end, they tore up shrubs, plucked out roots, and gathered grass growing in the rocky crevices, evidence of their wretchedness and their powers of endurance, until finally they sadly marred what might have been a fine reputation by sending envoys to Civilis begging for their lives. He would not accept their appeals, until they had sworn allegiance to the Gauls: then he appropriated the camp's remaining assets, sending guards to secure the money, baggage and camp-followers, and escort the soldiers as they left empty-handed.

After they had marched five miles, the German cohorts suddenly attacked their unsuspecting ranks. The bravest were killed where they stood, many were cut down as they scattered, the rest fled back to the camp. Civilis, it is true, condemned the Germans' action and their shameful breach of faith, but it is unclear whether this was a pretence on his part or whether he was indeed powerless to reign in their savagery.

His troops stripped the camp and set it on fire, the blaze devouring whoever had survived the battle.

### **Book IV:LXI Veleda**

At the time he first took up arms against the Romans, Civilis, following the barbarian custom, had dyed his hair red, and grown it long, until now with the legions destroyed he trimmed it. And they even say he presented his little son with various captives as targets for the child's darts and arrows. Furthermore neither he nor any of his Batavians swore allegiance to Gaul, trusting in German resources and, if it came to a question of contesting things with the Gauls, his solid reputation and power.

Among other gifts, Munius Lupercus, the legion commander, was sent to Veleda. This young girl of the Bructeri held wide authority, according to the ancient German custom, there being many seers among their women who, their worship increasing, are considered divine. At this time Veleda's influence was growing as she had prophesied victory for the Germans and the destruction of the legions. However, Lupercus was killed on the way.

A few centurions and tribunes of Gallic birth were held as a pledge of alliance. The winter quarters of the legionaries, cavalry and auxiliaries were demolished and burned, excepting those at Mainz and Vindonissa (Windisch, Switzerland).

### **Book IV:LXII The captive Romans are marched to Trier**

The Sixteenth legion and the auxiliaries, who had jointly surrendered, were ordered to transfer from Neuss to the colony of the Treviri (Trier), and the day was fixed before which they were to leave camp. The intervening time involved much anxiety for them, the more cowardly fearing the precedent of those killed at Vetera, the more robust the shame and disgrace: 'what march is this? Who will lead it? All will be at the mercy of those we have made masters of life and death.'

Others shamelessly stowed their money and dearest possessions about them, while some readied armour and weapons as if preparing for battle. Thus occupied, the hour of departure arrived, sadder than its anticipation, since within the ramparts their humiliation had been less apparent, while daylight and open ground revealed their ignominy. Images of the emperor had been torn down, the standards were naked, while on this side and that gleamed the Gallic banners. Led by Claudius Sanctus, fearful to look at having lost an eye, and more crippled still in mind, their ranks were silent as if in a long funeral procession.

Their shame was re-doubled when another legion, which had fled the camp at Bonn, joined them. And now the news of the legions' surrender was common knowledge, all who

trembled at the name of Rome before ran from their fields and houses, and gathering from every side delighted, beyond everything, in this unprecedented spectacle.

The Picentine cavalry squadron could not bear the joy of this abusive crowd, and ignoring Sanctus' threats and promises rode for Mainz. By chance they came across Vocula's assassin, Longinus, showering him with missiles to commence the future expiation of their guilt. The legions, however, without change of course, pitched camp before the walls of Trier.

### **Book IV:LXIII Civilis and Classicus discuss the fate of Cologne**

Civilis and Classicus, elated by their successful campaign, discussed whether to allow their men to ravage Cologne. While their native savagery, and desire for plunder, inclined towards destruction of the city, their military strategy was opposed to it, as was the benefit to be gained by a reputation for clemency in founding their new empire. Civilis was also influenced by the memory of the favour done him when his son, having been arrested in Cologne at the start of the rebellion, was treated with honour while in custody.

Nevertheless, the tribes across the Rhine hated the city for its opulence and rate of growth, and believed there was no alternative if the war were to end but to render it open to all Germans without discrimination, or destroy it and let the Ubii be dispersed also.

### **Book IV:LXIV The Tencteri demand Cologne return to the fold**

Thus the tribe of the Tencteri, on the opposite bank of the Rhine, sent envoys with orders to present their demands to an assembly of Cologne's citizens, as set out by the most forceful of the legation in the following manner: 'For your return to the body of the German people, and the German name, we thank those gods we both worship, Mars above all, and we congratulate you for attaining freedom at last, and being among the free. Until today, the Romans have made the river, land and almost the very air itself impassable to prevent us meeting and speaking together, or, with still greater insult to a warrior, have made us meet unarmed and virtually naked, under guard and paying for the privilege.

So that our friendship and alliance hold good forever, we demand you dismantle your colony's walls, the instruments of your servitude (since even the creatures of the wild lose their courage when imprisoned), and kill all Romans within your borders (freedom and tyranny are not easily combined). The property of those killed is to be held in common, so none can hide anything or pursue their own interest. Let you and us inhabit both banks of the Rhine, as our ancestors did.

As Nature has granted the light of day to all, so all lands lie open to the brave. Renew the institutions and customs of your forefathers, forgoing those luxuries which more than their weapons give the Romans power over their subjects. Sound and whole, forgetting your servitude, be an equal among peoples, or choose to hold rule over others.'

## **Book IV:LXV Cologne asserts its independence**

The citizens spent some time consulting among themselves, but since they could neither submit to the terms, for fear of the future consequences, nor reject them openly due to their present situation, they replied as follows: ‘We seized the first chance of freedom offered, and with more eagerness than caution, to join you, and the other Germans, who share our ancestry. Yet with the Roman forces gathering rapidly, it is wiser to add to our defences rather than destroy them.

All those foreigners from Italy or the provinces within our borders were killed by the war or have fled to their own lands. Of those who once settled here and are now allied to us by marriage, this for the future is their native city: nor can we think you so unjust as to desire we kill our own parents, brothers, children!

We abolish all taxes and burdens on trade: let there be free commerce between us, only in daylight and with no weapons present, until we are used to the new and unfamiliar situation. Let Civilis and Veleda arbitrate between us, before them let us ratify our agreements.’

Thus they mollified the Tencteri, sending a delegation to Civilis and Veleda, with gifts that brought all that the people of Cologne desired. But they were denied access to or speech with Veleda directly: being prevented from seeing her in order to inspire them with more respect. She herself lived on high, in a tower: one of those close to her being chosen to relay their questions and her answers, as would a messenger of the gods.

# **Book IV: LXVI-LXXXVI Cerialis versus Civilis, the German war**

## **Contents**

[Book IV:LXVI Civilis extends his power](#)

[Book IV:LXVII Dissent among the tribes](#)

[Book IV:LXVIII Mucianus moves against the Gauls](#)

[Book IV:LXIX Julius Auspex counters Valentinus, recommending caution](#)

[Book IV:LXX Disarray and defeat among the Gauls](#)

[Book IV:LXXI Petilius Cerialis defeats Valentinus](#)

[Book IV:LXXII Cerialis enters Trier](#)

[Book IV:LXXIII Cerialis addresses the tribes](#)

[Book IV:LXXIV Cerialis extols peace and order](#)

[Book IV:LXXV The Romans prepare for battle](#)

[Book IV:LXXVI The Germans debate strategy](#)

[Book IV:LXXVII The battle by the Moselle](#)

[Book IV:LXXVIII Roman victory](#)

[Book IV:LXXIX Cologne resists but the Romans suffer reverses](#)

[Book IV:LXXX Events involving Mucianus and Antonius Primus](#)

[Book IV:LXXXI Vespasian appears to perform miracles](#)

[Book IV:LXXXII Vespasian visits the temple of Serapis](#)

[Book IV:LXXXIII The origins of the god Serapis](#)

[Book IV:LXXXIV The transfer of the god's statue to Alexandria](#)

[Book IV:LXXXV The capture of Valentinus](#)

[Book IV:LXXXVI Domitian dissimulates](#)

## **Book IV:LXVI Civilis extends his power**

Now that Civilis' power had been enhanced by alliance with the citizens of Cologne, he aspired to win over the neighbouring states, or to wage war on them if they refused. He already controlled the Sunuci, organizing their young warriors in cohorts, when, to prevent his further progress, Claudius Labeo offered resistance with a hastily gathered force of Baetasii, Tungri and Nervii. Civilis, however, was confident of his position because he had previously seized the bridge over the Meuse.

An indecisive struggle ensued in the narrows until the Germans, swimming the river, attacked the rear of Labeo's force; meanwhile Civilis, impulsively or perhaps as planned, advanced to the Tungri front line and called to them, in a loud voice: 'We did not wage war so the Batavians and Treviri might rule the tribes: such presumption was far from our thoughts. Accept alliance with us: I have come to join you whether as your leader or a mere warrior.'

The Tungri were moved by this, and were sheathing their swords, as Companus and Juvenalis, two of their leading men, surrendered the whole tribe; Labeo escaping before he was surrounded. Civilis accepted the submission of the Baetasii and Nervii also, adding them to his forces. His power was now immense, the minds of the people either subdued, or inclining voluntarily, to his cause.

## **Book IV:LXVII Dissent among the tribes**

Meanwhile Julius Sabinus had destroyed all record of the Lingones' alliance with Rome, and commanded that he himself be saluted as Caesar. He hurled a disorganised mass of his tribe against the Sequani, bordering on their territory but loyal to us, nor did the Sequani hesitate to fight. Fortune favoured the better cause, the Lingones were routed.

Sabinus promptly fled the battle, as fearful as he had been hasty; spreading a report of his own death, through his destruction by fire of a house to which he had fled, it being believed that he had committed suicide there. How he survived by hiding himself (in a cave) for nine years, the loyalty of his friends, and his wife's noble example, will be related in the appropriate place.

The Sequani's success halted the warfare. Gradually the tribes regained respect for the rightful path and the treaties, the Remi foremost, who sent word throughout the Gallic provinces that envoys should gather to debate together whether the tribes chose liberty or peace.

## **Book IV:LXVIII Mucianus moves against the Gauls**

Yet in Rome, Mucianus was troubled, all suggesting a worsening situation, lest the distinguished generals he had already chosen, Gallus Annius and Petilius Cerealis proved unequal to the burden of this war. He could not leave the city ungoverned; and he was fearful of Domitian's uncontrollable excesses, while he doubted the loyalty, as I have said, of Primus Antonius and Varus Arrius.

Varus, commanding the praetorian guard, held military power. Mucianus removed him from his post, solacing him with control of the grain supply. To placate Domitian, whose feelings were not ill-disposed towards Varus, he appointed Arrecinus Clemens, who was connected to Vespasian's house through Vespasian's first wife (Clemens was her brother), to command the praetorian guard. Clemens was a dear friend of Domitian; his father had held that very post with distinction under Caligula, his appointment would be welcomed by the soldiers, and though of senatorial rank, he was equal to both sets of duties. The citizens appointed to the campaign, were some of the most illustrious, while others joined from ambition.

Domitian and Mucianus now made ready, but with different feelings, the one full of youthful hope, the other contriving various delays to restrain the former's enthusiasm; Mucianus fearing that if Domitian gained control of the army, his decisions in peace or war would be influenced for the worse by immature pride and perverse impulses.

The victorious Eight, Eleventh, Thirteenth and Twenty-first ex-Vitellian legions, and the recently conscripted Second, were marched into Gaul, partly via the Pennine and Cottian Alps, partly via the Graian. Meanwhile the Fourteenth legion was summoned from Britain, and the Sixth and First from Spain.

On news of the approaching army, those Gallic states inclined to milder courses, convened among the Remi. Envoys from the Treviri, led by Julius Valentinus, the fiercest advocate for war, were already there waiting. In a practised speech, he poured out all the usual charges against the might of empire, along with ill-natured invective against the Roman people, being a stirrer-up of turbulence and sedition, pleasing the majority with his heart-felt eloquence.

## **Book IV:LXIX Julius Auspex counters Valentinus, recommending caution**

Julius Auspex, however, one of the foremost of the Remi, countered by speaking of Roman power and the blessings of peace. He said that wars could be started even by cowards, but are carried out with risks even to the bravest, and the legions were now upon them. In this way he checked the enthusiasm of the more experienced by evoking feelings of reverence and loyalty, the younger by feelings of fear and danger: such that the gathering, while praising Valentinus' spirit, followed Auspex's advice.

It is a fact that the Treviri and Lingones were at a disadvantage among the Gauls, because they had sided with the Roman Governor, Verginius, during Vindex's rebellion. Many were deterred by the rivalry among the provinces. 'Who will lead in the war? Who shall we look to for authority and the auspices? Where, if all goes well, will the seat of government be?'

Not victory as yet, but discord now prevailed. Some boasted, in a quarrelsome manner of their treaties, others of their strength and wealth or their ancient lineage: in their dislike of the future state proposed, they preferred the existing one. Letters were to be written, in the name of the Gallic provinces, asking the Treviri to refrain from warfare, saying that pardon could be won, and there were those ready to plead their case, should they repent of their actions: but Valentinus was again opposed, and shut the ears of his fellow tribesmen to the proposal, though he was less effective in marshalling them for war than in the relentlessness of his speeches.

### **Book IV:LXX Disarray and defeat among the Gauls**

Thus neither the Treviri nor the Lingones, nor any of the other rebellious states, took any actions equal to the seriousness of the crisis. The leaders failed even to consult together, with Civilis ranging the wilds of Belgium, trying to capture or expel Claudius Labeo, while an indolent Classicus was mostly idle, as if a share of the empire were already his to enjoy.

Even Tutor delayed in securing the Upper Rhine and the Alpine passes. Meanwhile the Twenty-first legion penetrated via Windisch, while Sextilius Felix and his auxiliary cohorts entered via Raetia, these forces joined by a select cavalry squadron, originally formed by Vitellius but which had later joined Vespasian's side. Julius Briganticus commanded, who was Civilis' nephew, but loathed by his uncle and loathing him in turn, with all the bitter hatred of close relatives.

Tutor first added a fresh levy of Vangiones, Caeracates and Triboci to the Treviran forces, then reinforced these with veteran infantry and cavalry, drawn from legionaries seduced by hope or overcome by fear. In initial encounter, these troops massacred a cohort sent forward by Sextilius Felix, but then as the Roman armies and their leaders approached, they returned with honour to their previous loyalty, followed by the Triboci, Vangiones and Caeracates, while Tutor and his Treviri withdrew to Bingen (Indium), avoiding Mainz.

Tutor trusted in his position, having destroyed the bridge over the Nahe (Nava), but was attacked by cohorts led by Sextilius, outflanked by their discovery of a ford, and forced to flee. This defeat unnerved the Treviri, the mass of tribesmen throwing down their weapons and scattering through the fields, while various chiefs, so as to appear the first to abandon the warfare, fled to the states which had not relinquished their alliance with Rome.

The legions which had defected from Neuss and Bonn to the Treviri, as I mentioned above, now voluntarily swore allegiance to Vespasian. This happened while Valentinus was absent, who, in a fury on his return, wished all things to return to death and confusion, such that those legions withdrew among the Mediomatrici, an allied tribe.

Valentinus and Tutor then drew the Treviri into battle again, executing the two legionary commanders previously held captive, Herennius and Numisius, so strengthening their bond of guilt by minimising their hope of pardon.

## **Book IV:LXXI Petilius Cerialis defeats Valentinus**

This was the status of the war when Petilius Cerealis reached Mainz. His advent inspired hope; he himself being eager for battle, and more inclined to scorn an enemy than beware of one. He roused his soldiers with fierce words, declaring that he would not hesitate a moment once he could engage the enemy.

He sent home to their individual states those troops that been levied throughout Gaul, ordering them to announce that the legions sufficed to maintain the empire. The allies were to return to their peacetime duties, with confidence, since when Roman forces undertook a campaign it was already as good as ended. This action helped to ensure the Gauls' compliance, since once they had their young men back they tolerated the tribute, accepting their responsibilities more readily once their aggression was ignored.

When Civilis and Classicus heard of Tutor's defeat, the slaughter of the Treviri, and the enemy's success everywhere, they were alarmed, and rushed to gather their scattered forces, sending a host of messages to Valentinus, warning him of the danger of a decisive battle.

This prompted Cerealis to send officers to the Mediomatrici, to direct the legions against the enemy by a shorter route, while he united the forces accompanying him with the troops at Mainz. After a three day march he reached Riol (Rigodulum), which Valentinus had occupied with a large force of Treviri. It was protected by the hills and the Moselle, and Valentinus had added stone ramparts behind a deep ditch. These defences failed to deter the Roman general from ordering an infantry assault, or sending his cavalry onto the hills above, since he despised the enemy, believing their hastily gathered forces would enjoy less advantage from their position than his own men would from their abilities.

The Romans were a little delayed in their ascent while exposed to enemy missiles, but as soon as they came to close quarters the Treviri were demolished like a ruined building. And a detachment of cavalry rode along the lower hill slopes and captured the Belgian chieftains, along with their leader, Valentinus.

## **Book IV:LXXII Cerialis enters Trier**

Next day, Cerialis entered Trier. His soldiers, eager to despoil the town, cried out: 'This is Classicus' city and Tutor's; the men whose treason saw our legions besieged and slaughtered. Cremona was torn from Italy's breast because she thwarted her conquerors for one night. Yet what crime had Cremona committed? This colony, on the borders of Germany, is unharmed, yet rejoices at the plunder of our army, the death of our commanders. Let the spoils fill the imperial treasury: let it suffice us to deal this rebellious colony fire and destruction, and repay the ruin of so many of our forts.' But Cerealis, fearing the loss of reputation if it were thought his men were imbued with a spirit of licence and savagery, restrained them: and they obeyed, more forgiving of a foreign enemy now they had foregone civil conflict.

Attention then turned to the sad aspect those legions presented which had been summoned from the territory of the Mediomatrici. They stood there, eyes downcast,

conscious of their guilt: when the armies met there was no mutual welcome; the soldiers failed to respond to encouragement or consolation, they hid in their tents and avoided the light of day. It was not fear or danger that stupefied them, but shame and dishonour, even the victors being struck dumb.

The latter, not daring to speak out or utter pleas, by tears and silence sought forgiveness for their comrades, until finally Cerialis eased their minds, declaring that whatever had come of the discord between those soldiers and their officers, or of enemy treachery, was an act of fate. This day was to be regarded as the first day of their military service and their oath: neither he nor the emperor would recall their past misdeeds. Then the men were received in camp with the rest, and an edict was read out in each company forbidding any soldier's taunting of a comrade, in the course of quarrel or dispute, with accusations of murder or sedition.

### **Book IV:LXXIII Cerialis addresses the tribes**

Cerialis shortly called an assembly of the Treviri and Lingones and addressed them in this manner: 'I have never practised oratory, for the Roman people assert their worth through arms: but since words carry the most weight with you, and you do not value good and evil in themselves, but assess things by the voices of the seditious, I have decided to mention a few matters, now the war has ended, more necessary for you to hear than me to say.

The Roman leaders and commanders entered your lands and those of the other Gauls not out of greed, but because they were invited to do so by your predecessors, wearied to death by internal conflict, while the Germans, whom they had called upon for help, had imposed servitude on friend and foe alike.

The battles we have waged against the Cimbri and Teutoni, the efforts of our armies, and the results of our war with the Germans, are sufficiently well known. We have not occupied the banks of the Rhine to safeguard Italy, but simply so that a second Ariovistus cannot rule the Gauls. Do you think you are dearer to Civilis and his Batavians and those across the Rhine than your fathers and grandfathers were to theirs?

The Germans have always the same reason for crossing into Gaul, desire and greed and a longing for change, to leave behind their marshy wildernesses and possess this most fertile of soils and you yourselves. Freedom and false titles are their pretexts; but none aspire to enslave others and hold dominion themselves, without exploiting that same vocabulary.'

### **Book IV:LXXIV Cerialis extols peace and order**

'There were endless kings and wars throughout Gaul until you submitted to our authority. We, as victors, though ever the injured party, have exercised this sole right over you, that you fund the peace; for there is no quiet among nations without armies, no armies without pay, no pay without the tribute tax; everything else we share.

You often command our legions, it is you who rule these and other provinces; without distinction between us or exclusion. And though you are far away from Rome, you enjoy the

blessings beneficent emperors bring, while savage ones oppress those nearest. You suffer barren years, excessive rainfall, and other natural ills, and so too the greed and extravagance of your masters: as long as there are human beings, vice will exist, but it is not forever and compensated for by better times. Or perhaps you think the rule of Tutor and Classicus will be milder, and the tribute levied to guard against the Germans and Britons will be lower?

For should the Romans be driven out, the gods forbid, what will follow but conflict between all nations? Eight hundred years of order and success have built this edifice which cannot be destroyed without the ruin of its destroyers, and you run the greatest risk, you have gold and riches, the foremost causes of war. So love and cherish peace and Rome, where victor and vanquished alike have equal rights: and be warned by precedent, by fortune's ills and blessings, not to prefer ruin and defiance to security and obedience.'

With these words, Cerialis calmed and encouraged those who had feared worse.

### **Book IV:LXXV The Romans prepare for battle**

The Treviri were in fact already under the control of the victorious army, when Civilis and Classicus sent letters to Cerialis expressing the following sentiments: 'Vespasian, whatever report may hide, is no longer living, Rome and Italy are consumed by internal conflict. Mucianus and Domitian are empty names and without substance: if you Cerialis desire empire over the Gauls, we for our part are content with the limits of our states; if you prefer battle, we do not refuse you that either.'

To this message from Civilis and Classicus, Cerialis made no reply: sending the letter and he who had brought it to Domitian.

The enemy now gathered its divided forces from every quarter. Many blamed Cerialis for allowing this concentration, when he might have intercepted it in detail. The Roman troops, fortified their camp, which they had rashly occupied before undefended, with a ditch and rampart.

### **Book IV:LXXVI The Germans debate strategy**

Among the Germans there was a clash of diverse sentiments. Civilis urged them to await the arrival of the tribes living beyond the Rhine, who would so terrify the Roman people that the latter's power would fragment and collapse. 'As for the Gauls,' he said, 'what are they but a prize for the victors? And even now their true strength, the Belgians, are openly with us, or wish us well.'

Tutor claimed that delay improved the Roman's situation, since their forces were gathering from all quarters. 'A legion has been transported from Britain,' he said, 'others are summoned from Spain, or arriving from Italy: not sudden levies, but veterans expert in warfare. The Germans, in whom we place our hopes, are unruly, disobedient, always acting on impulse; and as for money and gifts, the only things that will sway them, the Romans possess more, and there is none so keen on fighting that he does not prefer peace to risk for the same reward.'

But if we attack immediately, Cerialis has no troops but the remains of the German legions, and these are tied to the Gallic states by treaty. The fact that they unexpectedly routed Valentinus' undisciplined force only feeds their rashness, and that of their leaders. They will chance their arm again, but will fall not into the hands of inexperienced youths, more concerned with words and speeches than steel and weapons, but into those of a Civilis and a Classicus.

When they see them, their spirits will feel new anxiety, recalling their flight, famine, and the many times they have been captured, with their survival uncertain. Nor are the Treviri and the Lingones filled with affection for them: they will take up arms again as soon as their fear has subsided.'

Classicus resolved their differing opinions by supporting Tutor's view, on which they at once acted.

### **Book IV:LXXVII The battle by the Moselle**

The central position was granted to the Ubii and the Lingones; the Batavian cohorts formed the right wing, the Bructeri and Tencteri the left. They suddenly charged forward, some from the hills, some between the Moselle and the road, so unexpectedly that Cerialis was still in bed in his room (not having spent the night in camp) when he heard the simultaneous news of the fight and his troops' defeat. He was still berating the messengers for their state of panic, when the extent of the disaster became clear. Breaking into the legions' camp, the enemy had routed the cavalry and gained the centre of the bridge over the Moselle connecting the far bank to the colony.

Cerialis, calm amidst the crisis, halting those fleeing with his own hands, resolutely exposing his unprotected body to enemy fire, with extreme temerity and by good luck, recovered the bridge, assisted by the bravest of his men who ran to join him, and held it with a chosen few. Later, withdrawing to the camp, he saw groups of stragglers, from the legions captured at Neuss and Bonn, with only a few soldiers rallying to the standards, and the eagles virtually surrounded by the enemy.

Incensed, he cried in anger: 'It is no Flaccus or Vocula you are deserting now: here is no treachery; I only need plead forgiveness for thinking, rashly, that you recall your oath to Rome in forgetting your pledge to Gaul. They will number me with the likes of Herennius and Numisius, all your leaders dying at the hands of their soldiers or the enemy.

Go tell Vespasian, or those nearer, Civilis and Classicus, that you deserted your general in the field: legions will follow who will not let me die unavenged or you unpunished!'

### **Book IV:LXXVIII Roman victory**

His words rang true, and the same reproaches were heaped on them by the tribunes and prefects. The troops were drawn up in cohorts and units, since they could not form extended line, the enemy being everywhere, and as battle was waged within the ramparts they were hindered by tents and baggage. Tutor, Classicus and Civilis, from their separate positions,

urged their men to fight: the Gauls for freedom, the Batavians for glory, and the Germans for the spoils.

All favoured the enemy, until the Twenty-first legion, with more space than the rest, gathered themselves, resisted the attack, and threw it back. Not without divine aid helping the Romans, the victorious enemy, in a sudden change of heart, took to flight. They themselves claimed they were terrified at the sight of cohorts, dislodged by their first attack, reforming on the hilltops, thinking fresh reinforcements had arrived.

But in reality the seeming victors were thwarted by a sordid struggle that began over the spoils, such that they forgot the enemy. Thus Cerialis, who had almost ruined things with his carelessness, restored it by his show of resolution; and following through his success, on the same day he captured and destroyed the enemy camp.

### **Book IV:LXXIX Cologne resists but the Romans suffer reverses**

His men were given little time to rest. The citizens of Cologne asked for help, offering to surrender Civilis' wife and sister, and Classicus' daughter, left as hostages to secure the alliance. And in the interim they had killed the Germans among them, fuelling fear and justifying their call for aid before the enemy regained strength and armed again in the expectation of revenge.

Indeed, Civilis had headed for Cologne, still formidable, since his finest cohort was still untouched, being formed of Chauci and Frisii stationed at Zulpich (Tolbiacum) on the borders of the Cologne region; however his approach was thwarted by the dire news that this cohort had been eliminated through a tactic devised by the citizens of Cologne. They had dulled the men's wits with a heavy meal and a free flow of wine, then locked the doors and set fire to the building, destroying those inside, while Cerialis was marching hurriedly towards them.

Civilis was troubled by further anxiety, lest the Fourteenth legion, supported by the fleet from Britain, might attack the Batavians on the coast, but Fabius Priscus led the legion inland against the Nervii and Tungri instead, while the fleet was attacked by the Canninefates, and most of the vessels sunk or captured.

The same Canninefates also routed a large force of the Nervii, who had spontaneously risen to fight for the Romans, while Classicus engaged in successful fight with the cavalry Cerialis had sent to Neuss. These defeats, though limited, were enough to tarnish the recent Roman victory.

### **Book IV:LXXX Events involving Mucianus and Antonius Primus**

At this time, Mucianus ordered that Vitellius's son be put to death, maintaining that discord would continue unless he eliminated the seeds of war. Nor would he allow Antonius Primus to be admitted to Domitian's retinue, nervous of his popularity among the soldiers, and of the pride of a man intolerant of equals let alone superiors.

Leaving to join Vespasian, he was received not as he had hoped, but without animosity on the emperor's part. Vespasian was torn between Antonius' merits, the war having undoubtedly been brought to an end under his leadership, and the aspersions in Mucianus' letters: while others attacked the man as dangerous, swollen with self-conceit, charging him with crimes in his former life.

Nor did Antonius fail to arouse hostility through his arrogance, and excessive reminders of his merit. He criticised Caecina for being taken captive and capitulating, others for cowardice. Hence he was gradually seen as being of less worth and weight, though for the sake of appearances Vespasian remained friendly.

### **Book IV:LXXXI Vespasian appears to perform miracles**

During Vespasian's months of waiting at Alexandria for the season of steady summer winds and calm seas, many strange events occurred showing the heavens' favour towards him, and the support of the gods.

One of the populace of Alexandria, known to be losing his sight, following a prophecy of the god Serapis whom that superstitious nation worship before all others, clasped Vespasian's knees and begged him, groaning, to remedy his blindness. He prayed the emperor might deign to moisten his eyes and cheeks with spit. Another whose hand was paralysed, at the promptings of the same divinity, beseeched Caesar to set his foot on it and massage it.

At first Vespasian, laughingly treated them with scorn; when they persisted, on the one hand he feared the discredit that might arise from failure, on the other he was inspired, by their appeals and the encouragement of his courtiers, to anticipate success. In the end, he ordered the physicians to advise on whether such blindness or debility could be cured by human aid.

The doctors suggested opposing treatments: in the first case the power of seeing had not been destroyed, and would return if the impediments to it were removed; in the second the wrist was out of joint, but could be reset with the application of salutary pressure. Such, they said, might be the gods' desire, and the emperor chosen for this divine ministration; and then the glory would be Caesar's if a remedy was achieved, while failure would merely bring down ridicule on the wretched suppliants.

So Vespasian, with a smile on his face, amid an excited crowd of bystanders, did as suggested, believing his good fortune capable of anything, and nothing now impossible. The hand was immediately restored to use, and daylight flooded the blind. Both events are still recalled by those present, even now when there is no reward for lying.

### **Book IV:LXXXII Vespasian visits the temple of Serapis**

This gave Vespasian a deeper desire to visit the sacred presence, and consult the god as to imperial matters: he ordered everyone cleared from the temple. After entering, while he was intent on contemplation, he saw behind him one of the Egyptian nobles, Basilides by name, who as he thought was detained by illness at a location many days distant from Alexandria.

He questioned the priests as to whether Basilides had been seen in the temple that day, and passers-by as to whether he had been seen in the city. In the end, after sending a detachment of cavalry, he discovered that, at that moment of his seeing him, Basilides had been eighty miles away: thus the name Basilides was to be understood as representing supernatural vision and oracular power.

### **Book IV:LXXXIII The origins of the god Serapis**

The origins of this deity have not yet been discussed by our authors: the Egyptian priests recall them thus. At the time when King Ptolemy (Soter, 306-283BC), the first Macedonian to found an Egyptian dynasty, was gifting the new city of Alexandria its defensive walls, temples and religious rites, the apparition of a youth of unusual beauty and more than human stature appeared to him, in his sleep, which advised him to send his most faithful friends to Pontus in order to bring back the youth's statue. This would be a blessing for the kingdom, and the city that received the image would become great and famous. At that very moment the apparition of the youth was carried to the heavens in a blaze of fire.

Ptolemy, moved by this miraculous omen, revealed his nocturnal vision to the Egyptian priests whose practice it was to interpret such things. As they proved ignorant of Pontus and like foreign parts, he questioned Timotheus, an Athenian of the clan of the Eumolpidae (priests of Eleusis) whom he had summoned from Eleusis to perform the rites, as to this religion, and this god. Timotheus, on questioning travellers to Pontus, learned there was a city there, Sinope (Sinop), and not far from it a temple, long famed among the natives as that of Jupiter Dis: since there is also a female figure there, beside the god, whom most call Proserpina.

Yet Ptolemy, though prone to superstitious fears as is the way with kings, feeling secure once more, and more keen on pleasure than religion, continually neglected the matter and turned his mind to other things, until the same apparition, now more dreadful and insistent, threatened the king himself and his kingdom with ruin unless the command was executed.

Then Ptolemy ordered that ambassadors and gifts be sent to King Scydrothemis (he being the ruler of the people of Sinope at that time) and that before sailing the ambassadors should visit Pythian Apollo. The seas were favourable, the oracle's answer unambiguous: they were to go and return with his father's statue, leaving that of his sister (Diana Proserpina) behind.

### **Book IV:LXXXIV The transfer of the god's statue to Alexandria**

On reaching Sinope, the ambassadors delivered their king's gifts, messages and requests to Scydrothemis. He was torn between fear of the god coupled with the threats and opposition of his people, and the recurring temptation of the ambassadors' gifts and promises. Three years passed thus, with Ptolemy no less eager or ready with his requests. He sent more imposing ambassadors, a larger fleet, and more gold.

At length, a menacing vision appeared to Scydrothemis, warning him to thwart the god's purpose no longer. While he still hesitated, they were beset by various disasters and diseases,

the god's anger being evident and weighing more heavily day by day. He summoned an assembly, and spoke of the god's command, the visions granted to himself and Ptolemy, and their growing misfortunes. But the people opposed their king: resistant towards Egypt and afraid for themselves, they surrounded the god's temple.

Now the story told becomes stranger, for the god himself embarked of his own accord on a ship lying onshore, and wonderful to relate crossed the high seas to Alexandria in two days. A temple, fit for that great city, was erected on the site called Rhacotis, where was an ancient shrine dedicated to Serapis and Isis. Such is the most celebrated account of the god's origins and arrival.

Yet I am not unaware that some say the god was brought from Seleucia in Syria, in the reign of Ptolemy III (Euergetes, 247-222BC); while others claim that same Ptolemy imported him from the site of Memphis, once the famous capitol of ancient Egypt. Many consider the god to be Aesculapius himself, because he heals the sick; some think him Osiris the most ancient god of those peoples; a greater number see him as Jupiter, lord of all things; but the majority, from his statue's attributes or their own conjecture, consider him to be Dis Pater, Father Dis.

#### **Book IV:LXXXV The capture of Valentinus**

Now, before Domitian and Mucianus reached the Alps, they received news of the successful action among the Treviri. The most outstanding proof of their victory was the capture of the enemy leader, Valentinus, who, never downcast in spirits, revealed by his gaze the same courage he had always shown. He was granted a hearing, merely so that his character might be ascertained, and was then condemned. At his execution, he was taunted with the defeat of his native country, to which he replied that it consoled him for his own death.

Mucianus now advanced the proposal, long concealed but as if it had just occurred to him, that since, thanks to the gods' benignity, the enemy's strength was broken and the war almost over, it would be scarcely fitting for Domitian to reap others' glory. If the situation of the empire or the security of Gaul were again at risk, then it would be right for a Caesar to be at the front, but he should assign the Canninefates and Batavi to lesser generals, while displaying his power and success as commander-in-chief from close quarters at Lyon, free of minor dangers, but ready for more serious ones.

#### **Book IV:LXXXVI Domitian dissimulates**

Mucianus' cunning was detected, but Domitian's show of obedience required it go unnoticed: thus they reached Lyon. They say that Domitian sent secret messages to Cerialis from there, testing Cerialis' loyalty by asking whether he would relinquish command of his forces to him should he arrive in person. Whether he was considering waging war against his father, or to gain troops and resources to oppose his brother, is unknown: since Cerialis wisely temporizing, evaded the issue, as due to the empty vanity of youth.

Domitian, realizing that his lack of years was a matter of scorn to his elders, neglected all imperial duties, including those he had previously exercised, even the most insignificant, and under the guise of simplicity and humility, with profound dissimulation, he pretended a devotion to literature and a love of poetry to conceal his true nature, and avoid rivalry with his brother, whose milder and contrasting character he interpreted otherwise.

# **Book V: I-XXVI War in Judea, the surrender of Civilis**

## **Contents**

[Book V:I Titus advances to the gates of Jerusalem](#)

[Book V:II Speculative origins of the Jewish people](#)

[Book V:III Moses leads his people out of Egypt](#)

[Book V:IV Religious practises of the Jewish people](#)

[Book V:V Jewish monotheism](#)

[Book V:VI The land of the Jewish people](#)

[Book V:VII Sodom and Gomorrah](#)

[Book V:VIII Judea before the Roman occupation](#)

[Book V:IX Advent of the Romans](#)

[Book V:X Vespasian sent to tackle the Jewish rebellion](#)

[Book V:XI Titus prepares to assault Jerusalem](#)

[Book V:XII Disposition of the Jewish forces](#)

[Book V:XIII Omens and prophecies](#)

[Book V:XIV Civilis at Vetera](#)

[Book V:XV Battle in the shallows](#)

[Book V:XVI Disposition of the opposing troops](#)

[Book V:XVII Civilis rouses his warriors](#)

[Book V:XVIII A German rout](#)

[Book V:XIX Civilis retreats](#)

[Book V:XX Minor engagements between the armies](#)

[Book V:XXI Cerialis defeats the Germans](#)

[Book V:XXII Cerialis escapes capture](#)

[Book V:XXIII A naval skirmish](#)

[Book V:XXIV Cerialis offers peace](#)

[Book V:XXV The Batavians debate the peace offer](#)

[Book V:XXVI Civilis anticipates the Batavian surrender](#)

## **Book V:I Titus advances to the gates of Jerusalem**

At the start of this same year (AD70), Titus Caesar, chosen by his father to complete the subjugation of Judea, and who, while both were still private citizens, had won military fame, enjoyed increasing power and reputation, as provinces and armies vied for him in their enthusiasm. While he, wishing to be thought superior to his fate, showed himself disciplined and energetic in the field. His friendly speech induced devotion, and he often mixed with the rank and file, at work or on the march, without harming his leadership.

In Judea, he was welcomed by three legions of Vespasian's veteran troops, the Fifth, Tenth and Fifteenth. He added to these the Twelfth from Syria, and men from the Third and Twenty-second transferred from Alexandria; these were accompanied by twenty cohorts of allied infantry and eight cavalry squadrons, as well as the princes Agrippa and Sohaemus, by auxiliaries sent by King Antiochus (of Commagene), and by a strong force of Arabs, hostile to the Jews, with that mutual dislike commonly shown by close neighbours. There were also many Romans whose hopes of gaining favour while the prince was still disengaged had led them to leave Rome, and indeed Italy.

With these forces, Titus entered enemy territory, in strict order, reconnoitring at every step, and ready for battle. He pitched camp not far from Jerusalem.

## **Book V:II Speculative origins of the Jewish people**

Now, as I am about to relate a critical moment in the life of this famous city, it is appropriate to give a view as to its origins.

They say that, at the time when Saturn was deposed and expelled by Jupiter, the Jewish people, exiled from the island of Crete, settled in the furthest regions of Libya. Justification is found in their name, since there is a famous mountain, Ida, in Crete, its inhabitants the *Idaei*, later lengthened into an alien form, as the *Iudaei*.

Others claim that in the reign of Isis, the overflowing population of Egypt, led by Hierosolymus and Iuda, discharged itself on neighbouring lands.

Many more claim them to be of Ethiopian stock, forced to migrate, out of fear and hatred, in the reign of Cepheus.

There are those too who say they were refugees from Assyria, and a people without land who acquired land in Egypt, later inhabiting their own cities in the Hebraic territory and the neighbouring parts of Syria.

Yet others say that the Jewish people were of glorious origin, being the *Solyimi* celebrated in Homer's epics (*Iliad* vi 184, *Odyssey* v 282), who founded a city and called it Hierosolyma after their own name.

## **Book V:III Moses leads his people out of Egypt**

The majority of authors agree that at the onset of a plague in Egypt that disfigured the flesh, the Pharaoh Bocchoris (Bakenranef of the 24th dynasty, early 8th century BC) approached the oracle of Ammon to seek a remedy and was commanded to purge the kingdom and transfer this people, hostile to his gods, to another land.

So being rooted out and brought together and later abandoned in the desert, one of the exiles, Moses by name, while the rest of his brethren wept and did nothing, warned them to expect no help from man or god, being deserted by both, but to accept as a guide from above the one whose aid would first grant them escape from present misery.

They agreed, and set out on their journey, trusting to chance. Nothing was more debilitating than their lack of water, and they lay scattered over the plain near to death, when a herd of wild asses left their pasturage for a rock hidden by a grove of trees. Moses followed, and, as he had supposed from the grassy area, found abundant fresh water.

This relieved their thirst, and after six days, walking without rest, on the seventh drove off the former inhabitants and possessed the land, where they founded a city and dedicated their temple.

## **Book V:IV Religious practises of the Jewish people**

Moses, to establish his position among them for all time, introduced new religious practices differing from those of other peoples. All that is sacred among us they consider profane, accepting on the other hand things we consider sinful. They consecrated, in the inner sanctuary, an effigy of that creature (the ass) whose guidance ended their thirst and their wandering, sacrificing a ram, apparently in derision of Ammon's ram's horns: they offer oxen with similar intent, because the Egyptians worship Apis (whose form is a bull). They abstain from the flesh of the pig, having once been afflicted with scabies to which this animal is liable.

They testify, by frequent fasting, to that great hunger they once suffered, while the unleavened bread the Jewish people make is witness to the haste with which they had to bake their flour. They say they choose to rest on the seventh day, because that day ended their toils; and were later led by the pleasure of inactivity to give the seventh year over to relaxation also. Others however say it is to honour Saturn (deity of the seventh day, Saturday) whether it is that they received the elements of their religion from the Idaeans, who it is said were exiled with Saturn and founded this people, or whether it is because Saturn holds the farthest orbit among the planets that rule humankind, and is the most powerful; also many of the heavenly bodies follow their paths and courses according to multiples of seven days.

## **Book V:V Jewish monotheism**

These rites, however they originated, have been maintained from antiquity: the rest of their customs, revolting and ill-omened to us, prevail out of perversity. For the most harmful tribes, scorning their ancestral religions, send gifts and tributes to that place, increasing the wealth of the Jewish people; and while resolute in their loyalty among themselves and prompt to show mutual compassion, towards all others they exhibit hostility and dislike.

They sit apart at meals, and sleep apart, and though prone to passion as a people they abstain from intercourse with foreigners; though among themselves nothing is explicitly unlawful. They adopted the practice of circumcision to distinguish themselves from other nations. Those who convert to their ways follow the same rite, and they are first taught to despise their previous gods, disown their native country, and hold the parents, children and brothers they have left behind as of no account.

However they take care to increase their numbers, regarding it as sinful to kill any unwanted child, and believing that the spirits of those killed in battle or by execution are immortal; hence their love of generation and their contempt for death. They bury a corpse rather than cremating it, after the Egyptian custom, with the same care and same belief regarding the underworld, while differing as to the heavens.

The Egyptians venerate many animalistic effigies, while the Jewish people comprehend one god alone, and with the mind only, regarding as impious those who create images of the divine in human likeness, from perishable matter, and the supreme eternal being as incapable of representation or destruction.

Therefore they erect no statues in their cities, still less in their temples; flattery not being paid to their kings, nor honour to our Caesars. Yet because their priests chanted, sounding pipes and cymbals, and wearing ivy garlands, and a golden vine was discovered in their temple, they were thought to be devotees of the worship of Father Liber (Dionysus), conqueror of the East, despite the incongruity of their customs. For Liber established joyous festive rites, while those of the Jewish people are vulgar and unmusical.

## **Book V:VI The land of the Jewish people**

Their land is bordered by Arabia to the east, Egypt to the south, Phoenicia and the sea on the west, while northwards they overlook a wide area of Syria. The people are healthy and resilient. Rain is rare, the soil fertile: its products like ours except they have balsam and the palm. The latter is a fine tall tree, the former a modest shrub. If a branch of balsam swollen with sap is pierced with a knife, the veins close, so a piece of stone or pottery shard is used to open them; the sap is used in medicine.

Mount Lebanon is the highest of the mountains, and wonderful to say in the greatest heat it is shaded by trees and covered with snow; it feeds and supplies the Jordan river. The Jordan does not reach the sea, but its flow passing intact through two lakes (Merom and Gennesareth) is retained by a third (the Dead Sea). The last is an immense lake, like the sea

but with a noxious taste, and the neighbourhood is plagued by its offensive odour. Its waters are not disturbed by the wind, and neither fish nor water-birds can tolerate them. Its lifeless waves support whatever is thrown onto them, like solid ground.

At a certain time of year, bitumen rises, which experience has taught the collection of, as it teaches us our other skills. Bitumen (or asphalt) is by nature a dark liquid (or semi-solid form of petroleum) which coagulates when sprinkled with vinegar, and floats on the surface. The tale told by ancient authors is that those who are concerned with it capture a segment with their hands and haul it aboard: then it flows in, without assistance, and weighs the boat down, until the stream is cut off: you cannot cut it with bronze or iron, but it shrinks from menstrual blood, or a cloth stained with it. However those who know the country say that floating masses of bitumen are driven by the wind or drawn by hand to shore, then once dried by the hot vapours from the ground or by the sun they are split with axe and wedge just like wood or stone.

## **Book V:VII Sodom and Gomorrah**

Not far from the lake is a plain which they say was once fertile and the site of great cities but which was scorched by lightning bolts: and that traces remain, the earth itself as if dried up having lost its power to bear fruit. For all plants there, whether seeded from the wild or cultivated by hand, become blackened and sterile, either in leaf or flower or in achieving their mature form.

For myself, though I might concede that famous cities were once destroyed by fire from the heavens, I think that the lake's vapours contaminate the ground, and poison the air above, such that crops and fruits putrefy, both soil and atmosphere being noxious.

Also, the Belus river (the Na'aman) empties into the sea of Judea (the Bay of Haifa, near Acre), and around its mouth sand is collected which mixed with soda is fused to form glass. The beach is of limited size but provides an endless supply.

## **Book V:VIII Judea before the Roman occupation**

A large part of Judea is covered with scattered villages, but there are towns, with Jerusalem as the nation's capital. The Temple there held vast riches, and the fortifications enclosed first the city, then the palace, and the innermost ones the Temple. Only members of the Jewish people might approach its doors, and entry was forbidden except to the priests.

While the East was dominated by the Assyrians, Medes and Persians, they were the most despised of subjects; after the Macedonians gained supremacy, King Antiochus (II, reigned 261-246BC) tried to abolish the Jewish religion and introduce Greek ways, but war with the Parthians prevented his alteration of that most reviled of nations for the better; now this was the period of Arsaces' revolt (he seized power in Persia c250BC).

Later, the Jewish people selected their own kings (the Hasmoneans), Macedonian power having waned, the Parthians not yet being strong enough, and the Romans far distant. These kings, expelled by the fickle populace, regained their thrones by force of arms, banished

citizens, razed towns, killed brothers, wives, and parents, and dared every crime common to royalty, but encouraged the national religion, since they had assumed the honours of the priesthood to strengthen their power.

### **Book V:IX Advent of the Romans**

Pompey was the first Roman to subdue the Jewish people and enter their Temple by right of conquest (63BC): thereafter it was common knowledge that there were no divine images within, the place was empty and the inner sanctuary void. The walls of Jerusalem were razed, the shrine remained.

Later, during our civil wars when those provinces were under the sway of Mark Antony, Pacorus, prince of Parthia, held Judea, but was killed by Publius Ventidius, the Parthians being driven back beyond the Euphrates: Gaius Sosius subdued the Jewish people.

Antony granted the kingdom to Herod the Great, a victorious Augustus extending it. After Herod's death, Simon of Peraea, without waiting for Augustus' blessing, assumed the title to the kingdom (4BC). He was executed by Quintilius Varus, the governor of Syria, the people repressed, and tripartite rule granted to Herod's sons.

All was peaceful under Tiberius. Then, when ordered by Caligula to erect his statue in the Temple, they chose to take up arms, their rebellion ending on that emperor's death. Claudius made Judea a province, the princes being dead or reduced to insignificance, and he entrusted it to Roman knights or freedmen. One of the latter, Antonius Felix (procurator: 52-60AD), indulged in every kind of cruelty and lust, exercising the authority of a king with the mind of a slave. He had married Drusilla, the grand-daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, and so Felix was Antony's grandson-in-law, while Claudius was Antony's grandson.

### **Book V:X Vespasian sent to tackle the Jewish rebellion**

The Jewish people remained compliant until Gessius Florus became procurator (64-66AD): under him the insurrection began. And when Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, tried to suppress it, various battles more often adverse than otherwise ensued.

On his death, Nero, whether by destiny or out of frustration, sent Vespasian there, and with his reputation, good fortune, and notable officers, within two summers his victorious army held the plains and all the cities except Jerusalem. The following year was concerned with the civil war, and was passed in inactivity as regards the Jewish rebellion. With peace throughout Italy, foreign concerns returned to the fore: and the fact that the Jewish militants alone had not ceased fighting increased our resentment; at the same time it seemed expedient for Titus to take over our forces there, given the vagaries and risks of a new regime.

## **Book V:XI Titus prepares to assault Jerusalem**

Thus, as I have said, Titus pitched camp before the walls of Jerusalem and displayed his legions in battle formation. The Jewish defenders formed line directly below the walls, so as to advance further if successful, but with refuge at hand if they were driven back. Some cavalry and light-infantry were sent against them but the engagement was indecisive. Later the defenders withdrew, and over the following days engaged in constant skirmishing before the gates until repeated defeats drove them within the walls.

The Romans now prepared an assault, for they thought it beneath their dignity to wait for the enemy to starve to death, and demanded action, some out of bravery, but many driven by pride and the desire for spoils. Titus had the vision of Rome, its wealth and pleasures, before his eyes, and if Jerusalem did not fall swiftly, his enjoyment of them would be delayed.

However the city stands on the heights, and was defended by outworks and fortifications which would have been adequate on far flatter ground, here two tall hills being included within walls built with skill, projecting or curving inwards so as to place a flank attack under fire. The rocks ended in sheer cliffs, and the defensive turrets rose sixty feet above the hills, a hundred and twenty feet from the valleys, a wonderful sight, and such that they seemed of equal height from a distance.

An inner wall surrounded the palace, while on a conspicuous height (to the north-west) stands the Antonia Tower, named by Herod the Great in honour of Mark Antony.

## **Book V:XII Disposition of the Jewish forces**

The Temple was like a citadel, with protective walls of its own built before the rest, and with greater care and effort; the colonnades themselves, surrounding the Temple, were a fine defence. There is an ever-flowing spring, the hills are tunnelled below ground and pools and cisterns hold rainwater. The city's founders foresaw many wars due to the uniqueness of their customs and way of life, therefore they built the whole in anticipation of long siege, and during Pompey's assault on the city, anxiety and experience taught them a great deal. Then too, Roman greed in Claudius' day, had bought them the right to fortifications, walls built in peace as if for war.

At this time, there was a large influx of dissidents from other defeated cities, since the most obstinate rebels had taken refuge here, and sedition was rife. There were three leaders, and three resistance forces: the outermost and widest of the walls was defended by Simon (bar Giora), the centre of the city by John (of Giscala, Yohanan ben Levi), and the Temple by Eleazar (ben Simon). John and Simon benefited from men and equipment, Eleazar from defensive positioning. But there was conflict, treachery and arson among the three forces, and a large store of grain was ruined.

John gained possession of the Temple by sending men as if to offer sacrifice there, but rather to kill Eleazar and his followers. Thus the citizens split into two factions, until at the approach of the Romans war against the foreign forces brought reconciliation.

## **Book V:XIII Omens and prophecies**

Portents had occurred, but the people consider it wrong to try and avert them, being prone to superstition but averse to propitiatory rites. Contending armies were seen in the heavens, weapons flashed, and the Temple was suddenly lit by fire from the clouds. Its doors flew open, and a superhuman voice cried out that the old gods were departing, accompanied by the mighty stir of their going.

Few reacted in fear, the majority were persuaded that this was the time mentioned in their ancient religious writings when the East would gain strength, and power over human affairs would spread from Judea. This enigmatic prophecy foretold the rise of Vespasian and Titus, but the masses, though human vanity, interpreted these great portents as tokens of their own destiny, and not even adversity could reconcile them to the truth.

We hear that the total number of the besieged, of every age and sex, was six hundred thousand: there were weapons enough for all who could fight, and more possessed of courage than their number suggested. Both men and women were equally stubborn; and if they were to be transported from their homes, they feared survival more than death. Such was the city and nation Titus advanced against.

Since the site prevented a sudden military assault, he decided on trenches with protective roofing, dividing the effort among the legions: there was a pause in the fighting, until everything ancient or modern ingenuity had devised for taking a city was in readiness.

## **Book V:XIV Civilis at Vetera**

Meanwhile, in Germany, Civilis, after his ill-fated fight among the Treviri, rebuilt his army and camped at Vetera, a defensible site, and where the memories of previous success there would rouse the courage of his barbarians. Cerialis followed him there, his forces doubled in strength by the advent of the Second, Sixth and Fourteenth legions; while the auxiliary cavalry and infantry he had summoned long before hastened to join him after his victory.

Neither general liked delay, but they were separated by a wide, and naturally marshy, plain, while Civilis had built a barrier obliquely across the Rhine, so that its waters, deflected from their course, flooded the neighbouring fields. Such was the nature of the ground, treacherous because of the shifting riverbed, and therefore dangerous to our men: since the Roman soldier is weighed down by armour and weapons and fearful of swimming, while the Germans are used to the rivers, lightly armed, and supported by their great stature.

## **Book V:XV Battle in the shallows**

So, although the bravest of our men engaged the Batavian attack, there was soon panic as men and horses were swallowed in the marshy depths. The Germans, knowing the shallows,

leapt through the water, and many of them left the attack to surround our flanks and rear, There was no close fighting as in the usual infantry battle, it was more like a naval conflict, with men struggling in the water, or if they made firm ground holding on grimly, the wounded and the whole, those who could swim and those who could not, locked together in mutual destruction.

Yet our losses were less than the confusion suggested, since the Germans, not daring to leave the safety of the marshes, returned to their camp. The outcome of this fight encouraged both leaders to hasten the final struggle, but from differing motives. Civilis wanted to follow up his good fortune, Cerialis to erase his disgrace: the Germans were emboldened by success, the Romans stirred by shame. While the barbarians spent the night singing and shouting, our men were enraged and threatening vengeance.

### **Book V:XVI Disposition of the opposing troops**

The following morning Cerialis stationed his cavalry and auxiliaries in the front line, placing his legions in the second, retaining picked troops under his command for emergencies. Civilis drew up his men in column rather than in extended line, with the Batavi and Cugerni on his right, and the left, nearer the river, held by tribes from across the Rhine.

The leaders, rather than exhorting their troops by way of a public assembly of their forces, spoke to each section as they rode along the lines. Cerialis recalled the glory of old associated with the name of Rome, victories of ancient times and of their own, urging them to annihilate forever this treacherous and cowardly enemy, whom they had conquered, it being a question of vengeance rather than war. They had fought superior numbers not long past, yet routed those Germans, who had appeared in strength: the cowed survivors fleeing, with wounds at their backs.

Cerialis then found the right means to spur them on, calling the Fourteenth the conquerors of Britain, the Sixth the men whose authority made Galba emperor, and the Second those troops who would that day in battle consecrate their new standards and new eagle. Then he rode towards the returnees of the army of Germany, and stretching out his arms begged them to recover their own bank of the Rhine, and their camp (at Vetera), with the blood of their enemies. All shouted eagerly, some wanting battle after long peace; others longing for peace and weary of war; all hoping for reward and rest thereafter.

### **Book V:XVII Civilis rouses his warriors**

Civilis also, in forming his lines, broke silence, calling on that field of battle to witness his soldiers' courage: both Germans and Batavians stood on glorious ground, the bones and ashes of Roman legions under their feet. 'Wherever the Romans gaze,' he cried, 'dire omens of captivity and defeat, confront them. Fear no uncertain outcome as in the fight with the Treviri: there, victory hampered the Germans, who threw away their weapons and filled their arms with the spoils: since then all had gone well for us and badly for the Romans.'

The provisions for battle a skilful general ought to make, have been made, the fields are flooded that we know so well, the marshes fatal to the enemy. The Rhine and the gods of Germany are present, under whose auspices this battle will be fought: remember your wives, your parents, your homeland: this day we will rival our ancestors' glories, or fill posterity with deepest shame!

Once they had approved his words with clashing weapons and ritual dance (as is their custom) they opened fire with stones, lead shot, and other missiles, our men trying to steer clear of the marshes, the Germans taunting them, drawing them in.

### **Book V:XVIII A German rout**

The missiles being spent, the fight grew hotter, as the enemy charged fiercely: their great stature and long spears enabled them to wound our infantry, slipping and floundering in the water, from a distance; while at the same time a column of Bructeri swam across from the dam they had driven, as I said, into the Rhine. There was confusion as a result, and our line of allied infantry was being repelled, when the legions took up the fight, checked the ferocious enemy advance and levelled the contest.

Meanwhile a Batavian deserter had approached Cerialis, promising that cavalry sent along the margins of the marshland could attack the enemy rear: that ground was solid, and the Cugerni who guarded it, inattentive. Two troops of horse, sent with the deserter, outflanked the incautious enemy. When this was known from the clamour, the legions charged in front, and the Germans, routed, fled towards the Rhine.

The war would have ended that day, if the Roman vessels had hastened to pursue them: not even the cavalry pressed on, since rain fell suddenly and night was near.

### **Book V:XIX Civilis retreats**

On the next day, the Tenth legion, from Spain, replaced the Fourteenth legion, which was sent from Cerialis' army to Gallius Annius in the upper province.

Civilis was reinforced by auxiliaries from the Chauci. However he hesitated to defend the Batavian capital, seizing everything portable, burning the rest, and retreating to the island, knowing that Cerialis lacked vessels to build a bridge, there being no other way for the Roman forces to cross. Furthermore, he destroyed the dike started by Drusus the Elder (in 9BC), so demolishing the barrier that constrained the Rhine's flow, allowing it to pour into Gaul unchecked. Thus, with the Rhine free, the channel between the island and Germany was left virtually dry.

Tutor and Classicus also crossed the Rhine, with a hundred and thirteen Treviran senators, among them Alpinus Montanus, who as we said earlier, had been sent into Gaul by Primus Antonius. His brother, Decimus Alpinus, went with him: meanwhile, others raised reinforcements among those tribes open to involvement in risk, by gifts and appeals for sympathy.

## **Book V:XX Minor engagements between the armies**

The fighting was still so active that, in a single day, Civilis attacked the permanent camps of the legions and of the auxiliary cavalry and infantry, at four separate locations; that of the Tenth legion at Arenacum, the Second at Batavadorum, and those of the auxiliary cavalry and infantry at Grinnes and Vada. His troops were allocated between himself, his nephew Verax, Classicus and Tutor, such that each led his own force. They were not confident of success everywhere, but of succeeding somewhere if they were bold enough: thinking that Cerialis was insufficiently cautious, and might be intercepted in transit, as he rushed to and fro responding to various reports of action.

The enemy warriors attacking the camp of the Tenth, found it hard work storming a legion, but routed the troops who had left the defences to fell timber, killing the prefect of the camp, five leading centurions, and a few of their men: the rest barricaded themselves inside the fort.

Meanwhile, at Batavadorum, German forces tried to destroy the bridge that had been started there, nightfall ending the indecisive conflict.

## **Book V:XXI Cerialis defeats the Germans**

The danger was greater at Grinnes and Vada. Civilis attacked Vada, Classicus assaulted Grinnes, and could not be halted, our best men having been killed, including Briganticus, the cavalry prefect, who as we have said was loyal to the Romans and opposed his uncle Civilis.

But when Cerialis arrived with a select cavalry squadron, fortune changed and the Germans were driven headlong into the river. Civilis, who was recognised as he tried to rally the fugitives and became a target for our missiles, abandoned his horse and swam the flood; Verax escaped likewise; Tutor and Classicus crossed in boats beached for that purpose.

Yet again the Roman vessels were missing from the battle line, despite orders to the contrary, due to caution and the dispersal of oarsmen for other military duties. In fact, Cerialis often granted insufficient time for the execution of his orders, being over-hasty in devising his plans but fortunate in their outcome: success was achieved, even when preparation was lacking: such that he and his men paid scant attention to sound military practice.

And a few days later, Cerialis narrowly escaped capture, though he could not evade the accompanying embarrassment.

## **Book V:XXII Cerialis escapes capture**

He had been to inspect the camps being erected as winter quarters for the legions, at Neuss and Bonn, and was returning with the fleet. His escort were scattered, and his guard careless. The Germans realised this, and planned an ambush. They chose a dark cloudy night and slipping downstream entered the camp unopposed.

Cunning aided their attempt at first: cutting the tent-ropes they killed the men who were buried under their own canvas. A separate force assaulted the boats, hurling grappling irons and dragging the vessels away; deceiving initially by silence, once the slaughter began they added to the panic with their clamour.

Roused by the onslaught, the Romans sought their weapons, running through the camp, few fully equipped to fight, most with their clothing draped round their bodies and their swords drawn. Their leader, half-asleep and virtually naked, was saved by the enemy's error; since they dragged away his flagship, marked out by its banner, thinking he was aboard. But Cerialis had spent the night elsewhere, as many believe, on account of his affair with a Ubian woman, Claudia Sacrata.

The sentries used his behaviour to excuse their own dereliction of duty, saying they were ordered to be silent in order not to disturb him, and thus the trumpet-calls and challenges had been omitted and they had fallen asleep themselves.

The enemy sailed away in broad daylight with the captured vessels, taking the flagship up the river Lippe as a gift for Veleda.

## **Book V:XXIII A naval skirmish**

Civilis was possessed by the desire to exhibit the strength of his navy: he therefore manned his biremes as well as his vessels driven by a single bank of oars, adding a large number of boats carrying thirty or forty men and the armaments common to Liburnian frigates; at the same time the vessels he had captured were tricked out finely with sails of multi-coloured weave.

The place chosen for the spectacle was the stretch of water where the mouth of the River Meuse discharges the flow of the Rhine into the sea. His reason for marshalling this fleet, above and beyond the vanity natural to his people, was to terrorise the supply convoys from Gaul. Cerialis more surprised than unnerved by this, assembled his fleet, which though lesser in numbers employed more skilful oarsmen, more knowledgeable pilots and larger vessels.

His fleet was assisted by the currents, his opponent's by the wind, thus they sailed past each other, exchanging light fire, and separated. Civilis, not daring to go further, withdrew over the Rhine. Cerialis, employing the usual military strategy, while relentlessly devastating the island of the Batavians left their leader Civilis' own villas and farms untouched.

Meanwhile, the progress of autumn with its heavy equinoctial rains filled the river to overflowing and turned the low-lying marshy island into a swamp. Neither fleet nor supplies were at hand and the Roman camp, on level ground, was eroded by the force of the river.

### **Book V:XXIV Cerialis offers peace**

It was afterwards claimed by Civilis that the legions could have been crushed, and that the Germans longed to do so, but he had cunningly dissuaded them; and that might not be far from the truth, since he surrendered a few days later. While Cerialis, in secret missives, was offering the Batavians peace and Civilis pardon, he also advised Velea and those close to her to alter the outcome of a war so adverse to them, and involving such frequent disasters, by rendering timely service to the Roman people.

He reminded them that the Treviri had been slaughtered, the Ubii had returned to the fold, and the Batavians had lost their homeland; they had won nothing by their friendship towards Civilis but harm, banishment and grief. A homeless exile, he would be a burden to those who received him, while they had already sinned enough by crossing the Rhine so often. If they committed further wrongs, the responsibility and the guilt would lie with them, vengeance and the gods' favour with the Romans.

### **Book V:XXV The Batavians debate the peace offer**

Promise was mingled with threat: and once the allegiance of the tribes beyond the Rhine had been shaken, debate commenced among the Batavians themselves: 'We must not further our own ruin, no one nation can prevent the subjugation of a whole world. What have we won by destroying legions with fire and sword, except to bring more and stronger legions against us? If we waged war on behalf of Vespasian, well he is now master of all: if we are challenging the Roman people in arms, how large a part of the human race do we Batavians represent?'

Look at the Raetians and the Noricans, and the burdens other allies carry: we pay no tribute, but only furnish brave men. This is the next best thing to freedom, and if we are to choose our rulers, we can more honourably endure Roman emperors than German women.' So said the mass of folk, the chiefs spoke more strongly: 'We have been drawn to war through Civilis' madness; he averting misfortune to himself by the ruin of his country. The gods turned against the Batavi when we besieged the legions, slew their legates, began a war vital to but one man, yet fatal to ourselves. Nothing remains but to come to our senses, and show our penitence by punishing that guilty one.'

### **Book V:XXVI Civilis anticipates the Batavian surrender**

Not unaware of their feelings, he decided to anticipate them, being not only weary of misfortune but hopeful of survival, a hope that often tames the greatest of spirits. Seeking a

conference, the bridge at Nabalia was severed, the two leaders advanced to the shattered ends, and Civilis began thus: 'If I were to defend myself before Vespasian's general, my acts would merit no forgiveness, my words no credence; we are inimical to each other; hostilities begun by him, I have pursued: my respect towards Vespasian however is of long standing; and when he was merely a private citizen, we were known to be friends.

Primus Antonius was aware of that when I was called upon, by letter, to maintain the legions in Germany and prevent the warriors of Gaul crossing the Alps. What Antonius advised in his letter, Hortensius urged in person: I have furthered the same war in Germany, as Mucianus in Syria, Aponius in Moesia, Flavianus in Pannonia....

**End of the extant text of the Histories**

## 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*.