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ROME : THE FIRST
THOUSAND YEARS



INDRO MONTANELLI

Rome: the first
thousand years

43722

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR OLIVER



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To Susina Moizzi

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Contents

1	'AB URBE CONDITA'	<i>page</i> 11
2	THE POOR ETRUSCANS	19
3	THE FARMER KINGS	27
4	THE MERCHANT KINGS	34
5	LARS PORSENA OF CLUSIUM	42
6	S.P.Q.R.	51
7	PYRRHIUS	59
8	EDUCATION	67
9	THE CAREER	74
10	THE GODS	82
11	THE CITY	89
12	CARTHAGE	98
13	REGULUS	105
14	HANNIBAL	112
15	SCIPIO	121
16	'GRÆCIA CAPTA...'	128
17	CATO	137
18	'...FERUM VICTOREM CEPIT'	144
19	THE GRACCHI	152
20	MARIUS	160
21	SULLA	167
22	A DINNER IN ROME	175
23	CICERO	183
24	CÆSAR	190
25	THE CONQUEST OF GAUL	197
26	THE RUBICON	205
27	THE IDES OF MARCH	212
28	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	220

CONTENTS

29	AUGUSTUS	<i>page</i> 227
30	HORACE AND LIVY	234
31	TIBERIUS AND CALIGULA	240
32	CLAUDIUS AND SENECA	246
33	NERO	252
34	POMPEII	258
35	JESUS	263
36	THE APOSTLES	269
37	THE FLAVII	275
38	EPICUREAN ROME	281
39	THE ECONOMY	287
40	ENTERTAINMENT	293
41	NERVA AND TRAJAN	299
42	HADRIAN	305
43	MARCUS AURELIUS	311
44	THE SEVERI	318
45	DIOCLETIAN	325
46	CONSTANTINE	331
47	THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIANS	338
48	CONSTANTINE'S HERITAGE	345
49	AMBROSE AND THEODOSIUS	352
50	THE END	358
51	CONCLUSION	367

To the Reader

WHILE this history of Rome was appearing by instalments in the *Domenica del Corriere*, I received an increasing number of indignant letters. Some accused me of levity, triviality and defeatism. Others of outright irreverence for the way I treated a subject considered sacred.

I was not surprised at this. In fact, up to now, only the class-room style has been used in writing about Rome. This, I am persuaded, is the very reason why precious little of it remains in the reader's head and why, having finished school, very few of us are tempted to take a refresher course. Nothing is more boring than to follow a story in which all the characters are monuments. I myself had quite a struggle to keep from yawning when, some years ago, realising that I had forgotten everything, I decided to study it all over again. This was until I came across Suetonius and Dion Cassius, who being contemporaries of those monuments, showed no such reverent and awed respect for them.

Following their lead, I brushed up the other Roman historians and chroniclers. It was like bringing a stone to life. At once all the famous personages, who at school had been presented to us as mere mummies, as inhuman abstract symbols, lost their immobility and assumed vices, weaknesses, mannerisms and manias. In a word, they became alive and real.

Why should we respect these personages more than the Romans themselves did? Are we doing them a favour by leaving them on pedestals in chilly halls of museums, where only school children, haunted by the examination bogey, are forced by their masters to go? I know of Jesuits who, committing no breach of orthodoxy, have written impartial hagiographies in which the Saints appear as they actually were, men among men with all their obstinacies and vagaries. The fact that many of them erred and that every one of them was tempted takes nothing away from their holiness. Quite the opposite. Jesus Christ made of Saint Peter, who had denied Him, an Apostle.

What makes the history of Rome great is not that it was made by men different from, but that it was made by men like ourselves. There was nothing supernatural about them. If there had been, there would be less reason for us to admire them. Cicero and Cæsar have a lot in common. Cæsar as a young man was an utter blackguard and all his life remained the woman-chaser who used to comb his hair over the top from the back and sides because he was ashamed of being bald. Augustus did not spend all his time, like an automaton, organising the Empire, but also in having trouble with his colitis and rheumatics and he very nearly lost his first battle against Brutus and Cassius owing to an attack of diarrhoea.

I believe the greatest wrong one can do them is to hush up the truth about them as human beings, as though one feared that they might be belittled by it. No. Rome was Rome not because the heroes of its history did not commit crimes and extravagances, but because these crimes and extravagances however great—and some of them were enormous—could not deprive them of their right to eminence.

I have discovered nothing new in this book. Everything narrated here has been narrated before. I hope I have done so in a simpler and more understanding manner, in a straightforward and more readily acceptable style, by a series of portraits which reveal the principal players in a truer light and by stripping them of the disguise of their sacerdotal vestments.

To some this may seem a modest ambition, but not to me. Far from it. I consider it a noble undertaking. If I have made the history of Rome attractive to thousands who hitherto have been put off by the pomposity of my predecessors, I shall count myself, with all due respect to those who accuse me of levity, triviality, defeatism or even of irreverence, a useful, fortunate and highly successful author.

INDRO MONTANELLI

Milan, November 1957

I

‘AB URBE CONDITA’

Nobody knows exactly when the first schools were opened in Rome. Plutarch puts it at about 250 B.C., or some five hundred years after the founding of the city. Till then Roman boys were educated at home, the poorer ones by their parents, the richer ones by “magistri,” that is by masters or tutors, usually chosen from among the “liberti,” freed slaves. They, in their turn, were chosen from prisoners of war, preferably those of Greek origin, who were the most cultured.

We do know with certainty however that they had an easier time than those of to-day. They already knew Latin. If, as the German poet Heine used to say, they had had to learn it they would never have had the time to go around conquering the world. Their history lessons used to run something like this:

When the Greeks of Menelaus, Ulysses and Achilles conquered Troy in Asia Minor and put it to fire and the sword, one of the few surviving defenders was Æneas. He was strongly supported by his mother, none other than the goddess Venus-Aphrodite. Nepotism was rife even in those days. With his little travelling bag, full of images of his celestial protectors (amongst whom, naturally, his mother had pride of place), but without a penny in his pocket, the poor fellow began to wander aimlessly round the world. After heaven only knows how many adventures and misadventures, he landed in Italy and began to travel north. On arrival in Latium he married the daughter of King Latinus, a girl called Lavinia, founded a city which he named after his wife and they lived there happily for the rest of their days.

His son Ascanius founded Alba Longa which became the new capital. After another eight generations, which means roughly

two hundred years after the arrival of Æneas, two of his descendants, Numitor and Amulius, were still on the throne of Latium. Unfortunately, there is not room for two on a throne so one day Amulius drove out Numitor to reign on his own and killed all his brother's children except one: Rhea Silvia. To stop her bringing any child into the world who, when he grew up, might get ideas about avenging his grandfather, he forced her to become a priestess of the goddess Vesta, viz. a nun.

One day Rhea, who was probably longing for a husband and did not at all relish the idea of eternal maidenhood, was taking the air on the river-bank. It was a very hot summer, and she fell asleep there. Just then the god Mars happened to be visiting the district, partly to stir up a little strife, which was his normal job, and partly in quest of girls, who were his favourite hobby. He saw Rhea Silvia, took a fancy to her and, without even waking her up, put her in the family way.

When Amulius heard about this, he was very angry but did not have her killed. He waited until she gave birth not to one, but to twin boys. These he had put on a tiny raft and pushed out into the river so that they should be carried downstream to the sea and drowned. He had reckoned without the wind. It was pretty strong that day and it stranded the fragile craft in the open country not far away. Here the two waifs, who were bawling their heads off, attracted the attention of a she-wolf, which ran to suckle them. Thus that animal became the symbol of Rome, later founded by the twins.

The uncharitable say that this she-wolf was no animal, but a woman, a certain Acca Larentia, nicknamed "She-wolf" on account of her savage character and her many infidelities to her husband, a poor shepherd. She was always disappearing into the woods to pursue her amorous adventures, but perhaps this is just gossip.

The twins sucked milk, went on to pap, then grew their first teeth. One received the name of Romulus and the other Remus. They grew up and finally found out who they were. So back they went to Alba Longa, stirred up a revolution, killed

Amulius and put Numitor back on the throne. Then, like all enterprising young men, instead of waiting for a ready-made kingdom from their grandfather, who would certainly have left it to them, they went off to found one for themselves a little farther down the road. They chose the very place where their raft had run aground, among the hills through which the Tiber winds just before it flows out into the sea. Here, as often happens between brothers, they quarrelled over what name to give the city. So they decided that the choice was to be up to the one who saw most birds. Remus, on the Aventine, saw six; Romulus, on the Palatine, saw twelve. The city was therefore to be called Rome. They yoked two white oxen, traced a furrow and built the walls, swearing to kill anyone who passed through them. Remus, who was a bad loser, said that they were weak walls and broke off a chunk with a kick, whereupon Romulus, faithful to his oath, laid him out cold with a blow of his mattock.

All this, they say, took place seven hundred and fifty-three years before the birth of Christ, to be exact on the 21st of April. This day is still celebrated as the birthday of the city, born, as we have seen, of a fratricide. Its inhabitants dated the beginning of the history of the world from that day and this went on until the advent of the Redeemer imposed another system of reckoning.

Perhaps the neighbouring peoples did the same thing: each one of them dated the history of the world from the foundation of their own capital, were it Alba Longa, Rieti, Tarquinia or Arezzo. They never succeeded in getting the others to recognise this because they made the slight mistake of losing the war—or, rather, the wars. Rome, on the other hand, won them, all of them. The smallholding of a few acres, which Romulus and Remus cut out for themselves with a plough among the hills of the Tiber, became, in the course of a few centuries, the centre of Latium, then of Italy, and then of the whole known world. And in all that known world its language was spoken, its laws obeyed and the years were counted "ab urbe condita," that is

from that famous 21st of April of 753 B.C., the beginning of the story of Rome and its civilisation.

Naturally, things did not happen exactly like that, but that was how, for many centuries, Roman fathers wished it to be taught to their children, partly because they believed it themselves and partly because, as great patriots, they were very flattered at being able to drop the names of influential gods such as Venus and Mars and distinguished figures like Æneas in connection with the founding of their City. They had a vague feeling that it was important to bring up their children in the conviction that they belonged to a country which had been founded with the aid of supernatural beings, who certainly would not have gone to the trouble unless they had had a great destiny in store for it. This conviction gave a religious basis to the whole life of Rome, which, in fact, collapsed as soon as it disappeared. The City was "caput mundi," capital of the world, for just so long as its inhabitants knew little and were ingenuous enough to believe the legends which their fathers and "magistri" had taught them; for just as long as they were convinced of being descendants of Æneas and of having divine blood in their veins and of being "anointed of the Lord," even if at that time he was called Jove. It was when they began to doubt these things that their Empire went to bits and the "caput mundi" became a colony. But let us not go too fast.

In the charming fable of Romulus and Remus perhaps not all is fantasy. Let us try to get to the bottom of it in the light of the few fairly definite facts given to us by archaeologists and ethnologists.

It appears that thirty thousand years before the foundation of Rome Italy was already inhabited by man. The experts say they can tell what sort of man this was since they have reconstructed his skeleton from various odds and ends of bones found here and there, which go back to the so-called Stone Age. Not having much faith in these deductions, let us take a jump forward in time to a much more recent period. The Neolithic

Age of something like eight thousand years ago, was five thousand before Rome. It seems that at that time the peninsula was populated by certain Liguri in the north and by Siculi in the south. These people had pear-shaped heads, lived partly in caves and partly in round huts, made of dung and mud, kept domestic animals and lived by hunting and fishing.

Now let us skip another four thousand years. In 2000 B.C. other tribes are arriving from the north, that is from the Alps. Who can say how long they had been on the move from their country of origin: Central Europe. These are not much less primitive than the natives with the pear-shaped heads, but they used to make their dwellings, not in caves, but on piles sunk in the water. They came, clearly, from marshy country. In fact, as soon as they appeared here, they made straight for the region of the lakes, Maggiore, Como and Garda, thus anticipating the tastes of modern tourists by several thousand years. They did, however, introduce to our country one or two great innovations such as the grazing of flocks, the weaving of cloth, and the fortification of their villages with earthworks against attack by man and beast.

Gradually they moved south and began to build their huts on dry ground, though they were still perched on stakes. Furthermore, they had learned from certain cousins of theirs, who had apparently settled in Germany, the use of iron, with which they made themselves a whole lot of new tools, axes, knives, razors, et cetera. They were also the founders of what could be called a real city, Villanova, which must have been somewhere near the present-day Bologna. It was the centre of a civilisation, known for this reason as "Villanovan," which slowly spread over the peninsula. The Umbrians, Sabines and Latins are believed to have originated from this civilisation as regards race, language and customs.

Nobody knows what these Villanovans did with the native Liguri and Siculi when they occupied the lands on either side of the Tiber. Perhaps they exterminated them as was the custom in those "barbaric" times, so-called to distinguish them

from our times, known as "civilised," in which we do exactly the same thing. Perhaps they subdued and then absorbed them. The fact remains that by about 1000 B.C. the newcomers had founded many villages between the mouth of the Tiber and the Bay of Naples which, although they were inhabited by people of the same race, were always at war with one another and only got together in the face of a common enemy or on the occasion of some religious feast.

The biggest and most powerful of these little towns was Alba Longa, the capital of Latium, which lay at the foot of Monte Albano and was probably on the same site as Castel Gandolfo. The handful of adventurous young men, who one day migrated some ten miles farther north and founded Rome, are believed to have been Albalongans. Perhaps they were farm labourers looking for a piece of land to settle on or perhaps they were bad lots wanted by the police and magistrates of their city. Perhaps, even, they were emissaries sent by their government to keep an eye on that point of the border with Tuscany, on the coasts of which a new population had just landed, the Etruscans. It was not known what part of the world these people had come from. In any case, nobody had a good word to say for them. Perhaps among these pioneers there was really one called Romulus and another called Remus. However, they could not have been more than a hundred strong.

The site they chose had many advantages and many drawbacks. It lay about fifteen miles from the sea, and this was admirable, for it afforded protection against the pirates who infested it, without having to do without a port. The river was easily navigable by the boats of the time right down to its mouth. The surrounding swamps and marshes made it malarial and malaria was an enemy which sat on its doorstep until only a few years ago. However, there were the hills which to a certain extent protected the inhabitants from the mosquitoes and, in fact, it was on one of these, the Palatine, that they first quartered themselves, with the intention of populating the other six in due course.

To populate them they needed children, and to have children these settlers, all bachelors, needed wives.

History does not tell us how Romulus, or whatever the leader of the gang was called, got women for himself and his followers and so we have to fall back on the legend. This says that he organised a big feast, perhaps with the excuse of celebrating the birth of his new city, and invited the Sabine (or Quirite) neighbours to come with their king, Titus Tatius, telling them to be sure to bring their daughters along. But while they were busily engaged in running and horse-racing, which were their favourite sports, their hosts drove them off the premises and very unsportingly stole their girls.

Our ancestors were touchy on the matter of women. Not long before the kidnapping of one, Helen, gave rise to a ten-years' war and ended in the destruction of a great kingdom: that of Troy. Since the Romans had kidnapped them by the dozen, it was only natural that the next day they should have to square accounts with their fathers and brothers, who came back in arms to retrieve them. They barricaded themselves in the Capitol, but committed the unpardonable mistake of trusting one of their improvised wives with the keys of the fortress. This Tarpeia, who was evidently none too satisfied with the husband who had fallen to her lot, opened a gate to the besiegers, who, being a chivalrous people, were all against treachery, including that perpetrated in their favour. They rewarded her by crushing her under their shields. The Romans later gave her name to the rock off which they used to push condemned traitors.

The whole thing finished up in an immense wedding-breakfast because the women, who were the cause of the battle, placed themselves between the two armies and said that they had no intention of becoming widows, which would be the case if their Sabine fathers won, or orphans, if their Roman husbands won. It was high time to call the quarrel off, because they were getting along very well with their consorts even if they were a

bit rough and ready. Much better to regularise their marriages than go on slaughtering one another.

This was what they did. Romulus and Tatius decided, each with the title of king, to reign together over this new people, born of the fusion of the two tribes, which bore the double name "Romani-quiriti." Since Tatius obligingly died soon afterwards, the experiment in duality of rule this time went off well.

Who can tell what lies beneath this story? Could it be just a version of a conquest of Rome by the Sabines put forward out of pride and patriotism? It is quite possible, however, that the two peoples really did intermingle voluntarily and that the famous Rape was just the normal marriage ceremony, as celebrated in those times, that is with the theft of the bride on the part of the groom, but with the consent of the father, as is still the practice among certain primitive peoples.

If this was really the case, it is probable that this fusion was imposed, rather than suggested, by a common enemy: those Etruscans who in the meantime had spread all over Tuscany and Umbria from the Tyrrhenian coast and, using much more modern methods, were now pressing south. Rome and Sabina were on the direct route of this march and were directly threatened by it. In fact, they did not escape it.

Hence the City which had only just come into being, had to deal with one of the most dangerous and insidious rivals in all its history. She overthrew them, first by prodigies of diplomacy, then with courage and tenacity. But it took her centuries.

THE POOR ETRUSCANS

UNLIKE the Romans of to-day, who treat everything as a joke, the Romans of antiquity took everything seriously. Especially once they had made up their minds to destroy an enemy. Not content with waging war on him and giving him no respite until they had defeated him, even at the cost of throwing away entire armies and untold gold, they did not leave one stone on another when they invaded his country.

For the Etruscans they reserved particularly harsh treatment when, after suffering countless humiliations at their hands, they felt strong enough to challenge them. It was a long struggle, with no holds barred, and they did not even leave the losers their eyes to weep with. Rarely has history seen a people vanish so completely from the face of the earth or another cancel its traces with such obstinate ferocity. This is why there is practically nothing left of the Etruscan civilisation. Only some works of art and some thousands of inscriptions of which only a few words have been deciphered have survived. On the strength of these scanty elements all and sundry have had their own little say about this bygone world.

To start with, nobody knows exactly where these people came from. Judging by the way they pictured themselves in bronzes and on terra-cotta vases, they were stockier and had more massive skulls than the Villanovans. Their features were reminiscent of the people of Asia Minor. Many, in fact, maintain that they arrived from those parts by sea. This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that they were the first of all the inhabitants of Italy to possess a fleet. Certainly they gave the name Tyrrhenian—which means Etruscan—to the sea which bathes the coast of Tuscany. Perhaps they arrived in

hordes and swamped the indigenous population, or perhaps small numbers landed and subdued them with their more advanced armament and more highly developed technique. That their civilisation was superior to the Villanovan is shown by the discovery in tombs of skulls which display quite refined samples of dental surgery. Teeth are very indicative of the life of a people. They decay proportionately to the advance of progress, hence better dentistry. The Etruscans already knew about bridgework for replacing their molars, and the metals for carrying out the job. In fact, they not only knew how to work iron, which they sought and found on the island of Elba and transformed into steel, but also copper, tin and amber.

The cities which they immediately set about building in the interior (Tarquinia, Arezzo, Perugia and Veii) were much more modern than the villages founded by the Latins, Sabines and other Villanovan peoples. They all had bastions for defence, streets and, as a crowning glory, drains. They actually followed what to-day is called a town plan, leaving to engineers, excellent for those times, what others left to chance or the whims of individuals. That they knew how to organise collective public utility enterprises can be seen from the drainage canals with which they reclaimed malaria-infested land. They were, however, formidable traders and money-grubbers, capable of doing anything to make money. At the time when the Romans did not yet know what lay behind Soracte, a small mountain not far from their city, the Etruscans had already reached Piedmont, Lombardy and Venice, had scaled the Alps on foot, and, following the valleys of the Rhone and Rhine, had taken their products to the French, Swiss and German markets and bartered them for local goods. It was the Etruscans who brought coinage to Italy as a means of exchange. This the Romans then copied, as is proved by the fact that they engraved the prow of a ship on their coins before they had ever even built one.

The Etruscans were a cheerful people, who always looked on the bright side of life. This is probably why, in the end,

they lost the war to the dismal Romans, who always looked on the gloomy side. The scenes reproduced on their vases and tombs show well-dressed men wearing the toga, which the imitative Romans later adopted as their national costume. The Etruscans, richly bejewelled at the wrists, neck and fingers, had long hair and curly beards and always seemed to be busily drinking, eating or conversing when not engaged in one of their sports.

These were mainly boxing, throwing the discus or javelin and wrestling, together with two other activities which we think of as being quite modern and foreign: polo and bull-fighting. Naturally the rules of these games were different from those observed nowadays, but ever since that time the sight of a duel between a man and a bull in the ring has drawn its *aficionados*, so much so that those who died had souvenirs of the scene painted on vases and put in their tombs so that they could continue to enjoy it in the other world.

A great step forward, compared to the archaic and patriarchal customs of the Romans and the other natives, was the condition of Etruscan women. They enjoyed much liberty among the Etruscans; in fact, they are depicted, sharing their amusements, in male company. It would appear that they were women of great beauty, and correspondingly loose morality. In the paintings they are shown wearing jewels. Embellished with cosmetics and untrammelled by excessive prudery, they carouse, reclining on ample sofas with their menfolk; or they play the flute or dance. One of them, Tanaquil, who later became very important in Rome, was an intellectual, well versed in mathematics and medicine. This means that, unlike their Latin counterparts, who were condemned to abysmal ignorance, they went to school and studied. The Romans, who were great moralists, used to call all ladies of easy virtue "Tuscan," that is to say "Etruscans," and in one of the comedies of Plautus a girl who is a prostitute is accused of having "Tuscan habits."

Their religion, which is always the moral projection of a people, centred on a god named Tinia, who wielded power with

thunder and lightning. He did not hold sway over mankind directly, but transmitted his orders to a sort of executive cabinet, composed of twelve great gods, so great that it was sacrilege even to mention their names. This being the case, we shall refrain also so as not to confuse the reader. Collectively, these twelve formed the supreme court of justice of the better world, whither the "genii," a kind of usher or policeman, escorted the souls of the departed as soon as they had abandoned their respective bodies. A regular trial was then held. Those who did not succeed in demonstrating that they had lived in accordance with the precepts of the judges were condemned to Hell, unless their surviving friends and relations offered up enough prayers and sacrifices to obtain their absolution. In this case they were admitted to Paradise, where they continued to enjoy earthly pleasures based on tippling, guzzling, free fights and singing, cheery reproductions of which they had had carved on their sepulchres.

It appears, however, that the Etruscans rarely mentioned Paradise, preferring to leave things vague. Perhaps too few went there for them to have much authentic information. What they were really well informed about was Hell. They knew all the individual torments suffered there. Evidently their priests were of the opinion that to get people to toe the line, threats of damnation were more effective than hopes of salvation. This point of view has been handed down to more recent times. Dante, who was born in Etruria, held forth at much greater length on the Inferno than he did on Paradise.

Nevertheless, the Etruscans were no gentle little lambs. They had few scruples about killing, even with the laudable intention of sacrificing the victim for the salvation of some dear one. Sometimes prisoners of war served this purpose. Three hundred Romans, captured in one of the numerous battles fought between the two armies, were stoned to death at Tarquinia and from their still palpitating livers augurs tried to foresee the outcome of the war. (Evidently they did not succeed, otherwise they would have called it off immediately.)

It was a common practice, though they usually used the entrails of either a sheep or a bull. This, too, the Romans copied.

Politically, the scattered cities of the Etruscans never managed to unite. Unfortunately none of them was strong enough to get the upper hand over the others, as Rome did with her Latin and Sabine rivals. There was a federation headed by Tarquinia, but it never overcame its separatist tendencies. Instead of uniting against the common enemy, the twelve little states of which it was composed allowed themselves to be gobbled up one by one. Their diplomacy was rather like that of certain modern European nations, which prefer perishing alone to living together.

All the foregoing is sheer deduction from those relics of Etruscan art which have come down to us and which are the only heritage left us by that people. Their bronzes are very beautiful, especially the "Apollo of Veii," also called the "Walking Apollo." The vases are almost always imitations of the Greek, and, apart from certain rare examples like the "black jar," do not strike us as being up to much.

Scarce as these relics may be, they are enough to open our eyes to how the Romans, once they had overcome the Etruscans (for so long their mentors and superiors in the fields of technology and organisation), not only massacred them, but tried to wipe out every trace of their civilisation. The Romans considered it tainted and corrupt, yet they copied from it everything that suited them; they sent their boys to the schools of Veii and Tarquinia to study medicine and engineering. They imitated the toga. They adopted the use of money. They probably even borrowed their political system, though this was common to the Etruscans and all other peoples of antiquity. With the Etruscans also the system developed from a monarchical régime into a republican one, and one governed by a "lucumo" or elected magistrate, and finally into a form of democracy dominated by the wealthy classes. Rome, however, determined to preserve from Etruscan laxity her own sound and austere customs, based on self-sacrifice and social discipline. She felt instinctively that

it was not enough to conquer the enemy in war and occupy his land if he, the vanquished slave, were then going to turn round and contaminate the households of his masters. So she exterminated him and furthermore insisted that all his documents and monuments be buried.

All this, however, happened a long time after the two people had first come into contact with each other. This took place in Rome itself. When the Albalongans arrived there, they found a small Etruscan colony had already settled and had given the place a name of their own. In fact, it would seem that Rome comes from "Rumon," which means "river" in Etruscan. If this is true, the first population of the city must have been composed not only of Latins and Sabines, peoples of the same blood and stock, as the story of the famous "Rape" would lead us to believe, but also of Etruscans, who were of quite a different race, language and religion. Some historians claim that Romulus himself was Etruscan. In any case, the rite with which he founded the city, by tracing a furrow with a plough drawn by a white bull and a white heifer, after twelve birds of good omen had hovered over his head, was most certainly Etruscan.

Without wishing to compete with the pundits who have been inconclusively wrangling over this topic for centuries, the following seems to us the most probable version.

The Etruscans, who were enthusiastic tourists and business men, had already founded a small village on the Tiber when the Latins and Sabines arrived. This village was used as a transit and supply-base for their shipping route to the south. There, especially in the Campania, they had already founded rich colonies such as Capua, Nola, Pompeii and Herculaneum. Here the local population called Samnites, also of Villanovan origin, came to barter their agricultural produce for the manufactured goods from Tuscany. It was difficult to get down there by land from Arezzo and Tarquinia: there were no roads and the region was infested by wild beasts and bandits. So it was much easier for the Etruscans, being the only ones to have a

fleet, to go there by sea. The voyage was long and took whole weeks. Their nutshells of ships could not carry enough supplies for the crew, and needed ports on the way where they could take on board flour and water for the rest of the voyage. The mouth of the Tiber, half-way along the route, was a convenient bay where they could refill their empty holds. Navigable as it was at that time, it offered an easy means of reaching the interior and of driving the odd bargain with the local Latins and Sabines. The countryside was dotted with from thirty to seventy settlements (the exact number is not known), each of which represented a small barter market. Not that much business could be done there, since Latium in those days was rich only in timber, thanks to its wonderful now-vanished woods. Moreover, it did not even produce grain but only a little buckwheat and wine and a few olives. The Etruscans, however, were content with little and were only too happy to make some extra cash, an idiosyncrasy of theirs which to this day persists.

This was why they founded Rome, calling it by that or some other name, without attaching much importance to it. Who knows how many Romes there were scattered along the Tyrrhenian coast between Leghorn and Naples? They stationed to guard it a garrison of sailors and merchants who perhaps considered this relegation a punishment. Their main duty was to keep in order the shipyard for repairing ships damaged by storms and the warehouses for supplying them.

Then, one fine day, little groups of Latins and Sabines began to arrive, partly because their own neighbourhood was getting a bit crowded and partly because they wanted to trade with the Etruscans, whose products they needed. That already in those days they had a strategic plan for the conquest first of Italy and then of the world, and that they considered the position of Rome vital for this purpose, is pure fancy on the part of modern historians. These Latins and Sabines were nothing but yokels whose ideas of geography hardly extended beyond the limits of their own cabbage patches.

It is probable that these new arrivals may have come to blows among themselves. It is just as likely that, instead of slaying each other, they united to oppose the Etruscans, who must have looked at them in much the same way that the English look at the natives in their colonies. In the presence of this foreign people, who treated them with haughtiness and spoke a language incomprehensible to them, Latins and Sabines must have realised they were brothers, bound together by the same blood, language, and poverty. For this reason, they pooled what little they had: their women. The famous "Rape" is probably nothing but the symbol of this accord, from which the Etruscans, of their own free will, were excluded. Considering themselves superior, they had no desire to mix with this riff-raff.

This racial division lasted for at least a hundred years, during which time the Latins and Sabines, by now interbred into the Roman type, must have had many a grievance to nurse. When, after the last king, Tarquin the Proud, the Romans got the upper hand, their vengeance was indiscriminate. Perhaps the savagery with which they set about destroying Etruria, not only as a State but as a civilisation, was the direct consequence of the humiliations which they had had to endure under the Etruscans in their own country. They wanted to purge everything of them, including history itself, even to the point of giving Romulus a Latin birth certificate (when perhaps he had an Etruscan one), and of dating back to the time of their union with the Sabines the origin of the City.

3

THE FARMER KINGS

WHEN Romulus died, many years after he had buried Titus Tatius, his co-king, the Romans said that Mars had carried him off, taken him to heaven and made him the god Quirinus. From then onwards they venerated him as such, just as the Neapolitans do to-day with Saint Januarius.

Numa Pompilius succeeded Romulus as third king of Rome. Him tradition makes half-philosopher and half-saint, like Marcus Aurelius several centuries later.

Numa was mainly interested in religious questions. There must have been an unholy confusion in that field, since all three peoples venerated their own gods. As nobody could make out which were the most important, Numa decided to sort things out. So as to impose this order on his quarrelsome subjects, he put out the story that every night, while he slept, the nymph Egeria used to visit him in dreams to give him instructions direct from Olympus. Anybody who disobeyed would have to reckon with not only the king, a man among men, but with the Almighty Himself.

This stratagem may seem childish but there may be a grain of truth in the legend, or at least an indication which enables us to reconstruct the truth. Whatever the names and origins of the kings of early Rome may have been, they must have been more like popes than real kings, just as, after all, the "Archon Basileus" was at Athens.

All authority at that time was heavily backed up by religion. Even the powers of the "paterfamilias" over his wife, his younger brothers, his children and his servants, were more or less those of a high priest to whom the Creator had delegated certain functions. In this lay his strength. This is why Roman

families were so disciplined and why everybody had, both in peace and war, such a strong sense of duty.

Numa, by establishing an order of precedence for the various gods brought to Rome by each of the three peoples, probably did a job of fundamental political importance. It enabled his successors, Tullus Hostilius and Ancus Martius, to lead a united people in their victorious wars against the rival cities of the region. However, he could not have had much real political power, because, when all was said and done, the final decision remained in the hands of the people. They had elected him and to them he was responsible.

This, by itself, does not mean much because in every day and age and in every régime whoever gives the orders says that he does so in the name of the people. In Rome, however, this was not just idle chatter—at least until the dynasty of the Tarquins. They lost the throne because they wanted to sit there as autocrats and not as “delegates.” The chain of command was roughly as follows:

The City was divided into three “tribes,” the Latins, the Sabines and the Etruscans. Each tribe was divided into ten “*curiæ*,” or companies; each “*curia*” into ten “*gentes*,” or family groups, and each family group into families. The “*curiæ*” usually met twice a year. On these occasions they formed the “*comitia curiata*,” which, amongst other things, elected a new king when one died. Everybody had an equal vote and the majority decided. The king carried out their instructions.

It was an absolute democracy without social classes. It worked well for as long as Rome remained a small peaceful village inhabited by a few people who rarely went outside its walls. As the number of inhabitants increased, so did their need. The king, who at first, apart from offering sacrifices and performing the other rites of the liturgy, had to enforce the laws and act as judge, no longer had time to do all these duties himself and so he began handing them over to officials. This was the beginning of what we call bureaucracy. The erstwhile

priest becomes a bishop and delegates parish priests and curates to help him with his religious functions. Then he needs somebody to look after roads, the census, land surveys and public health and nominates specialists to take care of these affairs. Thus the first ministry comes into being: the so-called "council of elders" or "Senate," made up of about a hundred members, descendants by right of primogeniture of the pioneers who had founded the City with Romulus. Their only duty at first was to advise the sovereign, but they later became increasingly influential.

Finally the army was created as an established organisation, which was also based on the "curiæ," each of which had to supply a "centuria," or one hundred foot soldiers, and a "decuria," or ten cavalymen with horses. The thirty "centuriæ" and the thirty "decuriæ," that is three thousand and three hundred men, made up the "legion." This was the first and only army corps of early Rome. The king, who was commander-in-chief, had power of life and death over the soldiers but he could not exercise absolute military power without control. He directed operations only after consultation with the "comitia centuriata," or the legion in arms. From them he had to get approval for the appointment of officers, who in those times were called "prætors."

By and large, the Romans had taken all due precautions that their king should not become a tyrant. He was to remain the trustee of the popular will. When a flight of birds passed over, or a tree was struck by lightning, his job was to summon the priests and with them study the portents. If they appeared to bode ill, he decided what sacrifices were necessary to placate the gods, who were evidently offended at something or other. When two private citizens quarrelled or one killed the other it was none of his business. But if anybody committed a crime against the State or the collectivity, he would have a policeman bring him in and might well sentence him to death. He could not take decisions in any other matters. In peace-time he had to refer to the "comitiæ curiatiæ," in time of war to the "cen-

turiatæ." If crafty, he might succeed in passing off his own opinions as "the will of the people." Otherwise he had to submit to it. In any case, before taking action, he invariably had to reckon with the Senate.

This was the system that the first king of Rome, whether he was Romulus or not, or to whichever of the three races he belonged, gave to the City. Such it remained when the wise Numa handed it on to his successor, Tullus Hostilius, a much more lively character.

He was a man who had politics, adventure and greed in his blood. The fact that the "comitia" picked him for king means that, after the forty years of peace assured her by Numa, all Rome was spoiling for a fight. Alba Longa was the richest and the most important of all the settlements and cities which surrounded her, and we do not know what excuse Tullus thought up for declaring war on her. Perhaps none. The fact remains that one fine day he attacked her and razed the city to the ground, even though legend has transformed this act of unprovoked aggression into a chivalrous and almost gentlemanly tourney. It is said that the two armies decided to leave the outcome of the battle to a duel between three Roman Horatii and three Albalongan Curiatii. The latter slew two Horatii but the survivor in his turn killed all three Curiatii and won the war. This in no way alters the fact that Alba Longa was destroyed and its king was tied by the legs to two chariots which, galloping in opposite directions, tore him in half. Such was the manner in which Rome treated her motherland, the land from which she claimed her founders had come.

Naturally this deed must have caused considerable alarm amongst all the other villages round about who, not having undergone Etruscan influence, were behind the times and realised they were weaker and less well armed than the Romans. Tullus Hostilius and his successor, Ancus Martius, harassed them so that the day Tarquinius Priscus came to the throne as the fifth king, Rome was already the prime object of concern to a territory which must have reached roughly to Civitavecchia in

the north, towards Rieti in the east and almost as far as Frosinone in the south.

Now it is highly probable that this policy of conquest, which was to become even more aggressive under the last three kings of the Tarquin family, was mainly of Etruscan inspiration. For this very simple reason: while the Latins and Sabines were farmers, the Etruscans were manufacturers and merchants. Every time a new war broke out the former had to let their farms go by the board and join the legion. Furthermore, they risked losing them if the enemy happened to win. The latter, on the other hand, had everything to gain. Consumption increased, government orders poured in and, in the event of victory, new markets were opened up. This has been the way things have gone in all times and in all nations: town dwellers, capitalists, intellectuals and business-men want wars against the will of the peasants, who have to supply the man-power for them. The more a state becomes industrialised, the more the town gets the upper hand over the country, the more aggressive and adventurous its policy becomes.

Until the fourth king, Rome's peasant element prevailed and its economy was mainly agricultural. The three thousand and three hundred men who formed the army show that the total population must have amounted to some three hundred thousand souls, the majority of whom were perhaps scattered round the countryside. In the City itself there may have been roughly one half who had by now spread from the Palatine on to the other hills. Most of them lived in mud huts, which sprang up higgledy-piggledy, with an entrance but no windows, and only one room in which father, mother, children, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren, slaves (if any), chickens, donkeys, cows and pigs all ate, drank and slept together. In the morning the men (senators included) went down to the plain to plough the land, yoke the oxen, sow and reap. The boys helped in the fields because this work was their only real school, their only real sport. Their fathers took advantage of the occasion to teach them that the seed only brought forth good

fruit when heaven sent rain and sunshine on the soil in the right doses; that heaven only sent rain and sunshine on the soil in the right doses when the gods so wished; that the gods only so wished when men had performed all their duties to them and that the first of these duties was for the young to obey their elders.

This was how Roman citizens were brought up, at least those of Latin and Sabine origin, who must have comprised the majority. Hygiene and personal cleanliness must have been reduced to a bare minimum, even for women. No cosmetics, no coquetry, little or no water. This the women had to draw in the valley and carry uphill in amphoras on their heads. There were no lavatories or drains; they just went outside the door. Their beards and hair were long and uncombed. As for their clothes, one should not be deceived by the statues, which belong to much later times, when Rome had a proper weaving industry and a class of specialised tailors, who were mostly of Greek origin and training. In those far-off days the toga, which later became so imposing, either had not yet been invented or else was still in its most primitive form. Perhaps it resembled the sort of garment the Abyssinians wear nowadays—a tattered length of white material, woven at home by the wife and daughters with a hole in the middle to put one's head through. Few had a spare one. They usually wore the same, summer and winter, day and night, with consequences that can well be imagined.

They indulged in no pleasures, not even that of gluttony. Contrary to the theories of modern American scientists, according to whom the strength of a people is conditioned by their intake of calories and vitamins, which in turn is conditioned by the variety of their diet, the Romans demonstrated that you can conquer the world even if you only eat a badly cooked mixture of kneaded flour and water, a couple of olives, and a piece of cheese, washed down only on feast days by a glass of wine. Oil, it appears, only came later, and it seems that at first they only used it to anoint themselves against frostbite and sun-

burn. This must have done quite a bit to increase the general stench.

Even the kings did themselves no better. Not until the Tarquin dynasty had they a uniform, a helmet and special insignia. Up to the time of Ancus Martius the king was an equal among equals; he, too, ploughed the land behind the yoked oxen; he, too, sowed the seed and harvested the grain. There is nothing to show that he had an office, let alone a court. He used to mix with the people without an escort because, if he had had one, everyone would have accused him of wanting to reign by force instead of by the consent of the people. He used to take his decisions sitting under a tree or on his own doorstep, after listening to the opinions of the elders, who gathered round him in a ring. He only mounted a dais, or perhaps wore some special garment, when he had to offer a sacrifice or perform some other religious ceremony.

The Romans also went to war with nothing resembling a proper military organisation. The prætor who commanded the centuria or decuria had no badges of rank. Their arms were mainly clubs, stones and rough swords. It took quite some time for them to acquire helmets, shields and armour, which must have had much the same effect in those days as the machine-gun and tank did in ours. Thus the great campaigns on which Rome embarked under its first warlike kings must have looked more like punitive expeditions than anything else and boiled down to man-to-man bashing contests, without a trace of tactics or strategy. The Romans won, not only because they were the strongest, but because they were the most convinced that their country had been founded by the gods to fulfil a great destiny and that to die for it was no merit, but only the settlement of a debt contracted at birth.

The enemy, once he had been defeated, ceased to be a "subject" and became an "object." The Roman who had taken him prisoner regarded him as his own private property; if that Roman was in a bad temper, he butchered him. If he was in a good one, he took him home as a slave and could do what he

liked with him: kill him, sell him or make him work. The land was requisitioned by the State, which leased it to its subjects, and cities were often destroyed and their populations deported.

By these methods Rome grew at the expense of the Latins in the south, of the Sabines and Æqui to the east and of the Etruscans to the north. She did not dare venture on the sea, which was only a few miles away, because she did not yet have a fleet and her peasant population had an instinctive mistrust of it.

The advent of an Etruscan dynasty was, however, to make radical changes both in home and foreign policy.

4

THE MERCHANT KINGS

THE exact date of the death of Ancus Martius is not known. It must have been about one hundred and fifty years after the day that legend says that Rome was founded, that is about 600 B.C. It would seem that at the time there was a certain Lucius Tarquinius in town, a very different type from those the Romans usually chose as their kings and magistrates.

He was not of local origin. He came from Tarquinia and was the son of a Greek, Demaratus, who had immigrated from Corinth and married an Etruscan woman. This mixed marriage produced a lively, brilliant, broad-minded and highly-ambitious young man, whom the Romans, when he came to settle amongst them, probably regarded with a mixture of admiration, envy and mistrust. He was rich and extravagant amid the poor and miserly, elegant in the middle of a community of rustics. He was the only one in a world of miserable illiterates to have studied philosophy, geography and mathematics. As for politics, his Greek, plus his Etruscan, blood must have made him a highly resourceful diplomat. Livy says

of him: "He was the first to intrigue to get himself elected king and made a speech to assure himself of the support of the plebs."

We very much doubt that he was the first to do so, but we can venture the certainty that intrigue he did. Probably the rich Etruscan families, who formed a powerful minority, saw in him the man for them. Weary of being governed by Latin or Sabine shepherds and peasants, who turned a deaf ear to their commercial and expansionist demands, they decided to put him on the throne.

One does not know exactly how it happened, but Livy's reference to the plebs gives us a very shrewd idea. The plebs composed a new element in Roman history or, at least, one which had had no importance under the first four kings. These had no need to address the plebs to get themselves elected since, in their time, the plebs did not even exist. There were no social differences in the "*comitiæ curiatae*," which dealt with the investiture of the sovereign. All were citizens, all were landowners, large or small, therefore all of them, on paper, had the same rights even if, in actual practice, certain professional politicians of necessity imposed on the others their point of view.

It was a perfect homespun democracy where everything was above-board. Discussion took place among equal citizens and the only thing that counted in the distribution of appointments was the esteem and prestige in which one was held. This was all very well when Rome was the small town it was during its first century of life, confined to its own narrow circle of hovels, where everybody knew everybody else and who was whose son and all about their past lives and how they treated their wives, how much they spent on food and how many sacrifices they offered in honour of the gods.

By the time that Ancus Martius died the situation had completely changed. The necessities of the wars had stimulated industry and had therefore favoured the Etruscan element which supplied carpenters, blacksmiths, armourers and merchants. Others had arrived from Tarquinia, Arezzo and

Veii and the shops were filled with assistants and apprentices who, as soon as they learned the tricks of the trade, set up shops on their own. The increase in wages had attracted peasant labour to the City, soldiers back from the wars did not want to return to the fields and preferred to stay in Rome, where the prospects of getting women and wine were better. First and foremost, the victories had started a flow of slaves into the city and it was this mass of aliens which made up the "plenum" from which the word "plebs" is derived.

Lucius Tarquinius and his Etruscan friends must have been quick to see the advantage that could be drawn from this mass of people, mostly excluded from the "comitiæ curiatiæ," once they were persuaded that only a king who was a foreigner like themselves could assure them of their rights. This was the reason for his harangue and who knows what promises he made them! They might even have been those that he later maintained! He was backed by the people who had money to spare for electoral propaganda and who were quite prepared to spend it provided they got a government more disposed than its predecessors to adopt that expansionist policy which was essential to their prosperity.

They succeeded. Lucius Tarquinius was not only elected under the name of Tarquinius Priscus but remained on the throne for thirty-eight years. To get rid of him the "patricians," or big landowners, had to have him murdered. This turned out to have been futile, however, because in the first place the crown passed to his son, and then to his grandson, and secondly, because the rise of the Tarquin dynasty was the effect rather than the cause of a certain trend which the history of Rome had taken. This made it impossible for her ever to return to her primitive and archaic social order, and the policy engendered by it.

The king of the merchants and the proletariat was authoritative, bellicose, systematic, and demagogic. He wanted a court so he had one built for himself in the Etruscan style, which was much more refined than that of Rome. In it he installed a throne

on which he sat in solemn state with a sceptre in his hand and a helmet full of plumes on his head. He must have done this partly out of vanity and partly because he realised that the plebs, to whom he owed his election and whose favour he intended to keep, loved pageantry and wanted to see their king in full-dress uniform, surrounded by a regiment of the Household Brigade. Unlike his predecessors, who had spent most of their time making sacrifices or casting horoscopes, he concentrated on the profane, in other words politics and wars. First he subjugated all Latium and then had another go at the Sabines, nibbling off a bit more of their land. For this purpose he needed arms which heavy industry supplied him—at a handsome profit—and miscellaneous provisions which the merchants produced for him—naturally making a nice little bit on the side. Republican anti-Etruscan historians claim that reign was nothing but graft, an enormous racket, the triumph of bribery and corruption, and that he used the loot from the vanquished not for embellishing Rome but for other Etruscan cities, particularly Tarquinia, his home town.

We doubt the truth of this because it was precisely during his reign that Rome took a great step forward, especially as regards town-planning and monuments. First of all he built the "Cloaca Maxima," that is the sewage system. Finally, the City really began to look like one, with well-laid-out streets, well-defined districts, houses that were no longer huts but proper buildings with sloping roofs, windows and an "atrium," and a "forum" or central square where the citizens used to foregather.

Unfortunately in order to carry out this authentic revolution, which transformed not only the external aspect of the city but also its way of life, he incurred the hostility of the Senate. This was the repository of the ancient traditions, and was in no way inclined to forgo its right of control over the king. In other times they would have deposed him or forced him to resign. Now they had to reckon with the plebs, a multitude which so far had no adequate political representation, but who hoped Tarquin would remedy this and who were ready to support him,

even at the barricades. It was easier to kill him and the senators did so, but they also made one colossal blunder. They did not kill his wife and child, convinced that she, owing to her sex, and he, owing to his tender years, were not in a position to maintain their hold on the sovereignty.

They might have been right if Tanaquil had been a Roman woman, accustomed to obedience. But she was an educated Etruscan and, furthermore, she had shared not only her husband's bed but also his work, taking an interest in problems, of state, administration, foreign policy and reforms. She was much better informed about everything than the senators themselves, many of whom were illiterate.

As soon as the king was safely underground, she took his place on the throne and kept it warm for her son, Servius. He in the meanwhile was growing up and was the first king of Rome, and the last, to inherit the crown without being elected.

The historians who came after Servius, all of them rabid republicans, have tried to say derogatory things about him, too, but without much success. Much against their will, they have had to admit that his rule was enlightened and that many of the most important works were completed during his reign. First of all he built a wall all round the City, thus providing employment for the masons, artisans and specialists, who regarded him as their protector. Then he set his hand to that great political and social reform which was to become the basis of every subsequent Roman order.

The old division into thirty "*curiæ*" was all very well for a city of thirty or forty thousand inhabitants, all more or less of the same class, with the same merits and the same amount of money. Now it had expanded enormously. Some people put the population of the City in Servius's time at seven or eight hundred thousand. Most probably these figures are wrong and they refer not to the actual population of Rome but include those of all the territories conquered by her. Nevertheless, the City must have had over a hundred thousand and the great public works programme undertaken by Tarquin and Servius

must also have been imposed on them by an acute housing shortage.

Of this mass of people only those already included in the "*comitiæ curiatæ*" had any say in matters and could vote. The others continued to be excluded and amongst them were the big industrialists, merchants and bankers, those in fact who provided the State with money for its wars and great public works. Now was the time for them to get their reward.

First of all, Servius granted citizenship to the "*libertini*," the sons of freed slaves, or "*liberti*." There must have been many thousands of them and, from that moment on, they became his staunchest supporters. Then he abolished the thirty "*curiæ*," which divided the electorate according to the quarter they lived in, and replaced them by five "*classes*," differentiated not on the basis of their place of residence but according to their wealth. To the first class belonged those who had at least a hundred thousand "*asses*"; those who had less than twelve thousand five hundred belonged to the last class. It is hard to say how much an "*as*" amounted to in to-day's money. Maybe three-halfpence, perhaps more. The importance of these financial differences was that they determined the political ones. Whereas in the "*curiæ*" all were equal, at least formally, and all votes were equally valid, the "*classes*" voted by "*centuriæ*" but they did not have an equal number of them. The first class had ninety-eight and the last class one only. In all they were one hundred and ninety-three and so, in practice, the ninety-eight votes of the first class were enough to get a majority. The others, even if they formed a coalition, could not beat them.

It was a sheer capitalist or plutocratic régime, which gave the monopoly of legislative power to industry and took it away from agriculture, i.e. the Senate, who were not nearly so well off. What could they do about it? Servius did not even owe his election to them. He had inherited the crown from his father, and on his side was all the money of the wealthy classes, who owed their newly-acquired power to him, in addition to the support of the lower classes to whom he had given employ-

ment, wages and citizenship. With the backing of these forces, he surrounded himself with an armed guard to protect his life against the evilly-disposed. He circled his head with a gold diadem and had an ivory throne made upon which he sat majestically with a sceptre surmounted by an eagle in his hand. Whoever wished to approach him, patrician or commoner, senator or beggar, had to get himself announced and patiently await his turn in the ante-room.

It is difficult to get rid of a man like this and, to do so, his enemies had to rely on a nephew of his for the job since he had free access to the court.

Before risking the coup, this second Tarquin tried to get his uncle deposed for abuse of power, but Servius simply went to the "centuriæ," who confirmed him king with great popular acclamation (that great republican, Livy, tells us this, so it must be true).

And so there was nothing for it but the dagger and Tarquin the Second used it. The Senate's sigh of relief ended abruptly, however, when the murderer promptly seated himself on the throne without even the formality of asking their approval, as used to be the custom in the good old days they had hoped to restore.

The new sovereign immediately showed that he was even more tyrannical than the one he had disposed of, so much so that they named him the Proud to distinguish him from the founder of the dynasty. They must have had a good reason for giving him this nickname, even if the story they later told about his fall is not true. It appears that one of his amusements was killing people in the Forum and he was certainly an aggressive character since he spent most of his reign in a series of wars. They were fortunate wars, since the army under his command, which was, by now, several tens of thousands strong, not only conquered Sabina but also Etruria and its southern colonies at least as far as Gaeta. It was not always an active war; often it was only a "cold" war, as they say to-day. The fact remains that Tarquin, partly by force of arms and partly by diplomacy,

was head of something like a small empire. It did not extend to the Adriatic but it already dominated the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Tarquin was so pugnacious was to make people forget that he came to the throne over the dead body of a generous and popular king. Successes abroad often serve to camouflage the internal weakness of a régime. In any case, it would appear that Tarquin had his mania for conquest to thank for his fall.

The story goes that one day he was encamped with his soldiers, his son, Sextus Tarquin, and his nephew, Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus. In their tent the latter two began arguing about the virtue of their respective wives, each of them, like a good husband, upholding that of his own. Probably each of them said to the other: "Mine is an honest woman. Yours makes a cuckold of you." The seed of doubt had been sown and they decided to go home that very night and surprise them in the act.

In Rome they found the wife of Sextus consoling herself for her temporary widowhood by banqueting with some male friends and plainly not discouraging their advances. The wife of Collatinus, Lucretia, was passing the time weaving a garment for her husband. Collatinus triumphantly pocketed the wager and went back to the camp. Sextus, humiliated and thirsting for revenge, set about courting Lucretia, and, finally, partly by violence, partly by guile, succeeded in overcoming her resistance.

After this infidelity, the poor woman sent for her husband and her father, a senator, told them what had happened and then plunged a dagger into her heart. Lucius Junius Brutus, another nephew of this king who had murdered his father, summoned the Senate, told them the infamous story and proposed the removal of the Proud One from the throne and the expulsion of all his family from the City (himself excepted, of course). Tarquin, informed of this, rushed to Rome, while, at the same time, Brutus was galloping to the camp. They probably crossed one another on the way. While the king was

trying to re-establish order in the City, Brutus was sowing the seeds of disorder among the legions. They decided to rebel and march on Rome.

Tarquin fled north, taking refuge in the same Etruria whence his ancestors had come and whose pride he had humbled by reducing her cities to the status of vassals of Rome. It must have been a very bitter pill for him to beg hospitality of Porsena, "lucumo," or chief magistrate of Chiusi, which at that time was called Clusium. Porsena, a perfect gentleman, offered it to him.

In Rome they proclaimed a republic. As later in the case of the Plantagenets in England and of the Bourbons in France, the monarchy of Rome had lasted for seven reigns. This was the year 508 B.C. and two hundred and forty-five had elapsed "ab urbe condita."

5

LARS PORSENA OF CLUSIUM

As people always do when they change the régime, the Romans hailed the new one with enthusiasm and placed on it all their hopes, including those of liberty and social justice. A great "comitia centuriata" was summoned, in which all the soldier-citizens took part. It declared the monarchy well and truly dead, blamed it for all the errors and iniquities which the public administration had committed during the entire two and a half centuries of its life, and, in the place of the king, appointed two consuls. They were to be the two principal authors of the revolution; the unhappy widower, Collatinus, and the unfortunate orphan, Lucius Junius Brutus. As the former declined the job, his place was taken by Publius Valerius, who went down in history with the nickname of "Publicola," which means "the people's friend."

Publicola gave proof of his friendship by proposing and getting the "comitia" to approve certain laws which remained fundamental for as long as the Republic lasted. These decreed the death penalty for anyone who tried to take over a public appointment without the approval of the people and allowed any citizen condemned to death to appeal to the Assembly or "comitia centuriata." Moreover, they gave any citizen the right to kill, without even a trial, whoever tried to get himself proclaimed king. The later law, however, forgot to define clearly the elements necessary for proving that somebody cherished this ambition. During the following years this came in very handy to the Senate for getting rid of a number of inconvenient enemies whom they accused of being would-be kings.

In his democratic zeal Publicola also introduced the custom for the consul, when he entered the enclosure of the "comitia centuriata," to have the lictors, who preceded him, lower the symbols of office: those famous "fasces" which Mussolini later was to bring back into fashion. This was to show that authority came from the people, who, having delegated it to the consul, remained its arbiter.

These things were all very fine and for the moment had great effect. Once their ardour had cooled off, people began to wonder what were the actual practical advantages of the new system. It was quite true that all citizens had the vote, but the "comitiæ" still continued to function according to the rights of the classes, just as Servius had rigged things. So the millionaires of the first class, having ninety-eight "centuriæ," that is ninety-eight votes, were still able to impose their will on all the others. In fact, one of the first steps they took was to revoke the distribution of land to the poor which the Tarquins had made in conquered territories. Thus a great many smallholders suddenly found their houses and land had been confiscated without notice. Not knowing how to make both ends meet, they came back to Rome to look for work.

But there was none going in Rome, as the consuls, who were

elected for one year only, could not carry out any of those great public works programmes. These had been the speciality of the kings, the first five of whom had been elected for life while the last two were hereditary. Furthermore, the Republic was dominated by the Senate, which had created it, and which was composed of landowners of Latin and Sabine origins. Compared with the spendthrift monarchy, which had been dominated by the industrialists of Etruscan and Greek origin, these were a packet of misers. They wanted to "balance the budget," as we would say to-day, and follow a cautious financial policy, particularly as it was against their interests to increase the number of their natural enemies the *nouveaux riches*.

In short, there was a slump, and the poor peasants who came in from the country to escape unemployment and starvation only found more starvation and unemployment. Factories were at a standstill. Houses and roads remained unfinished. The daring contractors, who had been the mainstay of the Tarquins and had given work to thousands of specialists and tens of thousands of workmen, were either banished or had reason to fear that they would be. Places of public entertainment closed one after the other, for lack of customers. These were thinned out for want of ready cash and by the puritanical atmosphere which all republics emanate or try to emanate. The propagandists of the new régime were continually haranguing the crowd so that they should not forget the crimes that the kings had committed. It probably occurred to their listeners as they looked around them that these crimes included the Forum, where they stood at the moment and which had been built by the execrated kings.

Amongst the misdeeds on which these propagandists were always harping was that the late dynasty had tried to make Rome an Etruscan colony. There was some truth in this, but it was also thanks to it that Rome now had her Circus Maximus, her Cloaca, her engineers, her artisans, her "histriones" (who were the actors of that time), her pugilists and gladiators (the protagonists of those spectacles the Romans loved so much), her

walls, her drainage, her fortune-tellers and her liturgy for worshipping her gods. All these were imports from Etruria.

Naturally, not everybody realised this, because not everybody had been to Etruria. The young intellectuals, however, were fully aware of it. They had studied at the Etruscan universities of Tarquinia, Arezzo and Chiusi, where they had been sent by their fathers and which they remembered very well indeed. As a rule, they did not belong to the patrician families, who educated their sons at home, were very careful to see that they did not learn too much, and tried to turn out men of character. They came from middle-class families and their lives were bound up with commerce, industry and the liberal professions, the very things most drastically hit by the new trend of events.

For all these reasons discontent soon made itself felt and, unfortunately, it coincided with a declaration of war on the part of Porsena, who had been egged on by Tarquin.

We cannot tell with absolute certainty how this deal was clinched, but, given the circumstances, we have no difficulty in guessing the arguments which the deposed monarch must have used to get the "lucumo" to come in on his side. The latter must certainly have pointed out that, though the Tarquins were of Etruscan blood, they had not been very good sons of Etruria insofar as they had continually harassed her with wars and punitive expeditions to the extent of becoming practically her overlord. The Proud One probably replied that whilst he and his two predecessors had been Romanising Etruria, they had also been Etruscanising Rome. Conquering it from within, one might say, at the expense of the Latin and Sabine elements which had formerly been predominant. The struggle had not been between foreign powers, but between rival cities, daughters of the same civilisation. Although Rome was the new-comer, she had not tried to destroy the others but to unite them under a single command so as to win the hegemony of Italy. Perhaps he, the Proud One, had made mistakes, perhaps he had been a little heavy-handed now and then, and had not shown enough

consideration for the independence of their cities. But the Tarquins had never treated any of them as, for example, they had treated Alba Longa, and so many other settlements and villages of Latium and Sabina, which had been razed to the ground. No Etruscan city had ever been pillaged. The merchants, the artisans, the actors and pugilists of Tarquinia, of Chiusi, of Volterra and of Arezzo, when they emigrated to Rome, had not been treated as slaves. On the contrary, they had gone up in the world and all the economy, culture, industry and commerce was virtually in their hands.

That is to say, rather, that it had been, with the Tarquins on the throne to protect them. But what was going to happen now, with this Republic? The Republic meant the return of the Latins and Sabines, those boorish, greedy, mistrustful reactionaries, with their instinctive racial intolerance, who had always harboured a smouldering hatred for the liberal and progressive Etruscan bourgeoisie. It was no good deluding oneself as to how they would be treated. Their liquidation meant the consolidation, at the mouth of the Tiber, of a hostile foreign power instead of a friendly (if, at times, slightly obstreperous) people of the same race. This power to-morrow might join forces with other enemies of Etruria and contribute to her downfall. Was Porsena prepared to stand idle and watch a similar alteration in the balance of power?

On the other hand, was it not a golden opportunity to prevent a similar catastrophe by attacking Rome now, whilst chaos was rife, within and without? Particularly in Latium and Sabina, where people's bones were still aching from the blows which they had received from the Roman soldiery. One signal from the powerful "lucumo" of Chiusi, and all these cities would rise against their scant garrisons and Rome would find herself divided, alone at the mercy of her enemies.

We know practically nothing of Porsena. Judging from the way he acted, we must draw the conclusion that he combined the qualities of a good general with those of a wise politician. He realised that there was a certain amount of truth in

Tarquin's arguments, but, before committing himself, he wanted to be quite sure of two things: that Latium and Sabina were really prepared to join with him and that in Rome itself there really was a monarchist "fifth column" ready to facilitate his task by an insurrection.

The insurrection actually took place and forgetting what the Proud One had done to their grandfather the two sons of the consul, Lucius Junius Brutus, took part in it. After the revolt had been ruthlessly repressed, they were arrested and condemned to death and it is said that their father insisted on being present at their decapitation.

The war, however, went badly for Rome. The various Latin and Sabine cities duly massacred their Roman garrisons and joined forces with Porsena, who had come down from the north at the head of a confederate army, to which all Etruria had sent contingents. According to historians, Rome worked miracles of courage against this invasion. Mutius Scævola, secretly finding his way into Porsena's encampment to kill him, mistook his victim and himself punished his guilty hand by putting it on a red-hot brazier. Horatius Cocles alone withstood the entire enemy army at a bridge over the Tiber, while his companions destroyed it under his protection. But the war was lost. These legends are proof of it. Their tone of exaltation is one of the earliest examples of "war propaganda." When a country suffers a defeat she invents or exaggerates "glorious episodes" to distract the attention of both contemporaries and posterity from the final result. That is why heroes nearly always belong to beaten armies. The winners do not need them. Cæsar, for example, does not even mention one in his Commentaries.

The surrender of the City was, in to-day's terminology, unconditional. She had to restore all her Etruscan territories to Porsena. The Latins also took advantage of this moment to attack Rome. She managed to save the situation at the battle of Lake Regillus, where the Heavenly Twins, Castor and Pollux, the sons of Jove, came to her rescue. Nevertheless, after

all these mishaps, that which had been a small empire under the kings found itself with a boundary which to-day would not quite reach Fregene in the north and would fall short of Anzio in the south. It was an enormous catastrophe from which it took her a century to recover.

This war, in addition, claimed another powerful victim: Tarquin. He had already assembled his impedimenta to return to Rome, resume control and wreak his vengeance, when Porsena stopped him and told him that he had no intention of putting him back on the throne. Had he realised that the restoration of the monarchy was quite impossible or did he mistrust the old master of intrigue who, once he was back at the head of his people and his army, might forget favours received and start harassing Etruria all over again?

We are inclined to plump for the second theory. Etruria was an anarchical country, in which every city wanted to be independent and could not bear to see its own autonomy limited. Tarquin would have made Rome an Etruscan city, but Etruria a Roman province. Etruria wanted no part of this and it cost her dear. Before its confederate army could even re-establish communications with the Etruscan colonies in the south, at which in the meanwhile the Greeks had begun to nibble, the League which Porsena had formed with such difficulty melted away. The "lucumo" retired to Chiusi and shut himself up there, whilst the Greeks advanced from the south and another terrible menace loomed large in the north. This was that of the Gauls, who were coming down from the Alps and submerging the Etruscan colonies of the Po Valley. Even in the face of this danger Etruria did not find her unity, that unity which Tarquin wished to give her under the sign of and in the name of Rome. The old king continued to intrigue, but in vain. The victorious cities of Latium, with Veii at their head, collaborated to prevent his return. They preferred to have to deal with a republican Rome, whose internal difficulties they knew and who was not in a position to take revenge. This revenge was, in fact, to be delayed for another century.

Liberations are always an expensive business. Rome paid for hers from her king with the Empire. She had taken two and a half centuries to gain supremacy over central Italy and had achieved it under seven kings. The Republic, in order to remain such, had to relinquish all this colossal patrimony.

What, then, had failed to work under the monarchy which induced the Romans to make this sacrifice in order to be rid of it?

The melting-pot had not functioned, that is the fusion of the races and classes which made up the people. The first four kings had humiliated the Etruscan element which composed the Middle Classes, Riches, Progress, Technique, Industry and Commerce. The last three had humiliated the Latin and Sabine element which composed the Aristocracy, Agriculture, Tradition and the Army and whose political expression was the Senate. Now the Senate was getting its revenge. It revenged itself by means of the Republic, which was exclusively of its making.

From now on everything was to be republican in Rome. Above all, its history. This began to be written in such a way as to discredit the monarchy and the spectacular successes which Rome had achieved under it. This should not be forgotten when reading books on Roman history, which, with one accord, date the beginning of the City's greatness from the expulsion of the last Tarquin.

This is palpably untrue. Rome had already been a powerful capital in the time of the kings, and it was largely due to their work that she became one again. The austere magistrates who supplanted them and wielded power "in the name of the people" found the premises for future triumphs ready-made for them: a well-laid-out city from the architectural and administrative point of view, a resourceful and cosmopolitan population, an élite of first-class technicians, a well-trained army, a religion and language already codified, and a diplomatic corps which had served its apprenticeship in making and unmaking alliances with most of the peoples round about.

This diplomacy was efficacious even at the moment of the catastrophe. Rome hastened to sign two treaties: one with Carthage to assure herself of peace from the seaward side, and one with the Latin League to assure it on land. Both involved radical concessions. On the sea, Rome gave up every claim in Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, beyond which she was not to go with her ships and where she could only embark stores without landing. This was a concession which cost her little, seeing that she did not yet own a fleet worthy of the name.

More painful were those on land sanctioned by the consul Spurius Cassius at the end of hostilities with Veii and her allies. Rome remained mistress of only five hundred square miles and had to accept being an equal among equals in the Latin League. The "foedus," that is the treaty of 493 B.C., begins with these emphatic words: "Let there be peace between the Romans and the Latin cities so long as the position of the sky and earth remains unchanged. . . ." The position of the sky and earth had not changed in the slightest when, less than a century later, the Roman republic went on the warpath again, exactly the same one along which their ancient kings had stopped half-way, and proceeded to administer an unforgettable lesson to the Latin cities.

6

S.P.Q.R.

AFTER 508 B.C., the year in which the Republic was founded, all the monuments which the Romans used to erect all over the place bore the initials S.P.Q.R., which means "Senatus Populus-Que Romanus"—"The Senate and the Roman People."

We have already described what the Senate was, but not the "populus," a word which had little or nothing in common with what we mean by the people. In those far-off days it did not include all the citizens, as is the case to-day, but only two "orders," or social classes: the "patricians" and the "equites," or knights.

The patricians were those who were descended from the "patres," or founders of the city. According to Livy, Romulus chose about a hundred heads of families to help him build Rome. These, naturally, helped themselves to the best land and considered themselves a cut above the later arrivals. Thus the first kings had no social problems to cope with since all his subjects were equal and he himself was only one of them appointed to carry out certain functions of a mainly religious nature.

Under Tarquinius Priscus a great many other people began to stream into Rome, especially from Etruria. The descendants of the "patres" were very careful to keep their distance from these new-comers and took refuge in the Senate, which was only accessible to members of their families. Each of them bore the name of his founder-forebear: Manlius, Julius, Valerius, Æmilius, Cornelius, Claudius, Horatius, Fabius.

It was from the moment that these two populations, the descendants of the ancient pioneers and the more recent

arrivals, began to live side by side within the city walls that the difference in classes arose: on the one hand the patricians, on the other the plebs.

Very soon the patricians were heavily outnumbered. In order to defend their prerogatives, they did what all social classes do when they are crafty and find themselves in the minority: they called in some of the plebs to share their privileges, thus binding the latter also to defend them.

Already under Servius Tullius the social classes were not just limited to two. An important middle class had sprung up among the plebs, which was quite strong in number, but very strong indeed financially. When the king organised the new "*comitiæ centuriatæ*," dividing them into five classes according to their financial status, giving the first, or millionaire's class enough votes to beat the other four, the patricians were far from happy. They saw themselves literally outclassed as a political power by people with no family tree but much more money. Thus, when Tarquin the Proud was expelled and the Republic proclaimed, they realised that they could not stand alone against all the others. They resorted to making an alliance with the moneyed bourgeoisie who, after all, like their counterparts in all times, asked nothing more than to be allowed to enter the aristocracy, that is, the Senate. If the French nobility of the eighteenth century had done the same thing, they would have avoided the guillotine.

These men of substance, as we have said, were called "*equites*" or knights. They all came from commerce or industry and their great dream was to enter the Senate. In order to make it come true they not only always voted with the patricians at the "*comitiæ centuriatæ*," because the latter had the keys to the Senate, but they did not mind dipping into their pockets to get an appointment or office. The patricians made them pay through the nose for this high honour. When they married the daughter of a knight, they insisted on a queen's dowry and even on the day the knight finally succeeded in becoming a senator, he was not admitted as a "*pater*" or

patrician, but as a conscript, for the assembly was composed of "patres et conscripti."

The "people" was formed of these two orders only, patricians and knights. All the rest were plebs and did not count. They included all sorts of people: artisans, small shopkeepers, clerks, freedmen and the like and, naturally, they were not all satisfied with their lot. In fact, the whole of the first century of the new Rome was taken up by social struggle between those who wished to enlarge the concept of the people and those who wished to restrict it to the two aristocracies: that of birth and that of money. This struggle began in 494 B.C., fourteen years after the proclamation of the Republic, when Rome, assailed on every side, had lost all that she had won under the kings. By now she was reduced more or less to the status of a county town and had to put up with being a member of the Latin League on an equal footing with all the other cities.

At the end of this ruinous war the plebs, who had supplied the man-power for it, found themselves in desperate conditions. Many had lost their farms which had remained in territory occupied by the enemy. In order to maintain their families while they were under arms, all of them had run heavily into debt, which in those times was not the normal state of affairs that it is to-day. Whoever did not pay, automatically became the slave of his creditor who could lock him up in the cellar, sell him or kill him. If the creditors were more than one they were even authorised to divide up the corpse of the poor devil when they had finished him off. Although it appears that they never went quite as far as this, none the less, the position of a debtor was far from comfortable.

What could these plebeians do to get a little justice? They had no voice in the "comitiæ centuriatæ" because they belonged to the last classes: those who had too few centuriæ and, therefore, too few votes to impose their will. So they began to agitate in the streets and squares, choosing orators from among the more intelligent of their fellows who demanded the

cancellation of debts, a new distribution of land to replace their lost smallholdings and the right to elect their own magistrates.

The "orders" and the Senate turned a deaf ear to these demands. Whereupon the plebs, or large masses of them, went on strike. They retired on to Monte Sacro,¹ some three miles from the City, and said that from that moment onwards they would not supply a labourer for the land, a workman for industry or a soldier for the army.

The latter threat was the most serious and urgent, because at that very moment a new menace had arisen in the form of the Volsci and the Æqui. Just when a peace had been more or less patched up with their Latin and Sabine neighbours, these barbarous tribes came rolling down from the heights of the Apennines to the plains in search of more fertile land and were already overrunning the cities of the League.

The Senate, thus hard put to it, sent deputation after deputation to the plebs to get them to come back to the City and collaborate in the common defence. Menenius Agrippa, to convince them, told them the famous story of the man whose limbs, to spite his stomach, refused to get it any food and so finished up by dying of starvation. But the plebs held out and replied that there was no choice. Either the Senate cancelled their debts, freed all those enslaved for non-payment and allowed the plebs to elect their own magistrates to defend them or they would remain on Monte Sacro and the Æqui and Volsci or whoever liked were welcome to come and destroy Rome.

In the end the Senate gave in. It cancelled the debts, freed the slaves and put the plebs under the protection of two "tribunes" and three "ædiles" elected annually by them.

This was the first great victory of the Roman proletariat and it gave them a legal instrument for winning others on the road to social justice. The year 493 B.C. is very important in the history of the City and of democracy.

¹ Latin "mons sacer."

With the return of the plebs it was possible to put an army in the field to counter the menace of the Volsci and the Æqui. Rome was not alone in this war, which lasted about sixty years and in which her very survival was at stake. The common danger kept not only her Latin and Sabine allies faithful to her, but also another neighbouring people, the Hernici.

The story goes that a young patrician greatly distinguished himself in the close-fought battles which ensued. He was called Coriolanus after a city which he had taken by assault and, being a diehard Conservative, did not wish the Government to make a free issue of grain to the starving population. The tribunes of the plebs, who in the meanwhile had been elected, asked for and obtained his exile. Coriolanus promptly joined the enemy's army, took over the command of it and, brilliant strategist that he was, led it from victory to victory right up to the gates of Rome.

To him also the Senate sent deputation after deputation with appeals to desist but he declined to listen. Only when he saw his imploring wife and mother coming to him did he give the order to his Volsci to withdraw, who reacted by killing him; but, left without a leader, they were defeated and forced to retreat.

In their wake appeared the Æqui, who had already turned Frascati upside down. They succeeded in interrupting communications between the Romans and their allies, and the situation was so dismal that they granted the title and powers of dictator to T. Quintius Cincinnatus. He, with a fresh army, relieved the surrounded legions and led them to final victory in 431 B.C. He then relinquished his command, having held it for only sixteen days, and went back to his farm to get on with his ploughing.

Even before this happy conclusion, a new war had broken out to the north against the Etruscan city of Veii. This city did not intend to miss the favourable occasion of putting Rome down once and for all. Veii had already committed a number of hostile acts whilst Rome was busy defending herself against

the Volsci and the Æqui, acts which Rome had submitted to in the manner of the English, that is, making a careful note of them. Then as soon as her hands were free, she settled accounts. It was a bitter war which also, at one point, required the appointment of a dictator. This was Marcus Furius Camillus, a great soldier but, above all, an honest man. He brought a great innovation to the army: the "stipendium." Up till now the soldiers had had to serve for nothing, and, if they were married, their families at home starved. The satisfied troops redoubled their efforts, took Veii by assault, destroyed it methodically and deported all the inhabitants as slaves.

This great victory and the exemplary punishment which sealed it filled the Romans with pride, quadrupled their territory until it was over fifteen hundred square miles, and gave rise to jealousy and mistrust of its author. While Camillus was conquering city after city in Etruria, in Rome they began to accuse him of being ambitious and of pocketing the loot instead of handing it over to the State. This so embittered him that he relinquished his command. Instead of returning home to clear his name he went into voluntary exile at Ardea.

He might perhaps have died there, leaving a name besmirched by calumny, if the ungrateful Romans had not needed him again to save them from the Gauls, the last and greatest danger they had to face before starting on their career of conquest. The Gauls were a barbaric people of Celtic stock who had come from France and had overrun the valley of the Po. They had divided that fertile territory among their tribes, the Insubres, the Boii, the Cenomani and the Senones. But one tribe under the command of Brennus conquered Chiusi, overthrew the Roman legions on the River Allia, and marched on Rome.

Historians have wrapped this chapter, which must have been a singularly unpleasant one for the City, in numerous legends. One of these is that when the Gauls were about to assault the Capitol, the geese sacred to Juno began to screech so loudly that they woke up Manlius Capitolinus. Thereupon,

at the head of the defenders, he beat off the attack. If he did, the Gauls somehow got into the Capitol just the same, as they also did into the rest of the City, whence the population had fled *en masse* to take refuge in the surrounding mountains. We are also told that the complete Senate remained, sitting like statues on the coarse benches of the Senate house, and that one of them, Papirius, when he felt his beard pulled in derision by a Gaul (who may have wanted to find out whether it was in fact stone), struck him in the face with his ivory sceptre. Finally, it is said that Brennus, having set fire to the whole of Rome, demanded heaven only knows how many pounds of gold if he went away and, for weighing it, insisted on fraudulent scales. When the senators protested, Brennus threw his sword on to the plate for good measure and pronounced the famous phrase: "Væ victis", "Woe to the vanquished!" Upon this Camillus, popping up by a miracle from somewhere, is said to have replied: "Non auro, sed ferro, recuperanda est patria," "The country must be restored with iron and not with gold." Whereupon he placed himself at the head of an army—it remains a mystery where this had been hidden up to now—and put the enemy to flight.

The truth of the matter is that the Gauls took Rome by force of arms, sacked it and went off, not pursued by the legions but laden with loot. They were hearty and clumsy plunderers, and their conquests had nothing political or strategic about them. They assaulted, sacked and retired, taking no thought for the morrow. If they had been able to imagine the vengeance Rome was to wreak for this humiliation, they would not have left a stone standing. Devastate it they did, but they did not destroy it. They then retraced their footsteps towards Æmilia and Lombardy. Camillus, urgently recalled from Ardea, got down to repairing the damage. He probably never even had a skirmish with the Gauls since they had already gone by the time he arrived. However, laying aside his rancour, he re-assumed the title of dictator and got down to the job of reconstructing city and army. The same people who had called

him ambitious and a robber now called him "The Second Founder of Rome."

While all this was happening on the outside, internally Rome had attained a major objective with the "Law of the Twelve Tables."

This was a success for the plebs who, ever since they had returned from Monte Sacro, had never ceased to demand that the laws should no longer be left as the monopoly of the priesthood, which in turn was the monopoly of the patricians. They stipulated that laws should be published so that everybody should know his obligations and the penalties to which he was liable if he did not fulfil them. Up to now the standards by which the magistrates had judged had been secret, contained in texts jealously guarded by the priests, and mixed up with religious rites by which they claimed to divine the will of the gods. If they were in a good temper, a murderer could get away with it; if not, a poor chicken thief might finish on the gallows. Since those who interpreted the divine will were patricians, the plebs felt defenceless.

Under pressure of external dangers from the Volsci, the Æqui, the Veians and the Gauls, not to mention the threat of a second retirement to Monte Sacro, the Senate gave in. It sent three of its members to Greece to study what Solon had done in this particular line. When these envoys returned, a commission of ten legislators was set up, who were called "decemvirs." Under the presidency of Appius Claudius they drew up the Code of the Twelve Tables, which was the public and written foundation of Roman Law.

This great achievement dates back to 451 B.C. which almost corresponds to the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the City.

Things did not run smoothly, because the decemvirs so much liked the plenary powers which the Senate had conferred on them to complete the job that, at the end of the second year when they were due to expire, they refused to part with them. This is said to be the fault of Appius Claudius, who wished to

continue in office to enable him to enslave and overcome the resistance of a delectable plebeian, Virginia, of whom he was enamoured. Her father, Lucius Virginus, went to protest. When Appius took a lofty tone, he stuck a knife in him, then, like Collatinus after the Lucretia business, hurried off to the barracks, told his story to the soldiers and exhorted them to revolt against the despot. The plebs, in indignation, once more retired to Monte Sacro and the army threatened to follow their example. So the Senate, in an urgent session, expressed regret to the decemvirs that they could no longer keep them in office. They were, therefore, dismissed, Appius Claudius banished and the executive power returned to the consuls.

It was not yet the triumph of democracy. This only came a century later, with the proposals of Licinius and Sextius, but it was a great step forward. The P in S.P.Q.R. began to be the "populus" as we understand it to-day.

7

PYRRHUS

ROME emerged from the humiliation she had suffered at the hands of the Gauls and from the internal struggle between patricians and plebs with two important gains. These were supremacy in the League over her Latin and Sabine rivals, who had suffered more serious devastation than she had without finding a Camillus to repair the damage and a more balanced social structure, which assured peace between the classes. And so, hardly had the smoke from the fires which Brennus left in his trail on his way north cleared away than the City, brand-new and better organised than ever, began to take a good look round for means of expansion.

Campania had the richest and most fertile land in the neighbourhood. It was inhabited by the Samnites, part of

whom, however, had remained in the mountains of the Abruzzi. Thence, cold and hungry, they often used to swoop down to plunder the herds and crops of their brethren of the plain. Under the threat of one of these incursions the Samnites of Capua applied for protection to Rome. Rome was only too delighted to oblige, as it was the best way of splitting this people permanently in two and intruding into their private affairs. Thus began the first of the three Samnite wars, which were to last about fifty years in all.

The first, against the people of the Abruzzi, was short, from 343 B.C. to 341 B.C. Some people say it was never fought because the Abruzzans failed to turn up and the Romans did not feel like winking them out in their mountains. However, one consequence remained—the “protection” of Rome over Capua, who felt so well protected that she invited the Latins to form a united front against their common protector. The Latins agreed and Rome suddenly found them enemies instead of allies. It was an awkward moment which required the usual heroic episodes to overcome its difficulties. To give an example of discipline the consul Titus Manlius Torquatus condemned his own son to death, because, in spite of the order to stand firm, he had left the ranks to reply to the insult of a Latin officer. His colleague, Publius Decius Mus, told by the augurs that the country could only be saved by the sacrifice of his life, advanced single-handed against the foe, quite happy to lay it down.

Whether these episodes are invented or true, Rome won and abolished the Latin League which had betrayed her. With this, the federal policy adopted up till now came to an end. The unitarian policy of a single block came into force. Rome conceded different types of autonomy to the various cities which had made up the League so as to avoid their having interests in common. The good old system of “divide and rule” was beginning to creep in. There were to be no political relations between the subject cities, each of which maintained them separately with Rome. Colonisers, to whom the land was given

free, were sent to the Campania and became the outposts of Roman sovereignty in the south. The Empire was coming into being.

The second Samnite war began, without a pretext, some fifteen years later in 327 B.C. The Romans, who had reached the outskirts of Naples during the previous war, had looked long and hard at this capital of the Greek colonies. They were fascinated by its long Hellenic walls, its gymnasia, its theatres, its commerce and its liveliness, and one fine day they occupied it.

The Samnites, both of mountain and plain, realised that if they were given a free hand these people would devour the whole of Italy. So they made peace with one another and jointly attacked the legions in the rear. At first their army, composed of guerrillas rather than soldiers, was beaten; later, knowing the terrain better than the Romans, they lured them into the gorges of Caudium, near Benevento, and bottled them up there. After many vain attempts to break out of the trap the two consuls were forced to capitulate and submit to the humiliation of passing under the yoke of the Samnite spears; these were the famous "Caudine forks."

Rome, as usual, bided her time and did not sue for peace. Profiting by the experience, she reorganised the legions. To avoid similar mishaps she made them more mobile and manœuvrable. In 316 B.C. she resumed the struggle. Once more she found herself in danger. The Etruscans to the north and the Hernici to the south-east tried to catch her unawares. She defeated them separately and then, with all her forces, turned on the isolated Samnites. In 304 B.C. she conquered Boiano, their capital, and for the first time her legions crossed the Apennines and reached the Adriatic coast of Apulia.

These successes worried the other peoples of the peninsula so much that fear drove them to forming a coalition and gave them the courage to challenge Rome. This time, in addition to the Etruscans, the Lucanians, the Umbrians and the Sabines also joined the Samnites, determined even at the cost of their

independence to defend their anarchy. They put together an army which met the Romans at Sentinum in the Umbrian Apennines. They were superior in numbers but, instead of operating in concert, all the generals commanding the different contingents shifted for themselves. Naturally they were beaten. Decius Mus, son of the consul who had voluntarily sacrificed his life for his country, repeated his father's gesture, and thus assured the family name its niche in history. The coalition broke up. The Etruscans, Lucanians and Umbrians sued for peace separately. The Samnites and Sabines fought on for another five years and, in 290 B.C., surrendered.

Modern historians assert that Rome undertook this series of wars with a precise strategic objective in view: the Adriatic. We believe that her legions arrived on the Adriatic without knowing how or why, but simply in pursuit of the fleeing enemy. Since the Romans of that time had no maps, they had no idea that Italy comprised what to-day would be called "a natural geopolitical unit," that it was the shape of a boot and that, to keep a firm hold on it, one must be master of its seas. Without knowing or propounding the theory, they quite simply put into practice the principle of *lebensraum* or living space, according to which a territory has to annex its neighbours in order to live and breathe. Thus, to guarantee the safety of Capua, they conquered Naples. To guarantee the safety of Naples, they conquered Benevento. At Taranto, because there was nothing but sea beyond it, they stopped.

Taranto, at that time, was a Greek metropolis. It had achieved great progress, especially in the fields of industry, commerce and art, under the guidance of Archites, half-philosopher, half-engineer and one of the greatest statesmen of antiquity. It was not a warlike city. In 303 B.C. it had asked and received from Rome a promise that her ships should never round Cape Colonne, which meant that Rome would leave her in peace from the sea. Taranto had been certain that she could never have reached her overland, but now this was the very direction from which she was seen to come rolling down.

The pretext for war was supplied, as usual, by an appeal for protection which the Thurii, threatened by the Lucanians, addressed to Rome. As always on these occasions, Rome readily complied and supplied a garrison to defend them. This was sent by sea, no doubt with the deliberate intention of looking for trouble as the ships had to round Cape Colonne to reach the Thurii. The Tarantines closed an eye to this infraction of the pact but, when the ten Roman triremes demanded to anchor in their port, they considered it provocation and attacked them, sinking four.

They then realised that this act meant war, and that they would come off very badly in any war unless they managed to get some very powerful outside help. Where could they find it? Italy had not a single state left capable of opposing Rome. And so they had to send abroad for help, thus setting a precedent for a custom which long prevailed in the peninsula. They found that help just the other side of the sea, in Pyrrhus, king of the Epirus.

This Pyrrhus was a strange character, who, if he had been content with his little mountain kingdom, might have lived to a ripe and comfortable old age. But in the *Iliad* he had read of the deeds of Achilles, and he had in his veins Macedonian blood, the blood of Alexander the Great. Everything conspired to make him rather like one of the condottieri of the fifteenth century. The proposal of the Tarantines was just what he had been waiting for. He embarked his army and met the Romans at Heraclea.

The latter found themselves face to face with an enemy of whose existence they had never dreamed: elephants. At first they thought they were oxen and, in fact, called them "Lucanian oxen." When they saw these monsters charge they were panic-stricken but, though they lost the battle, they inflicted such heavy losses on the enemy that his victory was empty. Ever since then the expression "Pyrrhic victory" has been used to describe conquests of which the price was too high.

The following year (279 B.C.), the Epirot repeated his

performance at Ascoli Satriano. Here again his losses were so heavy that, looking at the battlefield, he must have felt the same dismay that Napoleon III did a couple of thousand years later when he contemplated the field of Solferino. Pyrrhus therefore sent his secretary Cineas to Rome with peace proposals and, with him, two thousand Roman prisoners, who were under oath to return if peace were not concluded. We are told that the Senate was on the point of accepting these proposals, when the censor Appius Claudius the Blind took the floor to remind the Assembly that it was undignified to negotiate with a foreigner whilst his invading army was still encamped on Italian soil.

We doubt the truth of this; for Rome, at that time, Italy only meant Rome itself. However, there is no doubt that the Senate rejected the proposals, and that Cineas, together with the two thousand prisoners, not one of whom broke his parole, returned and gave Pyrrhus such a vivid description of what he had seen at Rome that the Epirot decided to accept an appeal from the Syracusans for help against the Carthaginians, who were beginning to take an uncomfortable interest in Sicily. There, too, he did not have much success. The Greek cities which he had come to defend could not agree among themselves and never gave him the contingents they had promised. Discouraged, he recrossed the straits to relieve Taranto, to which the Romans were now laying siege. By this time they were accustomed to elephants, which they now faced boldly. Pyrrhus was defeated in 275 B.C. at Malevento, which for the occasion the Romans re-christened Benevento. Italy having proved so unprofitable, Pyrrhus went back to try his luck in Greece, where he presently met his death.

Exactly seventy years had elapsed (343 B.C. to 273 B.C.) since Rome had recovered as well as she could from the internal upheaval due to the fall of the monarchy, had survived her struggle for existence and embarked on her authentic campaigns of conquest. By now she was arbiter of the whole peninsula, from the Tuscan-Æmilian Apennines to the Straits

of Messina. One by one the stars of all the little kings which had once twinkled there had been extinguished, including those of Magna Græcia, who were left without a protector once Pyrrhus had departed. Taranto surrendered in 262 B.C., Reggio in 260 B.C.

After her experience with the Latin League, Rome had realised that one could not put one's trust in protectorates and forced allies. Partly for this reason, and partly owing to overpopulation in the City, the Romans really began to Romanise Italy by the system of "colonies," a process they had already inaugurated after the first Samnite war. Enemy territory was confiscated and distributed to landless Roman citizens, especially to those with military merits. In fact, it was to the ex-soldiers that most of it was assigned, men who could be relied upon to rally promptly to their own defence—and Rome's. The natives naturally received them coldly as robbers and oppressors, and from the name of one of them, a certain Caphus, a corporal in Cæsar's army, the word "cafone" was later coined, a term of contempt meaning a coarse and vulgar person. This hostility also gave rise at this time to the mocking, derisive sound with which the defeated peoples greeted the Romans when they entered their cities and which, it would seem, was at first mistaken by them for a manifestation of welcome.

Of course one cannot hope to enlarge one's territory from five hundred to twenty-five thousand square kilometres, as the Romans did during this period, without treading on somebody's corns. On the other hand, all central and southern Italy began to speak the same language and to think in terms of nation and state instead of village and tribe.

During the course of these long and bloody wars and as a direct result of the pressure they exerted, the plebs attained their objectives, one after the other, including the last and fundamental one, guaranteed by the Hortensian Law, so-called after the dictator who decreed it: that the result of a plebiscite automatically became law, with no need for ratification by the

Senate. Since the veto on marriages between patricians and plebs had been abolished, at least on paper, by the Canuleian Law of 445 B.C., the latter were no longer excluded from any right or magistrature. And, since the prætorship was open to them and the right of admission to the Senate was given to those who had practised at the bar, even this last citadel of the aristocracy was accessible to them, albeit with a thousand precautions and limitations.

All this had been achieved in the face of endless antagonisms, which at times had endangered the very existence of the City. But the fact that, somehow or other, it had been achieved goes to show that, although the upper classes in Rome were indeed conservatives, they had their heads screwed on the right way. They were not in the least ashamed of defending openly the interests of their caste and never pretended to flirt with the left wing, as so many princes and industrialists have subsequently. They paid their taxes, did ten years' hard military service, died at the head of their men and, when it was a question of choosing between their own privileges and the good of the country, they did not hesitate. This is why, even after they had accepted complete parity of rights with the plebs, they remained in power, as the English nobility still manages to do even in this socialist world.

During the period of rest she allowed herself after the victory over Pyrrhus, which she also used for digesting her prey, Rome put the finishing touches to the internal equilibrium and order of that large portion of the peninsula of which she was mistress. The Appian Way, which Appius Claudius had built to link Capua to Rome, was prolonged to Brindisi and Taranto. This was the highway along which, not only the soldiers, but also the colonisers marched, on their way to Romanise Benevento, Isernia, Brindisi, Fermo, Adria and so many other cities. Rome granted very little independence to the conquered and had not much respect even for that, and thus she bears prime responsibility for the lack of communal and regional liberties in Italy which developed so vigorously in the Germanic world. On the

other hand, she brought the concept of the State, of which she was practically the inventor, to its highest expression and placed it on those five pillars which still uphold it: the Prefect, the Judge, the Policeman, the Law, and the Tax-collector.

These were the instruments with which she set out to conquer the world. Let us now take a closer look at the reasons why she succeeded.

8

EDUCATION

IN THE well-named "Stoic" Rome of those days, everybody "lived dangerously." The danger began on the day of one's birth. If one happened to be born a girl or with some physical defect, one's father had the right to throw one out of the door and leave one to die. What is more, he often did. The healthy male child, on the other hand, was welcome, not only because he would be useful to his parents later on by helping them with their work, but also because of their belief that, unless they left someone to look after their tombs and to celebrate the necessary sacrifices thereon, their souls would not go to heaven.

If all went well, that is, if the new-comer had hit on the right sex and physical endowments, eight days after his birth he was officially received by the "gens." The gens was a group of families descended from a common ancestor, who had given them his name. In fact, the infant was usually given three names: the individual, or first name (like Marius or Antonius, etc.), that of the gens, or real name, and that of his own family, or surname. Women only had the middle name, that of the gens, and were merely Tullia, Julia, Cornelia, etc., whereas their brothers would be, let us say, Marcus Tullius Emilius, Publius Julius Antonius and Caius Cornelius Gracchus.

This strange habit caused no end of confusion since the

founder-forebears numbered just about a hundred. The names of the gentes were only the same number and so they were continually repeated, making necessary an added fourth or fifth surname! For example, Publius Cornelius Scipio, who destroyed Carthage, added the names *Æmilianus Africanus Minor*. This distinguished him from the Publius Cornelius Scipio who had beaten Hannibal and had added to his name *Africanus Major*.

As can be seen, they were long, weighty, high-sounding names which of themselves imposed a number of duties on their infant-owner. A Marcus Tullius Cornelius could not live in the lap of luxury and give way to the fads and fancies that a Dickie or a Billikins can permit himself. They grew up anything but spoiled and from the tenderest age they were taught that the family to which they belonged was strictly a military unit of which the command was vested in its head, the "*pater-familias*." He only could buy and sell because he was the sole owner of everything, including his wife's dowry. If the latter was unfaithful to him, or if she dipped too deeply into the wine barrel, he could kill her without a trial. He had the same rights over his children, whom he could even sell as slaves. Everything that they bought automatically became his property. The females could only escape from this paternal authority when he gave them in marriage to someone "*cum manu*," that is, explicitly renouncing his every right over them. In this case the rights passed to the husband. Thus a woman always finished up by being the appurtenance of some man: either of her father, or of her husband, or when she was left a widow, of her eldest son or of a guardian.

This stern discipline, which, with the passing of the centuries, was gradually mitigated, was only tempered by "*pietas*," or affection between husband and wife and parents and children. It was hardly ever allowed to prejudice the granitic unity of the Roman family, which included grandchildren, great-grandchildren and slaves, the latter being simply regarded as objects. The mother was called "*domina*," or "*lady*," and was not

confined to a gynæceum, the woman's quarters where the Greek women had to live. She had her meals with her husband, but sitting on the triclinium (a sort of rustic divan) instead of reclining as he did. As a rule, she did not do much work with her hands because servants abounded, what with all the slaves they kept on capturing on the field of battle, and every family had more than one. These were directed and supervised by the domina. For relaxation she wove the wool for the clothes of her husband and sons. Books, playing-cards, theatres and circuses were forbidden. Visits were rare and strictly formal, and a scrupulous ceremonial rendered them complicated and difficult. The "domus," the house, was more like a fortress than a barracks and here the boys were brought up to unquestioning obedience.

They were taught that the fire was never to be allowed to go out because it represented Vesta, the goddess of life. It had to be kept going with fresh wood; bread-crumbs had to be thrown on it during meals. Little ikons were hung on the mud or brick walls in each of which the boy could see the "lares" and "penates", household gods who watched over the prosperity of the house and fields. On the door was Janus who, with his two faces, one looking inwards and the other looking outwards, kept an eye on who came in and who went out. Standing guard around were the "manes," or spirits of the ancestors, who hung around even after death. Thus nobody could make a move without running up against some supernatural guardian, who also belonged to the family: a family composed not only of the living, but also of their predecessors and their successors. The whole group formed not only an economic and moral microcosm but also a religious one, of which the "pater" was the head. It was he who offered the sacrifices on the household altar, gave orders and meted out punishment in the name of the gods.

The religious atmosphere in which the Roman boy grew up did not aim to make a better, but a more disciplined, man of him. Rather than inspiring him towards the noble ideals of

goodness and generosity, it moulded him to acceptance of those liturgical duties which turned his whole life into a rite. He was not expected to be altruistic, for example, but it was required, even insisted on, that he should observe certain precepts and partake in certain ceremonies. His prayers were directed to immediate and practical ends. He addressed himself to Abeona to teach him how to take his first steps, to Fabulina so that he should learn to utter his first words, to Pomona so that the pears in the garden should prosper, to Saturn to help him to sow, to Ceres to grant him a good harvest, and to Sterculus so that the cattle in the cowshed should provide enough manure.

None of these gods and spirits had any regard for morality, but they were highly particular about formalities. Evidently they cherished no illusions about the human soul. Being of the opinion that it had no real vocation for uplift, they left it to its own devices. What really interested them were not the sentiments but the deeds of the faithful. These they intended to keep strictly regimented within the framework of those two great institutions, the Family and the State, of which they were the guiding lights.

This was why they insisted on obedience to the father, fidelity to the husband, procreation, acceptance of the law, respect for authority, courage in war to the point of sacrifice, steadfastness in the face of death, all of which was decked out in sacerdotal solemnity.

Towards the age of six or seven this careful and punctilious formation of the character was followed by that of the mind, by normal education. This was not organised by the State, as it is to-day, with State schools. It remained a family affair. The father rarely, even in well-to-do homes, delegated the job to a slave or freedman. This custom came in much later, when Rome was greater and stronger but no longer stoic. Right up to the end of the Punic Wars fathers were their own sons' schoolmasters and taught them the three R's, which in those

times was called "discipline" the better to accentuate its insistence on absolute obedience.

The subjects were few and simple: reading, writing, grammar, history and arithmetic. The Romans had a kind of ink, concocted from the juice of certain berries, in which they dipped a small metal implement and traced words on little boards of planed wood (only later did they manage to make paper out of linen and parchment). Their language had a very rigid syntax but a limited vocabulary with no shades of meaning, which was much more adapted to drawing up legal codes than to love-stories and poetry. The Romans had no time for this kind of nonsense and anyone who wished to read it had to learn Greek, a much richer and more flexible language, full of nuances. The first history text-book was, in fact, written in Greek by Quintus Fabius Pictor, but this was in 202 B.C., a much later period.

Up to this time history was just handed down verbally from father to son by means of fanciful tales which appealed to the children's imaginations—stories like that of Æneas, of Amulius and Numitor, of the Horatii and the Curiatii, of Lucretia and Collatinus. These fictitious but "improving" historical legends were reinforced by poetry, all of which was sacred and commemorative in tone. It was condensed in volumes entitled "consular archives," "the books of the magistrates," "the annals," et cetera, which extolled great national events such as elections, victories, feasts and miracles.

The first to break away from these prescribed subjects was a Greek slave, Livius Andronicus, who had been taken prisoner during the sack of Taranto and had been brought to Rome. Here he began reciting the *Odyssey* to his owner's friends. These were enthusiastic and, being highly placed personages, commissioned him to make an entertainment from it for the great "ludi" or games of 240 B.C. To translate the Greek verses, Livius Andronicus turned them into Latin verse, crude and irregular in metre, and made them into a tragedy in which he himself declaimed and sang all the parts for as long as his voice

held out. The Romans, who had never seen or heard anything like this, were so delighted that the Government gave the poets recognition as a category of citizen, and allowed them to form their own corporation, with premises in the temple of Minerva on the Aventine Hill.

But this also, I repeat, happened much later. For the moment Roman boys had no literature to read. Once they were able to spell and had learned all the legends by heart, they went on to mathematics and geometry. The first consisted of simple sums carried out with the fingers of which the written numerals were imitations. I is the graphic representation of a raised finger, V of an open hand, X of two open and crossed hands. The Romans counted with these symbols and their prefixes (IV) and suffixes (VI, XII). Later a decimal system evolved from this manual arithmetic, with fractions and multiples of ten, that is of the ten fingers. As for geometry, it remained archaic until the Greeks came along to teach it; it was reduced to a bare minimum, just enough for the rudimentary constructions of the time.

There were no gymnastics. The wrestling ring and the gymnasium were of a much later date and also of Greek importation. Roman fathers preferred to develop the muscles of their sons by putting them to work on the farm with spade and plough and then to turn them over to the army which, when it did not kill them, sent them back, many years later, completely hardened. For this reason not even medicine was taught. The Romans were of the opinion that diseases were not caused by microbes but by the gods. There were only two alternatives: either it was a sign that the gods wished the sick man to depart from this life; in this case there was nothing to be done; or they just wanted to give him a temporary punishment and, in this case, the only thing to do was to wait. For every illness there was a prayer to such-and-such a divinity. The "Madonna of the Fevers" whom the Roman masses still invoke to-day is just the modern version of the goddesses Febris and Mephitis whom they used to invoke back in those times.

As for recreation, the boys were not even allowed to do what they liked with their spare time. After many hours of digging and an hour or so of grammar, the senatorial father used to take his offspring by the hand and drag him off to the hall opposite the Forum where the Senate held its sessions or "senatus-consulta." There, silently sitting on benches, Roman boys from seven or eight upwards had to listen to debates on the great problems of the State, administration, alliances and wars and moulded themselves in that grave and solemn image which was their salient characteristic.

It was the army which gave the finishing formative touch. The richer the citizen, the heavier the taxes he had to pay and the more years he had to serve with the colours. Ten years was the minimum for anyone who wanted to embark on a public career. In practice, only the rich were able to do so, as they were the only ones who could afford to spend so much time away from the farm or shop. Even if somebody wanted to exercise his political rights, that is, to vote, he had to have done his military service, for it was in his capacity as a member of the "centuria" that he took part in the "comitia centuriata," the highest legislative body of the State, divided, as we have said, into its five classes.

The first class had ninety-eight centuriæ, eighteen of which were cavalry and the rest heavy infantry. All the recruits joined up armed, at their own expense, with two spears, a dagger, a sword, a bronze helmet, a breastplate and a shield, which the second class did not have, though in other respects their accoutrements were identical to those of the first. The third and fourth classes were without defensive armament (helmet, breastplate and shield). The fifth class was just armed with staves and stones. The basic unit of this army was the legion, composed of 4,200 infantry, 300 cavalry and various supporting arms. Every legion had its own standard and it was a point of honour for every soldier to prevent it falling into enemy hands. In fact, when things looked unpromising, the officers used to grab it and advance. The troops, to defend it, followed and by

this expedient the tables were turned at the last moment in many a battle that was going badly.

In its earliest period the legion was divided into phalanxes, six solid ranks of five hundred men each, later, to make it more manœuvrable, into maniples of two *centuriæ*, companies of two hundred men. But the strength of this army did not lie in its order of battle but in its discipline. Cowards were flogged to death and the general could behead anybody, officer or other rank, for the slightest disobedience. Deserters and thieves had their right hands cut off. The rations were bread and vegetables and they were so used to this diet that Cæsar's veterans, during a year when the wheat crop failed, complained at having to eat meat.

They were called up at the age of sixteen, and had already begun to think about the regiment they were to join and in which they would grow up. Discipline was so strict and fatigues so exhausting that all preferred active service. After a life like that, death was no great sacrifice for these boys. That was why they faced it with such indifference.

9

THE CAREER

THE young man who had survived ten years' military service could, on his return home, embark on a political career. To this he was elected and promoted by grades, subject to every kind of precaution and control.

It was the assembly of the *centuriæ*'s job to sift the candidates for the various appointments, which were on the plurality system or held by more than one person. The first step was that of *quæstor*, an assistant to the higher magistrates in charge of finance and justice. He assisted in the control of State expenditure and collaborated in the investigation of

crimes. He could not remain in office for more than one year but, if he had performed his duties well, he could present himself to the assembly for promotion.

If he had not satisfied the electors, he was rejected, and could not for ten years apply for any other appointment. If, on the other hand, they approved of him, he was made an *Ædile* (there were four of them) and in this capacity, for one year only, he superintended buildings, theatres, aqueducts and streets, in fact, all public buildings and buildings of public interest, including houses of ill-fame.

If he produced satisfactory results in these duties, which were practically those of a borough surveyor, he could run for election to one of the four posts of *prætor*, a high civil and military appointment, lasting for a further period of one year. Formerly they had been army generals but by now they had become more like high court judges and interpreters of the law. On the outbreak of war they resumed command of important units under the orders of the consuls.

When they were at the top of the tree in this career, which was called "*cursus honorum*," they could aspire to one of the two positions of *censor*, who were appointed for five years. The length of this appointment was due to the fact that the census was only carried out every five years. An account of himself had to be given by everyone. The principal duty of the censor was, on the basis of his investigations, to lay down the amount of taxation payable by every citizen during the five-year period and also the number of years he had to serve with the colours.

These were not the only duties of the censor. He had even more delicate ones. Consequently the importance of the post, especially when it was held by citizens of the calibre of Cato and Appius Claudius the Blind, a great-grandson of the famous *decemvir*, rivalled even that of the consulship. The censor had to make secret enquiries into the "past" of any candidate for a public appointment. He had to investigate the virtue of his women-folk, the education of his children and his treatment of

his slaves. This gave him the right to poke his nose into anybody's private affairs, to lower or raise him in rank and even to expel from the Senate those members whom he deemed unworthy. Finally, it was the censors who drew up the budget and authorised State expenditure. As can be seen, their powers were enormous, and required great shrewdness and probity on the part of those who were entrusted with them. During the Republican period, those nominated were, generally speaking, well up to their task.

At the summit were the two consuls, the two heads of executive power. In theory at least, one of them had to be a plebeian. In practice, the plebs themselves almost always preferred a patrician. Only these highly educated and experienced men could offer some guarantee of being able to guide the State through increasingly complex and difficult problems. Then came the question of the elections. These were governed by a procedure which allowed the aristocracy to commit practically any kind of sharp practice. On election day the magistrate in office would scan the stars to find out which candidates were "*personæ gratæ*" to the gods. Since he claimed that he alone knew the language of the stars, he could put upon them any interpretation he liked. The awed assembly, accepting his verdict, proceeded to make its choice only from among those competitors who were thus approved.

Candidates appeared in a plain white toga without ornaments. This demonstrated the simplicity of their lives and the austerity of their morals. Often they lifted up a fold of it to show the electors the wounds they had received in battle. If elected, they remained in power for one year, with equal authority. They took office on the 15th of March and when they relinquished it the Senate generally admitted them as life-members. Since, in spite of everything, the title of Senator was the most sought-after by everybody, it was only natural that the consul did his best never to displease those who might confer it on him. In a certain sense he represented the secular arm of that august body which, from a strictly constitutional point of

view, did not count for anything but which, in actual practice, by means of the stars and numerous other subterfuges, decided everything.

The consuls, like the first kings, were above all the heads of religious authority and directed the more important rites. In time of peace they presided over the meetings of both the Senate and the assembly and, having listened to their deliberations, put them into effect by issuing the necessary decrees.

In war-time they became generals. They led the army, which they divided into two equal commands: half to one consul, half to the other. If one was killed or taken prisoner, the other took over supreme command. If both were killed or taken prisoner, the Senate declared an interregnum for five days, appointed an "interrex" to carry on, and then held new elections. These words show that the consul exercised for one year the same powers wielded by the ancient, non-absolute kings who preceded the Tarquins.

The office of Consul, though naturally greatly desired, was also the most difficult. Apart from great energy, it required a good deal of diplomacy and tact to keep on terms with both the Senate and the popular assemblies which elected him and to which he was answerable.

These assemblies were three: the "comitiæ curiatiæ," the "comitiæ centuriatiæ" and the "comitiæ tributæ."

The "comitiæ curiatiæ," dating back to Romulus and the times when Rome was only composed of "patres," were the most ancient. In fact, only the patricians belonged to them. They had in the very early days of the Republic very important functions, such as that of appointing the consuls. Later they gradually surrendered almost all their powers to the assembly of the centuriæ which, in republican Rome, was the equivalent of the House of Commons. Little by little it became a sort of College of Heralds which merely settled genealogical questions, such as whether a citizen belonged to this or that gens.

The assembly of the *centuriæ* was virtually the people in arms. All citizens who had done their military service belonged to it. Only foreigners, slaves and those who by reason of poverty were legally exempt from military service were excluded. Rome was grudging in granting citizenship. It carried privileges such as immunity from torture and the right of appeal to the assembly against the decisions of any public official.

It was not a permanent assembly. It was summoned by a consul or tribune and could not originate laws and decrees on its own. It could only vote "yes" or "no" by a majority to the proposals a magistrate laid before it. Its conservative character was guaranteed, as we know, by its division into five classes. It should always be borne in mind that the first class, composed of ninety-eight *centuriæ* of patricians, equites and millionaires, was enough to obtain a majority in a total of one hundred and ninety-three *centuriæ*. Since it voted first and the count was announced immediately, all that the others could do was bow their heads.

There was some element of justice in this procedure. The Romans considered that rights should go hand-in-hand with duties and vice versa. Thus, the richer one was the heavier the taxation one had to pay and the longer one had to serve in the army. In return the more one counted politically.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a hard-up fellow counted for nothing politically, even if he had the advantage of paying few taxes and spending only a few months in barracks. He always had to fall in with the wishes of those who politically did count.

It was now that these outcasts began to hold meetings on their own account. The so-called "councils of the plebs" which, as time passed, developed into the "*comitiæ tributæ*," was the organ through which the Roman proletariat fought its uphill battle for greater social justice.

These councils were started immediately after the withdrawal of the plebs to Monte Sacro, when they had been

allowed to elect their own magistrates, those famous tribunes who had the right of veto on any law or ordinance which they considered contrary to the interests of the proletariat. These "comitiæ tributæ" had the privilege of electing these magistrates. One by one they asked for and obtained the right to elect others; the quæstors, the ædiles of the plebs, and, finally, the military tribunes with consular powers.

This assembly, like that of the "centuriæ," had no other power than that of voting "yes" or "no" to the proposals of the magistrate who summoned it. However, they voted individually, and one man's vote was as good as another's, whatever his financial standing. The gradual growth of the Roman proletariat is marked by the increase in the attributes of this body as opposed to those of the other classes until finally, after innumerable struggles, its decisions, called "plebiscites," ceased to concern only the plebs and were binding on all citizens with all the effect of laws.

With these two assemblies, the "centuriæ" and the "tributæ," which by their very nature were bound to be antagonistic, the first in the name of Conservatism, the second in the name of Social Progress out to obstruct the manoeuvres of the former, one can well imagine how delicate must have been the job of the two consuls.

Nominally each of them had the "imperium" or power of command, which they displayed by having themselves preceded, wherever they went, by twelve lictors, each of whom carried a bunch of rods with an axe in the middle. They gave their combined name to their year of office and this was registered on the list in the consular archives. These were things which appealed to the ambitious. The actual handling of power was another matter.

Firstly, to be able to exercise it at all, they had to be in full agreement because each had the right of veto on the decisions of the other. More, they had to get the consent of the two assemblies.

This paralysis in the executive power enabled the Senate to

come into its own. It was composed of three hundred members and the censors filled the gaps caused by death by appointing an ex-consul or an ex-censor, who had particularly distinguished himself to take the dead man's place. The censors, or the Senate itself, could expel members who did not prove worthy of this high honour.

This venerable body met in the Senate-house opposite the Forum and was convoked by the presiding consul. Its decisions, which were taken by a majority, had theoretically no legal force. They were merely counsel to the magistrate. In practice, the latter would never have dared to lay a proposal before the Assemblies, who alone could give it executive power, unless it had been previously approved by the Senate. In effect, their opinion was decisive in all great matters of State: war or peace, or the government of the colonies or provinces. When a real crisis arose, the Senate had recourse to a special emergency decree, the "*Senatus consultum ultimum*," which took irrevocable decisions.

Its actual power lay more in its prestige than in the Constitution. The tribune himself, who, owing to his electoral origin, could not be in favour of the Senate, when he sat there, a silent observer, as was his right, usually came out with more conciliatory ideas than when he went in. The proof of this is that, as time passed, many tribunes became senators thanks to the friendly attitude they had assumed during their period of office towards what should have been the enemy's camp. Finally, the Senate had in reserve for great occasions a super weapon. It was capable of solving any problem which cropped up when they could get the magistrate to agree with them and not with the people. They could nominate a dictator with plenary powers, except that of disposing of State funds, for six months or a year. The proposal was made by one of the two consuls and could not be vetoed by the other. The nominee was chosen from among the ex-consuls who in virtue of having held that office were already senators. All the dictators of republican Rome except one were patricians. All except two

respected the time limit imposed on them. One of them, Cincinnatus, returned of his own free will to his plough and oxen after holding supreme command for only sixteen days, and went down in history as a legendary figure.

The Senate did not often exercise this prerogative, and even though it did not always live up to its great name it did not abuse it. Occasionally it would give way to greed, especially in the exploitation of conquered territories; occasionally, too, as it defended the privileges of its own caste, it would be deaf to the need for greater justice. Its members were not supermen; sometimes they made mistakes, sometimes they wavered and contradicted themselves. Nevertheless, on the whole, in the history of all times and of all peoples, their assembly stands supreme. They all came from families of statesmen and each one of them had had vast experience in the army, in the law-courts and in the administrative posts. They were at their worst in victory, when their pride and greed were unbridled; at their best in defeat, when the situation called for courage and tenacity. Cineas, the ambassador whom Pyrrhus had sent to negotiate with them, after seeing and listening to them, said in admiration to his sovereign: "No wonder there is no King of Rome. Each of those three hundred senators is a king."

IO

THE GODS

THIS organisation of State and magistrature was only made possible by the law, that is, by the publication of the "Twelve Tables of the Decemvirs," which were simultaneously its cause, consequence and instrument.

Up to that time Rome had lived under what was practically a theocracy, in which the king was also Pope. As such he only had the right of settling disputes between man and man. This he did, not according to a written legal code, but by consulting the wishes of the gods, who kept him duly informed on these during religious ceremonies. At first the king did everything on his own. Later the number of inhabitants increased, and as problems became more numerous and complicated, he had the clergy to give him a hand. In fact, the first lawyers in Rome were these priests.

A poor devil who had been, or who thought he had been, wronged, used to hurry off to one of them to get an opinion. The latter would give him one, after consulting secret texts to which only the priests had the right of access. For this reason nobody knew what his rights and obligations were. Whenever the occasion arose the priest would tell him. Cases were heard according to a liturgy of which only the priests knew the rites. Since the clergy were all of aristocratic origin, or henchmen of the aristocrats, one can well imagine the verdicts in cases of litigation between patricians and plebs.

The first effect of the Twelve Tables was the separation of civil law from divine law, the liberation of disputes between citizens from the capricious will of the gods, or rather of those who claimed to represent them. From this moment Rome

ceases to be a theocracy. Gradually ecclesiastical monopoly of the law crumbled. Appius Claudius the Blind published a calendar of "dies fasti" which indicated the days on which lawsuits could be heard and the procedure to be adopted: things that hitherto only the priests had claimed to know. Later, Coruncanius founded a regular law school the graduates of which became leading lights at the bar to the exclusion of the priests. The Twelve Tables, which laid down the basic principles of the later legislation of Rome and the world, were made a compulsory subject for schoolboys. They had to learn them by heart. This contributed to the formation of the Roman character, orderly, severe, legalistic and litigious.

From now on, the priests, compelled to deal with purely religious matters, began, without much success, trying to get a little system into things. They organised themselves into colleges, each of which had a Father Superior elected by the assembly of the *centuriæ*. No particular training was needed to become one. They did not form a caste apart, and had no political power. They were State employees, no more, and, as it paid their salaries, they had to co-operate with the State.

The most important of these colleges was that of the Nine Augurs, whose job was to investigate the reactions of the gods to the grave decisions about to be taken by the Government. Arrayed in his sacerdotal finery and preceded by fifteen "flamens," the high priest in earlier times used to study the auspices by observing the flight of birds, just as Romulus did when founding Rome. Later the high priest did it by examining the entrails of sacrificed animals. (Both these methods were learned from the Etruscans.)

In more serious crises a delegation was sent to Cumæ to interrogate the Sibyl, high priestess of Apollo. As a last resort they sent to consult the Delphic oracle, the fame of which had spread as far as Italy. Since the priests had no responsibilities other than those they owed to the State, it was only natural that they should be particularly receptive to suggestions made by the

State, especially when these were accompanied by promotion or a rise in salary.

The ritual consisted of a gift to the gods intended to obtain their protection or to placate their wrath. The procedure was meticulous, and the slightest mistake was enough to force them to have to repeat it as many as thirty times. In Latin the word religion has a completely external and procedural connotation. Sacrifice means, literally, to make something sacred, which was the offering made to the divinity. Naturally this varied according to the income of the offerer and the importance of the benefits to which he aspired. The poor father of a family who acted as spiritual director in his own home sacrificed on his hearth to obtain a good harvest, a piece of bread and cheese or a glass of wine. If the drought continued, he might go as far as a cockerel; if he were in danger of being flooded out, he might even cut the throat of his pig or a sheep. But when it was the State which was offering a sacrifice to enlist divine favour for some great national undertaking, the Forum, where the ceremony usually took place, was turned into a shambles. Entire flocks were slaughtered while the priests intoned the formulæ which the occasion demanded. The entrails and particularly the liver were reserved for the gods who had delicate palates. All the rest was eaten by the people, sitting round in a large circle. Thus these ceremonies developed into gigantic banquets interspersed with prayers. A law of 97 B.C. forbade the sacrifice of human victims, which goes to show that in exceptional cases this was the fate of unfortunate slaves or prisoners of war. There were citizens who voluntarily offered their own lives to save the nation: such as Marcus Curtius who, during an earthquake, in order to placate the gods of the Lower Regions, plunged into a chasm which immediately closed over him.

More genteel and less brutal were the so-called ceremonies of purification: of a farm, for example, or a flock, or an army off to war, or even a whole city. The priests used to walk round it in procession singing "carmina" or hymns full of magic spells.

Very similar was the ritual for "vota" offerings for obtaining some favour from the gods.

What gods?

The Roman State, which acted as their impresario or producer, never succeeded in settling this matter satisfactorily. Perhaps it never wanted to do so. Jove was considered the most important of the tenants of Olympus but he was not their king, as was Zeus in ancient Greece. Jove always remained a somewhat vague figure, a sort of impersonal Force, connected with the sky, with the sun, or the moon, or thunder and lightning, according to taste. Perhaps in early times he was the same person as Janus and only later did they become separate persons. During droughts the rich Roman matrons used to go barefoot in processions to the temple on the Capitol of Jupiter the Thunderer to implore rain. In war-time the doors of the temple of Janus were opened to allow him to reach the army and lead it in battle.

Equal to them in rank were Mars, who had the month of March named after him and who, being the natural father of Romulus, had a family connection with Rome, and Saturn, god of sowing, who legend says, was a prehistoric king and a professor of agriculture with communist tendencies.

After this quadrumvirate came the goddesses. Juno was the goddess of fertility, of fields and trees, of animals and men, and her name was given to the month of June, which was considered the most propitious for weddings. Minerva, imported from Greece on the shoulders of Æneas, protected wisdom and knowledge. Diana, goddess of the moon, superintended hunting and the woods and in one of them, near Nemi, stood a majestic temple of hers, where she is said to have married Virbius, the first king of the forest.

These were followed by a whole band of minor gods. Bacchus, god of wine and merriment, was quite prepared to dice for a harlot with the churchwarden of his temple. Mercury was supposed to have a weakness for merchants, orators and thieves,

evidently considered by the Romans as birds of a feather; Bellona specialised in wars . . . and so on.

As the City grew and its dominion spread, these gods multiplied out of all proportion. Whenever the Romans conquered any state or province, their first act was to help themselves to its gods and take them home. This was because of their conviction that the vanquished, without their gods, would not attempt revenge.

Apart from these who, although they received privileged treatment, were nevertheless prisoners of war, there were the "novensiles," those which many foreigners brought with them when they moved to Rome and settled there, so as to feel less like exiles and more at home. They set them up in temples paid for out of their own pockets. The Romans never contested anybody's right to do this, but actually went out of their way to be hospitable to all of them. Perhaps the State and its priests considered them, in a certain sense, as unsalaried policemen, who would keep their followers in order. To many of them they even allotted a place in the official Olympus. In 496 B.C. Demeter and Dionysus were joined as colleagues and assistants with Ceres and Liberus. A few years later Castor and Pollux, who had recently been consecrated, showed their gratitude by coming down from heaven to give the Romans a hand at the battle of Lake Regillus. Around 300 B.C. Æsculapius was arbitrarily transferred from Epidaurus to teach medicine in Rome. Gradually all these new-comers became permanent residents rather than guests, especially the Greek gods, who were more affable and cordial, less cold, punctilious and remote than the Roman deities. It was owing to Greek influence that a hierarchy gradually came into being among them with Jove, having the same attributes that Zeus had at Athens, at its head. This was the first step towards those monotheistic religions which, after Stoicism and Judaism had prepared the way, finally triumphed with Christianity.

This development, however, came much later. The Romans of the republican period simply recognised a whole Pantheon

of gods, who Petronius said were more numerous in some cities than were the inhabitants. Varrus estimated them at about thirty thousand. Their activities and interferences made life difficult for their worshippers, who were never quite sure what line to take in their discords and rivalries. One was always liable to get into trouble over some object sacred to one or another of them. When offended, they appeared in the guise of witches who flew by night, ate serpents, killed babies and stole corpses. One runs across them continually in Horace, Tibullus, Virgil and Lucan. They were all the more dangerous because the Roman religion, unlike most of the others, did not consider them confined to heaven. Although they were there too, they preferred to stay on earth, a prey to the earthly urges of hunger, lechery, cupidity, ambition, envy and greed.

To save poor mortals from their malevolence, religious orders multiplied. Among them was a feminine one, that of the Vestals. These were recruited between the ages of six and ten, and did thirty years' service in complete chastity. They were the forerunners of our nuns. Clothed and veiled in white, their principal duty was to water the earth with water drawn from a spring sacred to the Nymph Egeria. If caught breaking their vows of chastity, they were bastinadoed and buried alive. Roman historians mention twelve cases of this harsh treatment. At the end of their thirty years' service, they were received back into society with many honours and privileges. They could even marry, though, at that age, it was not too easy to find a husband.

The Romans did not have Sundays and week-ends, but their religion provided them with feast days and days of rest. During the year there were about a hundred, just about the same number that there is to-day, but they were celebrated more seriously. Even these feasts were austere and commemorative, like the "Iemuria" in May (the equivalent of our All Souls), which every head of a family celebrated at home by filling his mouth with white beans and spitting them out all round him crying: "With these beans I redeem myself and my family.

Depart, O souls of our ancestors!" In February there were the "parentalia" or "feralia" and the "lupercalia," when they used to throw wooden dolls into the Tiber to deceive the gods, who claimed real men. Then there were the "floralia," the "liberalia," the "ambarvalia," the "saturnalia."

Such anarchy reigned also in this sector that the main reason why the Romans drew up a calendar was the need to make a list of these festivals. In very early times the priests dealt with this matter, saying, month by month, when and how they should be celebrated. Tradition attributes to Numa Pompilius the merit of having settled this question by creating a fixed calendar, which remained in force until the time of Cæsar. It divided the year into twelve lunar months, giving the priests the faculty of lengthening or shortening them provided that, at the end of the twelfth, a total of 366 days had elapsed. The priests so abused this prerogative, in order to favour or to damage the interests of this or that magistrate that, by the end of the Republic, the Pompilian calendar had become quite useless and was merely a source of controversy.

The day-time hours were measured by eye, according to the position of the sun in the sky. The first sundial, of Greek manufacture, was brought to Rome from Catania in 263 B.C. and set up in the Forum. Since Catania is four degrees south of Rome, the hour did not correspond, the Romans got angry and there was confusion for a whole century because nobody knew how to put the contraption right. The days of the month were divided into the calends (the first), the nones (the fifth or seventh), and the ides (the thirteenth or fifteenth). The year, which was called "annus" or circle, began with March. Then came April, May, June, Quintile, Sextile, September, October, November, December, January and February. A substitute for Sunday was the "nundinæ," which fell every nine days and corresponded to market day in our country towns. The peasants left their fields to come and sell their eggs and fruit in town, but it was not a real holiday.

The Romans had to wait for the "liberalia" and the

THE CITY

"saturnalia" really to have a good time when, as one of the characters in Plautus says: "everybody could eat what he wanted, go where he liked, and make love to whoever he wanted, provided he left wives, widows, little boys and little girls in peace."

II

THE CITY

It is not known exactly how many inhabitants Rome had just before the Punic Wars. The figures given by historians on the basis of unreliable censuses are contradictory. They do not, perhaps, take into account the fact that most of the people covered by the census did not live within the so-called "pomerius," or city wall, but in scattered country villages outside it. In the city itself there could not have been more than a hundred thousand souls; to us a pretty modest population but for those times, enormous. Its ethnical composition must already have made it an international centre, though not to the extent that it had been under the Tarquin kings. They, because of their Etruscan love of trading and the sea, had attracted too many foreigners, many of whom had been difficult to assimilate. With the Republic, the native Latin and Sabine element grew stronger and took its revenge. Perhaps it regulated immigration more strictly. This now came in from the neighbouring provinces and was composed of people who were more acceptable.

The City had not made much progress, from the town-planning point of view, under the republican magistrates, who were miserly, rustic and unpretentious. Two main roads intersected inside it, dividing it into four quarters. Each quarter had its own tutelary gods, the "lares compitales," to whom statues were erected at every street corner. They were narrow streets,

of beaten earth, which only later were paved with stones taken from the river-bed. The "Cloaca Maxima," or drainage system, appears to have existed since the times of the Tarquins, and since it conveyed all the sewage of Rome into the Tiber, it infected their source of drinking water. In 312 B.C. Appius Claudius the Blind tackled and solved the problem by building the first aqueduct which provided Rome with clean, fresh water drawn directly from wells. Thus for the first time Romans, at least those of a certain standing, had enough water to wash themselves. The first "thermæ," or public baths, were only built after the defeat of Hannibal.

Houses had remained more or less as the Etruscan architects had built them. Only their fronts had been smartened up with stucco and decorated with graffiti.

The dangers to which they had been continually exposed had induced the Roman builders, in the hope of earning the goodwill of the gods, to concentrate on temples. On the Capitol three imposing ones to Jove, Juno and Minerva had been built of wood faced with stone.

The City still lived by agriculture based on small private properties. A good proportion of the population, even in the middle of town, after having slept huddled together on straw, would get up at dawn and, loading spade and mattock on to the ox-drawn farm cart, go off to plough their own fields, which only averaged about five acres. They were tenacious but not very enlightened peasants, who knew of no manure except the dung of their own animals and of no rotation of crops other than from grain to vegetables and back again. Many aristocratic families took their names from their own products. The Lentuli specialised in lentils, the Cæpiones in onions, the Fabii in beans. Other products were figs, grapes and oil. Every family had its chickens, its pigs and, most important, its sheep, which yielded the wool for their home-made clothes.

By the eve of the Punic War this idyllic picture of rustic life had undergone a complete change. The expeditions against neighbouring peoples had depopulated the countryside.

Abandoned homesteads had fallen into ruin. Undergrowth and weeds had spread over the fields of ex-soldiers, who returned to the City to earn a living. The new territories acquired from the beaten enemy were declared "public land" by the State, which sold it to profiteers, grown fat on war contracts. In this manner large estates were created. The owners exploited these with slave labour (which was plentiful and cost next to nothing), whilst in the City a proletariat was formed of landless ex-peasants in search of employment.

It was difficult to find a job because industry had not progressed but had actually receded since the time of the Tarquins. The subsoil, poor in minerals, was the property of the State, which leased it to unscrupulous and incompetent exploiters. Metallurgy had made little progress. Bronze continued to be more widely used than steel. Wood was the only fuel known. To provide it the fine forests of Latium were hewn down. Only the weaving industry was relatively prosperous, and proper factories had now begun mass production.

There were four obstacles to industrial and commercial development. The first, of a psychological nature, was the mistrust of the Roman ruling classes (all of them landowners) for any activity which might strengthen the bourgeois middle classes. The second was the lack of roads, which did not permit the transport of raw materials and finished products. The first road, the Via Latina, which was built in 370 B.C., almost a century and a half after the declaration of the Republic, merely linked the City with the Alban Hills. Only Appius Claudius, who built the aqueduct, felt the need some fifty years later to construct one. In fact, it bore his name and reached Capua. The senators reluctantly approved his grandiose project only because the generals also insisted on a road network. The third snag was the lack of a fleet, which disappeared after the end of the Etruscan supremacy in Rome. Small private shipowners had continued to build a few ships, but crews were timid and inexperienced. From November to March it was impossible to get them to leave the port of Ostia, where their boats remained

stuck fast in Tiber mud. Once it swallowed up two hundred of these boats in a single mouthful. They never ventured on anything more than minor coastal traffic because what with all the Greek and Carthaginian pirates who infested the waters to the east and west they were afraid to lose sight of the coast. This makes all the more admirable the miracle which Rome accomplished only a few years later when she, with her improvised fleets, faced up to those of Hanno and Hannibal.

A fourth impediment to trade in early times was the lack of a monetary system. During the first century of the Republic the means of exchange was livestock. Chickens, pigs, sheep, donkeys and cows were their articles of barter. In fact, the first coins bear the images of these animals and were called "pecunia," from "pecus," meaning livestock. The first monetary unit coined was the "as," a piece of copper weighing one pound. It had not been introduced for long when the State devalued it by five-sixths to meet the expenses of the first Punic War. This proves that the inflation swindle has always existed and the technique has not been changed over the centuries. On this occasion the State floated a loan among its citizens who brought in all their "asses" of a pound of copper each to enable it to fit out the army: whereupon the State divided each one of them into six, and, for every "as" received, paid back one-sixth to the creditor.

For a long time this devalued "as" remained the only Roman currency. Its purchasing power was, it seems, somewhere between sixpence and a shilling. Then a more complicated system developed. The silver sesterius came in, which was worth two and a half assis. Then came the denarius, equal to four sestertii and finally the gold talent, which must have been quite an ingot, since it was worth something like £1440 and probably was never seen by ninety per cent of the Romans.

Unlike ourselves, who regard our banks as churches, the ancient Romans treated their churches as banks, and deposited State funds in them because they thought that they would be

safer from burglars. There were no government institutes of credit. Loans were made by the "argentarii," whose little counting-houses lay in an alley off the Forum. One of the laws of the Twelve Tables forbade extortion and fixed a maximum rate of interest at eight per cent. All the same, usury flourished on the misery and needs of poor wretches. This was because what I have called industry was actually a seething mass of little artisan workshops, which, in competition with one another, sought to lower the cost of their products by skimping on the wages. Servile labour had no trade unions to protect it. Slaves did not go on strike against their masters because they were disorganised and lacked leaders. Every now and then they would start a serious war, which for this reason were called "servile wars" and which did actually endanger the State. On the other hand, they did have trade corporations, which were known as "colleges" and appear to go back to the days of Numa. There were corporations of the potters, the smiths, the cobblers, the carpenters, the flute-players, the tanners, the cooks, the bricklayers, the cordwainers, the bronze-workers, the weavers, the actors called "the artists of Dionysus." So we can deduce the number of trades exercised by Roman town-dwellers. They were controlled by State officials, who did not allow questions of salary and wages to be discussed, and who, when they felt that discontent was running dangerously high, would authorise a free distribution of wheat. Members used to meet to talk shop, play dice, tipple wine and help one another because they were all, even those who were free and had political rights, poor devils together. It is true that in peacetime they did little military service and paid no taxes, but in war-time they died like anybody else.

The Roman writers who flourished later and whose works have come down to us have painted glowing pictures of stoic Rome. This they did for polemical reasons—to confront the ancient virtues with the vices of their epoch. The Republic was far from perfect and, even though the law was inaugurated under it, one can hardly say that justice triumphed.

It is true, nevertheless, that its citizens lived a more uncomfortable and ascetic life than those of the Empire, but it was more orderly, sounder. Even then, morality was none too strict but debauchery was kept in its place and did not contaminate family life. This was based on the chastity of the girls and the fidelity of wives. Men, after sowing their wild oats with an occasional prostitute, married early, at the age of about twenty. From then on they were kept too busy trying to support wives and children to go on the loose.

Marriage was preceded by an engagement and was usually arranged often without even consulting the interested parties by the two fathers. It was a definite contract which mainly dealt with hereditary matters and the dowry. It was sealed by the young man putting a ring on the fourth finger of the girl's left hand, where, it was thought, a nerve connected with the heart.

Marriages were of two kinds, "cum manu" or "sine manu." With the first, the commonest and most complete, the father gave up all his rights over his daughter to his son-in-law, who practically became her owner. With the second, which dispensed with a religious ceremony, he kept those rights. The "cum manu" kind came into force by "usus," that is after the couple had lived together for a year, by "coemptio" (that is by purchase) or by "confarreatio" (when they had eaten a cake together). The latter was reserved for patricians and required a solemn religious ceremony with hymns and processions. The two families met their friends, servants and clients at the bride's home, and thence formed a procession to that of the bridegroom, to the accompaniment of flutes, love songs and coarse allusive comments. When the procession reached its destination, the bridegroom asked: "Who are you?" from behind the door and the bride answered: "If you are so-and-so, I am so-and-so." Thereupon the bridegroom lifted her up, gave her the front-door key, and the two of them, with bowed heads, passed under a yoke to show that they submitted to a common bond.

In theory divorce existed. The first one we hear about

happened two and a half centuries after the foundation of the Republic, in spite of the fact that it was obligatory for the sake of honour in the case of the wife's adultery. (The husband was entitled to take such measures as he saw fit.) The women of the time were rather plain and awkward, short-legged and with heavy ankles and wrists. Blondes, who were extremely rare, were more highly prized than brunettes. At home they wore the "stola," a sort of Abyssinian night-shirt of white wool, which reached their feet and was closed at the breast by a pin. When they went out, over it they wore the "pallas," or mantle.

The men were more solid than handsome, with deeply tanned faces and straight noses. As boys they wore the "toga prætexta," bordered with purple. When they had done their military service they changed it for the virile toga, which was completely white and covered the whole body. It had a white gathering which passed over the left shoulder, then under the right arm (which was thus left free) and returned to the left shoulder. The folds served as pockets. Until 300 B.C. the men wore beards and moustaches; later they adopted the habit of shaving which to many appeared too daringly in contrast to that gravity of which the Romans made such a fetish, as to-day we make a point of nonchalance.

Spartan sobriety even in the houses of the great was the rule. The Senate itself sat on rough wooden benches in the Senate-house, which remained unheated in winter. The Carthaginian ambassadors, who came to sue for peace after the first Punic War, greatly amused their spendthrift and sybaritic compatriots, by telling them how, at the dinners offered them by the Roman senators, they always saw the same silver dish passed round. Evidently they lent it to one another.

The first signs of luxury appeared with the second Punic War. On its outbreak a law was immediately passed prohibiting jewels, fancy clothing and over-substantial meals. The Government wished to preserve a healthy, frugal diet based on a breakfast of bread, honey, olives and cheese, a lunch of vegetables, bread and fruit, and an evening meal at which only

the rich had meat or fish. They drank wine, but it was almost always watered.

The young respected the old. Possibly, in family circles and among friends, expressions of affection or tenderness may have been used. Generally speaking, however, relations between men were brusque. It was easy to die and not only in war. The treatment of prisoners and slaves was merciless. The State, tough enough with its own citizens, was downright savage with its enemies. Nevertheless, some of its gestures were of authentic moral grandeur. When, for instance, a hired assassin came with an offer to poison Pyrrhus, whose armies were threatening Rome, the senators not only refused to have anything to do with it, but warned the enemy king of the plot against him. Again, when Hannibal, having routed them at Cannæ, sent ten prisoners of war to Rome to negotiate the ransom of another eight thousand, under oath to return if things fell through, and one of them broke his parole by staying at home, the Senate put him in irons and returned him, handcuffed, to the Carthaginian general. Polybius says that this cooled the exhilaration of the victor by showing him the type of man he was up against.

By and large the Roman of this period was not unlike the figure idealised by historians like Tacitus and Plutarch. He had many shortcomings: no sense of individual liberty, no taste for art or science, no conversational gifts, complete indifference to philosophic speculation (which he mistrusted) and above all, no sense of humour. On the other hand, he was endowed with loyalty, frugality, tenacity, obedience and practical sense. He was cut out not for understanding and enjoying, but for conquering and governing the world.

Apart from religious festivals, he had few pastimes. Until 241 B.C., when the Flaminian was built, Rome had only one circus, the Maximus, attributed to Tarquinius Priscus, where he could go to watch the duels between slaves. These normally finished up with the death of the loser. At first the State put up the money. Later it was provided, with an eye to useful electoral propaganda, by the ædiles. Some of them, by putting

on good shows, actually rose to the rank of consul, rather like certain presidents of football clubs, who when the team does well, become mayors or Members of Parliament.

In addition to these, shall we say "normal," amusements, to enliven the austere and dreary lives of the Romans, there were also "triumphs." These were accorded to a general returning from a victory in which at least five thousand enemy soldiers had been slain. If the total had only been four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, he rated an "ovation," so called because it consisted in the sacrifice in his honour of an "ovis," a sheep.

For the "triumph" an imposing procession formed up outside the City, at the gates of which the general and his troops had to lay down their arms and pass under a triumphal arch of wood and branches. It was the early model of those later built of marble. A column of trumpeters headed the procession. After them came wagons laden with the spoils of war; then entire flocks and herds destined to slaughter; then came the enemy chiefs in chains. Finally, preceded by lictors and flute-players, the victorious general himself, standing in a gaily-painted four-in-hand chariot, with a purple toga on his shoulders, a gold crown on his head, an ivory sceptre and a laurel branch. He was surrounded by his children and followed by his relations, secretaries, advisers and friends on horseback. He drove up to the temples of Jove, Juno and Minerva on the Capitol, laid the booty down at their feet, had the doomed animals rounded up for slaughter and, as an additional offering, gave orders for the decapitation of the enemy commanders. The people shouted for joy. The climax came with the custom, followed by victorious soldiery, of flinging taunts, sarcasm and jibes at their own general. To preserve him from a swelled head and delusions of infallibility, they heckled him with these exposures of his special faults and foibles. "Hey! Baldie!" they would shout at Cæsar himself, "Lay off the married women, and stick to the prostitutes!"

CARTHAGE

CARTHAGE, like all other cities of the time, attributed its origin to a miracle of which it gave a romantic account. Dido, the daughter of the king of Tyre, was said to have been its founder and she was later venerated by her fellow-citizens as a goddess. Made a widow, thanks to her brother who had killed her husband, she put herself at the head of a group of followers, took ship and set sail from the extreme eastern end of the Mediterranean towards the west in search of adventure. Coasting along North Africa past Egypt, Cyrenaica and Libya, she finally reached a point about ten miles west of where Tunis now stands. Here she landed and said to her companions: "Well, this is where we build the New City." And that was what they called it: New City, like Neapolis and New York. In their language it was Kart Hadasht, which the Greeks later translated as Karchedon and the Romans as Carthago.

Naturally things did not really go like this, but it is difficult to get to the bottom of the matter because the Romans did to Carthage, which unluckily crossed their path, exactly what they had done to Etruria. They reduced it to such pulp that to-day it is almost impossible to find material for any exact reconstruction of its history and civilisation.

Certainly it was founded by the Phœnicians, a people of Semitic race and language like the Hebrews. Great traders and navigators, they sailed their ships to and fro buying and selling a little of everything. Fearing neither man nor the devil, they were the first sailors in the world to go beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the Straits of Gibraltar, and to sail down the Atlantic coast of Africa and up the Spanish and Portuguese coasts. By

the time Rome had come into being, the Phoenicians had already founded along this route quite a number of towns. At first these must have consisted simply of a shipyard and a bazaar or market. Leptis Magna, Utica, Bizerta and Bone certainly originated in this manner and Carthage was one, perhaps even the most humble, of their sister cities. Circumstances were to make her the most prominent.

These circumstances were mainly the military and commercial decline of Tyre and Sidon. These cities were unfortunate enough to get in the way of Alexander of Macedonia, who, whilst Rome was still a village, tried to become emperor of the world. He only just failed to do so. Under the threat of his armies, the plutocrats of those two cities, who, like all plutocrats, had more cause to be frightened than other people, took steps to put themselves and their nest-eggs in safety. In those days it was the fashion to take refuge in Carthage (nowadays it is Tangier).

The city expanded with these new inhabitants, full of ready cash and initiative, and they drove the native population of poor negroes farther and farther back into the interior, while keeping many of them as servants and slaves. No longer content with trading and the sea, they turned to the land. This particular is interesting as it had always been thought up to that time that Jews were constitutionally ill-adapted to farming. The Semites of Carthage proved the contrary. They were expert in many types of cultivation, especially of vines, olives and fruit-growing, and from them even the Romans had much to learn. The greatest master of agriculture of ancient times, Mago, was a Carthaginian.

Carthage had a perfectly balanced economy. Its excellent and flourishing hardware industry turned out the best implements for cultivating and irrigating the land, thus transforming it into market-gardens and orchards. Most of this produce was loaded into their ships, which were the biggest in the world, and was sent off to Spain or Greece. Shipowners financed explorers to discover new markets. One of these, Hanno, sailed down the

Atlantic coast of Africa for over twelve hundred miles in a solitary galley.

Other commercial travellers followed the land trails on mules, camels and elephants. They found and brought back with them gold and ivory. They used to cross the Sahara with the same indifference with which Florentines cross the Arno. On the basis of their reports the Government used to send a few ships or a handful of soldiers to hold strategic points (just as was done later on by Venice).

Their economic and financial system was the most advanced of those times. Rome had hardly begun to coin crude metal money when the Carthaginians already had bank-notes, strips of leather stamped according to the value they represented. These circulated throughout the whole Mediterranean basin as freely as did the pound and the dollar later. Their nominal value was guaranteed by the gold which overflowed from the coffers of the State. Whenever Carthage made a new conquest, the first thing she did was to impose a tribute and no light one, on the losers. Leptis, for example, paid three hundred and sixty-five talents, about £600,000, a year for the privilege of being a vassal of Carthage.

The exploitation of her colonial empire was probably one of the reasons for the defeat of Carthage when she came into conflict with Rome. Until this threat materialised, it assured the Phœnician city of a prosperity unheard of until that time. Carthage had two or three hundred thousand inhabitants, none of whom lived in huts like the Romans. Poor Carthaginians lived in skyscrapers with as many as twelve stories, rich ones in palaces with gardens and swimming-pools. There were temples and public baths galore. As in London, the centre of the metropolis contained the "City" and the Treasury, surrounded by a triple bastion of walls and towers which could hold up to twenty thousand fully-equipped soldiers, four thousand horses and three hundred elephants.

As for the people and their customs, we can only rely on the testimony of Roman historians. They, naturally, could not be

expected to be impartial. The language of Carthage must have been very similar to Hebrew, in fact, their magistrates were called "shofetes," which certainly comes from the Hebrew "shofetim." Their features betray a Semitic origin. They had olive complexions and generally wore long beards without moustaches and even in those days they used the turban. The poorer ones, who had probably interbred with the native population and, consequently, had darker skins, wore what in Egypt to-day is called the "gallabia," a long, loose gown, which fell to their sandalled feet. The upper classes dressed in the Greek style, and wore elegant costumes bordered with purple, and rings in their noses. The condition of women was between the Athenian and the Roman. They were usually veiled and kept indoors, but an ecclesiastical career was open to them and they could reach high rank. Otherwise they could always take up prostitution which, as in Japan to-day, was a flourishing and esteemed profession, or, at the worst, one which was not despised.

Polybius and Plutarch agreed in asserting that Carthaginian moral standards were low, which is most astonishing when one considers that they were Semites, people whose customs are usually puritanically strict. These historians depict them as gluttons and drunkards, incorrigible profligates who were always ready for a row in the night-clubs and taverns. The "fides Punica" or Carthaginian word of honour became a by-word in Latin for treachery but it should not be forgotten that the history of Carthaginian treachery was written by Roman historians. Plutarch describes these ancient and implacable enemies of Rome as "servile towards inferiors and alternating between cowardice in defeat and cruelty in victory." Polybius adds that they looked at everything with an eye to the main chance. Polybius is known, however, to have been an intimate friend of Scipio, the man who burned Carthage to the ground.

Naturally the Carthaginians, too, had their gods. They had brought them along from their motherland, Phœnicia, but with changed names. Instead of Baal-Moloch and Astarte, as

they were called at Tyre and Sidon, they called them Baal-Haman and Tanit. Under them were Melkart, which means "key to the city," Eshmun, the lord of riches and good health, and, lastly, Dido, who held the same position in Carthage as Quirinus did in Rome.

Sacrifices were offered to all these gods, especially in time of need. For the minor gods it was merely a question of cows or goats, but when it was a matter of placating or ingratiating themselves with Baal-Haman, they used babies, whom they used to put between the arms of his great bronze statue. Then they tumbled them down on to the fire that was blazing below. They were known to burn up to three hundred in one day amidst the blast of trumpets and the thunder of drums so that their screams should be drowned. Their poor mothers were expected to look on without a tear or a lament. It appears that it was the custom among the rich families, when they were asked to supply a baby, to buy one from the poor. But when Agathocles of Syracuse laid siege to the city and made good relations between the classes as necessary as the help of the gods, this custom was forbidden so as to avoid ill-feeling between rich and poor.

On the whole, the political system was not very different from that of Rome. Aristotle wrote high praise of it, perhaps largely from hearsay and perhaps because no serious danger of dictatorship, a thing which he abhorred, ever arose there. As in Rome, the supreme legislative body was the Senate, also here composed of three hundred members. At first the majority of them came from the landed aristocracy. Gradually these were replaced by the wealthy and it became a plutocracy. The Senate took the important decisions and transmitted them to the "shofetes," who were roughly the counterparts of the Roman consuls. Only when they could not reach a decision did they ask the opinion of a sort of Chamber of Deputies, who had the right to vote "yes" or "no" but not to put up proposals of their own.

In theory also this Senate was elective. In practice, how-

ever, as all the key posts were in their hands, they could either by corruption or fraud successfully impose their own candidates. Above them there was only a sort of Constitutional Court composed of one hundred and four judges, who kept a general eye not only on the constitutionality of the laws but also on the expenditure of the administration. During the wars with Rome this court gradually became the real government.

Carthage did not attach much importance to her army because her African neighbours did not give her any trouble. The Carthaginians had no taste for barracks, which were full of mercenaries recruited from among the natives, mainly Libyans. Therefore the merit for their great achievements during the century-long struggle with Rome should be exclusively attributed to the genius of her generals such as Hannibal, Hamilcar and Hasdrubal, who were among the most brilliant of antiquity.

At sea, however, she was powerful, the strongest naval power of the time. In peace-time her home fleet numbered five hundred quinquiremes, which were more or less the equivalent of battleships, but light, speedy and gaily painted in red, green, and yellow. Their admirals were highly competent seamen who even without a compass knew the Mediterranean like the pond at the bottom of their gardens. They had repair shops, supply depots and informers in all the inlets of the French and Spanish coasts, and their Cartographic Institute was up to date and modern. At the time Rome was busily establishing her hegemony over the peninsula and had not yet launched a fleet, the Carthaginians allowed no intrusion by sea between Gibraltar and Sardinia. If any foreign vessel fell into their hands, they either commandeered it or sank it and, without even asking where they came from or what flag they flew, drowned the crew.

This, roughly, was Carthage at the time the Romans, having eliminated one after another of their rivals, had united the peninsula under their leadership and were now beginning to think of naval matters.

Please note that all the foregoing has been reconstructed on very fragile foundations. When Scipio put the city to fire and sword and razed it to the ground, he found among other things several libraries, but instead of bringing them to Rome he divided them among his African allies. These had not much time for books and allowed them to moulder into ruin. This is surprising in Scipio, who was a man of culture. This is why we have not a single history text-book and have to make do with what Sallust and Juba succeeded in reconstructing. Some fragments of Mago and the testimony of Saint Augustine confirm that Carthage had a culture of a high order.

The Greeks, in spite of the fact that they had the example of Athens under their eyes, declared that Carthage was one of the most beautiful capitals in the world. What remains of it is too little to confirm this. Its most important relics are those which archæologists have excavated in the Balearic Islands. Here the Carthaginians founded a colony whither perhaps some of them escaped at the moment of the massacre, possibly taking with them some works of art. All the rest is in the Tunis museum, where archæologists continue to bring all they manage to dig up on the site of the city some ten miles to the west. In the museum one can admire some fragments of sculpture taken from sarcophagi; the style is Græco-Phœnician. Then there is the usual pottery, mass-produced utility stuff of little value. Nothing remains of what, it appears, was the pride of Carthage, its craftsmanship. It is said that the goldsmiths were masters of their art. Unfortunately in all times and in all wars jewellery has been the most sought-after type of loot.

13

REGULUS

THE pact which the Romans had signed with Carthage in 508 B.C. when they were trapped between an internal revolution and the war with the Etruscans, Latins and Sabines, bound them never in any circumstances whatever to sail their ships beyond the Sicilian Channel, and never to land in Sardinia or Corsica except in the case of "force majeure," that is, to take on supplies or effect repairs in some shipyard.

These were serious limitations, but Rome had not suffered unduly from them because she had only an embryo fleet, which was entirely in the hands of Etruscan shipowners, who, with the proclamation of the republic, had lost their money and political influence. Rome at that time counted for nothing on the sea. The Latin-Sabine senators, who were all land-lubbers, knew nothing and could not have cared less about it. Therefore she had merely renounced what she did not possess. Rome perhaps was even in complete ignorance of the great changes in the so-called "balance of naval power" which had been taking place during these same years in the Mediterranean. Let us take a general look at the situation.

A war between the Phœnician and Greek fleets had been going on for centuries in the Eastern Basin, to the east of the Sicilian Channel. This was now going in favour of the latter. First the Ægean and then the Ionian Sea had fallen into the hands of the Hellenes. Italy became aware of this when increasing numbers of the victors began landing on southern and Sicilian coasts, founding colonies which became virtually an empire: Magna Græcia. Places like Catania, Syracuse, Heraclea, Croton, Messina, Sybaris, Reggio and Naxos were

flourishing cities for those times. Unfortunately, together with their gods, philosophy, sculpture and theatres, these empire-builders had also brought with them from their motherland their besetting sin of quarrelsomeness. This vice was to be their downfall in the struggle against Rome. For the moment they were the undisputed masters of the area.

In the Western Basin, on the other hand, the Phœnicians had gained the upper hand thanks to their young colony Carthage, which in its turn had founded numerous other colonies not only along the North African coast but also in Portugal, Spain, France, Corsica and Sardinia. The western Mediterranean had, in effect, become a Carthaginian lake.

When Rome, under the kings, had been mistress of Etruria and consequently of her fleet, she had come up against Carthage several times. Probably these contacts had not been always exactly courteous. In those times acts of piracy were the fashion and only involved the captains and crews who committed them. One ship used to attack another, even of the same nationality, rifle it, throw the sailors overboard and no more was heard of the matter.

Rome had then disappeared as a Mediterranean power. Only the Greeks of Magna Græcia and the Phœnicians of Carthage were left facing one another, the former to the east and the latter to the west of Sicily, the coasts of which they had divided; those to the east, in fact, were Greek and those to the west Carthaginian. They glowered at one another and lived in a state of "cold war," with moments of "shooting war," followed by armistices and uneasy peace. Both sides were convinced that sometime there would have to be a fight to a finish, but neither imagined for a moment that a third party was going to be the winner.

Nobody can say with certainty whether Rome knew what she was doing and had weighed up the pros and cons when she decided to accept the offer of the Mamertines.

These were a horde of mercenaries recruited by Agathocles of Syracuse from all over Italy to fight against the Carthaginians.

When the time came for them to be demobilised instead of going home, where maybe there was a warrant out for their arrest, they banded together, assaulted, sacked and exterminated the population of Messina, settling there as its masters. Thereupon they gave themselves the quaint and presumptuous name of "Mamertines," which means "Sons of Mars."

For the past twenty years these warriors had been getting up to every kind of mischief. They were in the habit of crossing the Straits of Messina and burning and destroying the villages on the Calabrian side. They had given trouble both to Pyrrhus and the Romans. Now, towards the end of 270 B.C., they found themselves besieged by Hieron of Syracuse, who was determined to get rid of them once and for all.

To avoid what would certainly have been an exemplary punishment, the Mamertines asked for help from the Carthaginians. These sent an army and occupied the city. Seeing that this trick had worked once, the Mamertines decided to try it again and appealed to Rome to liberate them from their Carthaginian protectors. This was in 264 B.C. Two and a half centuries had passed since the solemn pact of alliance had been signed between Carthage and Rome. On the whole, it had always worked well and had been reconfirmed twenty years earlier, when Carthage had offered and brought help to Rome in her struggle with Pyrrhus.

Sicily, to the Romans, was an Eldorado. Here was a chance for them to get a footing there. Everyone who had been there told wonderful stories of its riches and beauty. The invitation of the Mamertines was hard to resist.

Even so, it might have been refused had the senators been free to decide on their own. They knew to what this intervention would lead. But by this time certain decisions had to be left to the "comitiæ centuriatæ," in which the industrial and mercantile middle classes, those very people who had always made a good thing out of wars, had the biggest say. Those who had nothing to lose hoped to gain something, maybe even a farm in some colony. Those who had money hoped to

multiply it. Furthermore, it is difficult to raise objections to those who claim to speak in the name of the Fatherland and Manifest Destiny.

The Assembly decided to accept the offer and entrusted operations to the consul Appius Claudius. In the spring of 264 B.C., after several fruitless attempts, a small Roman fleet under the command of the tribune Caius Claudius succeeded in crossing the Straits and entering Messina with the aid of the Mamertines. They took Hanno, the Carthaginian general, prisoner and offered him the choice of imprisonment or the withdrawal of his men from the city.

Hanno must have been a conciliatory sort of man. Only a few months previously he had sent back to Appius Claudius certain Roman triremes which had been wrecked by a storm on the Sicilian coast. Now, in the face of these grim alternatives, he did not hesitate and, at the head of his little army, went home, where as a reward they crucified him. Evidently Carthage was not prepared to swallow this pill, for they immediately put another Hanno at the head of another army in the field.

When the new general landed in Sicily the first thing he did was to come to terms with the Greeks. He immediately made an agreement with those of Agrigento and then, at Scelinunte, received the envoys of Hieron of Syracuse, who accepted an alliance with him. Clearly the Greeks preferred "the devil they knew."

Appius Claudius, who had been relying on the centuries-old discord between Greeks and Phœnicians, was taken by surprise with the bulk of his army still in Calabria, so he resorted to deception. He spread the rumour that the new situation demanded his presence in Rome to receive new instructions. He even sent a few ships sailing north. The Carthaginians, reassured, relaxed their vigilance on the Straits, and Appius took advantage of this to land his troops, twenty thousand strong, just to the south of Messina, in view of the Syracusan camp, which he attacked.

Hieron handled the situation well, but the unexpected appearance of the Roman army led him to suspect treachery on the part of Hanno. So he abandoned him and returned hastily to Syracuse. Having thus isolated the Carthaginians, Appius immediately threw himself on them, this time without success. He therefore left a detachment to guard Messina and went off in pursuit of the other enemy, whom he considered weaker. Hieron, a good soldier, inflicted a heavy defeat on the Romans and Appius by a miracle saved his skin. He had to admit that the undertaking was not as easy as had been thought in Rome. So, leaving part of his forces to keep an eye on Hanno, he returned to Rome to report and to ask for reinforcements.

This matter was largely taken care of by the diplomats, who re-established good relations with Hieron and brought him back on to the Roman side. This was a good move. It was necessary at the same time to have Agrigento as well as Syracuse. Here diplomacy was powerless because there was a Carthaginian garrison at Agrigento. The Romans, therefore, laid siege to it and, after seven months, starved its defenders into a desperate sortie and defeat.

The Carthaginians immediately put into the field a second army under the command of Hamilcar, who had nothing to do with his namesake, the father of Hannibal. He realised that there was nothing to be done against the Romans on land, and with his fleet proceeded to attack all their naval bases, winning victory after victory.

Now one can see the stuff of which Rome was made. She had neither ships nor sailors, yet, within a few months and by the combined efforts of all her citizens, she succeeded in fitting out one hundred and twenty vessels. Hamilcar, who had one hundred and thirty, sailed against them without even taking the usual precautionary measures, and found himself up against the "corvi," or gangways, fitted with a beak or grappling-iron mounted on the bows of the Roman ships. This prevented the enemy from manœuvring and enabled the Romans to fight a

land battle at sea. Hamilcar lost a third of his forces and fled.

When this news was received at Carthage they were dumb-founded, being convinced that at sea they could give lessons to anybody. In Rome they swaggered with pride and decided to cross the Mediterranean and carry the war to the heart of the enemy's country. A second fleet, three hundred and thirty vessels in all, was added to the first, with a hundred and fifty thousand men under command of the consul Attilius Regulus. Carthage faced them with an equal force under the orders of Hamilcar. The encounter took place off Marsala. Their uncertain victory cost the Romans twenty-four ships. The Carthaginians paid for their certain defeat with the loss of thirty, but Regulus was able to land in Africa at Cape Bon.

Now it was the turn of Carthage to show what she was made of, and show it she did. She wavered slightly at the initial successes of the Romans, who, with the help of rebel Numidians, had come to within about eighteen miles of their city, and sent envoys to sue for peace. Regulus, on his own initiative, imposed unacceptable conditions, upon which the Carthaginians prepared for the death struggle. As they had lost faith in their own generals, they turned over the command to a Greek from Sparta, Xanthippus. The latter licked the army into shape by rough-and-ready methods, including summary executions, and introduced that new technique which Hannibal was later to exploit so brilliantly in the employment of cavalry and elephants.

The decisive battle was fought near Tunis. Only two thousand men of the Roman army, by bottling themselves up on Cape Bon, lived to tell the tale. Regulus was taken prisoner. It was the year 255 B.C.

It took Rome five years morally and materially to get over this disaster, which brought the war back to Sicily. During these five years fortunes alternated. On balance, they were generally more favourable to the Carthaginians. Then one day a new general of theirs was beaten in an attempt to retake Palermo and left twenty thousand dead on the battlefield.

Carthage, war-weary and thinking that their adversary was in the same state, took Regulus out of prison and sent him to Rome with her ambassadors to speak in favour of peace proposals. If these proposals were rejected, he was on parole to return. The Senate invited him to give his opinion in the presence of the enemy plenipotentiaries, and Regulus maintained that it was necessary to continue the war. When his view was accepted, in spite of the entreaties of his wife he returned to Carthage. Here they tortured him to death by preventing him from sleeping. His sons in Rome took two high-ranking Carthaginian prisoners and kept them awake until they, too, died.

The war continued. But now a new character appears on the Carthaginian side: Hamilcar Barca, father of Hannibal and supreme commander of the army and navy. He was the inventor of what to-day are called commandos and he began launching them with disastrous effect on the coasts of the peninsula, thus giving the Romans the impression that he intended to land.

The Senate, scared, was unwilling to risk a new fleet against him. Military reserves were almost exhausted and the resources of the Treasury exhausted. In this moment of crisis the wealthier citizens fitted out a fleet of two hundred ships at their own expense and put it at the disposal of the consul Lutatius Catulus, who blockaded the ports of Trapani and Lilibeo. On their side, the Carthaginians sent another of four hundred ships, laden with reinforcements, arms and supplies. If they managed to land, it meant the doom of the Romans in Sicily. Contrary to the orders of the Senate, which had forbidden him to take the initiative at sea, Catulus, though seriously wounded, ordered his squadron to attack. The heavily-laden Carthaginian vessels were unable to manœuvre. A hundred and twenty of them were sunk, whilst the rest sailed back to Carthage. Hamilcar was cut off from home and, in spite of all his successes, had no alternative but to ask for terms. Lutatius Catulus, who had no desire to follow in Regulus's footsteps, immediately accepted these proposals and granted Hamilcar the honour of arms and

the withdrawal of his men. Other conditions he left to the discretion of the Senate.

In Rome some people blamed Catulus for his indulgence and proposed renewing hostilities until the unconditional surrender of the enemy. Unconditional surrenders are almost always stupid objectives and the Senate quite rightly turned down the idea. They demanded from the Carthaginians their withdrawal from Sicily, the return of all prisoners of war without ransom and the payment within ten years of four thousand four hundred talents. They were reasonable conditions and Carthage hastened to accept them.

Thus finished the First Punic War. It had lasted almost a quarter of a century, from 265 B.C. to 241 B.C. Nevertheless, both in Rome and in Carthage, everybody knew that the peace was only an armistice.

14

HANNIBAL

BOTH sides were in a poor way at the end of this twenty-five years' struggle, but Carthage was worse off than Rome. Not only did she have to give up all Sicily, pay heavy reparations and accept the commercial competition of Rome in the whole Mediterranean, but thanks to internal conflict she slipped into anarchy.

The Government had refused to meet the arrears of pay owed to the mercenaries. They had served under Hamilcar, and, under the leadership of Mato (a truculent corporal who knew what he was about), they revolted. Immediately they gained the support of the subject peoples, particularly the Libyans. These also rebelled and raised an army under the command of Spendius, a Neapolitan slave, who laid siege to the city.

The rich merchants of Carthage were panic-stricken and begged Hamilcar to free them from this menace. At first Hamilcar hesitated, as he did not like the idea of fighting against his own ex-soldiers. But when they cut off the hands and broke both the legs of his colleague Cescus, and buried seven hundred Carthaginians alive, he decided to take steps. He called to the colours all the young men he could find in the beleaguered city, gave them some hard basic military training and, with ten thousand men, attacked the enemy, forty thousand strong. He broke through the blockading forces and, having driven them into a narrow defile, of which he blocked both ends, waited for them to die of starvation.

First they ate the horses, then the prisoners, then the slaves. Finally, in despair, they sent Spendius to beg for peace. Hamilcar's only reply was to crucify him. The mercenaries attempted a sortie and were massacred. Mato, taken prisoner, was slowly flogged to death. "It was," Polybius says, "the bloodiest and most inhuman war in history." It lasted over three years and at the end of it Carthage woke up to find that Rome had also occupied Sardinia. She protested, but Rome, well aware of the plight of her adversary, merely replied with a declaration of war. To avoid this, Carthage accepted the loss of Sardinia, added Corsica to it, and resigned herself to paying another twelve hundred talents. In other words, to avoid war she accepted defeat and this time did not protest.

Rome, too, had been licking her wounds during this period. The army was short of men and the currency had been devalued by 80 per cent. The policy of unification followed in the peninsula had, on the whole, produced good results insofar as none of the City's subject peoples had taken advantage of her reverses to rebel. But the northern frontier was not yet secure. The Ligurians, who were incapable of founding their own State, were nevertheless quite capable of sailing down the Tyrrhenian Sea with their ships to harry commerce and raid the coasts, particularly those of Tuscany. In the northern Adriatic the Illyrians, lurking among the rocky islands of Dalmatia, did

likewise. And, from Bologna to the Alps, in the whole of the Po Valley, the Gauls were growing in strength owing to the arrival of their kinsmen from France. Since these did not know the Romans, they were not afraid of them. If they were allowed to increase, there was always the risk of seeing them roll down again like an avalanche as they had done under Brennus.

Having mopped up the remaining Carthaginians in Sicily and occupied it (less the Kingdom of Syracuse, which was left to the faithful Hieron) with garrisons and colonies, they proclaimed it a "province." It was the first of the many which later were to make up the Empire. The second was Sardinia and Corsica together. When they had thus established a certain administrative order, the City decided to extend it beyond the Tuscan Apennines, which formed its northern frontier.

She began with the Ligurians, who were the most isolated and the least dangerous, and perhaps it was not really a war but a series of amphibious operations, that is, operations carried out simultaneously on sea and land. They lasted five years from 238 B.C. to 233 B.C. and required none of the usual heroic episodes. When they came to an end, the Ligurians had become vassals and no longer had a single ship with which to disturb communications with Sardinia and Corsica.

Then came the turn of the Gauls who in fact had already taken the initiative by organising, with the assistance of their kinsmen in France, an army of fifty thousand infantry and twenty thousand cavalry. The Romans had always taken a disdainful view of these doughty warriors, whom Polybius describes as "tall and handsome, and always spoiling for a war, which they fought naked, except for a necklace or an amulet or two." But the Senate was so perturbed at this new attack that, reviving a custom which had fallen into disuse, they decided to propitiate the gods with a human sacrifice, burying alive a couple of victims, who, of course, were chosen from amongst the Gauls. It can, however, be deduced that the gods were satisfied, because at Talamone the legions succeeded in surrounding the enemy and practically wiped them out once

and for all. Forty thousand Gauls fell on the battlefield; another ten thousand were taken prisoner. All Italy up to the Alps was now at the mercy of Rome and she called the rich new province, the third, Cisalpine Gaul. She occupied the capital, Mediolanum, now Milan, and founded two powerful colonies, Cremona and Piacenza.

She then turned east. In the course of a few years and by means of expeditions similar to the ones she had mounted against the Ligurians she reduced the Illyria of Queen Teuta to a tributary nation. Thus for the first time she set foot on the opposite shore of the Adriatic and made it a springboard for her successive conquests in the East.

Whilst Rome was completing her conquest of the peninsula and securing herself from the east and north, Hamilcar in Carthage was wasting no time in preparing for the coming struggle. As soon as he had subdued the revolt, he begged the Government to give him an army to restore the shaken Phœnician prestige in Spain and to build up a base there for operations against Italy. On his side were the middle classes, who wished to regain their commercial monopoly in the Mediterranean, on which their prosperity depended. But against him he had the landed aristocracy, who did not want to risk losing their privileges in dangerous adventures.

Eventually a compromise was reached. Instead of an army corps, Hamilcar was granted only a division, but this was enough for him. Hamilcar, a first-rate general, had not for nothing been given the sobriquet of "Barca" which, in Phœnician, meant "Thunderbolt." Before leaving at the head of his scanty command, he visited the church with his "lion cubs" as he used to call his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, and his three sons, Hannibal, Hasdrubal and Mago. Here, in front of the altar to Baal-Haman, he made them swear a solemn oath that one day they would avenge Carthage, and embarked them with his troops.

A few months were enough for him to bring to heel the Spanish cities which had rebelled. He then began to recruit the

natives to raise a proper army. The home country did not lift a finger to help him. On his own Hamilcar did everything. He sank mines, extracted iron and wrought it into arms. Trade he monopolised to finance himself. Unfortunately death surprised him, still a young man, during a skirmish against a rebel tribe. As he lay dying, he nominated his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, as his successor. The latter held command for another eight years without giving cause for anyone to regret his father-in-law. In the mining district he built a completely new city, which to-day is called Cartagena. On his death from an assassin's knife the soldiers acclaimed Hannibal, the eldest of Hamilcar's three sons, as their commander-in-chief. At this time he was twenty-six years old and seventeen of them he had spent under canvas with the troops. Furthermore, he still clearly remembered the oath which his father had made him swear.

Hannibal was, if not the greatest in an absolute sense, certainly the most brilliant of the military leaders of antiquity. Many put him on the same plane as Napoleon. Before his father took him to Spain he had received what, for those times, was a perfect education. He knew his history, languages (Latin and Greek) and, from the stories which Hamilcar had told him, he had a pretty shrewd idea of Rome, her strength and weaknesses. He was convinced, for example, that a defeat in Italy would separate Rome from her allies; that was what had happened in his father's time. He had not the slightest idea that Rome's policy was no longer federalistic. He was tough, frugal, and of boundless courage and cunning. Livy tells us that he was always the first to go into battle and the last to come out. It may be that he had undue confidence in his own powers of improvisation. All Roman historians, including Livy, have emphasised his greed, cruelty and unscrupulousness. It is true that the traps he set for the Romans were endless and diabolical but this was the reason that his soldiers adored and had such blind faith in him. He had no need of badges of rank to maintain his prestige, indeed, he dressed like the troops and shared

their hardships. Apart from being a master of strategy, he was also an excellent diplomat and inimitable at conducting espionage.

As he was unknown to his compatriots, among whom he had never returned since the age of nine, he could hardly expect them to agree to the opening of hostilities. So, instead of declaring war, he had to arrange for war to be declared on him. This was why, in 218 B.C., he attacked Saguntum.

Sagunto was a city allied to Rome, but ever since Hasdrubal's days, Rome had been pledged to regard everywhere south of the Ebro as a Carthaginian sphere of influence. Thus, since the city lay in that area, Hannibal had no difficulty in rejecting the protest which, in no uncertain terms, he received from Rome. She was convinced that Carthage was still the frightened, unsettled city it had been during the mercenary revolts. Thus, with great cunning on one side and gross carelessness on the other, the second campaign began.

Hannibal spent another eight months under the walls of the city before taking it by assault as he was not prepared to risk leaving that excellent port open behind him to the Roman fleet. Then, leaving his brother Hasdrubal to guard it and to train reinforcements, he crossed the Ebro with thirty elephants, fifty thousand infantry and nine thousand cavalry. They were almost all Spaniards or Libyans and there was not a mercenary among them.

His difficulties began as soon as he reached the other side of the Pyrenees. The Gaulish tribes allied to Marseilles, in her turn allied to Rome, offered resistance, regardless of the way Rome had treated their brethren of the Po Valley. Furthermore, when they knew that he intended to cross the Alps, three thousand of his men refused to follow Hannibal. He did not force them; on the contrary, he freed another seven thousand, who appeared to be hesitant, from their obligations and sent them home. Thus, rid of timid and irresolute troops, he marched north to Vienne and began the ascent.

It is not known exactly where he crossed over. Some say it

was by the St. Bernard, others by Mont Génève; most are in favour of the latter. In any case, at the beginning of September of 218 B.C. he reached the summit (covered thick with snow) and gave his men two days' rest. He had already lost a thousand or so owing to the cold, exhaustion, precipices and Celtic warriors. After this halt he began the descent, which was even more difficult, especially for the elephants. There were moments of crisis and despair in the hearts of these bold men but Hannibal kept up their morale by pointing out in the distance the beautiful Po Valley, which he promised them as a reward. Those who reached the bottom of the mountains were twenty-six thousand men, less than half the number that had started out. On the other hand, the Boii and the other Gauls received them in a friendly manner, gave them supplies and joined forces with them, so that together they massacred or put to flight the Romans of Cremona and Piacenza.

Astounded by such audacity, the Senate realised that this second war threatened to be even more dangerous than the first. They called up three hundred thousand men and fourteen thousand horses, part of which they entrusted to the first of the many Scipios who were to make the family name famous. He met Hannibal on the Ticino, allowed his front to be broken by the Numidian cavalry and lost the battle. Seriously wounded as he was, he would have lost his life as well if his sixteen-year-old son had not saved him. Sixteen years later this lad was to avenge his father at Zama. It was October of 218 B.C.

Two months passed, and another army was sent to meet Hannibal on the Trebbia. A second battle followed, and a second defeat. Eight months later Caius Flaminius, at the head of thirty thousand men, marched against him, now master of all Cisalpine Gaul. Flaminius was so certain of victory that he took chains with him to put on the feet of the prisoners. Hannibal appeared to be trying to avoid a pitched battle. Actually, by cunning manœuvring of his patrols and by skirmishing, he enticed his enemy on to a plain near the shores of Lake Trasimene, which was surrounded by hills and woods,

where he had concealed his cavalry. From these positions he entangled them inextricably and hardly a Roman, not even Flaminius, survived.

Livy tells us that the news threw Rome into a panic, but the Senate faced the situation with virile fortitude. The prætor, Marcus Pomponius, did not try to play down the communiqué about the defeat when he read it from the rostrum. "We have been defeated in a great battle," he said. "The danger is very serious."

Things were not looking too rosy, either, for Hannibal. As he drew nearer to Rome, he realised that his hopes of dividing her from her allies were unfounded. In Tuscany and Umbria the cities closed their gates before his army, which was unable to obtain supplies. In vain he liberated and sent home non-Roman prisoners. From the Apennines to Samnium all Italy stood solidly by the City. All Hannibal could do was to change direction towards the Adriatic in search of more hospitable lands. His allies, the Gauls, who could see no farther than the tips of their own noses, began to desert now that they were getting farther away from their own region. Hannibal sent messengers to Carthage to ask for reinforcements. They were refused him. He sent to Hasdrubal. The latter was being kept busy in Spain by the Romans, who had landed there. He continued his march south and found himself up against a new and embarrassing strategist.

Quintus Fabius Maximus had been appointed Dictator, and had begun that "masterly inactivity" for which he was to go down in history as the "Delayer." He skirmished and laid ambushes, but refused to be drawn into battle. He just waited for hardship, hunger and weariness to complete their work on the enemy, who were, in fact, desperate. Unfortunately the Romans got tired first and wanted an immediate victory. They listened with approval to the malicious Minucius Rufus, Fabius's second-in-command and detractor, and he was relieved of his command. It was divided between two freshly appointed consuls, Terentius Varro and Æmilius Paulus. The latter was

an aristocrat of sound judgment, who was well aware that the Romans had not yet worked out a strategy capable of dealing with Hannibal. Varro was a plebeian, a better patriot than general, who wanted what his electors wanted: a rapid victory. As he spoke in the name of Pride and Nationalism he got his way. He led his eighty thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry against Hannibal, who breathed a sigh of relief, although he only had twenty thousand veterans, fifteen thousand unreliable Gauls and ten thousand horsemen. The only one he feared was Fabius Maximus.

The battle, the most gigantic of ancient times, took place at Cannæ on the Ofanto. The Carthaginian, as usual, lured his enemy on to level ground suitable for the employment of cavalry and drew up his line of battle with the Gauls in the centre, convinced that they would cut and run, which, in fact, they did. Varro plunged into the gap and Hannibal's wings closed round him. Æmilius Paulus, who had opposed the battle, fought gallantly and was killed together with another forty-four thousand Romans, including eighty senators. Varro in company with the same Scipio who had saved his skin on the Ticino managed to escape. He took refuge in Chiusi and thence returned to Rome.

The mourning population awaited him at the gates of the City. When they saw him coming they went to meet him with the magistrates at their head and thanked him for having never doubted the Fatherland. This was Rome's reply to the catastrophe.

ACCORDING to the experts Cannæ remains in the history of strategy an unsurpassed example. Hannibal, the only commander ever to beat Rome four times running, only lost six thousand men, of whom four thousand were Gauls. But he also lost the secret of his success, which his enemies finally understood: the superiority of cavalry.

For the time being it looked as though the invader had won the day; the Samnites, the Abruzzans and the Lucanians revolted. At Croton, Locri, Capua and Metaponto the population massacred the Roman garrisons. Philip V of Macedonia made an alliance with the victor. Carthage, elated, announced the dispatch of reinforcements and certain young Roman patricians, already corrupted by Hellenic culture, meditated flight to Greece, their ideal country. These, however, were isolated cases, and Scipio, veteran of the two defeats of the Ticino and Cannæ, denounced them with words of fire. The people accepted fresh taxation and further mobilisation, the noble matrons brought their jewels to the Treasury and went to sweep the floors of the temples with their hair. The Government ordered a new human sacrifice, no longer of two but of four victims, whereupon two Greeks and two Gauls were buried alive. The soldiers refused to take their pay. Volunteers of thirteen and fourteen left home to swell the slender garrison which was preparing to defend Rome in her last battle against Hannibal.

Hannibal failed to appear. One still asks to-day why he was unwilling to take a chance. Like Hitler after Dunkirk, this great soldier, who had courage and to spare in battle, could not

manage to screw up enough to tackle the last obstacle, even though he knew it was almost defenceless. Was he suffering from the illusion that he would get substantial reinforcements in time for the great enterprise? Did he hope that the enemy would sue for peace? Or had he still a healthy respect for Rome, in spite of having beaten her four times? Whatever may have been the cause, instead of exploiting the enormous success of Cannæ, he decided to take a rest. He sent home the non-Roman prisoners and offered to return the Roman ones in exchange for a small indemnity. The Senate haughtily refused. Hannibal sent a certain number of them to Carthage as slaves and used up the others in gladiatorial games for the entertainment of his troops. Then he advanced to within a few miles of Rome and made its flesh creep before by-passing it to the east and making for Capua.

For the moment the Romans did not pursue him; they were painfully organising a new army of two hundred thousand men. When this was ready they gave a part to the consul Claudius Marcellus to re-establish order in Sicily, which had revolted; a part they kept for the defence of the City; another part they sent to Spain under the leadership of the two elder Scipios to keep Hasdrubal tied up.

By the following year Claudius Marcellus had conquered Syracuse. It had, after the death of the faithful Hieron, betrayed the alliance and tried to hold out with the aid of the devices of Archimedes, the greatest mathematician and technician of antiquity. Amongst other things he had thought up "iron hands" (which, from the confused and bewildering descriptions left us by historians, must have been cranes which lifted up the Roman ships) and "burning mirrors" which set fire to them by concentrating the rays of the sun on them. Perhaps these were only brilliant ideas which, in actual practice, remained on paper. The fact is that the city fell just the same and, in the slaughter that followed, Archimedes himself lost his life.

To this success, which revived Roman prestige in the south,

were added those of the two Scipios, who had given Hasdrubal several drubbings in Spain, and the retaking of Capua, which fell in 211 B.C., when Hannibal had turned his back for a moment and was hoping to deceive the Romans by a pretended march on Rome. The punishment of the unfaithful city was exemplary: all its chiefs were killed and the population was deported *en masse*. Terror spread over Italy and faith in Hannibal, "the liberator," was shaken.

Just at this moment arose the great leader who was destined to avenge all of Rome's humiliations. The two Scipios, who had been battling victoriously with Hasdrubal, were both killed in action. The son of one and nephew of the other, Publius Cornelius, the twenty-four-year-old veteran of the Ticino and Cannæ, was sent to take their place.

He was too young to hold such a high command but the Senate and the Assembly in the face of such a serious emergency decided to waive the law. Publius Cornelius Scipio had been a brave soldier and an excellent phalanx and cohort commander. On his return with Varro to Rome in the darkest hour after the defeat of Cannæ he had been the soul of the resistance. He was handsome, eloquent and bore a great name. He was reputed to be a god-fearing, courteous and just man, who did nothing, either in his public or private life, without first consulting the gods in prayer at the temple. He had, furthermore, managed to get himself a reputation among his fellow-citizens for being lucky, in other words of being a favourite of Heaven.

As soon as he arrived in Spain, where he found the army busily besieging Cartagena, he gave a demonstration of the particular favours which assisted him. The capture of the city was a question of crossing a lagoon connected with the sea. The depth of the water made swimming necessary, an impossible feat for a man weighed down by breastplate, helmet and arms. One morning Publius Cornelius assembled his men and informed them that Neptune had appeared to him in a dream. The god had promised to help him by lowering the level of the

lagoon. The soldiery neither believed nor disbelieved this but when, all of a sudden, they saw their general jump in and run across it, they acclaimed it as a miracle. They charged in after him, and, more for the god's sake than Scipio's, stormed and took their objective.

Actually there was nothing miraculous about it. Publius Cornelius had merely found out, in conversation with the fishermen of Tarragona, about the difference between high and low tide, a subject about which his veterans, all peasants, knew absolutely nothing. All the same, the energy and enthusiasm of troops are doubled once they are convinced that their general has divinity on his side. It began to be rumoured that the father of Publius Cornelius was not Scipio at all, but a monstrous great snake, into which Jove in person had changed himself. In those times the Romans were not above ruining their own mothers' reputations as long as they won. It is highly probable that Scipio started the rumour himself.

Almost all Spain fell into the hands of Rome by this coup. Hasdrubal, who no longer had any reason for staying there, managed to escape and, together with his army, sped off to join his brother via France and the Alps. Somehow or other he also succeeded in crossing them but a message of his to Hannibal, announcing his imminent arrival and the route he was going to take, was intercepted by the Romans, who were thus fully informed of all his plans. Two new armies were hastily fitted out. One, commanded by Claudius Nero, saw that Hannibal was safely pinned down in Apulia. In any case, the latter made no move because he had no idea of what was afoot. The other, under the orders of Livius Salinator, lay in wait for Hasdrubal in the most favourable position on the Metataurus, near Senigaglia, and exterminated his army. We are told that the head of the general, who was killed in the battle, was severed from his shoulders, taken to Hannibal's encampment and thrown over the walls of the ramparts. Owing to his trachoma the latter had already lost one eye but the remaining

one enabled him to recognise the miserable remains of the brother he had loved as a son.

By now the Carthaginian felt that he had failed. Philip of Macedonia, after a platonic declaration of war, had allowed himself to be won over by Roman diplomacy and had made peace. The Italian rebels, intimidated by the example of Capua, sympathised with Hannibal but did not help him. Eighty of the hundred ships which Carthage had sent him laden with reinforcements had been wrecked and sunk on the coast of Sardinia. Further, "the leisures of Capua," which became proverbial from then on, had sapped the morale and physique of the valorous army of Cannæ. One of his commanders had said to Hannibal when he refused to march on Rome: "The gods do not lavish all their gifts on one man. You know how to win victories, but you do not know how to use them." Perhaps there was more than a little truth in this judgment.

In 204 B.C. Scipio returned from his triumphs in Spain and was given command of a new and more powerful army, with which he embarked and sailed for Africa. Instead of being offensive, the war now became defensive for Carthage. Alarmed, she hastily sent for Hannibal to come and defend her. The man who came back after thirty-six years' absence, half-blind and worn out by fatigue and disillusionment, was still a great leader but no longer the twenty-eight-year-old prodigy who had set out from Cartagena. Half his troops refused to follow him and Roman historians say that he had twenty thousand men executed for mutiny. He landed with the rest in 202 B.C. and hardly recognised the city he had left when he was nine. Then he took up a position with his remaining veterans on the plain of Zama, about fifty miles to the south of Carthage.

The two armies were about equal in strength and they stood and watched each other for many months, improving their positions. Then the Romans received unhopèd-for aid. Massinissa, King of Numidia, was deposed by his rival, Syphax, a friend and protégé of the Carthaginians. Massinissa therefore joined Scipio complete with all his cavalry.

As Hannibal had always put his greatest trust in cavalry, perhaps this is why, before giving battle, he wanted to play his last card: that of coming to a friendly agreement. He asked for a meeting with his opponent, which was accepted. At last the two great generals met face to face. The interview was short and, it would appear, extremely polite. The participants came to the conclusion that there was no question of coming to an agreement but, judging by subsequent events, one is inclined to say that they got along very well together (they could hardly fail to esteem each other highly). They parted without rancour and immediately joined battle.

Hannibal, instead of imposing the initiative, had for the first time in his life to submit to it from his adversary, who adopted his own pincer-movements to beat him. In the ensuing disaster he displayed the same energy which he had had twenty-five years before. He assailed and wounded Scipio in single combat. He attacked Massinissa. He formed and reformed his battered phalanxes five, six, ten times to hurl them into counter-attacks. All to no avail. Twenty thousand of his men lay dead on the field. All he could do was to mount a horse and gallop off to Carthage. He arrived, covered with blood, summoned the Senate and announced that he had lost not a battle but the war, and advised them to send envoys to sue for peace. They did so.

Scipio was generous. He demanded the surrender of the whole Carthaginian fleet, less ten triremes, the abandonment of any conquest in Europe, the recognition of Massinissa in an independent Numidia, and reparations of ten thousand talents. He left Carthage her Tunisian and Algerian possessions, though she was not to add others to them, and did not insist on the handing over of Hannibal, though the Roman people would dearly have loved to see him yoked behind the victor's chariot on the day of his triumph.

His compatriots showed Hannibal none of the chivalry that his ex-enemy had done. The peace treaty had not yet been ratified when certain Carthaginians secretly informed Rome

that Hannibal was already meditating vengeance and was doing his utmost to organise it. Actually, he was only trying to re-establish order in his country and, at the head of the popular party, was doing his best to destroy the privileges of the corrupt senatorial and mercantile oligarchy which had been really responsible for the defeat.

Scipio used all his influence to dissuade his countrymen from asking for the head of his great enemy, but without success. To avoid arrest and surrender, Hannibal had to flee on horse by night, galloping over a hundred and twenty-five miles to Thapsos, whence he sailed for Antioch. At that time King Antiochus was hesitating between war and peace with Rome. Hannibal counselled war and became one of his military experts. In spite of all his skill, however, Antiochus was defeated at Magnesia and, among other conditions, the Romans insisted on the Carthaginian being handed over. So again he had to take flight, first to Crete and then to Bithynia. The Romans gave him no respite and finally surrounded him in his hideout. The old general preferred death to capture and Livy tells how, raising the poison to his lips, he ironically remarked: "Let us set the Romans' minds at rest, seeing that they haven't the patience to wait for the end of an old man like me." He was sixty-seven and a few months later his victor and admirer, Cornelius, followed him to the grave.

It was this second Punic War which decided for centuries and centuries the fate of the Mediterranean and of Western Europe. The third was merely a superfluous postscript. It gave Rome Spain, North Africa, the dominion of the sea and riches.

These gains also gave rise to a transformation in the life of Rome, which was not to prove at all beneficial to the future of the City. In all, three hundred thousand men, the élite of agriculture and the army, had fallen in battle. Four hundred cities had been destroyed and half the farms had been pillaged, especially in southern Italy, which has never really recovered to this day.

The Romans of two hundred years before would have repaired this damage in the course of fifty years or so; their successors were not made of the same stuff. What now attracted them was not work on the land but international trade. Instead of getting rich by patience and tenacity and by living a frugal life and saving, it was easier to do so in Spain where, for example, all they had to do was to scratch the earth to find iron and gold. Loot from the conquered peoples glutted the Treasury, and the tribute paid by the subject states, year after year, to the tune of millions, made every Roman citizen a "rentier" and put him off work.

This economic boom upset society and made the framework on which it had rested up till now inadequate. A new bourgeoisie of middlemen and contractors sprang up and traditions were softened and relaxed. What to-day is called "social life" now developed with intellectual and progressive salons. Faith in the gods weakened as did faith in that democracy which, in moments of danger, had had to rely on dictators with plenary power to save the country.

The crisis did not come all at once, but it was in these years after the downfall of Carthage that its seeds were sown.

16

'GRÆCIA CAPTA . . .'

ONE OF the first loads of booty which Rome, having decided to make war on Greece, brought back was a group of about a thousand intellectuals noted for their hostility to the City. Among them was a certain Polybius. He had a passion for history and taught the Romans how it should be written. "By what political system," he asked himself on arrival, "has this city been able to conquer the world in less than fifty-three

years; a thing which nobody else has ever succeeded in doing up till now?"

As a matter of fact, Rome had taken much more than fifty-three years, but, for the Greek Polybius, the "world" simply meant Greece, the conquest of which actually had not taken more than half a century. However, it had not been the diabolical cunning of the Senate and the Roman generals which had rendered their task so easy, but the fact that Greece, before being conquered, had already destroyed herself. Her disintegration had come from within and all Rome had had to do was gather the fruits.

The first dealings of the City with Greece dated back to the times of Pyrrhus. Even then, Greece, as a nation, had already ceased to exist or, rather, had given up all hope of ever becoming one. The various cities of which she was composed spent all their time fighting among themselves and there was not one capable of keeping the others united in defence of their common interests.

The last attempt to create a Greek nation had come from outside. This was from Macedonia, which the Greeks of Athens, Corinth and Thebes regarded as a barbarous foreign country. It is true that it was little like Greece. The chains of mountains which enclosed it from the south had cut it off from the culture, customs and civilisation of the coastal cities. On the other hand, this civilisation was too urban and mercantile to flourish in that harsh and rugged country of hidden valleys, sparse flocks and lonely, archaic villages. Nevertheless, the population had remained healthy, tough and strong. They knew nothing about grammar and philosophy but believed in their gods and obeyed their masters. These were an aristocracy of big landowners whose only occupation was attending to their own land and whose only pleasures were tournaments and hunting. Rarely and unwillingly they went to Pallas, the capital; not because the journey was arduous but because in that dull country town the king happened to live and they wished to have as little as possible to do with him. Only Philip and his son Alexander had

succeeded in overcoming their reserve and uniting them in the great adventure of conquest. Each brought his own contingent to the common army, of which he was the commander. All together, first under the sole command of the father and then of the son, they had occupied Greece, organised it, and tried to co-ordinate its forces with those of Macedonia. Their object? To conquer the world.

It was a wonderful adventure which only lasted as long as its two protagonists. In 323 B.C. Alexander died in Babylonia at the age of only thirty-three. Although he had led his army from victory to victory, to Egypt and India through Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Persia, his ephemeral empire faded away as quickly as it had risen. To his generals, gathered around his bedside to ask him whom he designated as his successor, he replied: "The strongest," but forgot to indicate who this was; perhaps he did not know. This is why his possessions were divided into five parts: Antipater took Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus, Thrace; Antigonus, Asia Minor; Seleucus, Babylonia and Ptolemy, Egypt. Naturally, they immediately started fighting among themselves.

Let us leave to their quarrels these "diadochs," as the five successors were called, quarrels which were of great advantage to Rome later on, and concentrate on those which immediately broke out in the kingdom of Antipater. This should have united Macedonia with Greece and, had the union been really effective, Rome would have found it a very tough nut to crack. But the Greeks did not want this and did all they could to prevent it. When Alexander died, Plutarch relates, the Athenians, who had received nothing but benefits from him, formed processions in the streets and sang hymns of victory "as though they themselves had overthrown the tyrant." Demosthenes, who had been the champion of resistance (a resistance of words only), had his brief hour of glory and incited his fellow-citizens to raise an army to resist Antipater. The army was raised and naturally defeated by the new King of Macedonia, an ignorant type with none of Alexander's weakness for

the highly-civilised Athens. He treated her just as he was accustomed to treating his own mutinous soldiers.

When Antipater died, leaving the throne to his son Cassander, Athens again rebelled. She was again defeated and punished. And so it went on for years and years: rebellions followed by repressions. Finally, Demetrius Poliorcetes (which means "conqueror of cities"), the son of Antigonos, arrived from Asia Minor and drove out the Macedonians. In Athens he was received as a conquering hero. They specially decorated an apartment for him in the Parthenon, and this he filled with prostitutes and effeminate boys. Tiring of these pleasures, he proclaimed himself King of Macedonia and as such abolished the independence of Athens, which he himself had restored. He then turned the city over to another Macedonian garrison.

From this régime of anarchy, which lasted a century and which was made worse by a terrifying invasion of the Gauls, Greece emerged politically finished. In the wake of her merchant fleet and on the swords of Philip, Alexander and their diadochs her civilisation had penetrated everywhere, from the Epirus to Asia Minor, to Palestine, to Persia, to Egypt and even to India. Everywhere the ruling classes and the intellectuals were Greek or under Greek influence. Her philosophy, sculpture, literature and science, transplanted to conquered countries, created new cultures. Politically, however, Greece was dead and was to remain so for two thousand years.

When Rome, by now free of Carthage, turned her eyes in that direction she saw a constellation of tiny states in permanent conflict with one another. Polybius had no reason to wonder how she managed to conquer them in so short a time. As a matter of fact she could have done so in far less.

It all began because of Philip V, King of Macedonia. This state, bled white by Alexander, was no longer what it had been, but it was still the most stable in Greece, whose cities at this time were divided into two Leagues, the Achæan and the Ætolian. These only patched up their private quarrels to unite against Macedonia.

In 216 B.C. Philip, hearing that Hannibal had annihilated the Romans at Cannæ, signed a pact of alliance with him and invited the Greeks to help him destroy Rome, a power which might become a menace to all of them. A conference was held at Lepanto, where the Ætolian delegate, Agelaus, speaking in the name of all present, urged Philip to put himself at the head of all the Greeks in this crusade. This seemed all very fine, but almost immediately in Athens and the other cities it began to be rumoured that Hannibal had given the Macedonian a free hand, as far as the Greeks were concerned, in return for his assistance. Suspicion, which had been momentarily allayed, at once flared up again and the Ætolian League sent envoys to Rome asking for help against Philip. The latter, who now had to cope with Greece, was compelled to give up the idea of Italy. Furthermore, he had to sign a treaty with Rome, thus putting an end to the first Macedonian War before it had even begun.

After the battle of Zama, Pergamum, Egypt and Rhodes, all of which had been molested by him, he asked Rome for help against Philip. The City, which had a long memory and well recalled the manoeuvre of the Macedonian king after Cannæ, sent an army under Titus Quintius Flamininus which trounced him at Cynoscephalæ in 197 B.C. Once this bastion had fallen, the road to Greece was open.

This Flamininus was a strange individual. Of patrician family, he had studied at Taranto, where he had learned Greek, and he was an admirer of Hellenic civilisation. Furthermore, he held advanced views. Instead of killing Philip, he put him back on his throne, in spite of the protests of his Greek allies, who claimed that they had won the battle of Cynocephalus. On the occasion of the great Isthmian Games held at Corinth, which were attended by delegations from all over Greece, he proclaimed that all her cities and peoples were independent, no longer subject to garrisons or tribute, and free to govern themselves according to their own laws. His listeners, who had expected the Macedonian yoke to be replaced by the Roman

one, were flabbergasted. Plutarch says that they raised such a yell of enthusiasm that a flight of crows, circling overhead, dropped down stone dead.

The Athenian sceptics did not have time to doubt the honest intentions of Flamininus. He put them into force at once by withdrawing his army from Greece. Having previously acclaimed him as their "Saviour and Liberator," they now criticised him for taking away a considerable number of souvenirs in the shape of works of art from certain cities of the Ætolian League. This was why they appealed to Antiochus, the latest heir to Seleucus, the king of Babylonia, to re-liberate them. It is not quite clear from what they were to be re-liberated. Flamininus had left them as free as air.

Pergamum and Lampsacus, who were closer neighbours of Antiochus, knew him better and consequently knew what to expect from him. So they asked for help from Rome. The Senate, which had never really believed in the liberal, progressive experiment of Flamininus, sent another army under command of the hero of Zama. With a small force he attacked Antiochus at Magnesia and routed him, in spite of the wise strategic counsels given to him by his guest, Hannibal. Then Scipio wheeled north, defeated the Gauls, who were still encamped in the neighbourhood, and returned to Italy without laying a finger on the Greek cities.

For several years Rome persisted in this policy of tolerance and respect. She only intervened in their internal affairs when invited to do so and tried to support constituted authority. As a result she was unpopular with all the malcontents, who accused her of being reactionary. Perseus of Macedonia, who had succeeded Philip in 179 B.C., tried to take advantage of this frame of mind to rally the masses for a holy war against the City. He had married the daughter of the successor of Antiochus, with whom he had made an alliance, and he also involved Illyria and the Epirus. The latter two states were practically the only ones to lend him help. A third Roman army under Æmilius Paulus, the son of the consul killed at

Cannæ, now arrived on the scene and routed Perseus at Pydna in 171 B.C.

Amongst other things the secret files of the beaten enemy fell into the hands of Æmilius. In them were found all the documents relating to the plot, with complete proofs of the guilt of the various parties concerned. As a punishment seventy Macedonian towns were razed to the ground and Illyria and the Epirus devastated. Rhodes, which had conspired without taking an active part in the war, was deprived of her possessions in Asia Minor, and a thousand Greek sympathisers of Perseus, including Polybius, were taken to Rome as hostages.

This indicates that, by this time, Rome had abandoned the illusions of Flaminius and the other phil-Hellenes of the City, including the Scipios themselves, and had overcome their sense of inferiority towards Greece. She was now returning to her good old-fashioned methods of dealing with the conquered. Even this time the turbulent Greeks did not realise what they were up against. Within a few years new proletarian classes came to power, which did not differentiate between socialism and nationalism. The Achæan League was resuscitated and, when it learned that Rome was engaged in a third war with Carthage, it raised the banner of freedom all over Greece.

By now Rome was quite capable of fighting a war on two fronts and, whilst Scipio Æmilianus was embarking for Africa, the consul Mummius swooped down on Corinth, one of the more troublesome cities. He besieged and took it, killed all its menfolk, enslaved all its women and, having taken on board all the movable property he could lay hands on, burnt it to the ground. Greece and Macedonia were then, with the exception of Athens and Sparta, united into a single "province" under a Roman governor. Athens and Sparta were granted a limited degree of autonomy.

Greece had at last found peace—the peace of the grave.

The third and last Punic War, so desired by Cato the Censor, was set in motion by Massinissa. Neither of them was destined to see the end of it.

Massinissa was one of the strangest personages of antiquity. He lived to be ninety, had his last son at eighty-six and at eighty-eight still galloped at the head of his troops. After Zama he had got the throne of Numidia back again and, since Carthage had given Rome a pledge not to go to war again, he never tired of tormenting her with his inroads and pillaging. Carthage protested to Rome, who paid no attention. But, when she had paid up the last of her fifty annual indemnities for reparations, she decided to stand no more from Massinissa and attacked him.

At this time Cato's party had the upper hand in Rome, and he always finished speeches, no matter what they were about, with the refrain: "Quite apart from all this, I think that Carthage ought to be destroyed."

Following his suggestions, the Senate saw a golden opportunity in the Massinissa incident. Not only did they forbid the Carthaginians to take any initiative, but demanded three hundred babies of noble birth as hostages. The babies were handed over, amid the wails of their mothers, some of whom swam out to sea after the departing ships and were drowned. Seeing that this provocation had not worked, the Romans demanded the surrender of all arms, the entire fleet and a large part of the harvest. When these demands were also complied with, the Senate insisted that the whole population should withdraw ten miles from the city, which was to be razed to the ground. The Carthaginian ambassadors vainly objected that never in all history had such an atrocity been perpetrated and threw themselves on the ground, tearing their hair and offering their own lives in exchange.

But Rome wanted war and war she was determined to have at all costs.

When this news reached Carthage, the infuriated mob lynched those responsible for handing over the babies, the ambassadors, the ministers and all the Italians they could lay hands on. Then, mad with rage and hatred, they called everybody to arms, including the slaves, and turned every house into

a fortress. In two months of feverish activity they mustered eight thousand shields, eighteen thousand swords, thirty thousand spears and a hundred and twenty ships.

The siege, by land and sea, lasted three years. Scipio *Æmilianus*, the adopted son of the son of the victor of Zama, won doubtful glory by finally taking the city. For another six days fighting continued, street by street and house by house. Sniped at by sharpshooters from the roofs and windows, Scipio destroyed all the buildings.

Those who in the end surrendered were only fifty-five thousand out of the five hundred thousand inhabitants of Carthage. All the rest were dead. Their general, still another Hasdrubal, implored and was granted mercy by Scipio. His wife, in shame, hurled herself and her children into the flames of a burning building.

Scipio asked the Senate's permission to put an end to this slaughter; their only answer was that not only Carthage but all its dependencies must be destroyed. The city continued to burn for seventeen days. Its few survivors were sold as slaves and, from then on, its territory became a province under the generic name of Africa. There was no peace treaty for the simple reason that there was nobody left to sign one. The Carthaginian ambassadors had been right: never had history seen such an atrocity.

Fortunately for Cato and Massinissa, they were spared remorse. They were already dead and buried.

17

CATO

IN 195 B.C., just after the second Punic War, the women of Rome formed a procession and marched on the Forum to ask parliament to repeal the Oppian Law, which had been passed during the austerity period of Hannibal's imminent threat to Rome and which forbade the fair sex gold ornaments, coloured garments and the use of carriages.

For the first time in the history of the City women took the lead in something. For the first time they took a political initiative or, in other words, stood up for their own rights. For five and a half centuries, from the day of its foundation, the history of Rome had been a history of men to whom the women, an anonymous mass, had merely acted as a chorus. Those few whose names we know, Tarpeia, Lucretia, Virginia, probably never existed. They do not represent credible personages, but monuments to Treachery or Virtue. Roman public life was exclusively male. Women only counted in private life, in the home and family circle, where their influence was strictly confined to their functions as mothers, wives, daughters or sisters of their menfolk.

In the Senate, Marcus Porcius Cato, in his capacity as "censor" entrusted with the surveillance of customs, opposed this female demand, and his speech, handed down to us by Livy, illuminates the changes that had taken place in the family and social life of the City.

"Gentlemen, if every one of us had maintained his authority and rights as a husband in his own home, we should never have reached this point. Now look at us. Female arrogance, having robbed us of our freedom of action in our families, is now destroying it in the Forum as well. Remember what a hard

time we had to keep our women in order and to restrain their licentiousness, even when the laws permitted us to do so. Just imagine what will happen from now on, if these laws are repealed and women are legally put on an equal footing with ourselves. You know what women are: make them your equals and in no time you will find them lording it over you. In the end it will come to this: the men of the whole world, who, all the world over, make their women obey, will be ruled by the only men in the world who are ruled by their women: the Romans."

Demonstrators drowned the orator in gales of derisive laughter but like all those who speak the truth he was accustomed to that. The Oppian Law was repealed and Cato uselessly tried to get his own back by increasing tenfold the taxes on luxury goods. When the wind begins to blow from a certain direction, there is not a censor with an earthly chance of stopping it. The suffragettes, once they had taken the initiative, had no intention of letting it slip from their grasp again. Gradually they obtained the right to administer their own dowries, which made them financially free and independent, or, to use to-day's expression, "to lead their own lives." Then followed that of divorcing their husbands whom, if this proved impossible, they poisoned. Birth-control became a more and more common practice.

Contrary to general belief and to how he has been described, the man who was trying to put a stop to these new fashions, all of Greek origin, was not in the least an intolerable moralist with an acid tongue and liver trouble. Quite the contrary. Marcus Porcius Cato was a plebeian peasant from near Rieti, bursting with health and good humour, who lived to the age of eighty-five (an almost legendary age for those days). He died after achieving all his ambitions, including one particularly dear to his heart: that of making many enemies.

Pure chance made him an outstanding political figure and perhaps the most interesting personality of his period. He was living in stoic simplicity on his tiny farm, which he cultivated

with his own hands, when an old retired senator, Valerius Flaccus, disgusted with the corruption of Rome, came to live nearby. Valerius was an old-fashioned patrician of the type that hated sophistication and he took an instant liking to this horny-handed young man, with his rough clothing, red hair and missing teeth, who used to read the classics in secret because he was as ashamed of doing so as if it had been some unmentionable vice, but who had learned from them to write and speak in a clear-cut and unadorned style. Owing to their common tastes and ideas they became friends, and Valerius encouraged Marcus (who was called Porcius because his family had always bred pigs and Cato because all his ancestors had been cunning) to become a lawyer. This was the profession from which one entered public life and perhaps the senator launched him on it with this very object in view, hoping to leave a successor to combat the modernistic trend, which his age prevented him from doing in person.

Cato tried his hand and won a dozen cases, one after the other, before the local courts. Then, with an assured clientele, he took chambers in Rome, as we say, stood as a candidate in the elections, and set off on the so-called "course of honours" with the alacrity of a Hannibal. *Ædile* at thirty in 199 B.C., *prætor* in 198, three years later he was *consul*. Then he began again. *Tribune* in 191, *censor* in 184, he held one office after another until a ripe old age, particularly in war-time, when he changed his civil for military rank. He was more at home in camp than in the Forum because in camp he could invoke discipline (considered by him the foremost among virtues) with more propriety. As a general he appears to have been a stickler, but his soldiers forgave him this because he always marched on foot with them, fought with cool courage and allowed everyone a pound of silver out of the booty, which he then turned over to the Senate intact without even keeping an ounce for himself.

This was a rule which the Roman generals had nearly always observed up until the Punic Wars but which, of late, had been becoming an exception. The Government, when the

takings were abundant, used to wink at the part the victor pocketed for himself. Quintus Minucius had brought back thirty-five thousand pounds of silver and thirty-five thousand denarii from Spain; Manlius Vulso four thousand five hundred pounds of gold from Asia; four hundred thousand sesterii, something well in excess of £1,000,000, had been extorted from Antiochus and Perseus. It was only natural that the honesty of the Roman generals and magistrates, who had always been poor, thrifty and miserly, should succumb to this downpour of gold and Cato's battle to prevent it was doomed to failure. Nonetheless, he fought it.

In 187 B.C., when he was tribune, he asked Scipio Africanus and his brother Lucius, who had returned victorious from Asia, to account for the sums paid out by Antiochus in war reparations. It was a perfectly legitimate request but it came as a surprise to Rome since it raised doubts as to the impeccability of the hero of Zama, who was really above suspicion. It is not clear what led Cato to take this step. He must have been well aware of the African's integrity and immense popularity. Perhaps he simply wished to re-establish the principle, which was falling into disuse, that Roman generals, whatever their names or merits, should render their accounts; or was there perhaps at the bottom of it a violent dislike for the Scipio clan, who were æsthetes, Hellenists and moderns?

Perhaps it was for both reasons. In any case, the request set the oligarchy of ruling families, who practically held the monopoly of power in the aristocratic circles of the Senate, against its originator. Until Sulla's times the history of Rome is practically that of a few dynasties; the same names are continually cropping up. Of the last two hundred consuls of the Republic, half come from only ten families and the other from sixteen. Of all these the Scipios were the most distinguished, from the one who had fallen on the Trebbia to the one who had triumphed at Zama and whose adopted son was later to destroy Carthage.

The African, in spite of his injured pride, was prepared to

respond but was prevented from doing so by his brother Lucius. He took from his brief-case the documents showing his receipts and expenditure and tore them up in front of the Senate. For this gesture he was brought in front of the Assembly and sentenced for fraud, but he escaped punishment owing to the veto of one of the tribunes, a certain Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, of whom we shall hear more presently. In confirmation of what we have said above about government by dynasties, this tribune happened to be a relation of the accused, having married his daughter Cornelia. The hero of Zama, summoned before the Assembly for judgment, interrupted the debate by inviting its members to the temple of Jove to celebrate the anniversary of his great victory, which chanced to fall on that same day. The members accepted, but when they returned to parliament and summoned the general again he refused to appear and, embittered by their insistence, retired to his villa at Liternum where he remained until his death. His persecutors finally left him in peace but Cato justly deplored the fact that for the first time in the history of Rome the military merits of a defendant had frustrated justice and denounced in this episode the first symptoms of that individualism and hero-worship which would shortly corrupt society and destroy democracy.

It may be asked how, with such powerful adversaries as women and the cabal of the aristocratic families, this implacable trouble-seeker still managed to remain in power and to get himself elected every time he stood for office? Few people liked him, but his honesty in those corrupt times and his asceticism in that effete age had the same effect on everybody as remorse. He was what everybody should have been, would have liked to have been, but unfortunately, was not. That was why they respected and voted for him even though they detested him. Furthermore, he was a great orator. This is odd, since he had started his literary career by publishing a treatise against orators, thus anticipating Verlaine's famous phrase: "When you meet oratory, wring its neck." Nevertheless, by dint of telling others how not to speak, he had learned to speak well

himself. What little remains of his speeches is enough for us to recognise him as being greater than Cicero, who was certainly more rounded, dignified and high-sounding, but less direct, effective and sincere. This all goes to show that there is no eloquence, literature, music, painting or anything else without moral strength and firm conviction to sustain it.

Cato salted even his severest tirades with humour. When, for example, as censor, he had Manilius expelled from the Senate for kissing his wife in public and was asked whether he himself had never done the same thing, he replied: "Yes, but only when it is thundering. That is why bad weather always puts me in a good temper." Even when they brought him to trial (and it appears that they tried to do so forty-four times under one pretext or another), he never lost his good humour and laughed just as often as he snapped back. It could not have been much fun to have to face him in cross-examination, with his ready sarcasm, his bitter gibes, his battle-scarred face, red hair and uneven teeth. Nobody would ever have overthrown him if, at a certain moment, he himself had not wearied of the useless battle and retired of his own free will to write books, an occupation which he secretly despised. He did so because he wanted to oppose with Latin texts those which other writers were composing in Greek, a language which threatened to gain the monopoly of Roman culture.

His *De Agri Cultura* is, in fact, his only surviving text and is the first book in real Latin prose to have been published in Rome. It is a curious practical manual in which advice on methods of curing rheumatism and diarrhoea is mixed up with vaguely philosophic theories. As for his views on various methods of farming, here they are: "The best," he says, "is profitable cattle raising. And then? Moderately profitable cattle raising. And then? And then ploughing and sowing." Cato did not wish to return to agriculture but to grazing.

No one had a stronger presentiment of the decadence of Rome than he did or diagnosed more accurately the root of the infection: Greece. He had studied the language and, educated

and alert as he was under his rough clothes, he realised that Hellenic culture was so superior to and more refined than Roman culture that it was bound to corrupt it. He called Socrates "a gossipy old maid" and approved of the judges who had sentenced him to death as a corrupter of the laws and traditions of Athens. "Mark my words," he wrote to his son, "if those people manage to contaminate us with their culture, we are lost. In any case, they have already started with their doctors who, with the excuse of healing us, have come here to destroy the 'barbarians.' I forbid you to have anything to do with them." He would rather have seen him dead than cured by Greek medicines.

It is most probable that this phobia led to his insistence on "*delenda est Carthago*" for which he has remained famous. More than preventing the revival of the Phœnician city, he was aiming at distracting Rome from the temptation of conquering Greece. He wanted his country to look westward, not to the East whence, according to him, only vice and disaster could come. Perhaps he was very disappointed at the rapidity with which Scipio concluded the task. He would have preferred a defensive war against ten Hannibals to an offensive one against Hellas. When he saw the consuls Marcellus, Fulvius and Æmilius Paulus come back from there, their wagons laden with statues, paintings, metal cups, priceless furniture and embroidered materials, and the people queueing up in front of these marvels and discussing fashions, styles, hats, sandals, silverware and cosmetics, he must have torn his hair.

He died in 149 B.C. when the Senate had already decided to send the last Scipio "*ad delendam Carthaginem*." Perhaps this decision gave him a last ray of hope, or at least we like to think so. Had he lived a little longer, he would have seen that the destruction of Carthage had been completely useless. In fact, once that city had disappeared from the face of Africa and the Mediterranean, the Romans had no eyes, ears and thoughts but for Phidias, Praxiteles, Aristotle, Plato, refined cookery, make-up and the intellectual ladies of Athens.

‘... FERUM VICTOREM CEPIT’

HORACE, much later, confirmed these fears which Cato had expressed with a verse: “Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit” —“Captive Greece her captor captive made.” She used several weapons to do so: religion and the theatre for the plebs, philosophy and art for the upper classes (which, not yet educated, would unfortunately become so later).

To Polybius, when he was taken there as a prisoner, religion seemed still to be deep-rooted. “The characteristic,” he wrote, “for which, in my opinion, the Roman Empire is superior to all others lies in its religion. This, which in other nations would be considered deplorable superstition, here in Rome is the very corner-stone of the State. Everything connected with it is adorned with pomp, and it so conditions public and private life that nothing can compete with it. I think the Government must have created it especially for the masses. It would not be necessary if the people were made up exclusively of enlightened persons, but for the multitude, always stupid and prone to blind passions, it is just as well that there should be fear to keep them in check.”

It is understandable that to such a man, fresh from Greece, where scepticism was limitless, the Romans who still retained a glimmer of faith must have seemed like so many monks. It was only a glimmer, though certain liturgical forms (“pomp,” Polybius calls them) were still from force of habit respected. Even Cato, though he endeavoured to preserve all the old customs and beliefs, wondered in a public speech how the augurs, who knew all each other’s little tricks, managed to keep a straight face when they met in the street. Plautus was able to ridicule Jove in the role of the seducer of Alcmena on the stage with impunity and to present Mercury as a Clown.

Yet the public, who applauded these irreverent comedies, had, on hearing the news of the disaster of Cannæ, rushed to the Forum crying: "To which god must we pray for Rome to be saved?" Evidently the Romans only remembered in moments of danger that they had gods but did not know out of the many with which their Paradise swarmed the right one for the job. The Government's answer was also odd. They decided to entrust the safety of the City not to a Roman god, as had always been the case up till then, but to a Greek goddess, Cybele. Her statue was to be brought from its home in Pessinus, Asia Minor, to Rome. Attalus, king of Pergamum, agreed to the removal. Thus Magna Mater, as the goddess was re-christened, arrived one fine day at Ostia where Scipio Africanus was waiting to receive her at the head of a party of noble matrons. The rumour went round Rome that the ship, which had run aground at the mouth of the Tiber, had been refloated and steered upstream into the heart of the City by the Vestal Virginia Claudia by sheer force of chastity. Whether or not they believed this, everybody burnt incense as the goddess passed on her way to the Temple of Victory escorted by the procession of matrons. The Senate was rather shocked and perplexed when it found out that the Great Mother had to be ministered to by self-castrated priests. There were none available in the religious colleges of Rome. Eventually some were produced from among the prisoners of war and ordained for the purpose.

From this moment Greek ceremonial spread, and was applied not only to gods from overseas but also to the Roman ones. As a result, instead of being austere and gloomy, as ceremonial had been up to now, it became light-hearted and orgiastic. In 186 B.C. the Senate was astonished and alarmed to find out that the masses were particularly devoted to Dionysus, and had made him their favourite deity. They flocked to his temple and enthusiastically offered sacrifices to him. The reason is clear. These sacrifices consisted of gigantic banquets, copious libations and considerable laxity in the

relations between men and women. They were, in fact, anything but "sacrifices." The police raided these junketings, rounded up and arrested seven thousand participants, condemned a few hundred to death, the rest to prison, and suppressed the cult. When the police have to be called in to protect the morals of the people it means that they are already beyond protection.

Apart from this, it became noticeable that the theatre was fast becoming the real temple of Rome.

The first theatrical experiment had been that of Livius Andronicus, the Tarantine-Greek prisoner of war. In 240 B.C. he had written, acted and sung the *Odyssey* in crude verse. As we have said, the public and Government were so delighted by this show that they had allowed the actors to form a "corporation," and to organise the so-called "ludi scenici" on the occasion of the great annual feasts.

Five years after that historic occasion, another prisoner of war, a Neapolitan this time, Cnæus Nævius, produced another play. It ridiculed the abuses and hypocrisy of Roman society with the brio of an Aristophanes. The people were highly amused but the influential families took offence and protested. They were too crude and obtuse to appreciate satire, which is at home only among really civilised peoples. Poor Nævius was arrested and had to retract. He wrote another comedy, certainly with the intention of never again offending anybody, but as he was a very witty man, this was beyond him. Again his pen let slip a few more barbs, for which he paid by being deported. In this way Rome lost a playwright who might have founded an original theatre, not a mere banal copy of a foreign one, and a humorist who might have taught those dreary, pedantic people the art of recognising and laughing at their own defects, to their own betterment. Nevius, continuing to write in exile, left a very poor dramatic poem on Roman history which is patriotic to the point of being silly.

From then on the Roman theatre merely aped the Greek until a third foreigner came along to give it a touch of originality.

Quintus Ennius was an Apulian with an Italian father and a Greek mother. He had studied at Taranto, where were given the dramas of Euripides, of whom he was a fervent admirer. Then he had gone to do his military service. By his courage in Sardinia he had attracted the attention of Cato, who was there as quaestor and who brought him back to Rome. His *Annals*, an epic story of Rome from Æneas to Pyrrhus, was, until Virgil appeared, the national poem of the City. But his first love was the theatre, for which he wrote about thirty tragedies in which his principal butt was the zealotry of bigots. Here in the words of one of his leading characters are his religious convictions: "I assure you, my friends, that the gods do exist, but they don't care in the least what is done by us mortals. How, otherwise, can one explain that good is not always rewarded by good and evil by evil?" Cicero (who reports this speech, already symptomatic of the theories of Epicurus, and who claims to have heard it recited) assures us that the applause was loud and long. Ennius advised his followers to put a little but not too much philosophy into their plays. Unfortunately, he was the first not to heed this wise maxim. He insisted on writing such high-brow drama that the public turned their backs on him and flocked to the farces of Plautus, the first real Roman author of plays.

He arrived from Umbria in 254 B.C. and even his name made people laugh; Titus Maccius Plautus meant Titus the flat-footed clown. He began his career as an "extra," saved a little money, invested it in an unlucky speculation and lost the lot. Then, in order to eat, he started to write. At first he adapted Greek comedies, putting in topical gags about current Roman events. When he saw that the public laughed at these more than anything else, he abandoned his foreign models and began to write originals, using as plots day-to-day happenings of the City. This gave rise to a truly contemporary theatre of manners. Plautus soon became the idol of the public, who loved his cheerful good humour and loud Rabelaisian laugh. His *Miles Gloriosus* had his audiences rolling in the aisles. Every-

body liked him and they even stood for his *Amphitryon*, which contained an irreverent satire on Jove, who was presented as a vulgar Don Juan who, in order to seduce Alcmena, passes himself off as her husband, invoking and offering sacrifices to himself.

In 184 B.C., the year Plautus died, Terence, a Carthaginian slave, arrived in Rome. Terence had the luck to hit on the house of Terence Lucan, an educated and affable senator, who discovered the talent of his servant and freed him. Terence, originally called Publius Afrus, adopted his name out of gratitude. When he had written his first play, *Andria*, he read it to Cecilius Statius, a well-established and highly successful author of the day whose works have all perished. Suetonius says that Statius was so impressed that he invited his visitor, although dressed like a tramp, to lunch. Despite the fact that he frequented society salons and became fashionable among the upper classes, Terence never achieved the general popularity of Plautus. His second play, *Hecyra*, failed. The audience walked out in a body when they heard that a duel between a gladiator and a bear was about to begin at the Circus. However, Terence had a success with *The Eunuch*, which earned him eight thousand sestertii, about £2,300, for two performances on the same day. In Rome it was murmured that the real author of these works was Laelius, the friend of Scipio, and a great friend and patron of Terence. The latter, with great tact, never either confirmed or denied this gossip, and, perhaps to get away from it, decided to go to Greece. He never returned. On his way back he died of an illness in Arcady.

The intellectual and sophisticated circles of the time had for Terence the same devotion that their French counterparts of to-day had for Gide. Cicero defines him as "the most exquisite poet of the Republic." Cæsar, who knew his literature and was more forthright, considered him a perfect stylist but a "Menander dimidiatus," a Menander at half-cock, on the stage. True, his plays never lapse into the vulgarities of Plautus.

Their characters are more complex, more subtle, their dialogue more meditated and richer in double meanings. Unfortunately, they were all written in a language which was no longer that of "the people," and the people sensed its artificiality and booed.

More and more people now attended the theatre, particularly since admission was free. The premises were rudimentary and only erected for feasts and taken down afterwards. They consisted of a wooden structure, which supported the stage, in front of which there was a circular "orchestra" for the ballets which accompanied the show. Some of the spectators stood, others lay on the ground, and others sat on benches which they had brought from home. Only in 145 B.C. was a permanent theatre built. This was also of wood, without a roof but with fixed seats arranged in a circle which in the Greek style completely surrounded the stage. Anybody could go there, even slaves who, however, were not allowed to sit, and women, who were relegated to the back rows.

The prologue, recited by an actor before the curtain went up, included recommendations to mothers to blow their children's noses before the show began, or to take home those who snivelled. They must have been noisy, undisciplined audiences who frequently interrupted the performance with ribald comment and salacious remarks. Often they did not notice when the show was over, so it always finished with a "nunc plaudite omnes"—an invitation to applaud.

The actors were generally Greek slaves, except for the star, who could be a Roman citizen. The latter, however, lost his political rights on taking up this career, just as in France until the seventeenth century. Men also played the women's parts. As long as the public was limited in number, they made do with a sketchy make-up but when, in the last century before Christ, houses were filled to capacity they introduced the use of masks to distinguish the characters. These were called "personæ" from the Etruscan "phersu." Thus "dramatis personæ" literally means "masks of the drama." The players

in a tragedy wore "cothurni," which were short boots, and, in a comedy the "soccus" or shoe without heels.

As now, there was unceasing conflict between what the public wanted and a censorship which kept productions under rigid surveillance. It had been for violation of one of the Laws of the Twelve Tables, which banned political satire and even authorised the death penalty for it, that poor Nævius was banished. To avoid the same fate, his successors had borrowed everything from Greece: scenes, characters, situations, costumes and even the names of coins. The reasons for this censorship were, as usual, bureaucratic and stupid. They did not mind a certain amount of obscenity, provided there was no hint of criticism of the Government or of prominent citizens.

Fortunately the ædiles, who staged these shows for the entertainment of the public and who were also after their votes, were always on the side of, and protected, the authors. Plautus must have had some very powerful friends to let him get away with what he did. It is thanks to him that the Roman theatre existed except as a translation from the Greek. Without it we should have been deprived of that mirror of society which, for better or for worse, has been bequeathed to us.

This general relaxation was made possible owing to the now-prevailing atmosphere of free thinking. It had been imported by the "Greeklings," as the Romans called them, with a scorn that did nothing to stop those Romans taking them on as teachers. Prisoners of war, brought over as hostages and slaves, were the first grammarians, orators and philosophers to open schools in Rome. In 172 B.C. the Senate discovered among them two disciples of Epicurus. These were banished. A few years later Crates of Mallos, director of the State Library of Pergamum and chief exponent of the Stoic School, came to Rome as an ambassador and broke his leg. Whilst waiting for it to set he gave lectures.

In 155 B.C. Athens sent three philosophers (all she had left by now) on a diplomatic mission: Carneades, a disciple of Plato, Critolaus the Aristotelian and Diogenes the Stoic. The

three also gave lectures. When Cato heard Carneades assert that the gods did not exist and that justice and injustice were merely a matter of convention, he rushed to the Senate and demanded that the three Athenians be repatriated.

He had his way. It was little use though, seeing that Greek thought and culture were being fostered by many of the Romans themselves and that the most influential of them were already steeped in them. Flamininus had at his home a gallery of sculpture by Polycleites, Phidias, Scopas and Praxiteles. Æmilius Paulus had helped himself to the library of Perseus, and had brought his children up on it. When he died, the youngest of these children was adopted by Cornelius Scipio, the son of the African. He took over the name and, as Publius Cornelius Scipio Æmilianus, emulated his grandfather by destroying Carthage and became head of his powerful clan, which he converted to Hellenism. With his good looks, wealth, pleasant manner, keen intelligence and incorruptible honesty (he only left thirty-three pounds of silver and two of gold when he died), he had everything necessary to make him the favourite of the aristocratic salons now springing up everywhere. Polybius lived for years as a guest in his house. A daily caller was Panætius, another aristocratic Greek from Rhodes, and of the Stoic school. His book *On Duty*, which Scipio probably suggested and inspired, was that on which the gilded youth of Rome modelled itself. Unlike the ancient stoics, the modern ones did not preach absolute virtue nor did they insist on complete indifference to fortune or misfortune. They were only propounding a substitute, full of decent compromise, for a faith which could no longer sustain the Roman way of life. Indulgence was taking the place of the severe puritanism of other days.

Scipio's drawing-room exerted an enormous influence. Apart from Flamininus, there were outstandingly Caius Lucilius and Caius Lælius. Their friendship with the master of the house inspired Cicero's book, *De Amicitia*. Lofty ideas were exchanged. Beauty was acclaimed. Refined manners, original and precious

ideas and, above all, pure, polished, accentless speech were *de rigueur*: this speech, thanks to Catullus, a *habitué* of these circles, became that of literary and cultured Rome. But when uttered by Terence's characters it was jeered at by the public as artificial and too remote from their own.

19

THE GRACCHI

IT WAS in one of these "salons" that the seeds of revolution were sown. Contrary to general belief, revolutions never originate among the proletariat, which provides the man-power for them, but among the aristocratic or bourgeois classes, which are then consumed by them. Revolutions are always more or less a form of suicide, since a class is only eliminated when it has already eliminated itself.

Cornelia, daughter of Scipio Africanus, had married Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, the tribune who had vetoed the sentence on Lucius, the brother of the hero of Zama. Since his intervention had saved his wife's uncle it was an example of nepotism in reverse. However, notwithstanding this pardonable lapse, he continued to enjoy a well-deserved reputation for integrity. Elected first censor and then (twice) consul, he had governed Spain in a liberal and enlightened manner. Cornelia had given him twelve children of whom nine died young. On his death, Cornelia was left with only two boys, Tiberius and Caius, and a girl, Cornelia; whether she was born deformed or became so through infantile paralysis is not known.

Cornelia the mother was an exemplary widow and a great educator. She must also have been good-looking, since, according to Plutarch, an Egyptian king asked her to marry him. She haughtily replied that she preferred to remain the daughter of one Scipio, the mother-in-law of another, and the mother of the

Gracchi. At that time the second Cornelia had already married the destroyer of Carthage. It was not, it appears, a love match but a marriage of convenience, as was usual in that society composed of families and dynasties, with a view to reinforcing their alliances.

Cornelia was also something that had never up to then been seen in Rome. She was a great intellectual and a charming hostess. Her drawing-room, where the greatest names in politics, art and philosophy used to forgather, resembled those of certain French ladies of the eighteenth century; its functions were more or less the same. Its leading lights, partly for family reasons, were the so-called "Scipio set" with Lælius, Flamininus, Polybius, Caius Lucilius, Mutius Scævola and Metellus Macedonicus. As regards birth, intelligence and experience, it was the best Rome could offer. What a difference there was between these new leaders and their fathers and grandfathers. To begin with, these moderns accepted the inspiration of a woman. Further, they had a bath every day, were fastidious in dress and not in the least convinced that Rome should give lessons to the world. On the contrary, they believed that Rome should go to the school of Greece.

Conversation in this salon was not revolutionary but "progressive." It must have been similar to that of to-day's left-wing liberals or radicals. Since they were all highly-placed personages, they knew what they were talking about, and what they said was re-echoed in Senate and Government circles.

The situation of Rome, far from being bright, called forth wide criticism and the darkest forebodings. The City was having trouble in digesting the immense Empire which she had so rapidly devoured. The grain of Sicily, Sardinia, Spain and Africa, which, owing to free slave-labour, was glutting the market at a very low price, was bringing economic ruin on the rural Italy of the small-holders. Those small and medium land-owners, who had been the most effective bulwark against Hannibal and had made the best soldiers in the war against him, were unable to face the competition. They were selling

up their modest farms, which were absorbed by the big estates. A law of 220 B.C., which forbade the senators to engage in commerce, obliged them to invest the capital which they had accumulated from the spoils of war in agriculture. Further, much of the land requisitioned from the enemy had been ceded to speculators in return for the money they had lent to the State. Neither these speculators nor the senators were any longer country gentlemen. Accustomed to living in town, with its comforts and ease, politics and business, they had no intention of abandoning it and returning to the simple frugal life of their stoic ancestors. Thus they did what certain barons of southern Italy do to-day. They acquired an estate, turned it over to an agent, who, by driving the labourers and over-exploiting the resources of the soil with no thought for the future, tried to make it yield as much as possible for the owner and himself.

Another social and moral crisis arose from the economic one: that of a society which, founded on its small, free farmers, now relied more and more on loot from abroad and slavery at home. A torrent of slaves kept pouring into Rome. In 177 B.C. forty thousand Sardinians were imported in a single batch, ten years later one hundred and fifty thousand Epirots. "Wholesalers" in this human commodity used to follow the legions who captured them, so as to lay in supplies of them. With the downfall of the Greek and Macedonian empires, these dealers had by now reached Asia, the Danube and the frontiers of Russia. Slaves were so plentiful that transactions in ten thousand at a time were normal on the intercontinental market of Delos. The price fell to six shillings a head.

In the towns it was the slaves who provided the labour for the artisans' shops, the offices, banks and factories, thus throwing into unemployment and indigence those citizens who had previously done the work. Their relations with the contractors varied with the temperament of the latter. Although they were not bound to show any special regard for a slave, some tried to treat them humanely. A limit was put to these humani-

tarian considerations by the economic law of competitive prices. The trend was for more to be demanded of and less conceded to them.

In the country the plight of slaves was even more of a contrast to times when they had been a rarity and, once they had been taken into a family, had finished up by becoming part of it, rather like poor relations. The modest size of the property and the shortage of hands had made relations with the owner direct and human. On the big estates, where slaves were employed in droves, the owner never appeared and in his place was an overseer chosen from the dregs of the population, who made drastic economies on the food and clothing, which was the only salary due to these poor wretches. If they disobeyed or complained, they were put in chains and thrown into underground cells.

In 196 B.C. slaves revolted in Etruria. The legions killed them all; many were crucified. Ten years later another revolt broke out in Apulia: the few who survived the repression were imprisoned down a mine. In 139 B.C. a full-scale servile war broke out under the leadership of Eunus, who massacred the population of Enna, occupied Agrigento and in a short time, with an army of seventy thousand mutinous slaves, made himself master of almost the whole of Sicily, defeating a Roman army in the process. It took six years to put an end to it. Punishment was of course on a proportionate scale.

In the year 133 B.C. Tiberius Gracchus, the son of Sempronius and Cornelia, was elected tribune. He had grown up in his mother's salon with radical ideas drummed into his head by his tutor Blossius, a philosopher from Cumæ. From adolescence he thought about nothing but politics. He was what is usually called an "idealist," but how far his ideas, which were excellent, served his ambition, which was enormous, and vice versa, not even he himself knew. This, after all, is the quandary of all idealists. He knew a great deal about the predicament of the country, partly because it was continually and knowledgeably discussed in the salon and partly from what

his brother had told him after going to study it at first hand in Etruria and returning horrified by what he had seen. Tiberius realised that Italy would be ruined if its agriculture fell irretrievably into the hands of speculators and slaves, and that no sound democracy could flourish in Rome if the people were undermined by continual unemployment and subsidies.

The only remedy for slavery, city life and military decadence seemed to him to lie in a bold agrarian reform. This, as soon as he was elected, he put before the Assembly. The reform consisted of three proposals:

1. No citizen could possess more than two hundred and fifty acres, which could be increased to five hundred if he had two or more sons.
2. All lands distributed or leased by the State should be returned to it at the same price, with an indemnity for any improvements carried out.
3. These lands should be divided up and re-distributed to poor citizens in lots of about twelve or fifteen acres each, with the obligation not to sell them and to pay a modest tax on them.

They were reasonable proposals and fully consistent with the Licinian Laws, which had been passed more than two centuries previously. Tiberius, however, made the mistake of presenting them in a demagogic and rabble-rousing speech quite out of keeping with his social position. "Our generals," he said speaking from the rostrum, "encourage you to fight for the temples and the tombs of your ancestors. It is vain and false appeal. You have no paternal altars. You have no ancestral tombs. You fight and die just to provide luxury and riches for those over you."

It was well delivered because Tiberius was an excellent speaker, but it unfortunately contained subversive elements. The Senate declared the proposals illegal, accused their author of having ambitions towards dictatorship and persuaded Octavius, the other tribune, to put his veto on the proposals. Tiberius replied with a motion whereby a tribune, when he

acted contrarily to the will of the Assembly, should immediately be deposed. The Assembly approved this motion, and Tiberius's lictors forcibly ejected Octavius from his bench. The law was then passed and the Assembly, fearing for the life of Tiberius, escorted him home.

He was probably not received there that day with the unanimous enthusiasm he may have expected. Perhaps only Cornelia continued to regard him as one of her jewels, as she had once called him and Caius. The others must have been somewhat shaken, not so much by the laws which he had imposed and which were in complete harmony with the political and social outlook of the "salon," but by the unconstitutional methods he had used against Octavius. Scandalised, they withdrew their support when, contrary to a precise ruling which definitely forbade it, he stood again for the tribuneship.

He was obliged to do this because the Senate threatened to put him on trial as soon as his term of office expired. Abandoned by his own family and friends, Tiberius, to curry favour with the plebs, swung even farther to the left. He promised if re-elected to shorten military service, to abolish the monopoly of the senators in court juries and, since at that moment Attalus III of Pergamum had just died and left his kingdom to Rome, he proposed selling all its mobile property and using the proceeds to help the peasants to equip their farms. Here he slipped into pure demagogy and presented his opponents with valid arguments against him.

On the day of the elections Tiberius appeared in the Forum with an armed bodyguard and wearing mourning to make it quite clear that if he were not elected he would be condemned to death. Whilst voting was in progress a group of senators headed by Scipio Nasica burst in with clubs in their hands. The prestige which the Senate still held, and which Gracchus had foolishly overlooked, is shown by the fact that the friends of Tiberius respectfully fell back before these patricians and left him standing alone. He was killed by a blow on the nape of the

neck and his body, together with those of some hundreds of his followers, was thrown into the Tiber.

His brother, Caius, was refused permission to recover and bury it.

This took place in 131 B.C. Seven years later, in 124 B.C., the second of Cornelia's "jewels" took his brother's place as tribune. We understand him better and rate him higher than his brother, since he seems to have been more of a realist, and more sincere. He also was a magnificent orator: Cicero considered him the greatest (after himself, of course). He had fought bravely under his brother-in-law, Scipio Æmilianus, at Numantia and he had great self-control. In fact, he proceeded by degrees, without trying to do everything in a hurry.

During these seven years the Agrarian Laws of Tiberius, which the Senate, having killed their author, had not dared to repeal, had in spite of the fact that their application had involved many difficulties of a practical nature produced good results. The census had registered eighty thousand new citizens, who had become as such owners of a piece of land, but many protests had been made by the old proprietors. They did not want to hear of the dismemberment or confiscation of their lands and entrusted their cause to Scipio Africanus. It is not clear why he accepted the defence of interests which were contrary to his own ideas. Perhaps he was induced to support them by those very family reasons which should have led him to abstain. He was on ever worse terms with his wife, Cornelia, and one morning in 129 B.C. he was found murdered in his bed. It has never been discovered who killed him. Naturally the gossips of the aristocratic households, where they were detested, put the blame on his wife and mother-in-law.

Having grown up amid so many misfortunes and in a house by now deserted even by its most intimate friends, Caius went ahead cautiously with the application of the laws of Tiberius. He set up new agricultural colonies in southern Italy, he won over the soldiers by decreeing that from now on they would be equipped at State expense, and he fixed the price of grain at a

"political price" which was half the market price. By this last measure, which later became the strongest weapon in the hands of Marius and Cæsar, he had all the masses of the City on his side.

The following year, on the strength of these successes, he was again able to stand for the tribuneship without incurring his brother's fate and was elected. He now thought he could play his trump cards, but here he fell into error. He proposed adding to the three hundred senators-by-right another three hundred elected by the Assembly and extending citizenship to all the non-slaves of Latium and to a good proportion of those of the rest of the peninsula. But he failed to reckon with the boundless indifference of the Romans to their brethren of Latium or the peninsula. The Senate promptly took steps to exploit this tactical error of its adversary. It egged on Livius Drusus, the other tribune, to make even more radical proposals: that the tax imposed by the Tiberian law on new proprietors should be abolished, and that forty-two thousand landless Roman citizens should be given new allotments in twelve new colonies. The Assembly immediately approved these projects and, when Caius went back there, he found that all his thunder had been stolen by Drusus.

He stood for election a third time but was rejected. His supporters claimed that there had been trickery but he calmed them down and retired to private life.

The Senate, recognising that he could be a menace so long as he retained any life, indicated its readiness to reward whoever would put an end to it. The Assembly realised that this would be the thin end of the wedge towards nullifying the legislation of the Gracchi, and their sympathisers attended the next session armed. One of them hacked a Conservative to bits because he had used threats against Caius. The next day the senators appeared in full battle array, each of them attended by two slaves. Partisans of the Gracchi entrenched themselves on the Aventine, and Caius tried to act as mediator. When he met with no success, he dived into the Tiber to escape his enemies'

assassins. Just as his pursuers were catching up with him on the opposite bank, he ordered one of his slaves to kill him. The slave obeyed and, drawing the bloodstained dagger from his master's heart, plunged it into his own. One of Caius's faithful disciples severed his head from his trunk, filled it with lead and took it to the Senate to exchange it in accordance with their offer for its weight in gold. He not only pocketed the reward but was restored to political favour. The mob, which had applauded him so loudly, made no issue of his assassination of their hero. They were too busy looting that hero's house. Cornelia, mother of two murdered sons and a widow suspected of homicide, went into mourning. The Senate ordered her to take it off.

20

MARIUS

Two hundred and fifty of his followers were killed with Caius. Another three thousand were arrested. For the moment it looked as if the Conservatives had won and a drastic repression was expected. It did not materialise. The Senate adjourned the agricultural reforms, but it did not touch the subsidy on grain or try to renew the monopoly of the aristocracy in the juries of the law courts. Evidently it realised, in spite of its temporary victory, that the situation did not justify radical restorations.

For some years there remained in force a hand-to-mouth régime which did not try to remedy what the Gracchi had attempted, though they had done so prematurely and had committed many tactical errors. With the excuse of giving further aid to the small landowners created by the agrarian laws, they allowed them to sell the lands they had been assigned. Deprived of Government backing, they did so, and the big estates came

back into being on the usual basis of slave labour. Appianus, a very moderate democrat, admitted that during those years there were only in all Rome about two thousand owners of land. None of the others had any and their situation became daily worse.

The last straw was the so-called African scandal. This began in 110 B.C. Mycipsa, who had succeeded Massinissa on the throne of Numidia, had died six years previously and had left his bastard son Jugurtha as regent and guardian to his two legitimate heirs, still minors. Jugurtha killed one and declared war on the other. This survivor appealed to Rome, as protector of the kingdom, for help. The City sent out an inquiry commission which Jugurtha bought off with a handsome bribe and which, on its return to Rome, corrupted the senators who were to examine its findings. It was not until Quintus Metellus, a comparatively honest man, was elected consul that a general was found disposed to make war on the usurper instead of accepting his bribes.

Though without newspapers in those days, the people knew what was going on both out in the open and behind the scenes. The hatred they had been nursing for the aristocracy since the murders of the Gracchi flared up violently when they learned that Metellus, who was one of the better of them, was opposed to the election of one of his commanders, Caius Marius, to the consulate just because he was not a patrician. Although he was comparatively unknown, the Assembly voted solidly for him and gave him command of the legions. The reason was that at the time (as in all times when a democracy is at its last gasp) people were saying: "We need a Man . . ."

They were lucky enough to find him. Marius was an old-fashioned character of the kind that by now was only to be found in the provinces. Like Cicero, he was born at Arpino, the son of a poor farm-labourer. The army, which he had joined very young, had been his university. He had earned promotion, medals and the scars which seamed his body, at the siege of Numantia. On his return he had made a good marriage.

He had married Julia, the sister of a certain Caius Julius Cæsar, whose family was nothing exceptional, being only small landed gentry. This Cæsar already had a son, another Caius Julius Cæsar, who was to get himself talked about for thousands of years. Thanks to his own prowess, Marius had been elected tribune. He had taken advantage of this not to go in for politics and show his incapacity, but to return to his soldiers with a higher rank, still under the command of Metellus. The latter, bogged down in the war with Jugurtha, was scandalised when he knew that his subordinate wanted to go to Rome to stand for the consulate. It was out of place and presumptuous on the part of a poor peasant even though the consulate was in theory open to the plebs.

Marius, a touchy, vindictive man, was offended and, once elected, claimed the command from Metellus, who was forced to give it up to him. The war immediately began to move at another pace. In a few months Jugurtha was forced to surrender and adorned the victor's chariot when Marius was given a superb triumph by the people of Rome, who saw in him their champion. They did not know that it was not Marius who had struck the decisive blow against the usurper of Numidia, but a quæstor of his by the name of Sulla, who stood in relation to Marius much as Marius had stood in relation to Metellus.

However, for the moment Marius was the hero of the City. Ignoring the provisions of a Constitution by now on its last legs, Rome confirmed him as consul for six years running. Danger from outside had not, indeed, finished with Jugurtha. It was actually more serious than ever, because of certain Gauls. They had returned to the attack. More numerous and aggressive than before, the Cimbrii and the Teutons had reappeared, rolling down like an avalanche from Germany into France. A Roman army which had met them in Carinthia had been destroyed. They had then destroyed a second army on the Rhône, subsequently a third and a fourth. The Senate sent a fifth, under the command of two patricians, Servilius Cæpio and

Manlius Maximus. These did nothing but quarrel between themselves out of jealousy, each annulling the actions of the other. At Orange, eighty thousand legionaries, the pride of the aristocracy which had produced these inept generals, and forty thousand auxiliaries died on the field of battle. Rome waited tensely to be herself assailed by these hordes. Fortunately they crossed the Pyrenees instead of the Alps and began pillaging Spain. When they came back again, Marius, who had now been consul for four years, was ready.

He had raised a new type of army, his really great innovation, which was later to bear arms for Cæsar. He had realised that it was no longer possible to rely on citizens declared "fit for military service" just because they belonged to one of the five classes and were in duty bound, however unwillingly, to serve. Instead, he resorted to the indigent and unemployed, offering them good pay, abundant loot and a generous assignment of land after victory. He was replacing the national army by a mercenary one: a risky operation and, in the long run, a disastrous one, but made necessary by the decadence of Roman society.

He led his proletarian recruits, with a cadre of veteran N.C.O.s, beyond the Alps, toughened them with forced marches, gave them battle training in operations against minor objectives, and finally made them build an entrenched camp near Aix-en-Provence in a locality through which the Teutons were bound to pass.

They were so numerous that they streamed past it for six days, derisively asking the Roman sentries on the ramparts whether they had any messages for their wives at home. These Teutons were just the same as they had been three centuries previously: tall, fair-headed, very strong and extremely courageous, but with absolutely no notion of strategy. Otherwise they would never have left such a powerful enemy in their rear. They paid for it dearly. In fact, a few hours later, Marius fell on them from behind and exterminated a hundred thousand of them. Plutarch says that the people of Marseilles erected

palisades with their skeletons and that the land that year, fertilised by so many corpses, yielded a harvest such as had never been seen before.

After this victory Marius returned to Italy and lay in wait for the Cimbrii near Vercelli, where Hannibal had won his first victory. These, like their Teuton brothers, showed more courage than brains. Naked amid the snow, they advanced boldly against the Romans, using their shields as sledges to slide down the icy slopes and raising glad cries, as though it had been a sporting event. Here, as at Aix, it was more of a shambles than a battle.

In Rome, Marius was acclaimed as a "second Camillus" and as a token of gratitude they gave him all the booty captured from the foe. He thus became enormously rich, the owner of lands "as vast as a kingdom" and, for the sixth time running, he was elected consul.

In the game of politics, which he now had to learn to play, our hero, as is often the case with heroes, showed himself much less expert than in handling legions. He had made promises to his men which he now had to keep. To keep them he was forced to ally himself with the leaders of the popular party: Saturninus, the tribune of the plebs, and Glaucia, the prætor. This pair of scoundrels had experience of every kind of parliamentary skulduggery, and their one aim was to feather their own nests under cover of the highly popular Marius. The land was actually distributed in accordance with the laws of the Gracchi, but, to gain votes for the party, the political price of wheat, already low, was reduced by another nine-tenths. This absurd measure jeopardised the financial balance of the State. Even the more moderate of the popular party hesitated. The Senate persuaded a tribune to veto it but Saturninus, contrary to the Constitution, presented the law. There was a certain amount of trouble. The candidates for the consulate of 99 B.C. to be elected as the colleague of Marius were Glaucia, for the popular party, and Caius Memmius, one of the patricians still commanding some

respect, for the Conservatives. The latter was murdered by Saturninus's assassins, and the Senate, resorting to the emergency measure of the "*Senatus consultum ultimum*" for the defence of the State, ordered Marius to see that justice was done and order re-established. Marius hesitated. As a matter of fact, he had done little else since entering politics. He had aged, grown fat, drank heavily and had to choose between open rebellion and the liquidation of his friends. He took the second course. He ordered Saturninus, Glaucia and their followers to be stoned to death by the Conservatives, at whose head he placed himself for the occasion. Then, realising that he was unpopular with the patricians because he was an uncertain ally, and with the people because he was a certain traitor, he retired, full of rancour, and left on a journey to the Orient.

Less than two years had elapsed since Rome had hailed him in triumph as a "second Camillus." Had he accepted this ingratitude a little more philosophically, he would have gone down in history with an untarnished name. Being of a primitive nature, governed by his passions, consumed by unfulfilled ambition and more than ever convinced that he was "the man for the occasion," when events called him back on to the scene, he returned without hesitation to play a somewhat ambiguous role.

In 91 B.C. Marcus Livius Drusus was elected tribune. He was a patrician, son of the man who had opposed Tiberius Gracchus, and father of the girl who was later to marry a certain Octavian, the future Cæsar Augustus. He put up three fundamental reforms to the Assembly: the distribution of other new lands to the poor, the restoration of the monopoly in the juries to the Senate, after the addition of three hundred new members to it, and the granting of Roman citizenship to all free Italians. The Assembly approved the first two proposals. The third was never discussed, as the hand of an unknown assassin suppressed its author.

Immediately the whole peninsula was up in arms. After two centuries of union with Rome, it was still treated as a conquered

province. Squeezed dry by taxes and by military levies, it was subject to laws passed by a parliament in which it had no representation, and the main task of the Roman prefects in the various capitals of the provinces had been stirring up strife between rich and poor to keep them disunited. Only a few millionaires by wire-pulling and bribery had obtained Roman citizenship. Furthermore, in 126 B.C. the Assembly had made it illegal for the Italians of the provinces to immigrate to the City and in 95 B.C. had expelled those who were already there.

Rebellion spread like wildfire, except in Etruria and Umbria, which remained faithful. The others raised an army, which was stronger in despair than in lances and shields, especially in the case of the slaves who made common cause with the rebels. The latter proclaimed a federal republic, with its capital at Corfinium, and turned it into a "servile" war as well as a "social" one. In the panic which spread in Rome, where nobody had any illusions as to the vengeance that these outcasts were saving up for their secular oppressors, the myth of Marius, "man of the moment," was revived. He improvised an army by his usual method and led it, with no scruples about the cost, from victory to victory. He devastated and massacred up and down the whole peninsula. When three hundred thousand men had fallen on one side or the other, the Senate decided to grant citizenship to the Etruscans and the Umbrians as a reward for their fidelity and also to all others who were prepared to lay down their arms and swear fidelity.

The peace which followed was that of a graveyard. It reflects little credit on the man who imposed it. Furthermore, Rome kept her word by incorporating her new citizens into ten new "tribes," who voted *after* the thirty-five Roman ones, making up the "comitiæ tributæ," that is, without any possibility of modifying a decision. To obtain full democratic rights they had to wait for Cæsar. They then entered on them with such enthusiasm that they did not realise that he meant to end them.

A year later the war no longer "servile" or "social" but "civil" broke out again. This time Marius did not confine himself to taking advantage of it; he personally provoked it. But, like the popular party previously, the Conservatives had chanced to find their own "man of the moment." He was Marius's former subaltern and quæstor in Numidia, Sulla.

21

SULLA

SULLA was elected consul in the year 88 B.C., immediately after the end of the servile and social revolution which Marius had so bloodily repressed. Sulla's nomination, supported by the Conservatives, was unusual and somewhat unconstitutional, as he was a man who had never followed a regular "cursus honorum."

Lucius Cornelius Sulla came from a family of impoverished minor aristocrats. He had always shown a marked distaste for those two great passions of his contemporaries, a military uniform and a magistrate's toga. In the course of a misspent youth he had been kept by a Greek prostitute older than himself, had been unfaithful, and then maltreated her. He had never been interested in politics or serious matters. Possibly he lacked a regular education. However, he was well read, knew Greek and its literature well and had taste in art.

His underlying talents, which were enormous, might never have been revealed if, somehow or other, he had not been elected quæstor, given a captain's rank in the army of Marius in Numidia and had been directly concerned in the undoing of Jugurtha. He it was who persuaded Bocchus, king of the Moors, to hand over the usurper. This clever piece of work crowned a series of successes won by the sword. Sulla had shown himself a magnificent commander, cold, cunning and extremely brave,

and his men would follow him anywhere. War interested and amused him because it involved hazard and risk, two things he always liked. He therefore continued to follow Marius in his campaigns against the Teutons and the Cimbrii and made a valuable contribution to his victories.

When he returned to Rome in 99 B.C., Sulla could easily have stood for higher office. But for the present he had had enough. For four years he plunged back into his former life amongst prostitutes, circus gladiators, starving poets and penniless actors. One day he suddenly presented himself for election as prætor and was defeated. This so injured his pride, which in him took the place of ambition, that he put himself up for ædile, was elected, and delighted the Romans by offering them the first fights against lions in the amphitheatre. Naturally, the next year he was prætor and, as such, took command of a division in Cappadocia to reduce its king, who had rebelled, to obedience. He returned to Rome victorious with a booty rich enough, but not so rich, it would appear, as that which he himself had pocketed. Tired of being in debt, he wished to finance his own electoral campaigns rather than depend on a party. He did not, in fact, belong to one. Being a patrician by birth, but poor, he regarded the aristocracy, who looked down their noses at him, with the same indifference and contempt as he did the plebs, who did not accept him as one of them. He had always lived his own life among outsiders and his quarrel with Marius was not at all on political grounds but because he had had Boccus give him a bas-relief in gold which depicted the king of the Moors handing over Jugurtha to him, instead of to Marius.

Sulla stood for the consulate of 88 B.C., not for political reasons but to obtain command of the army. This was being mobilised against Mithridates of Asia Minor, where he had fought against Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, which was, as usual, in turmoil. A woman was the deciding factor in Sulla's election. He had, in fact, divorced his third wife, Clelia, after showering gifts on her, in order to marry a fourth: Cecilia

Metella, widow of Scaurus and daughter of Metellus the Dalmatian, pontiff and prince, that is, President of the Senate. It was owing to this connection with one of its most powerful families that the aristocracy began to see in Sulla their champion. They backed his election and gave him the coveted command.

The tribune, Sulpicius Rufus, tried to invalidate his appointment. He proposed to the Assembly that it be transferred to Marius, who, although almost seventy, was still out for position, office and honours. Sulla, not the type to forgo anything, rushed off to Nola, where the army was fitting out. Instead of embarking it for Asia Minor, he marched back with it to Rome. Here Marius had improvised another to resist him. Sulla won with ease and rapidity, Marius fled to Africa and Sulpicius was killed by one of his slaves. Sulla, on the rostrum, held up his severed head and rewarded the murderer for services rendered by granting him his freedom; he then had him killed for his treachery. After this there were very few reprisals. With his thirty-five thousand men encamped in the Forum, Sulla proclaimed that no proposal of law could be put up to the Assembly without the prior consent of the Senate, and that in future voting in the "comitiæ" was to be carried out by "centuriæ," according to the old constitution of Servius. Then, after getting himself confirmed in his military command with the title of proconsul, he allowed two consuls, the patrician Cnæus Octavius and the plebeian Cornelius Cinna, to be elected to look after home affairs, and he himself left on his eastern expedition.

Before he was in sight of the Greek coast Octavius and Cinna had already begun to quarrel. In the streets the Conservatives, or "optimates," arrayed themselves on one side, while democrats, or "populares," lined up on the other. The servile and social war of two years before flared up into civil war. Octavius won and Cinna fled but, in a single day, more than ten thousand corpses were piled up on the paving-stones of the City.

Marius hastened back from Africa to join Cinna, who was melodramatically touring the provinces to stir up revolt, his

toga in rags, his sandals worn out, his beard long and his battle-scars carefully displayed. In no time he raised an army of six thousand men, mainly slaves. With this he marched on the now defenceless capital. It was downright slaughter. Octavius awaited his death sitting calmly on the consul's bench. The heads of the senators, hoisted on pikes, were paraded through the streets. A revolutionary tribunal condemned thousands of patricians to death. Sulla was declared relieved of his command, his property was confiscated, and all his friends were killed. Cecilia alone was saved because she managed to escape and reach her husband in Greece. Under the new consulship of Marius and Cinna terror reigned for one year. Vultures and dogs devoured the bodies denied burial and left in the streets. Freed slaves continued to sack, burn and pillage until Cinna, with a detachment of Gaulish soldiers, isolated them, surrounded them and killed the lot. For the first time in the history of Rome foreign troops were used to re-establish order in the City.

Marius died in the midst of the bloodshed, worn out by alcohol, spite and unsatisfied ambition. Cinna remained alone, virtually dictator. Valerius Flaccus, who had been elected in the place of Marius, was sent east with twelve thousand men to depose Sulla.

Cut off from the homeland, the latter was busy besieging Athens, which had allied itself with Mithridates. He in his turn was on his way from Asia with an army five times superior in numbers. The situation was desperate and might have become hopeless if Sulla had allowed himself to be taken under the walls of the city by Flaccus and Mithridates jointly. Those who knew him well used to say that a fox and a lion slumbered in Sulla, and that the fox was more dangerous than the lion. Thanks to a number of timely "miracles," his soldiers were convinced that he was a god and therefore infallible. He was, in fact, a formidable general who understood his men perfectly and knew with cold precision how to exploit their strength and weaknesses. As he had run out of money, he paid his troops by allowing them to sack Olympia, Epidauros and Delphi. Never-

theless, he always restored discipline immediately afterwards. Impregnable Athens was stormed in a surprise attack and Sulla's soldiers were rewarded by being given a free hand. "Nobody knows how many people they killed," says Plutarch, "but in the streets blood flowed in rivers and flooded the suburbs."

After days and days of massacre, Sulla, who, in spite of his love for Greece and her culture and art, had looked on with complete detachment, said that the survivors must be forgiven in the name of the dead. Having reorganised his phalanxes, he led them against the army of Mithridates, who was advancing on Chæronca and Orchomenus. Sulla defeated him in a masterly battle and pursued his remnants across the Hellespont into the heart of Asia. He was just preparing to deliver the final blow to the last of the enemy forces when Flaccus arrived with orders to relieve him of his command.

The two generals met. At the end of their conversation Flaccus had not only given up all idea of carrying out his orders but had put himself, of his own free will, under Sulla's. When his second-in-command, Fimbria, tried to rebel, Sulla offered an advantageous peace to Mithridates. He undertook to respect his kingdom within its old frontiers, and only insisted on reparations consisting of eighty ships and two thousand talents to pay his men and take them home. He then marched against Fimbria in Lydia, but did not need to beat him, since, such was his prestige, as soon as they saw him, Fimbria's troops joined him. The abandoned Fimbria committed suicide.

Sulla retraced his footsteps without passing up the opportunity of helping himself to treasures and of squeezing cash out of all the provinces en route. He crossed Greece, embarked his army at Patras, and landed at Brindisi in 83 B.C.; Cinna, who was rushing to halt him, was killed by his own soldiers and a revolution broke out in Rome.

Sulla had brought back magnificent booty for the Government, fifteen thousand pounds of gold and a hundred thousand of silver. But the Government, still in the hands of the popular

party, headed by Marius's son, Marius the Younger, proclaimed him a public enemy and sent an army against him. Many patricians escaped from Rome to join him. Of these Cnæus Pompey, one of the most brilliant of the "gilded youth," brought a small personal army composed of friends, clients and servants of his family.

Marius the Younger was soundly beaten in battle but, before fleeing to Preneste, he sent orders to his followers in Rome to kill all the patricians still left in the city. The prætor summoned the Senate, as was his right, and all senators on the "black list" were butchered on their benches. The murderers then evacuated the city to join Marius and the other popular forces now preparing to play their last card against Sulla. The battle of Porta Collina was one of the bloodiest of antiquity. Of the hundred thousand and more of Marius's men, over half were killed and another eight thousand prisoners were slaughtered out of hand. The heads of their generals, stuck on pikes, were carried in procession round the walls of Preneste, the last bastion of the popular party, which soon surrendered. Marius killed himself, and his head, too, was cut off, sent to Rome and hoisted in the Forum.

Colossal was the triumph which the capital accorded to Sulla on the 27th and 28th of January of 81 B.C. The general was followed by an enthusiastic procession of Marius's proscripts, all with wreaths of flowers on their heads, who acclaimed him as father and saviour of the country. This time not even the soldiers hurled rude remarks at their leader; they cheered him with the rest. Sulla performed the ritual sacrifices on the Capitol and then harangued the crowd. With becoming modesty he attributed the incredible series of successes which had brought him there to good luck. This being the case, he requested—or rather, insisted—that he be given the title of "Felix," which literally means "happy" but which, on this occasion, meant "Fortune's favourite" or "the man of destiny." The people bowed to his will and decided to erect in his honour the first equestrian statue in gilded bronze ever seen in Rome.

This was not the only innovation that Sulla, to emphasise his absolute authority, introduced. He was the inventor of the "cult of personality." He coined new money with his profile on it and put into the official calendar as obligatory "The Feasts of the Victories of Sulla." In his dictatorship he treated Rome like any other conquered city, garrisoned by his soldiery and subjected to ferocious repression. Forty senators and two thousand six hundred knights who had sided with Marius were condemned to death and executed. Rewards up to £3,000 were given to those who handed over, dead or alive, any fugitive proscrip. Even many of those who had tried to avoid compromising themselves by not siding with anybody were suppressed or exiled, especially if they were rich. Sulla needed their money for his soldiers. Forum and streets were gaily decorated with heads, as they are nowadays with coloured balloons. One of the accused was a young man called Caius Julius Cæsar, who, being a nephew of Marius on his mother's side of the family, had refused to abjure his uncle. Mutual friends intervened and the young man was let off with banishment. As he signed the sentence Sulla said, "I am being stupid. There are a lot of Mariuses in that lad."

For two years Sulla governed autocratically. To fill the gaps in the population caused by the civil war he granted citizenship to foreigners, mainly to Spaniards and Gauls. He distributed land to over a hundred thousand veterans, especially in the Cumæ region, where he himself had a farm. To discourage town-dwelling he abolished free distributions of grain. He reduced in importance the office of the tribune and put back into force the rule of the ten years' interval for anyone standing for the consulship a second time. He repopulated the Senate, which had been decimated by massacres, with three hundred new members of the upper middle classes, who were faithful to him, and restored to it all those rights and privileges which it had had before the Gracchi. It was definitely an aristocratic restoration. He made a thorough job of it and disbanded the army, decreeing that in future no armed forces could camp in

Italy. Considering his mission completed, to the general astonishment he returned his powers to the Senate and restored government by the consuls. Then, just like any other private citizen, he retired to his villa at Cumæ.

By this time Cecilia Metella was dead. She had fallen ill just after her husband's triumph and, since it was an infectious disease, he had had her taken to another house, where he left her to die like a mangy cur.

Shortly before his abdication Sulla, by now almost sixty, had met Valeria, a beautiful girl of twenty-five, whom chance had placed by his side at the circus. Seeing a hair on the dictator's toga, she removed it with two fingers. Sulla turned to look at her, amazed first at such barefaced audacity and then at such luscious beauty. "Don't mind me, Dictator," she said, "I only want a hair's share of your good fortune." This appears to have been Sulla's only disinterested love, as he was too much of an egotist to feel such sentiments. Soon afterward he married her and it may be that the desire to enjoy to the full his beautiful young wife influenced his intention to abdicate.

The day on which he relinquished power and laid down the insignia of office he went home amid the dismayed and awe-stricken silence of the passers-by. One of them began to follow him and call him names. Sulla did not even turn round. He merely remarked to the few friends who accompanied him: "What an imbecile! After this, no dictator in the world will ever be prepared to lay down power."

He spent the last two years of his life with Valeria, hunting, talking philosophy with his friends and writing his "Memoirs," only a very few fragments of which have reached us. It appears that "The Happy One" was really happy at the close of his life. That life had been a full one without delusions or regrets (he was not capable of remorse), as he had always wished it to be. Among his veterans at Cumæ he remained vigorous and active until his dying day, settling their disputes in his imperious and abrupt manner. When a certain Granius disobeyed him over some trifle, he had him brought into his room and

strangled by his servants, just as in the good old days when he had been dictator. His pride and arrogance did not diminish even when he found himself face to face with death, which was knocking at his door in the form of a malignant ulcer which may have been cancer. With his cold blue eyes under his golden mane and his pale face, described by Plutarch as looking like "a mulberry sprinkled with flour," he continued to conceal his sufferings with a cheerful smile and bantering words. Before he died, he dictated his own epitaph: "No friend has ever done me a service, and no enemy has ever done me an injury which I have not repaid in full." It was true.

22

A DINNER IN ROME

THE restoration of Sulla had had one fundamental defect: it had denied the exigencies which had led to the revolution. For the creation of a dynamic and lasting work its author had lacked one essential quality: faith in mankind. Not that mankind deserves it, but it expects it in those who propose to govern it. Sulla did not believe in anything, least of all in the possibility of reforming his fellow-men. His love for himself was so great that there was none left for others. He despised them and was convinced that the only thing to do was to keep them in order. This was why he had set up a formidable police organisation which he left in the hands of the aristocracy—for whom he had no particular regard but because he was convinced that the "populares" were even more contemptible, and that any reform of theirs would have been a step in the wrong direction. The consequences were that ten years after his death his political structure had fallen to pieces.

The patricians, finding themselves with all this power in their hands, exploited it to steal, corrupt and kill instead of

using it to reorganise the Government and society. By now everything was just a question of money. It was standard practice to buy election to an office. There was even an organisation for securing votes with its specialised technicians: the "interpretes," the "divisores" and the "sequestres." Pompey, to get his friend Afranius elected, invited the chiefs of the tribes to his palace and bargained for their votes as if they had been so many sacks of apples. The law courts were even worse. Lentulus Sura, when acquitted by a jury with a margin of two votes, clapped his hand to his forehead and exclaimed: "Damn it! I bought one too many. And with prices what they are to-day . . ."

Since everything was a question of money, money was the only thing about which anybody cared. Capable and honest officials in the administration did still exist, but the majority were incompetent plunderers. These, to obtain a post in the government of a province, would not only forgo a salary, but would actually pay to get it, so sure were they of being able to make a handsome profit on it within a year. Make a profit they did, out of taxes, robbery and the sale of the inhabitants as slaves. When Cæsar was assigned to Spain he owed his creditors something like £300,000; in one year he repaid every penny. Cicero earned himself the reputation of being an honest man because in his year as governor of Cilicia he put aside only £35,000. This he trumpeted abroad in his letters as a good example.

The soldiers behaved no better. Lucullus returned home a millionaire from his campaigns in the Orient. From the same part of the world Pompey brought back booty of three or four millions for the State Treasury with another eight or nine for his own private one. The ease with which one could multiply one's capital, if one had enough to buy an appointment, was such that bankers would lend it to anybody who did not have it at fifty per cent interest. The Senate forbade its members to practise this ignoble usury but the ban was got round by using somebody else's name. Even men of the dignity of Brutus were

associated with money-lenders, who administered their capital and lent their money on those exorbitant conditions. In the hands of such a corrupt ruling class, Rome had become a pump which sucked money out of its Empire to enable a category of satraps to maintain an increasingly magnificent tenor of life in ever more ostentatious luxury.

One evening Cicero began to pull Lucullus's leg about the name he had earned himself as a gourmet. Cicero, a young lawyer from Arpino, was the son of a well-to-do farmer who had given him a good education. When he was twenty-seven and almost unknown he had taken on a famous but decidedly risky case, that of defending Roscius against Chrysogenes, who was a great favourite of the then dictator, Sulla. Cicero, with a masterly harangue, won the case. Then, possibly fearing reprisals from Sulla, he left for Greece. He stayed there for three years, studying the language, the oratory of Demosthenes and the philosophy of Poseidonius (a mediocre exponent of Socrates and the Stoic school). Three years later, with Sulla safely dead, he returned, married Terentia (and her considerable dowry), and, in his capacity as a lawyer, went in for politics. He immediately had on his hands another *cause célèbre*. This time it was against Verres, a senator who, as governor of Sicily, had been up to every kind of dirty work but who was supported by the entire aristocracy. He was up against Hortensius, the prince of the Roman Forum and trusted advocate of the aristocracy and Senate. This case was a Dreyfus affair of the time, with the patricians on one side and on the other the people—particularly the wealthy "equites" of the middle classes. Cicero again won, and thus replaced Hortensius as leader of the bar and became the idol of a social class, which also happened to be that into which he himself had been born.

Lucullus, an ex-general of Sulla's, had served for eight years in the Orient in the war with Mithridates. He came from a poor aristocratic family with a scandalous reputation. His father was said to have extorted money from the rebellious slaves in Sicily, his grandfather to have stolen statues and his mother to

have had more lovers than hairs on her head. This may have been exaggerated. In any case, Lucullus, as a young man, showed no signs of these vices. Highly ambitious, he had all the qualities which make for success: brains, eloquence, education and courage. As long as Sulla, who had a weakness for him, was alive, his career had been easy. On the death of his protector, he had not hesitated to win the favours of a woman, Præcia, who, owing to the importance of her lovers, had great influence, in order to continue it. Through Præcia he obtained the proconsulship of Cilicia. This enabled him to go on commanding, making and winning wars, and enriching himself with the spoils. To become a leader of the calibre of Marius, Sulla and Cæsar, he only lacked one quality, that of an understanding of men. Although he led his soldiers from victory to victory he exhausted them until they finally mutinied. Having obtained his command by intrigue, by intrigue he lost it again. Recalled to Rome, he had retired from public life and proceeded to enjoy his wealth. It was enormous, and he splashed it lavishly around. His villa at Misenum had cost over a half a million pounds, the estate at Tusculum extended to more than fifty thousand acres and the palace he had built on the Pincio was famous for its sculpture gallery, for the precious manuscripts he had looted in the East, and the gardens, in which he cultivated plants like the cherry (till then unknown in Rome), with the industry of a fanatical botanist. Above all, his palace was famous for its kitchens, where the most exquisite delicacies were prepared.

As we were saying, Cicero, one evening, with a group of friends, began pulling Lucullus's leg about his gourmandise being just a pose, and offered to bet that, if one were to visit his house without warning the cooks, one would find there the simple supper of a peasant or a soldier. Lucullus accepted the challenge. He invited everybody to make investigations and merely asked permission to send orders for the table to be laid for all of them in the Hall of Apollo. This was enough to let his servants know what was afoot. A dinner in the Hall of

Apollo could not cost less than two hundred thousand "scsestertii." As hors-d'œuvre, sea-food, fledgelings with asparagus, oyster pasties and shrimps were obligatory. Then came the actual dinner, breasts of sucking-pigs, fish, duck, hare, turkey, peacocks from Samos, partridges from Phrygia, lampreys from Gabes, sturgeons from Rhodes. Cheeses, sweets, wines.

Plutarch, who tells the anecdote, does not say what guests partook of this banquet, but they must have been the cream of Roman society. Certainly there must have been Marcus Licinius Crassus, the aristocratic son of one of Sulla's most famous commanders, who had killed himself rather than surrender to Marius. Sulla had compensated the orphan by letting him buy at bargain prices the properties of the proscribed followers of Marius and allowing him to organise the first fire-brigade ever seen in Rome. When a fire broke out Crassus used to rush to the scene, but instead of extinguishing the flames he used, there and then, to make a bid for the burning building to the proprietor, who was usually only too glad to get rid of it. Only when it was his did Crassus get the pumps in action. Otherwise he let it burn.

Another guest who certainly must have been present at this feast of Lucullus was Titus Pomponius Atticus. Although of bourgeois descent, he was a more refined type of aristocrat. Being of an immensely wealthy family he had no need to soil his hands with unsavoury practices, and he had confined himself to finishing his education in Athens. There he had met Sulla, who had taken such a liking to him that he had wished to have him as a collaborator. Atticus however declined. He preferred to continue his studies. He then invested his capital, which amounted to over half a million pounds, in a cattle ranch in the Epirus, apartments in Rome, a school for gladiators, and a publishing firm for books of cultural value. Cicero, Hortensius, Cato and many others made use of him, not only as their financial advisor, but also as their deposit bank. Such was his reputation and prestige that, although he lived simply as a true epicurean, there was no salon in Roman society where he did

not have a standing invitation, and no party that he did not attend.

There must also have been Pompey, the favourite and son-in-law of Sulla who used, somewhat ironically, to call him "the Great." Of equestrian birth, he was the pattern of elegance and achievement. Before he was twenty-one he had won his first battle and a triumph, and was so seductively handsome that the courtesan Flora used to say that she could never leave him without giving him a kiss. He was considered an upright young man, which, for those times, he was, endeavouring to do his best for everybody as though he was doing it for himself. He was said to have many ambitions; actually he only had one: to be superior in everything to everybody, but this was probably more vanity than ambition.

None of the characters at this dinner would have been found in the Stoic Rome of three centuries before. This was not only because of the fashionable cut of their clothing, the dishes which they ate and the fine, flowing, clear Latin with which they spoke, sprinkled with literary allusions, but because the gathering would include women, who had emerged from their state of subjection. Clodia, the wife of Quintus Cecilius Metellus, and, at that time, the first lady of the city, set the mode for the others. She was a feminist, went out alone at night, and, when she met a friend, instead of modestly lowering her eyes, as had always been the custom, she used to put her arms round him and kiss him. She invited her male friends to dinner when her husband was away and, asserting that women should have the right of polyandry, she practised it unreservedly. Taking lovers by the dozen, she jilted them with much charm and no remorse. The poet Catullus, obsessed by and madly jealous of her, celebrated her in immortal verses under the name of Lesbia. Celius, another discarded lover, tried to get his own back by accusing her in court of having attempted to poison him and publicly called her "quadrantaria" "a quarter of a cent," the tariff of the low-class prostitute. Clodia was fined, not because she was guilty, but because she was sister to

Publius Clodius, one of the leaders of the radical party, detested by the now all-powerful aristocrats and sworn enemy of Cicero. Celius's cause was explained by Cicero who was reluctant to accuse a woman, especially one who had been such a good friend to so many men.

With examples like this before their eyes, it was difficult for girls to become good wives and mothers. Marriages, arranged entirely for political and financial considerations, were contracted and dissolved with the utmost ease. Pompey, to help his career, divorced his first wife to marry Emilia, Sulla's step-daughter. When she died he married Julia, the daughter of Caesar, who changed wives five times and was regularly unfaithful to all of them. "This city," Cato used to say, "is nothing but an agency for political marriages qualified by horns." Marriage "cum manu," the kind which did not admit of divorce, had practically disappeared in order to allow couples to annul them at will. A simple letter sufficed for this. Children were unwanted because they would have been a bother and had by now become a luxury afforded only by the poor. Freed from the chores of pregnancy and baby-feeding, wives looked around for distractions. These they found in love-affairs and culture, which had now begun to be fashionable.

The literary tastes of this rich and frivolous society did not centre on the major writer and poet of the time, Lucretius. The author of *De Rerum Natura* was probably an aristocrat, but lived a very retired life owing to ill-health. It appears that he was subject to a recurring form of depressive mania and his inspiration was too lofty, tragic and profound to win popular favour. Catullus, an easy, sentimental poet, was all the rage. This rich, miserly bourgeois from Verona was always complaining about how hard up he was, but he had a house in Rome, a villa at Tivoli and another on Lake Garda. The ladies adored him because he only spoke of love and had rendered soft and "boudoir" a language which seemed to have been devised solely for legal codes and proclamations of victory. Apart from him, the other best-known writers were Marcus Celius, a

penniless aristocrat with radical sympathies, Licinius Calvus, an amateur poet and orator not without talent, and Elvius Cinna, who, after the death of Caesar, was mistaken for one of his murderers and killed by the mob. These literati, all "left-wing intellectuals," were against dictatorship but did nothing to defend democracy. Perhaps their influence was greater than they deserved because, as well as social circles and women to make known their works, there was by now a proper publishing business.

Atticus had introduced parchment, out of which he made "volumes," which means "rolls," with pages composed of two or three columns of manuscript. Special slaves, whose only pay was their keep, were employed for copying them by hand. Authors, too, were unpaid, except for an occasional gift. Practically speaking, only the rich could afford to take up literature. An edition usually ran to about a thousand copies, which were distributed to the booksellers, from whom book-lovers would come to buy them. It was one of these booksellers, Asinius Pollio, who started Rome's first public library.

This technical progress stimulated output. Terence Varro published his essays on Latin and rustic life. Sallust, between one political battle and another, published his *Storiæ*, magnificently, but rather one-sidedly, written, and Cicero, who had now become undisputed master of the art of oratory, put out his speeches in book form, of which only fifty-seven have been handed down to us.

Briefly, culture was no longer the domain of a few lone specialists. It had begun to spread throughout society; that society which, by now, had definitely turned its back on the primitive customs and healthy ignorance of the first republican era. What is usually called the "Golden Age" of Rome was approaching and, like all golden ages, was the beginning of the end of its civilisation.

POMPEY and Crassus, whom we met in the previous chapter, were not just frivolous business-men but politicians as well. They intended to play important parts, and succeeded, even though they both paid for it later with their lives.

As favourites of Sulla, their careers at first had been easy. On the retirement of the dictator the Senate put them in command of two armies to quell the rebellions in Spain and Italy.

Spain had already rebelled several times against the malpractices of the Roman governors. Now useless cruelties had been added to these malpractices. In 98 B.C. the general Didius, imitating his predecessor Sulpicius Galba, lured an entire tribe of natives into his camp with the promise of a distribution of land. He then exterminated the lot. One of his officers, Quintus Sertorius, indignant at such barbarity, deserted and, calling the other tribes to arms, organised them into an army. With this for eight years he regularly beat the Romans. During that time he also governed the province wisely. As Metellus, the general the Senate had sent to conquer him, could not do so, he promised something like £125,000 and twenty-five thousand acres of land to anyone who succeeded in killing him. Perpenna, another Roman refugee in Sertorius's camp, stabbed him. However, instead of going and claiming his reward, he preferred to take over from the dead man and continue the war on his own account. The Senate sent out Pompey, who easily defeated, captured, and killed the renegade. Spain was thus handed over to the malpractices of its governors again.

In the meanwhile a far more serious rebellion was soaking Italy in blood. Lentulus Batiates ran a school for gladiators at

Capua attended by slaves being prepared for what was almost certain death in the circus for the amusement of the spectators. One day two hundred of them tried to escape and seventy-eight of them succeeded. They pillaged the district and elected as their chief a Thracian by the name of Spartacus. He must have been a man of good family and notable qualities. This Spartacus tried to rally the millions of slaves in Italy, organised an army seventy thousand strong, thirsting for freedom and revenge, and taught them how to make arms for themselves. He then beat the generals the Senate sent against him. He was not intoxicated by these victories and, being a clever politician, knew quite well that in the long run his was a hopeless struggle. He therefore led his horde towards the Alps with the intention of crossing them, disbanding his men and sending them home. This at least is what Plutarch says. But his followers wanted to turn back to continue pillaging town and countryside. Although Spartacus, who must have had a conscience, tried to stop this brigandage, he did not like to leave them in the lurch. He was beaten in one battle, won another against Cassius, and finally found himself face to face with the City, thus confronting her with the fearful prospect that all the slaves of Italy and those in Rome itself might join the insurgents and overwhelm her.

Command was then given to Crassus and the flower of the aristocracy enrolled as volunteers under his banner. Spartacus, realising that he was now up against the Empire, withdrew to the south. His intention was to ferry his men to Sicily and thence to Africa. Crassus gave chase, caught up with his rear-guard, destroyed it and continued the pursuit. In the meantime Pompey and his legions were on their way from Spain by forced marches. Recognising that the game was up, Spartacus attacked, plunging foremost into the thickest of the fray and killing two centurions before falling so riddled with wounds that it was impossible to identify his body afterwards.

The majority of his men died with him. About six thousand of them were rounded up in the woods and crucified along the sides of the Appian way.

This was in 71 B.C. On their return to Rome, the two victorious generals did not send their armies home, according to the law and the wishes of the Senate. They did not like one another much, as they were born too rich, fortunate and ambitious. However, when the Senate refused Pompey a triumph and the distribution of land he had promised his veterans, they combined and encamped threateningly close to the City itself.

Immediately the "populares" who, since the death of Sulla, had been waiting for the chance to get even with the aristocracy for their high-handedness, took their side. Seeing in them their champions, they elected them as consuls for the year 70 B.C. Pompey and Crassus were anything but "populares." By birth they belonged to the upper middle class, but the blind egotism of the aristocracy had had the very effect of driving that class into the arms of the proletariat. In fact, the first steps taken by the two consuls were to restore to the tribunes the powers taken from them by Sulla and to remove from the patricians the monopoly in the court-juries, re-admitting the "equites." After this they came to an agreement over the division of personal gains. Pompey was to take over from Lucullus the supreme command in the Orient and given the rank of admiral to repress the Mediterranean pirates, who were making the trade routes to Asia Minor unsafe for shipping. In return he undertook to reopen the oriental markets for the investments of the banker friends of Crassus, who thus became their supreme patron.

In the Senate only one voice was raised in favour of the measure, that of a still almost unknown young man who was not exactly popular among his aristocratic fellows: Julius Cæsar. The Assembly unanimously approved it at the incitement of another young man: Cicero. The victory of the Assembly and Pompey marked the end of patrician supremacy and of Sulla's ascendancy on which it was founded. This was to have a decisive influence on subsequent events. Immediately after Pompey's departure at the head of a hundred and twenty-five

thousand men, five hundred ships and a hundred and fifty million sestertii, trade with the Orient revived. As a result the price of grain, mainstay of the landed aristocracy, fell.

Only one thing happened to mar this peaceful and progressive return to democracy and stiffen the forces of reaction. We only know Lucius Sergius Catilina from the descriptions of his enemies and, in particular, of Sallust and Cicero. Cicero describes him as "a turbulent individual, on permanently bad terms with god and man, who could never find rest either asleep or awake: hence his ashen complexion, his bloodshot eyes and his epileptic gait: in short, his madman's appearance." The trouble is that Cicero, through his wife, was stepbrother-in-law to a Vestal Virgin, whom Catiline had been accused of deflowering. At the trial he had been acquitted but in society people said that it was true that one should not be surprised, seeing that to please his mistress he had already murdered his own son.

Perhaps the hostility which he met everywhere was another reason why Catiline, though of aristocratic descent, became one of the most rabid of the "populares." His programme was radical. He demanded the cancellation of all the debts of all the citizens. It was also whispered that he had organised a band of four hundred desperadoes to assassinate the consuls and take over the Government.

Actually, nobody ever saw this famous band. Catiline merely presented his candidature for the consulship, evidently hoping, as had been the case with Pompey and Crassus, that his name would rally all the anti-senatorial currents. But the upper middle classes, being the creditors to whom the debts were owed, were naturally indisposed to support him. They were with the plebs when it was a question of limiting the monopolies of the aristocracy, but they were with the aristocracy and, consequently, the Senate when it was a question of the State and finance.

This can be seen from the attitude of Cicero, who put himself up as rival candidate to Catiline and got himself elected as

representative of "concord between the orders," so becoming spokesman for that year of the alliance between the aristocracy and the upper classes.

Having failed at the elections, Catiline began hatching the famous plot. He secretly assembled a few thousand followers at Fiesole and set up a conspiracy within Rome itself. All sorts of people took part in it, slaves, senators and two prætors, Cethegus and Lentulus. Backed by these elements, he stood again for the elections the following year and, to make sure of the result, arranged for the assassination of his rival and of Cicero. That, at least, was the version that Cicero gave when he appeared on the Field of Mars, attended by an armed body-guard, for the counting of the votes. Catiline failed again.

On the 7th of November of 63 B.C. Cicero said that during the night the conspirators had come to his house to kill him but had been driven off by his guards. The next day, meeting Catiline in the Senate-house, he pronounced the famous oration against him ("Usque tandem, Catilina? . . ." How long, Catiline, will you continue to abuse our patience? . . .) which is still the torment and delight of schoolboys. One day was not enough for this arraignment. He needed three. It was his masterpiece and he poured into it in equal measure all the treasures of his rounded, sonorous eloquence and his vanity. A magnificent piece of theatre.

On the 3rd of December he managed to get a warrant issued for the arrest of Lentulus, Cethegus and five other conspirators of high rank. He did not dare do the same to Catiline, who left in silence and went to join his troops in Tuscany. On the 5th he demanded that the prisoners be condemned to death and was supported by Silanus and Cato the Younger. Again only one fresh young voice spoke up in defence of the accused, that of Julius Cæsar, faithful advocate of the "populares." He asked for simple detention. His oratory, in contrast with that of Cicero, was sober and bare and when he had finished speaking some young aristocrats tried to kill him. Cæsar managed to escape and, while Cicero went to the prison to have the

sentence carried out, Mark Antony, the other consul (father of a young man who was destined to become more famous than himself), left at the head of the army to deal with Catiline.

The battle took place near Pistoia. Not one of the insurgents surrendered. Closing round their banner—the eagles of Marius—and Catiline, who shared their fate, they fought to the last man.

First to be surprised and delighted at the energy he had shown was Cicero. He had not suspected that he had it in him. In a speech to the Senate he modestly declared that the task he had undertaken had been so great as to surpass all limits. Having thus laid his claim to deification, he went on to say that he would have likened himself to Romulus if the salvation of Rome had not been a much more glorious achievement than its foundation.

The senators may have smiled at this outburst but willingly decreed him the title of "Father of the Country" and, when he relinquished his appointment, at the end of 63 B.C., they escorted him home as a mark of their esteem. Cicero had villas at Arpino, Pozzuoli and Pompeii, an estate worth fifty thousand "sestertii" at Formia, another worth five hundred thousand at Tusculum and a palace worth three and a half million on the Palatine. These were all properties bought with "loans" from his clients, because the law forbade lawyers to accept fees. These "loans," which, naturally were never paid back, took their place. Moreover, Cicero thought up another way of getting rich: by wills in which he had himself made heir. In the course of thirty years he inherited twenty million "sestertii" from his clientele, nearly six hundred thousand pounds.

It was logical that a man of this kind should preach "concord among the orders." He wanted a balance which was neither the savage reaction of an aristocratic caste to which he did not belong, nor yet a form of progressiveness which would have led to general equality.

Rich, prince of the Forum and "Father of the Country," he appeared to have everything. He lacked, however, the most

important thing of all: peace in his home. Terentia was a virtuous and intolerable wife, who poisoned his life with her nerves and rheumatics. Furthermore, she was no less eloquent than her husband. Two orators in one house are one too many, and in his the prince of the Forum yielded the gavel to his wife. She used it to complain interminably about something or other. When she finally decided to leave him a widower, Cicero replaced her with Publilia, whose dowry was no whit inferior to that of her predecessor. Later he got rid of her because she did not get on with his daughter Tullia, his only real and genuine affection.

After the Catiline business, his political star began to wane, though it flickered again briefly under Cæsar. Cæsar was sometimes his enemy and sometimes his friend, as we shall see, but Cicero never forgave him for being just as good an orator, though in a different style, as he was himself. He became increasingly absorbed in his literary pursuits. To these we owe some of the finest passages in Latin. Above all, for their freshness and wealth of autobiographical anecdotes, we appreciate his letters. He wrote any number of them and they reveal him to us just as he was: a glutton for work, a tender father, a shrewd administrator of public and private funds, a good friend to friends (who might be useful to him) and a vain peacock, so unconscious of his own vanity that he immortalises it in impeccable prose. Such is his candour that it redeems it from being a failing and almost makes it a virtue.

AT THE moment Catiline fell dead there arrived in Rome as a sort of advanced guard Metellus Nepos, one of Pompey's commanders. He had landed at Brindisi after a brilliant series of victories in Asia Minor, and had come on ahead to stand for office as prætor. Once elected, he was to do his best to promote Pompey's re-election as consul.

He carried out the first part of his programme with the votes of the "populares," but found himself partnered by Marcus Cato, a conservative of Conservatives, who, after the victory over Catiline, were under the impression that they had again become masters of the situation. They saw no good reason for supporting the ambitions of Pompey, who would have asked nothing better than to become their representative. If they had chosen him they might have saved, or at least delayed their own downfall, so great was Pompey's prestige. Most Conservatives were jealous of him, his riches and his successes, and thought they could do quite well without him.

Once more only one voice in the Senate struck a discordant note. It was that of Cæsar, who was also a prætor supporting Pompey. There was a tumult in the Assembly that day. Cæsar, together with Nepos, was deposed. He was rescued by the crowds, who gathered to protect him, ready to revolt. He calmed them down and sent them home. For the first time the Senate realised that he might have to be taken seriously. His deposition was rescinded.

Caius Julius Cæsar was then twenty-seven years old and, like Sulla, came from a poor aristocratic family. Its origins had been traced back to Ancus Martius and Venus but, since these dubious progenitors, it had not contributed any further out-

standing personages to the history of Rome. Members of it had been prætors, quæstors, and even consuls, but they were merely secondary figures. Their house stood in the Suburra, the populous and ill-famed quarter of Rome. Here Cæsar was born in either 100 or 102 B.C.

We know nothing of his youth except that he had a Gaulish tutor, Antony Gnifo, who, apart from teaching him Latin and Greek, may have given him useful information about the character of his compatriots. During his adolescence he suffered from headaches and epileptic fits; his ambition at the time was to become a writer. He went bald early. Being ashamed of this, he tried to hide it by combing his hair from the back over on to his forehead. He used to spend much time every morning in this complicated operation.

Suetonius reports him as being tall, rather plump, fair-skinned, with black, vivacious eyes. Plutarch says he was thin and of medium height. Perhaps they were both right: one is describing him as a young man, the other in later life. His long tours of military service must have hardened him. Since boyhood he had been an excellent horseman who could gallop with his hands crossed behind his back. Often he used to march at the head of his troops and sleep in wagons. His diet was simple. He was always cool and level-headed. It cannot be said that he was handsome. Under his bald and over-massive skull protruded a square chin, a bitter, twisted mouth framed by two deep creases and an out-thrust lower lip. In spite of this he was always fortunate with women. He married four times and had innumerable mistresses. His soldiers called him "*calvus mœchus*," the bald adulterer, and when they marched through the streets of Rome on the occasion of a triumph they would shout: "Look out, men! Lock up your wives. The bald seducer is back!" and Cæsar was the first to laugh.

In contrast to the legend which makes him out to have been of a grave and pompous solemnity, Cæsar was a man of the world, courtly, elegant, broad-minded and with a great sense of humour. He could laugh off and reply to quips at his own

expense with mordant sarcasm. He was indulgent with the vices of others because he needed others to be so with his. Curio called him "husband to all the wives and wife to all the husbands in Rome." One of the reasons that the aristocrats hated him was that he was always seducing their wives, who, it would appear, queued up to be seduced. Among them was Servilia, the half-sister of Cato, who for this reason was implacably hostile to Cæsar. Servilia was so devoted to him that, on retiring from the post of mistress, she offered him her daughter, Tertia, in her place. Cæsar rewarded her by allotting her the belongings of certain proscribed senators at one third of their value. Cicero made a pun about this, saying that the bargain was made "*Tertia deducta*." Pompey himself, though he was handsomer, richer and, at that time, more famous than Cæsar, had to put up with the latter's seduction of his wife and repudiated her. Cæsar made amends by giving him his own daughter in marriage.

This extraordinary personage, round whom from now on the history of Rome and the world was to revolve, was from a moral point of view a son of his time. In fact, he started off in a far from promising way. Having finished his studies at about sixteen, he went off to Asia with Minucius Thermus on one of the many campaigns there but, instead of making a good soldier, he became a favourite of Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, who had a weakness for good-looking boys. On his return to Rome at the age of eighteen he married Cossutia in deference to his father's wishes. When his father died, Cossutia was discarded for Cornelia, the daughter of that Cinna who previously had succeeded his uncle Marius. This strengthened ties already binding him to the democratic party.

When Sulla set up his dictatorship, he ordered Cæsar to divorce her. Cæsar, though he changed wives as easily as he changed his toga, boldly refused. He was condemned to death and Cornelia's dowry was confiscated. Then mutual friends intervened and Sulla let him off with exile. Cæsar repaid this act of clemency by calling it "stupidity" but he was wrong.

Sulla had fully understood the "stupidity" he was committing and confided to intimate friends: "That boy is worth many Mariuses." Perhaps he had a private liking for him.

When the dictator retired, Cæsar returned to Rome. Finding it still in the hands of reactionaries, who detested him because he was the nephew of Marius and the son-in-law of Cinna, he left again for Cilicia. At sea he was captured by a pirate crew, who asked twenty talents, something like £23,000, for his ransom. Cæsar insolently replied that this was too little for a person of his worth and that he preferred to give them fifty. He sent his servants to raise the money and passed the time of waiting in writing poetry and reading it to his unappreciative captors. Cæsar called them "barbarians" and "idiots" and promised to hang them the first chance he got. He kept his word. As soon as he was liberated he hurried to Miletus to charter a flotilla, with which he pursued and captured the buccaneers, recovered his money (or, rather, that of his creditors which he did not even bother to repay) and as a gesture of clemency to the pirates cut their throats before hanging them.

He himself tells of this adventure in letters to friends, but we would not swear to its authenticity. Cæsar was not yet the sober and dispassionate writer of *De Bello Gallico* who, having won many battles, had no need to romanticise them. It was a talkative, arrogant, dissipated young scamp who returned to Rome in 68 B.C. and presented himself as a candidate for the office of quæstor. He put himself heavily into debt with Crassus, whose wife, Tertullia, he seduced, and used the money to buy the necessary votes. He was given a governorship and a military command in Spain, fought against the rebels and returned to Rome with the reputation of being a good soldier and a wise administrator.

In 65 B.C. he stood again and was elected ædile. He thanked his supporters by financing super-spectacles for them but he also did one other thing: he had replaced in the Capitol Marius's trophies, which Sulla had removed. Three years later

Cæsar was appointed proprætor in Spain. His creditors held a meeting and asked the Government not to let him leave before settling his debts. He himself admitted owing them twenty-five million "sestertii." Crassus, as usual, lent him the money. Cæsar returned among the Iberians, subdued them almost completely and brought such booty back to Rome that the Senate granted him a triumph. However, this might have been to prevent him from standing for a consulship, since his candidature could not be presented during his absence and the law forbade the winner of a triumph to return to Rome before the ceremony. Cæsar, in spite of this, returned leaving his army outside the gates of the city. It was in the coming electoral campaign that he was to make his first great political moves.

The Conservatives hated him because he had stood up for Catiline, brought back the trophies of Marius to the Capitol, and was now presenting himself as leader of the "populares." They could easily have prevented his success by putting somebody against him with the prestige of a Pompey, whom, as we have said, they rejected because they were jealous of his victories and riches. These were so great that he could afford to keep his own private army, the one with which he had landed at Brindisi from the Orient and which could have elected him dictator by force. Generously, Pompey demobilised it and only entered Rome to celebrate his triumph with a small following of officers. Courageous in battle, Pompey was timid over political responsibilities and always avoided anything illegal or against the rules. The Senate knew this. They took advantage of it to snub him and to refuse to distribute to his soldiers the lands he had promised them. Cæsar saw in this a golden opportunity of winning him over on to his and Crassus's side.

This masterpiece of diplomacy was sealed by a tripartite agreement: the first Triumvirate. Pompey and Crassus put their enormous influence and their immense wealth at Cæsar's disposal to get him elected consul. When he came to power he

was to distribute the land to Pompey's soldiers and assign to Crassus the contracts he was after.

Thus Cicero's famous "concord between the orders," that is, the alliance between the aristocracy and the upper classes, broke up. The latter, who saw in Crassus and Pompey their legitimate representatives, made common cause with the "populares" of Cæsar, and in this way the aristocracy, stupidly and arrogantly convinced that they had no need of help or to share their privileges with anybody, remained isolated. They put up an insignificant personage, Bibulus, as their candidate. He was elected but they could not prevent Cæsar, a very different type of man, from being elected as well.

Cæsar fulfilled his obligations to his allies. He immediately proposed the distribution of the land and the ratification of the measures taken by Pompey in the East. The Senate opposed them. Cæsar put the proposals directly before the Assembly. The Gracchi had done the same thing and it had cost them their skins; but times had changed. Bibulus applied his veto, saying that, on interrogation, the gods had been unfavourable. The Assembly laughed in his face. A proletarian emptied a chamber-pot over his head. The proposals were approved by a great majority. Pompey became Cæsar's son-in-law by marrying his daughter, Julia; the middle classes and the mob fell into one another's arms and had the time of their lives for months at the expense of the Triumvirs, who organised magnificent displays at the Circus for them.

In this atmosphere of popular favour it was easy for Cæsar to put into effect his economic and social reforms, which, after all, were those of the Gracchi. The Senate opposed them all, and sent Bibulus to announce that the gods disapproved of them. The Assembly did not care a hoot about the gods. They laughed at Bibulus, who, in the end, shut himself up at home and did not again emerge. Since it was the custom to name the year after the two consuls, the Romans called 59 B.C. "That of Julius and Cæsar."

He concluded it by procuring the election as his successors

for 58 B.C. of Gabinius and Piso, whose daughter, Calpurnia, he had married after getting a regular divorce from his third wife, Pompea. The latter was about to stand trial for indecency and sacrilege and was accused of admitting her lover, Clodius, disguised as a woman into the enclosure sacred to the goddess Bona, of whom she was a priestess. This last at least was true. Clodius, a handsome, ambitious and unscrupulous young aristocrat, often used to visit Cæsar, whose politics he admired as well as his wife. It is not absolutely certain that she was his accomplice when he was caught in his dastardly deed. Cæsar, called upon to give evidence, defended Pompea's innocence. When the judge asked him why, in that case, had he divorced her, he replied: "Because Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion." He also testified in favour of Clodius, saying that he did not consider him capable of such an act, although, it would appear, he had done much worse ones, as, for example, seducing his own sister, the famous Clodia, the Lesbia of Catullus and wife of Quintus Cecilius Metellus, whom Cicero had lashed with his malicious tongue. Resentful busybody that he was, the great lawyer also came to give evidence against her brother. But Cæsar set Crassus to work; he bought the judges and Clodius was acquitted.

Why Cæsar had been so keen on saving this rascal became clear immediately afterwards. He stood for tribune of the plebs and, although he had dishonoured Cæsar's wife, Cæsar supported him. Evidently, having installed his father-in-law and an intimate friend on the consular bench, he wanted somebody in his debt at the head of the proletariat. Towards his wife's honour he could not have been more indifferent. The Clodius affair had given him an excuse to get rid of a wife who was no longer of service to him and to acquire another whose family connections were extremely useful. His last act before leaving office was to nominate himself Proconsul of Cisalpine Gaul and the Narbonne for a period of five years. Since the law forbade any troops to be stationed south of the Apennines, whoever commanded those north of them was practically master of the

THE CONQUEST OF GAUL

entire peninsula. Cæsar by now was determined to be that master.

He knew the Senate would do its utmost to thwart him, but he had demonstrated that one could govern perfectly well without it by submitting laws for the direct approval of the Assembly. Latterly he had gone even further: he had decreed that all debates held by the Senate should be taken down and published daily. Thus the first newspaper was born. It was called *Acta Diurna*, and it was free because it was affixed to the walls so that every citizen could read it and keep an eye on what his rulers were saying and doing. This invention was of enormous importance; it sanctioned the most democratic of all rights. The Senate, which in the past had owed much of its prestige to its secrecy, was now accountable to public opinion, a subjection from which it had never recovered.

With Gabinus and Piso as consuls to guard his rear, with an adventurer susceptible to blackmail as leader of the plebs, with the friendship of Pompey, with the financial support of Crassus, with the Senate under restraint and compelled to make public its decisions, Cæsar could now leave Rome in quest of what he still lacked: a faithful army and military glory.

25

THE CONQUEST OF GAUL

WHEN Cæsar went to Gaul in 58 B.C., it was to the Romans only a name. They knew the southern provinces, which they had reduced to vassalage to assure their land communications with Spain; they had no idea of what lay beyond them to the north.

To the north there was nothing which to-day might be called a nation. The Celtic tribes who lived there, scattered throughout the various regions, spent their time fighting one

another. Cæsar who, among other things, was a great journalist and a shrewd observer, noted that each of these tribes was divided into three classes: the nobles or knights, who had the monopoly of the army, the priests or Druids, who had the monopoly of religion and education, and the people, who had only the monopoly of hunger and fear. Cæsar considered that to dominate these tribes and to keep them divided, it would be enough to set the nobles against the nobles. Each of them, to make war on the others, would draw a section of the population in his wake. There was only one danger; that the Druids might get together and form a spiritual centre of national unity. Therefore, it was necessary to have all of them on the side of Rome.

Cæsar liked the Gauls for two reasons: firstly, because one of them had been his earliest tutor, and, secondly, because they were the blood-brothers of the Celts of Piedmont and Lombardy, whom Rome had already subjugated and who supplied her crack infantry regiments. If he could extend this domination to the whole of France, he would have found an inexhaustible reservoir for his armies.

Cæsar had not sufficient forces for a regular conquest. For all that vast territory he had been given four legions, less than thirty thousand men. Moreover, at the moment he assumed command, four hundred thousand Helvetians were pouring out of Switzerland and threatening to submerge the Narbonne while a hundred and fifty thousand Germans were crossing the Rhine into Flanders to reinforce their kinsman, Ariovistus, who had settled there thirteen years previously. All Gaul, in alarm, appealed to Cæsar for protection. Without even referring to the Senate, he enlisted another four legions at his own expense, and sent word for Ariovistus to come and parley with him. Ariovistus refused and Cæsar, if he were to consolidate his prestige in the eyes of his new subjects, had no choice but war against him and the Helvetians.

There followed two bold, lightning campaigns. Beaten in spite of their enormous numerical superiority, the Helvetians

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asked to be allowed to withdraw to their own country. Cæsar agreed, provided they became vassals of Rome. The Germans were literally wiped out near Ostheim. Ariovistus escaped but died shortly afterwards. Cæsar, the impenitent and debt-ridden libertine, was proving himself a formidable general on the battlefield.

Taking advantage of this success which had left all Gaul stunned with amazement, Cæsar invited it to unite under his command, to avoid future invasions; the Gauls were prepared to do anything but agree among themselves. Many tribes rebelled and appealed for help to the Belgians. These came running. Cæsar defeated them, defeated those who had called them in, and then announced to Rome somewhat prematurely that the whole of Gaul had been subdued. The people were beside themselves, the Assembly applauded and the Senate made a wry face. Cæsar, suspecting that the Conservatives were preparing treachery, went back to Italy and summoned Pompey and Crassus to Lucca to work out a common plan of defence: the second Triumvirate.

Rome had, indeed, been in the throes of convulsions ever since Cæsar had relinquished the consulship. The leader of the aristocrats up to that time had been Cato, a rather obtuse reactionary but an honest man. Perhaps he might have been a little bit more open-minded if he had not borne the name of his grandfather, the great Censor, who had had the narrowest mind on record. This name was his ruin. It obliged him to play a part which may not really have convinced him. In order to maintain the austerity of the ancient customs he used to go about barefoot, without a tunic, continually grumbling about the new ones. The first Cato had done the same thing, but his grumble had been seasoned by honest hearty laughter, pungent sarcasm, bellyfuls of beans and copious draughts of wine. The grandson had a gloomy, disagreeable expression and the sour tongue of an old maid obsessed with remorse for her uncommitted sins. Perhaps the reason why he got on everybody's nerves was because he got on his own by having to behave like

a professional moralist. Even so, he was an odd kind of moralist since he saw nothing wrong, for example, in his wife, Marcia, taking the lawyer Hortensius, Cicero's handsome and eloquent rival, for a lover. In fact, when Cato found out about it, he asked the adulterer, reports Plutarch: "Do you want her? I'll lend her to you." When Hortensius died shortly afterwards, Cato took Marcia back and went on living with her as if nothing had happened.

Nevertheless, this strange man had his good points. Above all, he was honest and this explains how, in an epoch when everything, particularly votes, could be bought, he never got further than prætor. The senators, whose political privileges he defended and who had no time for honesty, would have preferred him to have used more suitable weapons against the general corruption and the new enemy they were up against. This enemy was Clodius who, after the departure of Cæsar, had become ruler of Rome. He it was who fixed things with the Assembly for Cato to be sent to Cyprus as proconsul. Cato obeyed, and the Conservatives were left without their head.

Luckily for them, Clodius was a better demagogue than he was a politician, and, consequently, had no sense of proportion. In his blind hatred of Cicero he began persecuting him and forced him to escape to Greece. He then confiscated his patrimony and razed his palace on the Palatine to the ground.

Cicero, though not so important in Rome as he thought himself, was still something of a national institution and Pompey and Cæsar were the first to disapprove of such measures. However, Clodius would not come to heel and rebelled against his two powerful masters. Having enlisted a gang of hooligans, he began terrorising the city. Quintus, the brother of Cicero, who had asked the Assembly to recall the proscript, had an attempt made on his life and escaped by the skin of his teeth. Pompey, in order to get this request granted, had to engage another gang of thugs to beat the rebellious fool at his own game. Its leader was Annius Milo, an aristocrat with

little money and as few scruples as Clodius. Whereupon Rome became what Chicago used to be some forty years ago.

Cicero, who was given a great welcome on his return, now became legal adviser to the Triumvirs, his saviours. He pleaded their cause in the Senate, arranged for Cæsar to be granted more funds for his troops in Gaul, and had Pompey made commissary for six years, with full powers, to solve the peninsula's food problems. In 57 B.C., however, Cato returned from Cyprus, where he had performed his duties brilliantly, and under his leadership the Senate renewed its struggle with the Triumvirs. Calvus and Catullus flooded Rome with epigrams against them and, when the patrician Domitius stood for the consulship of 56 B.C., he based his electoral campaign on the repeal of Cæsar's agrarian laws. Cicero, sniffing the wind as usual, thought that it was turning in favour of the right wing and, siding with Domitius, denounced Cæsar's father-in-law, Piso, for embezzlement.

It was to remedy all this that the Triumvirs held their meeting at Lucca, where it was decided that Pompey and Crassus should stand for the consulship again and that, after their victory, they should reconfirm Cæsar for another five years as governor of Gaul. On the expiry of their term of office Crassus was to have Syria and Pompey, Spain. Amongst the three of them they would be masters of the whole army.

The plan worked all right because the riches of Crassus and Pompey, with the contributions of Cæsar who now held the purse-strings of the whole of Gaul, were enough to buy a majority. Thus the proconsul was able to return to his provinces where, in the meanwhile, a new German invasion was imminent. Cæsar massacred the invaders, driving them back across the Rhine. He then, with a small detachment, crossed the Channel and, for the first time, Roman soldiers set foot on English soil. It is not quite clear what took him there. Curiosity perhaps. He stayed a few days, defeated the few tribes who crossed his path, made a few notes and came back again. The next year with increased forces he repeated the

expedition. He beat a native army under Cassivellaunus and went as far as the Thames. Perhaps he would have gone even farther had he not heard from Gaul that a revolt had broken out there behind his back.

For the moment Cæsar took it as a matter of ordinary administration. Landing on the Continent, he routed the Eburoni, who had started the revolt, and left the bulk of his army to garrison their northern provinces. Then he returned to Lombardy with a small escort. He had only just got there when he learned that the whole country was in ferment and united for the first time under an able leader, Vercingetorix. Cæsar knew him: he was a warlord from the Auvergne, a land of tough mountain warriors, son of a certain Celtillus, who had been killed by his own men because he had wanted to become king of a united Gaul. Perhaps this young fellow had nursed the same ambitions as his father and had hoped to be crowned by Cæsar, who had been friendly to him? Disappointed, he had rebelled but, wiser than the others, he had appealed to nationalist sentiment and assured himself of the support of the Druids, who had given him their blessing.

Vercingetorix now stood with powerful forces between Cæsar in the south and his army in the north. The situation could not have been worse but Cæsar faced it with his usual audacity. Recrossing the Alps with his meagre columns, he began to move north through France, now a completely hostile country. Day and night he led his men on foot through the snow of the Cevennes, heading for the enemy's capital. Vercingetorix hastened to defend it. Cæsar left Decimus Brutus in charge and himself, with a few horsemen as escort, slipped through the enemy lines towards his main body. He concentrated it, beat the Avari and the Cenabi separately and sacked their cities. He had to withdraw before Gergovia because he was harried by the Ædui, whom he had considered the most loyal of his allies and who had now abandoned him.

Alone in hostile territory and confronting odds of ten to one, he thought the game was up. Staking all on a single throw, he

marched on Alesia. Here Vercingetorix had massed his army, and Cæsar laid siege to it. Immediately the Gauls came down from all directions to liberate their leader. Two hundred and fifty thousand men concentrated against the four Roman legions. Cæsar ordered his men to erect two ramparts: one facing the beleaguered city and the other the relieving forces. Between these two bastions he disposed his troops with their few remaining arms and victuals. After a week of desperate resistance on two fronts the Romans were starving, but the Gauls, fallen into anarchy, had begun to withdraw in disorder. Cæsar says that if they had stuck it out for another day they would have won.

Vercingetorix in person came out of the hard-pressed city to beg for mercy. Cæsar granted it to the city, but the rebels became the property of the legionaries, who sold them as slaves. Their unfortunate leader was taken to Rome where, one year later, he followed his victor's chariot in chains and was "sacrificed to the gods," in the current phrase.

Cæsar spent the rest of that year in Gaul, stamping out the embers of the revolt. He did so with a severity unusual in a man who had always been magnanimous towards a beaten adversary. Once he had meted out punishment by executing the leaders, he resumed his usual routine of clemency and pacification. By these means he converted the Gauls into a tractable people, faithful to Rome. This can be attested by the fact that, during the civil war with Pompey, they did not make the slightest attempt to shake off their fragile bonds.

Rome did not realise the magnitude of her proconsul's gift. She only saw a new province twice the size of Italy with five million inhabitants to exploit. Little did she imagine that Cæsar had founded a nation which was destined to perpetuate and spread her language and her civilisation throughout Europe. She was at the time in any event too busy with her own internal strife to have time for any larger considerations.

After his consulship Crassus had left for Syria, as agreed at Lucca. In his craving for military glory he had declared war on the Parthians, had been beaten by them at Carrhæ and,

whilst he was negotiating with the victorious general, the latter had killed him and sent his severed head to be used as a stage prop in one of the plays of Euripides. Pompey, on the other hand, had himself given an army to govern Spain and had remained with it in Italy, adopting an attitude that presaged little good. His strongest link with Cæsar had been broken by the death of Julia. Cæsar had offered to replace her with his granddaughter, Octavia, and, as the widower declined, he had offered himself as a husband for Pompey's daughter in place of Calpurnia, whom he would have divorced. In Rome they exchanged the status of father-in-law for that of son-in-law with the utmost nonchalance. Pompey refused this offer also. He was no longer interested in a family link with Cæsar, because he had finally come to an agreement with the Conservatives, as whose champion he now emerged. Knowing that Cæsar's proconsulship was due to expire in 49 B.C., he had his own extended until 46 B.C. He would thus be the only one of the two to have an army.

Democracy, under the blows of Clodius and Milo, who had reduced it to a question of bludgeons, was on its death-bed. In the end Milo disposed of Clodius, who had recently burned his house down. The plebs treated the dead man as a martyr. Taking his corpse to the Senate-house, they set fire to the building. Pompey called in his troops to quell the riots and thus became master of the city. Cicero hailed him as the "Consul without a Colleague" and the phrase went down well with the Conservatives since it allowed them to give him the powers of a dictator without using the unpleasant name. Pompey quartered his entire army in Rome and under its domination the Assembly held its sessions and the law courts their trials, including that of Milo who, despite being defended by Cicero, was condemned for the murder of Clodius. Cicero later published his speech for the defence; when Milo, who had fled to Marseilles, read it, he exclaimed: "Oh, Cicero, had you really spoken the words you have written, I should not be here now eating fish!" It is possible that the Prince of the

Forum's written speeches did not always correspond with his spoken versions.

Pompey again proposed the law that required the presence of the candidate in the City before he could run for consul. The Assembly, garrisoned by his troops, approved it. This ruled out Cæsar, who could not come back before the day fixed for his triumph. It was 49 B.C. and his term was due to expire on the 1st of March, but Marcus Marcellus proposed that this date be anticipated. The tribunes of the plebs applied their veto, but this veto implied a democratic legality which no longer existed. Cato added his proposal that Cæsar should be brought to trial and banished.

26

THE RUBICON

CÆSAR's hesitation before unleashing civil war has been the delight of many writers. It has made famous a little stream of which otherwise nobody would ever have known the name—the Rubicon, near Rimini, which marked the boundary between Cisalpine Gaul, where the proconsul could keep his troops, and Italy proper, where the law forbade him to take them. Historians have described Cæsar on its banks, wrapped in meditation and gnawed by doubt. In actual fact, he had already made his decision or rather had it forced on him before he got there.

In order to avoid a conflict between Romans, he had accepted the proposals put forward by Pompey and the Senate, who by now were one and the same thing. These were that he should send one of his few legions to the East to avenge Crassus and give another back to Pompey, who had lent it to him for operations in Gaul. But when the Senate definitely replied with a refusal to allow him to stand for consul and offering him the choice of disbanding his army or being declared a public enemy,

Cæsar realised that if he chose the first alternative he would be handing himself over helpless to a State which was out for his blood. He put up a final proposal, which his subordinates, Curio and Antony, went to read to the Senate. In the form of a letter Cæsar offered to demobilise eight of his ten legions if they would extend his governorship of Gaul until 48 B.C. Pompey and Cicero pronounced themselves in favour. The consul Lentulus drove the two envoys from the hall. Cato and Marcellus asked the Senate, which reluctantly agreed, to grant Pompey the necessary powers to prevent the "State being endangered." This was the formula for imposing martial law. It put Cæsar with his back squarely to the wall.

He paraded his favourite legion, the thirteenth, and addressed his soldiers as "commilitones" and not as "milites." He had the right; apart from being their general, he had been their real comrade. For ten years through every kind of difficulty, wisely alternating indulgence with strict discipline, he had led them to victory. These veterans were experienced regular soldiers, who knew their job and how to sum up their officers. For Cæsar, who rarely had to rely on rank to assert his authority, they felt respectful affection. So when he told them how things were and asked them how they felt about taking on Rome, their own country, in a war, all were for it and said so, although they knew that if they lost they would be treated as traitors. They were almost all Gauls from Piedmont and Lombardy, a people to whom Cæsar had given citizenship, a fact which the Senate obstinately refused to recognise. Their general was their country. When he warned them he had not even the money for their pay, their answer was to deposit their savings in the legion's funds. Only one deserted to go over to Pompey: Titus Labienus. Cæsar, who considered him the most able and trustworthy of his commanders, sent his baggage and pay after him, as the fugitive had gone off without it.

On the 10th of January 49 B.C., he "cast the die," as he himself put it. That is to say, he crossed the Rubicon with one

legion, six thousand strong, against the sixty thousand Pompey had assembled. At Piceno he was joined by the twelfth, at Corfinium by the eighth. Another three he formed from local volunteers, who had not forgotten Marius and saw in his nephew his successor. "The towns open their gates to him and greet him like a god," wrote Cicero, who was beginning to doubt whether, by joining the Conservatives, he had backed the right horse. Actually, Italy had had enough of them and offered no resistance to the rebel, who rewarded her with long-sighted clemency: no looting, no killing, no imprisonment.

During this bloodless march on Rome Cæsar continued to try to find a compromise or at least to give the impression of trying to do so. He wrote to Lentulus pointing out to him the disasters that would befall Rome in a fratricidal struggle. He wrote to Cicero telling him to inform Pompey that he was prepared to retire to private life if they guaranteed his safety. Without waiting for a reply he continued to advance against Pompey, who was retreating towards the south.

In spite of the fact that they had rejected Cæsar's offers the Conservatives had abandoned Rome, declaring that they would consider as enemies any senator who remained there. Laden with money, pretensions, and insolence, each with his servants, wives, mistresses, small boys, luxurious tents, fine linen, uniforms and plumes, these aristocrats were noisy camp-followers of Pompey whose brain they muddled with their idle chatter. Pompey had never had a very strong character, even when young. Now, aged and asthmatic, fearful of making a decision, he continued to withdraw as far as Brindisi, where he embarked his army, still twice the size of his enemy's, and ferried it over to Durazzo, on the ground that he wanted to train and discipline it before the final battle.

Cæsar entered Rome on the 16th of March, leaving his army outside the City. He had rebelled against the State but he still respected its laws. His request for the title of Dictator was refused by the Senate. He then asked that an armistice com-

mission should be sent to Pompey. This, too, the Senate refused. He asked to be allowed to dispose of Treasury funds and the Tribune Lucius Metellus applied his veto. Cæsar replied: "It is as difficult for me to utter threats as it is easy for me to carry them out." The Treasury was immediately put at his disposal and Cæsar, before emptying it, paid in all the booty accumulated during his recent campaigns. Even theft had to be legal.

The Conservatives prepared their counter-attack by mobilising three armies: that of Pompey in Albania, that of Cato in Sicily and another in Spain. They reckoned on forcing Cæsar and Italy to surrender from hunger, without having to fight a battle of which they feared the outcome. Cæsar sent two legions to Sicily under the command of Curio. Curio followed Cato, who had sailed for Africa, attacked him without adequate preparation, was beaten and died during the battle, asking Cæsar's pardon for the harm which he had done him. In order to make sure of the corn supply, Cæsar went in person to Spain. He underestimated the strength of Pompey's following there and found himself in difficulty, but in moments of danger Cæsar was always at his best. One day, whilst being besieged, he diverted the course of a river and became the besieger. The enemy surrendered, and Spain was again under the control of Rome. The people, freed from the spectre of famine, gave Cæsar a rousing welcome and the Senate granted him the title of Dictator, which Cæsar now refused. They elected him consul and that was enough for him.

With his customary rapidity he set the internal affairs of the State in order without recourse to trials, banishments and confiscations. Then he mustered his army at Brindisi, embarked twenty thousand men on the twelve ships he had available and landed them in Albania on the trail of Pompey. The latter was astounded, as he had been convinced that nobody in winter would have dared cross a stretch of water patrolled by his powerful fleet. Why he did not at once attack his rash opponent, who had come within reach in such small strength,

will never be known. He even had on his side a storm which sank Cæsar's squadron and prevented him from ferrying the rest of his army across. In the boat in which he was trying to reach the Italian coast Cæsar shouted to his terrified oarsmen: "Don't be afraid: you are carrying Cæsar and his Star." The storm, however, cast him on the rocks. If Pompey had taken the initiative at that moment the Star would never have risen again.

The weather finally turned fair. One of his finest generals, Mark Antony, arrived to reinforce Cæsar's demoralised troops with men and supplies. Before attacking, Cæsar says he sent fresh peace proposals to Pompey, which had no effect. Neither did Cæsar's attack. Pompey held fast, took a few prisoners and killed them. Cæsar also took a few and enlisted them. His veterans admitted that the battle had gone badly because they had not fought hard enough and asked to be punished. Cæsar refused and they begged him to lead them back into battle again. Instead he led them into the granary that was Thessaly to rest and refresh them.

In Pompey's camp Afranius advised returning to Rome, now undefended, and leaving Cæsar to his fate. The majority were for giving him the *coup de grâce* because they thought he was already beaten. Pompey, having no ideas of his own, followed those of the others, went after Cæsar and caught up with him on the plain of Pharsalus. He had fifty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry; Cæsar had twenty-two thousand infantry and a thousand cavalry. On the eve of the battle there were great banquets, speeches and drinking of toasts to certain victory in Pompey's camp. Cæsar, in contrast, had a ration of corn-meal and cabbage with his men in the mud of the trenches. He issued firm orders to his officers, whilst among his enemies there were a thousand arm-chair strategists with a thousand different plans and a commander-in-chief who was waiting for them to suggest one to him.

Pharsalus was Cæsar's masterpiece. While only losing two hundred men, he killed fifteen thousand and took twenty

thousand prisoners. These he ordered to be spared. He then celebrated his victory by eating, in Pompey's sumptuous tent, the dinner which cooks had prepared in honour of Pompey's triumph. The hapless general was at that moment galloping towards Larissa, still followed by his entourage of worthless aristocrats, amongst whom there was a certain Brutus, whose corpse Cæsar had looked for on the battlefield in terror of finding it. He was the son of his former mistress, Servilia, Cato's half-sister, and perhaps Cæsar himself was his father. Finally, Cæsar received a letter from him in Larissa, asking his pardon and begging it also for his brother-in-law Cassius, who had married his sister Tertia, Servilia's daughter, and had been taken prisoner with other followers of Pompey. Cæsar immediately gave free pardon to both of them because Rome in those days was what Ennio Flaiano says Italy is to-day: a country not only of poets, heroes and navigators, but also of uncles, nephews and cousins.

Pompey, having joined his wife at Mitylene, sailed with her for Africa. His intention was probably to take command of the last of the senatorial armies, the one which Cato and Labienus were organising at Utica. His ship cast anchor in the waters of Egypt, a vassal state of Rome, administered through the young king Ptolemy XII, who was a degenerate completely under the thumb of a rascally eunuch called Potinus. Potinus had already heard about Pharsalus and thought that he would earn the gratitude of the victor by murdering the vanquished. Pompey was knifed in the back under the eyes of his wife as he stepped ashore from a launch. His head was sent as a present to Cæsar, who turned his own aside when it was shown to him. Cæsar did not care for blood, even that of his enemies, and there is no doubt that he would have pardoned Pompey if he had taken him alive.

As he was in the area, Cæsar decided before returning to Rome to straighten out matters in Egypt, where for some time they had been going badly. Ptolemy, according to his father's will, should have married his own sister, Cleopatra, and they

then should have shared the throne. When Cæsar arrived, Cleopatra was not there; Potinus, the better to further his own interests, had had her locked up. Cæsar secretly sent for her. In order to reach him she had herself hidden under the covers of a bed which the slave Apollodorus was to take to the apartments of the illustrious guest in the royal palace. Cæsar found her there when he turned in for the night, with momentous consequences.

The following day he settled matters between brother and sister, that is, he practically gave them complete sovereignty at the expense of Potinus, whom he had killed on the grounds, possibly true, of treasonable conspiracy. Unfortunately, the city rose against Cæsar. The Roman garrison sided with the rebels. Cæsar and his few men turned the royal palace into a fortress, sent a messenger to Asia Minor for reinforcements, burned his fleet so that it should not fall into enemy hands (unluckily the fire also spread to the great library, the glory and pride of Alexandria) and in a raid, which he himself led swimming, captured the Island of the Lighthouse. Here he waited for his reinforcements to arrive by sea. Ptolemy thought he was lost, joined the rebels and nothing was ever heard of him again. Cleopatra courageously stood by Cæsar who, when his men arrived, routed the Egyptians and put her back on the throne.

He remained nine months with her, at the end of which she gave birth to a baby who was named Cæsarion so that there should be no doubt as to his paternity. Cæsar must have been very much in love to be so deaf to the appeals of Rome. The City had now fallen into the clutches of the Milo gangs, back again from Marseilles. Finally, hearing that Cæsar intended making a long cruise with Cleopatra up the Nile, his own soldiers mutinied. A rumour had spread among them that their general wanted to marry and stay in Egypt as king of the Mediterranean.

At this Cæsar roused himself and at the head of his men went off to Asia Minor, where he "came, saw, and conquered"

Pharnacetes, the rebel son of Mithridates, at Zela. Then he sailed for Taranto, where Cicero and other ex-Conservatives came to meet him with ashes on their heads. With characteristic magnanimity Cæsar cut short their contrite speeches by shaking hands with them. Then, with Cleopatra and Cæsarion he returned to a turbulent Rome and his long-suffering wife Calpurnia.

27

THE IDES OF MARCH

THE SITUATION in Rome was none too bright. Grain was no longer arriving from Spain, where Pompey's son had organised another army, nor from Africa, which Cato and Labienus controlled with an army as big as the one which had been defeated at Pharsalus. At home chaos reigned. Cicero's son-in-law, Dolabella, had joined up with Cælius, the successor of Clodius, leader of the extremists. Between them they had decreed the cancellation of all debts, which meant a financial crisis, and from Marseilles had recalled Milo, the leading exponent of demagogy and the blackjack. Mark Antony, who, as Cæsar's representative, had to keep order and who, as a soldier, was rough-and-ready in his methods, had called in the troops. About a thousand Romans had been butchered in the Forum. Cælius and Milo fled to stir up revolt in the provinces, where various legions had mutinied.

Cæsar, accustomed to battling with the right wing, that is, with the reactionaries, hated to have enemies on the left; he did not want to finish up like Marius, who had been obliged to massacre his own supporters in order to save the situation. He began to unravel his political tangle with the soldiers, "because," he said, "they depend on money, which depends on force, which depends on them." He visited the mutinous legions alone and

unarmed and, with his customary calm, told them that he agreed that their claims were legitimate. He went on to say that he would satisfy them when he got back from Africa, where he was going to fight "with other soldiers." At these words, Suetonius says, the veterans were overcome by shame and remorse. They shouted that this could not be, that they were Cæsar's soldiers and intended to remain so. Cæsar raised a few difficulties and then gave way for the simple reason that he had no other soldiers. Not only was he a great general, he was also an extremely artful one. He embarked the troops, burning with the desire to make amends, and in April 46 B.C. landed in Africa at Thapsos. Here he found eighty thousand men waiting for him under the command of Cato, Metellus Scipio, his former henchman, Labienus, and Juba, king of Numidia.

Again he was facing odds of three to one, again he lost the first round, again he won the decisive battle. It was appalling. This time his soldiers did not obey his orders to be merciful and slaughtered all the prisoners. Juba committed suicide on the battlefield and Scipio, overtaken at sea, was killed. Cato, with a small detachment, shut himself up in Utica. He advised his son to submit to Cæsar and then distributed all his available funds to those who wished to try to escape. He then invited his most intimate friends to dinner, discussed Socrates and Plato with them, retired to his room and split open his stomach with a dagger. His slaves found him and called a doctor, who did what he could to replace his intestines, which were bursting out of the wound. While the doctor was bandaging him up, Cato pretended to be unconscious, but when left alone he removed the bandages and reopened the wound with his own hands.

They found him dead with his head resting on the pages of Plato's *Phædo*. Cæsar, grieved, said that he could not forgive him for having deprived him of the opportunity of forgiving him. He gave him a solemn funeral and was merciful to his son. Perhaps he felt that this unpleasant and, in many respects, insufferable man was taking the virtues of republican

Rome to the grave and would willingly have exchanged his life for that of many of his friends: Cicero, for example.

After a short period in Rome Cæsar went to Spain to destroy the last of the Pompeian armies. He routed it at Munda and could at last devote himself entirely to the task of reorganising the State. He had the power to do so because the Senate had given him the title of Dictator, first for ten years and then for life. It was a gigantic undertaking which called for a ruling class. This Cæsar did not have. He invited his aristocratic ex-adversaries to collaborate with him, as being the most competent, but their only answer was sarcasm and conspiracies. They continued to harp on the old story of his projected marriage to Cleopatra and the transfer of the capital to Alexandria. Cæsar could only count on a small group of faithful friends who knew little about administration. With these he formed a sort of ministry: Balbus, Mark Antony, Dolabella, Oppius, *et cetera*. The Assembly was on his side so he reduced the Senate to a purely consultative body. He increased it in number from six to nine hundred by admitting new members, drawn partly from the middle classes of Rome and the provinces and partly from his old Celtic officers, many of whom were sons of slaves.

This manœuvre formed part of a much vaster plan. Cæsar had given a glimpse of this plan when he had granted citizenship to all Gaul south of the River Po. The Senate had never ratified this measure but now had to accept its extension to all Italy. Cæsar had realised that no good could be expected from the Romans of Rome, soft, degenerate, and incapable of producing anything but parasites and deserters. He knew that the only good lay in the provinces, where the family had remained intact, customs sound and education severe. He was planning to renew the framework of the administration and the army with these provincials of peasant or lower middle-class origin.

This was his radical change. He tried to put it into effect by means of the great agrarian reform planned by the Gracchi.

To ensure its success, he called in the industrial and commercial middle classes to finance the operation. Great capitalists like Balbus and Atticus became his bankers and advisers. In this enterprise Cæsar displayed the same energy he had displayed as a general in battle. He insisted on seeing, knowing and deciding everything himself. He would not stand for waste or incompetence and never had enough time to eliminate both. The policy of full-time employment for labour fitted in perfectly with his passion for building. He was a born builder and was happiest when busiest. Instead of annoying him the gossip of his enemies amused him.

He used to have it told to him so that he could pass it on to Calpurnia, with whom he had gone back to live after the Cleopatra interlude. He was, in his own way, a good husband. He compensated his wife for his countless infidelities with a thousand attentions, profound esteem and affectionate companionship. He always had something to tell her when he came home. Here he treated his collaborators and subordinates with the well-bred aloofness natural to him. He dressed with care and only took advantage of one of the prerogatives which were his due as Dictator: that of wearing a laurel wreath to conceal his baldness. He did everything with an air, even the forgiveness of someone who had injured him. He went even further. Whenever possible he preferred to know nothing about the injury. This is why he burned without reading it the correspondence that Pompey had left in his tent at Pharsalus and Scipio in his at Thapsos. When he learned that Sextus was preparing to avenge his father in Spain, he had sent him his sons, who had remained in Rome; his two enemies, Brutus and Cassius, he had made governors of provinces. Perhaps in this magnanimity there was a measure of contempt for mankind, a trait which quite often accompanies greatness. Perhaps his complete disregard for the dangers which threatened him was rooted in this contempt. He could not have been blind to the fact that plots were going on all round him and knew that generosity is a stimulant, not a sedative, of hatred. Nevertheless,

he thought that his enemies lacked the courage to take action. He dreamed of new undertakings: of taking vengeance for Crassus on the Parthians, of including Germany and Scythia in the Empire.

In February of 44 B.C. he was already drawing up his plans for these campaigns when Cassius became ringleader of a conspiracy to kill him. Into it he tried to draw Brutus, whom Cæsar still loved as a son (perhaps because he knew he was). Novelists and playwrights have tried to make this young man a hero of republican liberty. It is doubtful whether he really was. The conspiracy was tricked out in noble ideals; it claimed that its object was the death of a tyrant who aimed at a king's throne which he intended to share with Cleopatra, the foreign harlot, and then leave to his bastard Cæsarion after transferring the capital to Egypt. Had he not had his statue erected beside those of the ancient kings? Had he not had his own image put on the new coins? Power had gone to his head, already deranged by a recurrence of his epileptic fits. Better both for him and his memory that he should be suppressed before he got a chance to destroy the liberty and supremacy of Rome.

These were probably the arguments which the "lean and hungry" Cassius used to convince his brother-in-law. Nevertheless, perhaps those which tipped the scale were quite other, of a more personal and secret nature. Brutus hated Cæsar not because he did not know that he was his father, but because he did. Perhaps he had never forgiven his mother for making a bastard of him. These are mere suppositions, for Brutus was taciturn and reserved. One very doubtful source reports that in a letter to a friend he wrote: "Our ancestors taught us never to tolerate a tyrant, even though he happens to be our father." It is only too easy to attribute such thoughts to a man after he has put them into practice.

Brutus was an educated man, who knew his Greek and philosophy. He had governed Cisalpine Gaul, which Cæsar had entrusted to him, honestly and efficiently. He had married his cousin Portia, daughter of his uncle Cato. This certainly could

not have made him favourably disposed towards the Dictator. The most alarming thing about him was the fact that he wrote essays about Virtue. Virtue is one of those deities best beloved in silence.

During the first few days of March, after indoctrinating him carefully, Cassius came to tell Brutus that on the coming Ides, that is to say on the 15th, Cæsar was going to make his great *coup*. His right-hand man, Lucius Cotta, was going to propose to the Assembly, already determined to approve, that the Dictator be proclaimed king. The excuse was that the Sybil had predicted that the Parthians, against whom he was preparing an expedition, could only be defeated by a king. One could not rely much on the opposition of the Senate. Its recent reform had given the majority to the followers of Cæsar. The only remedy before it was too late was the dagger. This conversation took place in the presence of Portia, who supported Cassius's point of view. To show that she could keep the secret, even under torture, she drove a dagger into her thigh. Brutus gave in; he had to show he was worthy of such a wife.

That evening Cæsar was dining at home with some friends and, according to the custom of Roman hosts, he proposed a topic of conversation. "What death would you prefer?" Everybody had their say. Cæsar pronounced himself in favour of a rapid and violent end. The following morning Calpurnia told him that she had dreamed of him covered in blood. She begged him not to go to the Senate, but a friend, who was privy to the plot, came to fetch him: Cæsar went with him and just missed another friend, a loyal one, who came to warn him of the conspiracy. In the street a soothsayer shouted to him to beware of the Ides of March. "They are already here," said Cæsar. "They aren't over yet," replied the other. Just as he was entering the Senate-house, somebody put a roll of parchment in his hand. Cæsar thought it was just another of the usual petitions and did not unroll it. He still held it in his hand when he died: it was a detailed denunciation.

He was barely inside the Capitol when the conspirators were

on him with their daggers. The only person who could have defended him, Mark Antony, was detained in the entrance hall by Trebonius. Cæsar at first tried to protect himself with his arm but gave up when he saw Brutus among his assassins. It is very probable that he really did say to him: "You, too, my son?" as Suetonius says he did.

He fell, riddled with thrusts, at the feet of the statue of Pompey. This he himself had had put there and he used to bow to it whenever he passed. The deed left its own authors dismayed and uncertain. Brutus gave a rousing cheer for Cicero, calling him "Father of the Country," and asked him to make a speech. Horrified at the idea of getting involved in this business and realising that oratory would have been out of place, the great speaker remained speechless for the first time in his life. Mark Antony entered and saw the corpse stretched out on the floor. Everybody expected him to give way to an outburst of vindictive rage. Instead, the "Faithful One" did not say a word and went out in silence. Outside, perturbed by the news, which was just beginning to spread, a crowd was gathering. Fearfully the conspirators appeared in the entrance. Some of them tried to explain what had happened, justifying it as a triumph of liberty. The word "liberty," however, no longer had any fascination for the Romans. They began to growl menaces. The conspirators hastily retired, barricaded themselves inside the Capitol and, putting their armed servants on guard, sent a message for Mark Antony to come and get them out of their predicament.

The "Faithful One" came the next day, when Brutus and Cassius had in vain already made a second speech to calm the crowd, which had become ever more threatening. By a clever speech in which he asked for the maintenance of order in exchange for the punishment of the guilty, he more or less succeeded in calming them. He then went to Calpurnia, who was prostrate with grief, and had himself given Cæsar's will in a sealed envelope. This he delivered to the Vestal Virgins, as was the custom in Rome, without opening it. He was quite sure

that he had been designated heir. Then he secretly sent for the troops encamped outside the city. Returning to the Senate, he made a speech of Cæsarean stature designed to restore order and reduce tension. He approved the proposal made by Cicero for a general amnesty on condition that the Senate ratified all Cæsar's outstanding projects. He also promised a governorship to Brutus and Cassius, which would enable them to get away from Rome. He had them to dinner with him the same evening.

On the 18th he pronounced the eulogy at Cæsar's funeral. This was the most solemn one ever seen in Rome. The Israelite community, grateful to Cæsar for the kind treatment they had received from him, followed his bier, mingling with his veterans and singing their ancient mournful hymns. The soldiers threw their arms, the gladiators and actors their costumes on the pyre and the entire populace kept vigil round the coffin the whole night long.

The following day, Antony had the Vestals hand him back the will. He opened it in the presence of the highest authorities of the State and read it aloud in public. Of his private income, which amounted to about a hundred million "sestertii," Cæsar left a sum to every Roman citizen. His magnificent gardens he gave to the City of Rome as a public park. The rest was to be divided between his three great-nephews, one of whom, Caius Octavius, he had adopted as his son and designated heir.

The "Faithful One" who, forty-eight hours after his chief's assassination, had invited his murderers to dinner had been repaid for his strange fidelity.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

APART from a few intimate family friends who had seen him as an adolescent, nobody in Rome knew this Caius Octavius, who was destined to change his name twice and, under the last one, Augustus, was to go down in history as the greatest Roman statesman. His grandmother had been Julia, Cæsar's sister, who had married a rich, vulgar provincial from Velletri. His father had had quite a successful career and had finished up as Governor in Macedonia. As for the boy, he had grown up under almost Spartan discipline, had been diligent in his studies, and his great-uncle Cæsar, who had no legitimate son in spite of all the wives he had married, had taken him into his home and had grown fond of him. He took him to Spain with him in 45 B.C., when he went to eliminate the last remnants of the Pompeians, and on that occasion had admired the will-power with which he put up with hardships which his health could ill support. He suffered, in fact, from colitis, eczema and bronchitis, ailments which became worse with time and compelled him to live, even in battle, like a chick in cotton-wool, with belly-bands, shawls, woollen caps and a whole chemist's shop of pills, ointments and syrups and a doctor at hand. He did not drink, ate like a sparrow and had a terror of draughts. Still, he faced the enemy with the coolest courage and never took any action, even the most ordinary one, without first carefully weighing up the pros and cons.

Cæsar, the brilliant, daring improviser, so broad-minded and irrationally generous, so easy in his speech and vivacious in his gestures, must have taken a liking to him because of the contrast between them. He followed his studies, giving him guidance in strategy and administration, and, as soon as he was

seventeen, gave him a small command in Illyria to obtain experience of military life and government. It was here that towards the end of March a messenger reached him with the news of his uncle's death and his will. He hurried off to Rome, and, contrary to the advice of his mother, who did not trust Mark Antony, went to see him. The latter treated him disdainfully and called him "little boy."

He did not take offence and calmly asked whether the money Cæsar had left to the Roman citizens and soldiers had actually been distributed. Antony replied that there were other more urgent matters to be attended to and so Caius Octavius, who now, owing to his adoption, had taken the name of Caius Julius Cæsar Octavian, borrowed the money from rich friends of the dead man and distributed it according to his instructions. The veterans began to look with a favourable eye on this "little boy," who to them seemed to be a chip off the old block.

The irritated Antony announced some days later that an attempt had been made on his life and that he had found out from the would-be murderer that Octavian had organised the attempt.

Octavian asked for proof and, since this was not forthcoming, hastened off to the two legions which in the meantime he had recalled from Illyria, joined forces with those of the two consuls in office, Hirtius and Pansa, and the three of them marched against Antony.

He was only eighteen at the time and for this reason the Senate was on his side. The aristocrats were alarmed at Antony's arrogant attitude. Now that he saw he had been defrauded of Cæsar's heritage, he was trying to seize it by force. In his few days of power he had ransacked the Treasury, appropriating millions for himself, had arbitrarily occupied Pompey's palace, and had nominated himself Governor of Cisalpine Gaul. This was his excuse for keeping an army in Italy and thus becoming its master. The Senate realised that, if they let him get away with it, they would have another, and

worse, Cæsar on their hands. Consequently they decided to support Octavian, who seemed less likely to give trouble. Cicero mobilised his oratory in the struggle against Antony in a series of "Philippics," mainly aimed against his private life. This gave him plenty of scope. Antony, who was now thirty-eight years old, had spent them in feats of military prowess, acts of arrogance, generous gestures and obscene conduct. Even Cæsar, who was fond of him and far from being strait-laced, must have been shocked at the harem of both sexes which his general, even in war-time, used to cart around with him. Antony was an ignorant, profligate, vigorous, full-blooded and violent aristocrat. Cicero, poking his nose into his past history, found plenty of grounds there for all his accusations.

The battle between the two armies took place near Modena and Octavian was so outrageously lucky that he was the only general to survive; Hirtius and Pansa were killed, and Antony, beaten for the first time in his life, fled. The victor returned to Rome at the head of all the troops quartered in Italy and went straight to the Senate to insist on his appointment as Consul, the abolition of the amnesty for the Ides of March conspirators and their condemnation to death. The Senate, who had counted on using him as their tool, were indignant and offered resistance. Whereupon Octavian summoned another of Cæsar's lieutenants, Lepidus, sent him to make peace with Antony, and the three of them established the Second Triumvirate, thus demonstrating that the youngster had learned his uncle's lesson. The Senate bowed its head and in the days that followed had leisure to reflect that a Dictator's successor always makes one regret his predecessor.

Patrols of soldiers were stationed at all the gates of the city and the great vendetta began. Three hundred senators and two thousand officials, indicted for the murder of Cæsar, were tried and executed after the confiscation of all their possessions. Twenty-five thousand drachmæ, nearly £6,000, was the price put on the head of a fugitive. Most of them preferred to kill themselves, a gesture reminiscent of the great Romans of

ancient times. The tribune Salvius gave a banquet, drank poison and left as his last wish the order that dinner should continue in the presence of his corpse. His wish was granted. Fulvia, the wife of Antony, had the innocent Rufus hanged at the door of his own house because he would not sell it to her. Her husband was not in a position to stop her because, at that moment, he was in bed with the wife of Coponius, who by this arrangement saved his life.

Antony's sweetest revenge was upon Cicero, not only because the "Philippics" had stuck in his throat, but because he wanted to avenge Clodius, whose widow he had married, and Lentulus, Antony's stepfather, whom Cicero had had killed in prison during Catiline's conspiracy. The "Father of the Country" had tried to escape by embarking at Anzio. Unfortunately, he suffered from sea-sickness, which seemed worse than death to him. Cicero forbade his servants to offer resistance and meekly extended his neck. His head and right hand were taken to the Triumvirs. Antony was overjoyed and Octavian was, or pretended to be, indignant. He had never cared much for Cicero, who had played a double game with his uncle, and with whose murderers he had allied himself after praising him so highly when he was alive. Octavian himself he had defined as "laudandum adolescentem, ornandum, tollendum." It sounded like praise but "tollendum" not only meant "to be exalted," but also "to be killed." There was little doubt about the interpretation of a double meaning when it came from the mouth of Cicero. Thus died the greatest orator of Rome, victim of his own oratory.

Now all that remained to be done was to punish the principal guilty parties, Brutus and Cassius. They had departed as Governors of Macedonia and Syria respectively and had joined forces, thus creating the last of the armies of republican Rome, which was not destined to leave a happy memory of itself in those provinces. Palestine, Cilicia and Thrace were literally stripped bare. Whole populations, particularly the Jews, who had not the wherewithal to pay their tribute, were

reduced to slavery and sold. Virtue did not prevent Brutus from besieging, starving and driving to mass suicide the inhabitants of Xanthus. When they arrived the armies of Antony and Octavian were welcomed as "liberators."

The battle took place at Philippi in September of 42 B.C. Brutus broke Octavian's line of battle. Antony broke through that of Cassius, who had himself killed by an attendant. Octavian was in bed in his tent with one of his usual attacks of influenza, so Antony waited for him to recover before setting out with him in pursuit of Brutus. The latter, when he saw his men waver, threw himself on a friend's sword. Antony looked for his body and, when he found it, in pity covered it with his purple tunic. He remembered that Brutus had only imposed one condition on joining the plot against Cæsar: that Antony should be spared.

At Philippi the greatest names of the aristocracy fell with the Republic, of which it had been the mainstay. Those who were not killed in battle committed suicide, as did the son of Hortensius and the son of Cato. They were all that remained of the flower of the ancient Roman patrician class and at least they proved themselves brave soldiers to the very end. At home only the craven and corrupt remained. These people would do anything to avoid hardship and danger, and were quite prepared to accept the division made of the great Empire by the victors. Octavian took the European slice, Lepidus was given Africa. Antony chose Egypt, Greece and the Middle East. Each of the three knew that the arrangement was purely temporary; each of them except Lepidus, who was satisfied, hoped sooner or later to get rid of the other two. The most likely to succeed was Antony, who believed in military force only and knew that as a general he was superior to his colleagues.

The first thing he did was to send a message to Cleopatra, ordering her to come to him at Tarsus to answer the accusation of having helped and financed Cassius. Cleopatra obeyed. On the day fixed for her appearance, Antony prepared to receive her on a majestic throne raised in the middle of the Forum in

the presence of the population, who were all agog at the thought of the forthcoming trial. Cleopatra arrived on a ship with red sails, a golden prow and a silver-plated keel. The crew was composed of her maids, dressed as nymphs, who thronged round a lamé canopy under which she lay, provocatively attired as Venus, intent on the melodies played to her on pipes and flutes. When the news of this extraordinary apparition on the waters of the River Cydnus spread round town, everybody rushed to the port to see her, as they do to-day to see Sophia Loren. Antony was left alone in a towering rage. He sent for her and she replied that he was expected on board for dinner. Furious, Antony went, still considering himself the judge and her the accused. When he saw her, he was dumbfounded. He had met her as a little girl in Alexandria; now, seeing her again as a mature woman, it was only too obvious why Cæsar had been enthralled by her. His generals were already at her feet. Dinner began with his haughtily accusing her and ended with his giving her Phœnicia, Cyprus and large helpings of Arabia and Palestine. She rewarded him that very night, and when she left took him with her to Alexandria, where he seemed to have forgotten all about the precarious nature of his position. Cleopatra, on the other hand, remembered it well. She entirely understood that the Empire could not tolerate three masters. Though she did not love Antony, and perhaps had never loved anybody, she intended to use him as the instrument for the operation which, with Cæsar, failed to carry through.

While all this was going on at Alexandria, Octavian was laying the foundations of the reunification. It was not easy. Sextus Pompey was busy again in Spain and blocking supplies. Unemployment was spreading, inflation threatened, and the Senate was proving obstructive unless adequately bribed. On top of all this, Antony's wife, Fulvia, perhaps to remove her husband from Cleopatra's spell by getting him back to Rome, organised a plot with his brother Lucius. They raised an army and stirred the Italians to revolt. Marcus Agrippa, Octavian's most trusted lieutenant, had to intervene to put down this rising.

Lucius surrendered at Perugia and Fulvia died of anger, disappointment and jealousy.

In these events Antony, egged on by Cleopatra, saw his opportunity. He assembled his army and sailed with it for Brindisi, where he besieged Octavian's garrison. However, the soldiers on both sides refused to fight and so their generals were obliged to make peace. This was sealed by Antony's wedding to Octavian's sister, Octavia.

History does not relate Cleopatra's reaction to this episode, which put an apparent end to her projects. Antony, separated from her, seemed to have recovered some of his reason. He took his wife to Athens, where she endeavoured to interest him in the monuments of its culture and the lessons of its philosophers. This interlude ended with his sending her back to Rome and setting out with his legions for Persia. Here Labienus, son of Cæsar's treacherous general, was organising an army in the service of its rebel king. Cleopatra joined Antony at Antioch; though she disapproved of the undertaking and refused to finance it, she accompanied her lover. He vainly pursued the enemy for three hundred miles, lost a good proportion of his hundred thousand men, imposed a theoretical vassalage on Armenia, proclaimed himself victor, and treated himself to a solemn triumph at Alexandria, thus scandalising Rome, who considered that she had the monopoly of such ceremonies. Anthony then gave notice of divorce to Octavia, so breaking the only link he had with Octavian, married Cleopatra, endowed the two sons he had had by her with all the Middle East and named Cæsarion heir to the crown of Egypt and Cyprus.

By that proceeding he rendered inevitable the conflict with Octavian, who was preparing for it with his usual cautious tenacity. He, too, had had his sentimental complications. He had fallen in love—it is difficult to imagine—with Livia, the wife of Tiberius Claudius Nero, who was in her fifth month of pregnancy. Although he was under thirty he had already been married twice before. First to Claudia and then to Scribonia, who had given him a daughter, Julia. Now he divorced this

second wife and amicably persuaded Tiberius Claudius Nero to do the same with Livia. Her two sons, Tiberius, who was almost full grown, and Drusus, who was about to be born, he adopted as if they had been his own.

These domestic affairs settled, he turned to the work of reconstruction. Sextus's blockade was broken with the destruction of his fleet, order was restored and a newborn confidence caused the release of hoarded capital. Marcus Agrippa, apart from being a good general, was an incomparable Minister of War. In fact, he was the real reorganiser of the great army which was to restore unity to the Roman Empire.

29

AUGUSTUS

IN THE SPRING of the year 32 B.C. a messenger from Antony arrived in Rome with a letter to the Senate. In this the Triumvir proposed that he and his two colleagues, having restored the Republican institutions, should all three simultaneously resign their positions and commands and retire to private life. The proposal was so astute that it is easier to imagine it originating with Cleopatra than Antony.

Octavian was embarrassed. To escape from his dilemma he published Antony's will which, he said, he had obtained from the Vestals with whom it had been deposited. It designated as his sole heirs the two sons he had had by Cleopatra and nominated her as regent. There are grave doubts as to the authenticity of this document. However, it served to confirm the suspicions which all Rome harboured with regard to "the Serpent of the Nile." It also enabled Octavian to embark on a war of independence which, with much perspicacity, he declared on Cleopatra and not on Antony.

It was a naval war. The two fleets met at Actium. That of

Octavian, commanded by Agrippa, though inferior in numbers, defeated the enemy, who retired in disorder to Alexandria. Octavian did not go in pursuit. He knew that time was on his side and that the longer Antony stayed in Egypt the more he would be softened by orgies and idleness. Instead, he landed in Athens to settle the Greek situation and then returned to Italy to put down a revolt. After this, he again set out on a wide sweep through Asia Minor to isolate Antony by destroying the alliances he had made there. Finally, he closed in on Alexandria. On the way he received three letters: one from Cleopatra, together with a sceptre and crown, symbols of her submission, and two from Antony suing for peace. To Cleopatra he replied that he would leave her on the throne if she killed her lover. All things considered it is surprising that she ignored the offer.

With the courage of despair Antony attacked and gained a partial victory. This, however, was not enough to prevent Octavian from enclosing the city in a trap. The next day Cleopatra's mercenaries surrendered and the news reached Antony that the queen was dead. He tried to kill himself with a dagger. When he learned that she was still alive he had himself carried to the tower in which she was barricaded with her handmaidens and died in her arms.

Cleopatra asked permission to bury the body and sought an audience. Octavian agreed. She appeared before him as she had done before Antony—perfumed, basted and clad only in queenly veils. Under those veils, however, there was now a woman of forty, not twenty-nine, and showing the ravages of time too fully used. Augustus needed no great strength to resist her temptations and informed her that he was going to take her to Rome to adorn his triumph. She applied an asp to her breast and allowed it to poison her. Her handmaidens did likewise.

Octavian settled the question of the succession in characteristic manner. He allowed the two corpses to be buried side by side, killed the little Cæsarion, and sent back the two sons

of the dead couple to Octavia, who brought them up as if they had been her own. So as not to humiliate Egypt by making her a Roman province, he proclaimed himself king, helped himself to her enormous treasure, put a prefect in charge and went home. Here he quietly did away with Antony's eldest son, by Fulvia.

By now he was just thirty-one and absolute master of all Cæsar's heritage. The Senate no longer had the desire, or the strength, to dispute it with him. Only out of caution did he refrain from asking for the throne. Octavian knew the power of words and was aware that that of "king" still held odious memories. There was no point in awakening certain ideas slumbering in torpid consciences. The Romans had ceased to believe in democratic institutions. They knew the corruption to which they were heir. They did, however, care about the form. They wanted order, peace, safety, a good administration, a sound currency and their savings guaranteed. Octavian set about giving them these.

The army, which now numbered half a million, he paid off with the gold brought back from Egypt, keeping only two hundred thousand men under arms. Of these he called himself "Imperator," a purely military title. The rest he settled as peasants on lands specially acquired for the purpose. He cancelled the debts of private citizens to the State and initiated a great public works programme, but these were just the first and easiest steps. Like Cæsar, Octavian did not wish to confine himself to mere administration but also wished to carry out gigantic reforms and reconstruct the whole of society on the lines laid down by his uncle. For this he required a bureaucracy, of which he was the real inventor. Round him he gathered a sort of Cabinet, composed of experts, whom he had the knack of choosing well. There was a great organiser like Agrippa, a great financier like Mæcenas and various generals, among whom his stepson, Tiberius, was soon to become prominent.

As almost all these belonged to the upper-middle class, the aristocrats complained that they had been excluded. Octavian,

therefore, chose some twenty of them, all senators, to form a sort of Privy Council which gradually became the mouthpiece of the Senate and ratified its decisions. The Assembly or Parliament still continued to meet but ever less frequently and it never made any attempt to oppose a proposal put forward by Octavian. The latter stood for the consulship thirteen times running, and, naturally, was elected every time. In 27 B.C. he suddenly placed all his powers in the hands of the Senate, proclaimed the restoration of the Republic and announced his intention of retiring to private life. He was only thirty-five at this time and the sole title he had accepted was the new one of Prince. The Senate responded by abdicating in its turn and handing all his powers back to him, begging him to accept them. They also conferred on him the name of "Augustus," meaning the "increaser," an adjective which later became used as a noun. Octavian accepted with an air of resignation. It was a comedy, perfectly acted on both sides, which showed that the Conservative and Republican quarrel was dead. Even the proudest senator preferred a master to chaos.

The master, however, continued to show discretion in the use of his powers. He lived in Hortensius's very splendid palace, but he did not transform it into a court, and kept a monastically furnished little room with a study on the ground floor as his personal apartment. Even when, many years later, the building was destroyed by fire and he built another one like it, he insisted that these two rooms should be identically rebuilt. He was a sober creature of habit who kept to a strict timetable. As he considered himself the first servant of the State, he worked very hard and used to put everything in writing: not only the speeches he was to make in public, but also those he made at home to his wife and family. Not until Franz Josef of Austria, to whom he was similar in many respects, can history produce a sovereign so attached to duty, respectable, prosaic and unattractive. Or one so unhappy in his family affections.

These embraced Julia, his daughter by Scribonia, Livia, his third wife, and his two stepsons, Drusus and Tiberius, whom

she had brought with her. Livia was an irreproachable wife, if a little dull and too obviously virtuous. She brought up her children well, did a great deal for charity and supported her husband's various infidelities with resignation. Everything leads one to believe that she was far less interested in love than she was in the power of Augustus and the careers of her sons. These, in fact, made rapid headway. Generals at the age of twenty, they were sent to subdue Illyria and Pannonia. Augustus, who had brought about the "pax Romana," soon gave up the idea of war and new annexations but he wanted to guarantee the boundaries of the Empire, which were continually threatened. Drusus, his favourite, extended them from the Rhine to the Elbe to make them safer, beating the Germans brilliantly, but in the process he fell from his horse and was seriously injured. Tiberius, who adored him and who was in Gaul, galloped four hundred miles to get to him. He arrived just in time to close his eyes. The death of this gay, impetuous and expansive lad was a great blow to Augustus since he had intended to make him his successor. Now he hoped that Julia would give him another heir.

This lively, sensual and flighty girl was the apple of his eye. At the age of fourteen he had married her to Marcellus, son of his sister Octavia, the widow of Antony, but Marcellus had died shortly afterwards. Julia had then become the gayest of widows alive in act and conversation. Her father, who had begun to issue laws for the promotion of public morality, decided that this would best be served by finding her another husband. He chose Marcus Agrippa, the Minister of War who, after the victory at Actium, had become his most trusted and able collaborator. A great soldier, gentleman and engineer, he had pacified Spain and Gaul, reorganised trade and built roads. He was the only important figure of whom it was never murmured that he made money on the side. Augustus, who was a planner by nature, and thought he had the right to interfere with the happiness of others, did not worry about the fact that Agrippa was forty-two and Julia was eighteen and that he already had a

wife with whom he was very happy. He insisted on his divorcing and remarrying.

The couple could not have been worse assorted even though they did bring five children into the world. These, somewhat surprisingly, resembled Agrippa. Julia, brazenly asked for an explanation, would equally brazenly reply: "I only embark new sailors on the ship when it is already laden." Eight years later Agrippa died. Julia again became the Merry Widow of Rome. To put matters right Augustus insisted on a third marriage, this time to Tiberius, whom he now saw, or whom Livia made him see, as a possible Regent for the Empire until such time as Julia's sons, Caius and Lucius, came of age. Tiberius, too, was already happily married to Agrippa's daughter, Vipsania. But this happiness did not coincide with that planned by Augustus. He destroyed it and changed it into unhappiness. When, instead of being Agrippa's son-in-law, he took his place as Julia's husband, Tiberius had to put up with all that the most wretched husband has ever had to put up with from a wife. When he could not stand it any longer, he retired to private life in Rhodes, where he spent seven years studying. Julia's scandals in the meanwhile put even the memory of Clodia in the shade. Caius and Lucius died, one of typhoid and the other in battle, and Augustus, now sixty, was shattered by these misfortunes. Consumed by eczema and rheumatics and increasingly under the thumb of Livia, he finally banished his daughter to Pantelleria for immorality. He then recalled Tiberius and, though he never really liked him much, adopted him as his son and heir.

Perhaps at that moment he thought he was going to die. His colitis and influenza gave him no respite and he never took a step without his private doctor, Antony Musa. He had become crotchety, suspicious and cruel. For a mere indiscretion he had the legs of his secretary, Tallus, broken and, to protect himself from non-existent plots, he invented the police, that is to say, those prætorians or bodyguards who later were to play such a nefarious part under his successors. Ever more sceptical,

and embittered by his sufferings, he clearly saw the failure of his work of reconstruction. True, there was the "pax Augusta." The sailors from the East used to come and thank him for the safety with which they now sailed the seas, but Varus, with three legions, had been massacred on the Elbe by the German, Arminius, and the frontier had had to be withdrawn to the Rhine. Augustus guessed that on the other side, in the depths of their forests, the Germanic tribes were in a ferment. Trade, revived by Agrippa, was flourishing and the currency, stabilised by Mæccnas, was sound. The administration was functioning, the army was strong, but the great moral reform had failed. Divorce and birth-control had destroyed the family and the Roman race was almost extinct. The last census had shown that three-quarters of the population were freedmen or sons of foreign freedmen. Hundreds of new temples had been built but there were no gods in them. People no longer believed in them. Morals cannot be renewed without a religious basis. Augustus had tried to revive the ancient faith without believing in it himself. The result was that the people pretended to adore him as a god.

Julia, who died in exile, had left Augustus a granddaughter, called Julia like her mother. Unfortunately, she showed every sign of taking after her not only in name. Her grandfather had to have her, too, put away for immorality. Broken by this new grief, he thought of starving himself to death but his sense of duty and the certainty that he had not long to live prevailed. In fact, for those times, he lived to a very great age.

He was seventy-six when, convalescing after an attack of bronchitis, death surprised him at Nola. That morning he had worked as usual from eight until midday, like a perfect official, signing decrees and answering correspondence. Sending for Livia, with whom he was about to celebrate his golden wedding, he bade her an affectionate farewell. Then, like a great Roman, he turned to those present, and said: "I have played my part well. So, my friends, let me leave the stage with your applause."

Before cremating the corpse the senators bore the coffin all round Rome on their shoulders. They might have been glad to have got rid of him if they had not known that Tiberius was his successor-designate.

30

HORACE AND LIVY

MANY YEARS before, when he had returned victorious from his campaign against Antony, Augustus found Mæcenas waiting for him at Brindisi with a young poet from Mantua named Virgil. Virgil was the son of a civil servant of Celtic birth, whose little farm, in which he had invested all his savings, had been confiscated by the army. The boy had then come to Rome and published a book of poems, the *Eclogues*, which had been well received. Mæcenas had become his protector. He planned to use him as a propagandist for Augustus, and this was why he had come to introduce him.

Augustus had the author read him the unpublished manuscript of the *Georgics*. He took a liking to him for two reasons which had little or nothing to do with art. The first was that Virgil was sickly like himself and so they could talk for hours about their respective infirmities. The second was that these poems extolled the pleasures of that same rustic frugal life to which Augustus wanted all the Romans to return. Actually, as Seneca points out, Virgil described the country with all the mannerisms, style and artificiality of a town-dweller, but Augustus had not noticed this. The only thing that really mattered to him was that Virgil's poetry should be instructive. He rewarded the author by having his confiscated farm restored to his father. Virgil, however, did not return there. He far preferred writing about the countryside sitting in Rome. He was, however, greatly obliged to Augustus and with the aim of

celebrating his victories composed the *Æneid* in his honour. He wrote slowly, with great diligence and attention to style. Since, with the income from the farm and the generosity of Mæcenas, he no longer had to earn his living and had no other amusements, he spent most of his day working. He never married owing to his ill-health. His friends in Naples, where every now and then he used to winter, nicknamed him the "little virgin." Augustus was anxious to see the finished work. Occasionally Virgil read him a passage but he never reached the end of it. In 19 B.C. he interrupted his writing to visit the Emperor in Athens, and, as he lay dying at Brindisi, where he had been taken, he begged his friends to destroy the manuscript of the poem. Perhaps he deemed the epic not to be his vocation and preferred to leave other, fragmentary elegiac compositions to posterity. Augustus prevented the dead man's wishes from being carried out. Thanks to his desire to preserve this uncompleted monument to his own glory, he saved for us an authentic masterpiece.

Augustus's interest in literature was not merely confined to Virgil. It also included many other writers, amongst them Horace and Propertius. Mæcenas, who backed them, used to present them to him and thus gave his name to all patrons of the arts. This excuses him for the extremely poor verses which he piqued himself on composing. After Atticus had first established his publishing firm, many others had sprung up and a flourishing business had come into being. Editions of five or ten thousand copies, at ten shillings or a pound a copy, all hand-written by slaves, were sold out in a few months. Books were becoming a necessary adjunct for the interior decoration of any self-respecting household, even if they were never read. Orders came pouring in from the provinces.

This fashion had a great influence on society. Instead of remaining rude and warlike, it became ever more intellectual and literary. This was the reason why Augustus saw in it an instrument for his moral reforms. Until old age and sufferings had made him susceptible and touchy, he had always been

tolerant of epigrams and satires, even of those aimed at himself personally. He had public libraries built, and advised Tiberius to go easy on punishments and censorship. He even went so far as to compose some verses himself for the benefit of the rich, who had become interested in culture. A copy of these he sent to a certain Greek who used to wait for him every day when he came out of his palace so that he could read him his own. This Greek rewarded him with a very small offering and a very courteous letter in which he excused himself for not being able to pay better owing to his poverty. Augustus was highly amused at this sally and had him sent a hundred thousand "sestertii."

These writers and poets, however, rather let the Emperor down by devoting the worst of their efforts to State propaganda and the best to aiding and abetting the deplorable tendencies of an ever more libertine and cynical society. The public did not want the great themes of glory, religion and nature but preferred those of love and dalliance. The bard of these new motifs was Ovid, a lawyer from the Abruzzi, who had embittered his father by refusing to undertake a political career, proclaiming that he had been personally chosen by Venus to sing of Eros. He married three women, loved numerous others and wrote about all of them with the utmost frankness. He openly declared that he did not give a curse for all the various little Catos who criticised him. The success he obtained with his sugary lascivious verse led him to believe that he was a great poet. The last modest words of his *Metamorphoses* are: "I shall live on in the centuries to come."

This ink was hardly dry when he received an order from Augustus sending him into exile at Constanza on the Black Sea. The exact reason for the emperor's punishment has never been known. He is said to have been having an affair with the granddaughter Julia. She, in fact, was banished at roughly the same time. Ovid, like all men to whom success comes easily, had no fortitude in putting up with adversity. His laments from his place of exile, *Ex Ponto* and *Tristia*, are more to the credit of

his elegiac vein than his character. He never returned to Rome alive in spite of sending a thousand letters vainly imploring mercy from the emperor and help from his friends.

Generally speaking, although it has been called the Golden Age, the Augustan period did not see a literary and artistic flowering comparable to that in Greece under Pericles or in Italy during the Renaissance. Under this bourgeois Emperor, a correspondingly bourgeois taste developed. This preferred the middle course and the middle course often means mediocrity. The qualities which were most appreciated were moderation and a sense of proportion, seasoned with a certain good-humoured and homespun scepticism. In fact, the most representative writer of this time is Horace.

He was the son of an Apulian tax collector who wished to make a lawyer out of him. At the cost of heavy sacrifices he sent him to study first at Rome and then at Athens. Here Horace met Brutus, who was preparing for the battle of Philippi. Brutus took a liking to the young man and immediately put him in command of a legion, which gives us some idea as to why his army was beaten. In the midst of the battle Horace threw away his helmet, shield and sabre and fled to Athens to write a poem about how sweet and noble it was to die for the Fatherland.

Repatriated, without a penny to his name, he got a job as assistant to a *quæstor*. Since he was not invited to society salons and did not know any respectable women, he began to write verse about the ladies of easy virtue with whom he consorted. One day Virgil, having read a book of his, spoke of it enthusiastically to Mæcenas, who expressed a desire to meet the author. Mæcenas immediately liked the rather vulgar, vainglorious and timid little provincial and recommended him as a secretary to Augustus. Horace, however, refused what to anybody else would have seemed a gift from heaven. This was partly because he was neither ambitious nor greedy. Most of all, probably, it was because he had no intention of tying his destiny to that of a politician who, one day, might get killed and

involve him in the same fate. Mæcenas, to enable him to devote more leisure to literature, gave him a villa with fertile lands at Sabina. It was excavated in 1932 and gives us some idea of the magnate's generosity. It had twenty-four rooms, a spacious portico, three baths, a beautiful garden and five dependent farms.

Now that he was a well-to-do landowner Horace could devote himself to his true calling, that of the moralist. His *Satires* are priceless vignettes of everyday Romans of his time. He took them from the street, not from history or high society, and presented each one with cynical detachment. Every now and then, to keep in well with the Government, he used to write a poem in rhetorical and insincere praise of Augustus. The latter was highly flattered and commissioned him to complete his *Odes* with a secular *Carmen* in which his deeds and those of Drusus and Tiberius were to be extolled. Horace set about it. He had to seek inspiration in Glory, Fate and Infallible Destinies, things which attracted him not the slightest. Exhausted and bored, he finished this dreary poem after having interrupted it a thousand times to write the *Epistolæ* to his friends, especially to Mæcenas. These, together with his *Satires*, remain his masterpiece. He became ever more sedentary owing to ill-health which compelled him to take great care of himself and to observe a rigid diet. In vain Mæcenas encouraged him to travel. Horace preferred to stay in Rome or, better still, in his villa, where his diet was a forkful of home-made spaghetti, a minute portion of boiled meat and a stewed apple. To make up for this, he wrote poems about convivial friendship, succulent banquets, deep potations and loves with Glycera, Neæra, Pyrrha, Lydia, Lalage and countless other females who either never existed or whom he hardly knew. For virtue he had the stoic's respect, for pleasure the epicurean's appreciation, but he could not practise one or the other owing to his heartburn, rheumatism and liver trouble.

He was fully aware of the decadence of society and, despite his own complete lack of belief, attributed it to the decay of

religion. The fear of death cast a gloom over his latter years, during which he even refused to go to Rome. His letters are pervaded with it. "Thou hast loved, eaten and drunk enough and now it is time for thee to pass on," he used to repeat to himself. He died at the age of fifty-seven, leaving his property to the Emperor, and asked to be buried beside Mæcenas, who had died a few months previously. His wish was granted.

What the period of Augustus did not contribute to art and philosophy was compensated for by the contribution to history made by Titus Livius (Livy). He was another Celt, like Virgil, born at Padua. He, too, according to the wishes of his family, should have become a lawyer, but being disgusted by the contemporary city, he preferred to make a study of Ancient Rome. Unfortunately, he has left us nothing in writing of his own personal affairs. He was too busy composing a hundred and forty-two books, starting *ab urbe condita*, from the foundation of the city, and continuing with the Horatii and the Scipios. Only about forty of these have been handed down to us. It was an enormous work, carried out with scrupulous care and attention to detail. No wonder that when he got as far as the Punic Wars he had had enough and wanted to stop. It was Augustus who encouraged him to go on.

This is rather surprising, considering that the works of Livy are one long hymn of praise for the great Republican, Conservative aristocracy and, as such, opposed to Cæsar and Cæsarism. But they were also a pæan to the ancient austere customs and to the Roman "character." This was what the Emperor liked. We make our own reservations as to the accuracy of Livy's accounts, especially when he has his personages make lengthy speeches, which sound more like himself than them. His is a story of heroes, an enormous tapestry of episodes and, rather than informing the reader, it carries him away. If one is to believe him, Rome, like Italy in Mussolini's time, was only inhabited by warriors and seafarers of absolute rectitude. They merely conquered the world to improve its morals and make it a better place. According to him, men are divided into

the good and the bad. In Rome there were only the good and outside only the bad. From his point of view, even a great general like Hannibal becomes a common rascal.

All this does not alter the fact that Livy's history, which took up an entire fifty years of its author's life, remains a great literary monument, perhaps the greatest achieved under the auspices of Augustus.

31

TIBERIUS AND CALIGULA

THE ONE thing that can certainly be said about Tiberius is that he was born under an unlucky star. When his mother brought him as a boy into the home of Augustus, the Emperor only had eyes for his brother Drusus. Drusus was as attractive, lively, arrogant and impulsive as Tiberius was timid, reserved, thoughtful and sensitive. He might well have become jealous and resentful. Instead, he looked up to Drusus with affection and risked his life in an effort to save him when he was injured in Germany. He even escorted his brother's bier from the Elbe to Rome on horseback and it took him years to get over his grief.

He had studied much and, as soon as he was given an army, he won numerous victories over warlike and crafty enemies like the Illyrians and the Pannonians. When they gave him provinces to administer, he organised them with efficiency and honesty. At the age of twenty they already called him "the little old man" because of his gravity. He devoted his few leisure hours to keeping up his excellent Greek and studying astrology. This gained him a reputation as a heretic. He never moved in society or went to the Circus. Possibly the first woman to engage his affection was his wife Vipsania, the daughter of

Agrippa, a lady of great virtue and of domestic habits similar to his own.

Had he been allowed to stay married to her perhaps his character would have remained such as it had been in his youth, that of a simple, serene Stoic, generous with his friends and more exacting with himself than with others. The fact that his soldiers adored him proves this. In Rome he was hated for being the personification of a virtue which was a reproach to all. Augustus, however, made him divorce his wife in order to marry his own daughter, Julia, delightful and wayward but eminently unsuitable as a companion to one of his nature. Why did Tiberius give way? It was true that the inheritance was at stake but he had never seemed to attach much importance to it. He had been an industrious subordinate of his stepfather but had never tried to curry favour with him, preferring to be esteemed rather than loved. Certainly Livia must have been instrumental in procuring his compliance. She may have been an exemplary wife to Augustus but she was a bad mother for Tiberius, out for his advancement even if it cost him his happiness.

Tiberius bore his matrimonial misfortune with dignity. It was said that he refused to denounce Julia for adultery (as was his duty and legal right) to avoid annoying Augustus, but in fact he withdrew from public life and retired as a private citizen to Rhodes, where perhaps he spent his most peaceful period. The Emperor then banished Julia. Her two sons, Gaius and Lucius, being dead, he sent for Tiberius again. Here we can once more discern the hand of Livia, for Tiberius returned to duty at his stepfather's side. When Tiberius finally succeeded him he was already fifty-five. His first step was to appear before the Senate and ask it to relieve him of his responsibilities and to restore the Republic. The Senate thought that he was simply adopting a pose (as perhaps he was) and, although it detested him, begged him to remain. When it asked his permission to name a month after him, as it had done for Augustus, Tiberius replied: "What, pray, will you do from the thirteenth heir onwards?"

Adopting this sardonic attitude towards every kind of adulation, the chaste and taciturn Tiberius set about the job of governing with much equity and shrewdness. On his death he left the State much richer and more prosperous than it had been when he had taken it over. Unluckily, he became the victim of the pens of Tacitus and Suetonius, who made him the scapegoat for all the evils of the period.

The most serious charge against him is that of adopting his nephew Germanicus as his son and heir and then having him murdered. Germanicus was the son of Drusus and of Antonia, a niece of Augustus. He was a handsome, intelligent, vivacious and courageous boy who was very popular in Rome. Tiberius sent him to the East as governor to gain experience. It was, however, insinuated that he had exiled him because he was jealous of him. As he died out there, people said that Piso, on the orders of Tiberius, had murdered him. Piso committed suicide to avoid trial. Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, was among the most implacable of Tiberius's accusers but Antonia, the boy's mother, stood up for him. And between a wife and a mother, the truth is more likely to lie on the side of the mother.

Another accusation made against him was that of cruelty to Livia. He certainly owed the throne to her but she could not have been very easy to get on with. She claimed the right to countersign imperial decrees and would frequently remind Tiberius that but for her he would still have been an *émigré* in Rhodes. Moreover, she considered herself mistress of the household and when he went out refused to let him have the keys. Finally, Tiberius went to live by himself in a modest and gloomy apartment where there was nobody to nag him. Even so, he still had to put up with Agrippina who had another claim on him: the life of Germanicus. This Agrippina, apart from being his niece (having married the son of his brother Drusus), was also his stepdaughter. She was the child of Julia's marriage to Agrippa and, when Julia married Tiberius, Agrippina came with her. She was a greedy and querulous woman with all the

vices and none of the good qualities of her mother, who had been charming, witty and generous. She had had a son by Germanicus, a certain Nero, who now, according to her, should be designated heir in the place of his dead father. Tiberius endured her carping with patient resignation. "Do you really feel so wronged because you are not Empress?" he used to ask. Tiberius also had a son, Drusus, by his beloved and virtuous Vipsania, but he was a vicious wastrel and Tiberius had disinherited him. He actually was looking for an heir, but was uncertain whether Nero was the right choice.

A series of plots were hatched against him, of which evidence was brought to him by Sejanus, the commander of the Prætorian Guard of the Palace. How genuine this was is uncertain, but gradually Sejanus became the only man Tiberius trusted. As a result he allowed him to bring the strength of the Guard up to nine cohorts, little realising what a terrible precedent he was setting. Thereupon he retired to Capri.

One can hardly say that he ceased to rule while he was there, but he transmitted all his orders through Sejanus. The latter altered them to suit himself and thus became the real master of the City. Finally, he unearthed still another conspiracy involving Poppeius Sabinus, Agrippina and Nero, and received authority to punish them. The first was executed, the second banished to Pantelleria and the third committed suicide. By now Drusus was dead, as was the "Mother of the Fatherland," the name given to Livia in derision.

One day his sister-in-law Antonia, the mother of Germanicus, at the risk of her life sent Tiberius a secret note warning him that Sejanus was now plotting to assassinate him and take his place. Tiberius, in spite of his age, rushed to Rome, arrested the traitor and handed him over to the Senate for trial. As the Senate had lived for years in terror of this satrap, not only Sejanus but all his friends and relations were executed. His adolescent daughter was duly deflowered before the trial because the execution of virgins was prohibited by law. His wife committed suicide but not before she had written a letter

to Tiberius denouncing Lavilla, the daughter of Antonia, as one of Sejanus's accomplices. Tiberius had her arrested and she starved herself to death in prison. Agrippina also killed herself. The Tiberius who emerged from this orgy of bloodshed and treachery was naturally no longer the man he had been. He lived another six years and it appears that his mind was deranged. In A.D. 37 he decided to leave Capri and, during his journey through Campania, he was taken ill, possibly with a heart-attack. When his courtiers saw that he was recovering, they put a pillow over his head and suffocated him.

Tiberius had kept the peace, improved the administration and enriched the Treasury but, although the Empire seemed intact, Rome, its capital, was increasingly corrupt. To arrest this decay the strong hand of a great reformer was needed. Perhaps Tiberius thought he discerned the necessary qualities in the second son of Agrippina and Germanicus, Caius. The soldiers, amongst whom he had grown up in Germany, used to call him Caligula, or "Little Boot," because of the military type of footwear he always adopted.

At first he seemed to have been a good choice. Caligula was generous to the poor, restored a semblance of democracy by giving back its powers to the Assembly and was noted as a brave and conscientious soldier. The sudden change in him can only be explained by some disease of the brain: a typical case of schizophrenia or disassociation of the personality. He began having fits of terror at night, especially during thunderstorms when he used to wander round the palace crying for help. Tall, well-built and athletic, he used to spend hours in front of the mirror making faces at himself. He was very good at this, as he had pop-eyes, while a bald patch on top made him look like a friar. At one time he had a craze for everything Egyptian and insisted on introducing Egyptian customs into Rome. He made the senators kiss his feet and duel with gladiators in the Circus, where they regularly got killed. He also made them elect his horse, Incitatus, consul, and built a marble stable and an ivory manger for it. Still aping Egypt, he took his sisters as mistresses.

One of them, in fact, Drusilla, he actually married and nominated heiress to the throne. He then repudiated her in order to marry Orestilla on the very day she was to marry Caius Piso. He stopped at his fourth wife, the rather ugly Cæsonia, who was already pregnant when he met her. To her for some reason he was devoted and faithful.

Perhaps, owing to their hatred of the monarchy, Dion Cassius and Suetonius may have exaggerated somewhat, but Caligula must certainly have been a criminal lunatic. One morning he woke up in a rage with bald men. All those he could find he ordered to be fed to the wild beasts of the Circus. These, owing to a famine, were ravenous. Then came the turn of philosophers and he sentenced them all to death or deportation. Only his uncle Claudius, because he was considered mentally deficient, and the young Seneca, because he pretended to be seriously ill, were spared. Not knowing whom to persecute next he forced his grandmother, Antonia, to commit suicide because, looking at her one day, he found that she had a noble head but that it sat badly on her shoulders. Finally, he picked on Jove. He said that Jove was an inflated balloon and that he had wrongfully usurped the position of King of the Gods. He therefore had the heads removed from all his statues and replaced by his own.

All this was a pity because in his rare moments of lucidity he was friendly and witty with a turn for repartee. To a Gaulish cobbler who called him a mountebank to his face, he replied: "True, but do you think my subjects are any better?" In fact, if they had been they would have found a way of getting rid of him. Instead they applauded him and the senators were the first to kiss his feet.

It took the prætorian Cassius Chæreas to rid Rome of this pest. Caligula, as a matter of routine, took delight in heaping obscene insults on him but this Cassius was touchy. One evening, as he was escorting the Emperor along the corridor of the theatre, he knifed him. The City could hardly believe its ears. They suspected that it was a trick of Caligula's to find out

and punish those who were pleased at his death. To convince everybody that it was true, the prætorians also killed his wife, Cæsonia, and shattered his baby daughter's skull against the wall.

This was a suitable end to the personages concerned and the sinister atmosphere of terror and madness in which they had lived. Such, by now, was Rome, the capital of an Empire where regicide was the only alternative to unbridled tyranny. Incapable of killing their own tyrants, the Romans had to resort to mercenaries.

32

CLAUDIUS AND SENECA

THE PRÆTORIANS, having killed Caligula, were masters of the situation and intended to remain so. They looked round for a successor with whom they could do as they liked. The most suitable choice seemed to be the dead man's uncle. This was fifty-year-old Claudius, who was crippled by infantile paralysis, stammered and wore a permanently dazed expression. On the night of the murder he had been found hiding behind a pillar, trembling with fear.

He was the son of Antonia and Drusus, son of Germanicus. Protected by a well-earned reputation for being a half-wit, he had escaped all the tragedies of the Claudian family. If he had been simulating, one must admit that he did it very well for, ever since he was a child, even his mother used to call him an abortion and, when she wanted to malign anyone, she used to say he was "even more of a cretin than my poor Claudius."

It is hard to say how much he put it on to keep out of trouble. In any case, he was the only surviving member of his family. He dragged his deformed little legs and spat in every-

body's face when he spoke to them. Tall and obese, his nose was red from wine-bibbing. He had survived so long by keeping out of everybody's way, studying and writing history. He also wrote his autobiography, spoke Greek, and was a student of geometry and medicine. When he appeared before the Senate to be proclaimed Emperor, he said: "I know that you consider me a poor imbecile, but I am not. I have pretended to be one. That is why I am here to-day." He then rather spoiled the effect by making a speech on methods of treating snake-bites.

Claudius started off by giving a handsome reward to the prætorians who had elected him but in return insisted that Caligula's murderers be handed over to him. He had them executed. This, he said, was to lay down the principle that "Emperors should not be murdered." Then, with a stroke of the pen, he cancelled all the decrees of his predecessor and set about reorganising the administration. In this task he displayed a common sense and equilibrium that nobody had suspected in him. Convinced that none of the senators were any good, he formed a cabinet of technicians recruited from among the freedman and, together with these, began studying and carrying out great public works. He used to enjoy making calculations and designs in person. Much of this time was taken up by the draining of Lake Fucinus, where he employed thirty thousand workers for eleven years digging a tunnel to drain off the water. When all was ready, as a final spectacle before the lake was dried up, he offered the Romans a naval battle between two fleets of twenty thousand condemned criminals. These saluted him with the famous cry: "Hail, Cæsar! Those who are about to die salute thee!" They then sank one another and drowned. The public, thronging the surrounding hillsides, roared with delight.

Everybody also laughed when in A.D. 43 this hard-drinking Emperor with the half-baked, amiable expression set out at the head of his army to conquer Britain. He had never done any soldiering (he would certainly never have passed a medical

examination) and Rome was convinced that he would run away at the first brush with the enemy. When the word went round that he was dead, grief was genuine and general. The Romans were sincere in their liking for this Emperor of theirs, who, with all his extravagances, had proved to be the best or, at least, the most human of them all, since Augustus.

Actually Claudius was far from dead and had really conquered Britain. He now returned, bringing with him its king, Caractacus, who was the first of the kings conquered by Rome ever to be pardoned. Naturally, the credit for this victory should go to the generals rather than to Claudius. Nevertheless, it was Claudius who appointed the generals and he knew how to choose them. Vespasian was one who learned his trade under him.

Unfortunately, this worthy man was an incorrigible philanderer. He had already had (and been unfaithful to) three wives when, at the age of almost fifty, he married the fourth. This was the sixteen-year-old Messalina. Messalina has gone down in history as the most infamous of all queens. Perhaps this is not true. She may simply have been the most licentious. As she was not particularly good-looking, whenever a young man did not want her she used to get Claudius to give him the necessary orders. Dalliance thus became a patriotic duty. Claudius's sole condition was that Messalina would allow him similar freedom. On the whole, they were a well-matched couple, but a difficulty arose when Claudius decided to restore Roman morals to their primitive austerity. A wife like Messalina hardly set the best of examples. One day, during his absence, she even married Silius, who was her lover at the time. His ministers informed the Emperor, telling him that Silius was aiming to replace him on the throne. Claudius returned, had Silius killed and sent a couple of Prætorian Guards to arrest Messalina, who was hiding in her mother's house. Fearing her vengeance, these guards stabbed her to death in her mother's arms. Claudius ordered them to kill him,

too, if he ever gave any indication of wanting to get married again.

He did so the following year. His fifth wife was virtuous and made him regret her shameless predecessor. Agrippina, daughter of Agrippina and Germanicus, was his niece. She had already been married twice and from her first husband she had had a son, Nero, whose career was her main interest in life. She was another Livia, only worse. At the age of thirty she had little difficulty in establishing her ascendancy over a failing husband. She kept him away from his advisers, put her friend Burrus in command of the Prætorian Guard and started a new reign of terror. Death warrants bearing Claudius's signature turned out after his death to be forged. The poor man, though in his dotage, at a certain moment seemed to realise what was going on. He resolved to do something about it, but Agrippina intervened by serving him a dish of poisoned mushrooms. Nero, who was not devoid of a low sense of humour, later said that mushrooms must be a food of the gods, seeing that they had managed to make a god out of a poor creature like Claudius.

Nero in Sabine dialect means strong and for the first five years of his reign the son of Agrippina gave promise of a wise and magnanimous strength. For this, however, thanks were due less to him than to Seneca, who governed in his name.

Seneca was a Spaniard from Cordova, a philosopher who had inherited a large fortune. He had already achieved notoriety before Agrippina engaged him as her son's tutor. Caligula had sentenced him to death for impertinence but had then pardoned him because he suffered badly from asthma. Claudius had exiled him to Corsica because of an affair with his aunt Julia, a daughter of Germanicus. Seneca remained there for eight years, writing excellent essays and less excellent tragedies. We do not know who suggested him to Agrippina as the most suitable man to bring Nero up according to the principles of Stoicism, a philosophy of which Seneca was a distinguished exponent. In any event, in the course of a

few days the exile became tutor to the future master of the Empire.

He was a strange character. He took unscrupulous advantage of his position to increase his private fortune but did not use it to improve his style of living. He ate sparingly, drank only water and slept on a bed of planks. He was faithful to his wife from the day he married her. When accused of being too fond of money and power, he used to reply: "I do not praise the life I lead. I praise the life I ought to lead, the life of which I so falteringly try to follow the pattern." At the height of his career he was publicly accused by a pamphleteer of embezzling three hundred million "sesterces" of State funds, of making a profit on them by usury and of getting rid of his rivals and enemies by denouncing them to justice. Seneca, who at the time could have had suppressed anybody he wanted to, made no attempt to suppress his accuser. However, according to Dion Cassius, he continued to practise usury.

When his pupil came to the throne, Seneca provided him with a noble speech to read in the Senate. In this the new Emperor undertook only to exercise the powers of Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Probably nobody believed it, but for five years the promise was kept. During this time all other powers were in the hands of Agrippina and Seneca. Things went quite smoothly as long as these two agreed. Nero, with their guidance, made some wise decisions. He rejected the proposal of the Senate to erect gold statues to him. He refused to sign death warrants and when, as a rare exception, he had to sign one, he waved the pen and exclaimed: "Would that I had never learned to write!" He really gave the impression of being a decent youth whose main interests were music and poetry. Nobody imagined that these harmless diversions might one day become dangerous.

In the end Agrippina went too far; that is, she wanted to manage things on her own. Seneca and Burrus were alarmed and, to neutralise Agrippina, urged Nero to use his authority. Agrippina, in a fury, threatened to undo all the good work by

putting Britannicus, the son of Claudius, on the throne. Nero forestalled her by doing away with Britannicus, and confining his mother to a villa. During her period of restraint she did a disservice to history by writing a book of Memoirs about Tiberius, Claudius and Nero. Suetonius and Tacitus helped themselves liberally to material from this book, and as it was dictated by vengeance, serious doubts are permissible of its accuracy.

For as long as Nero accepted the precepts of Seneca Rome and the Empire remained peaceful, the frontiers secure, trade flourished and industry progressed. Unfortunately the time came when the pupil, still barely twenty, began to listen to a new preceptor, one who offered greater encouragement to his artistic tendencies. This was Caius Petronius, the arbiter of Roman elegance and prototype of the dandy.

It is hard to recognise in this rich aristocrat, whom Tacitus describes as being of refined and delicately voluptuous tastes and of ironic and exquisite conversation, the Caius Petronius who was the author of the *Satyricon*. This is a book, vulgar to the point of obscenity, in which the characters are banal and the situations trite. If they are one and the same person, it means that there is not a world but a whole universe of difference between the author's actual life and the way he wrote about it. Whatever the truth of the matter, Nero was fascinated by Petronius. He had met him in society and considered him the model of refinement and culture, irresistible to men and women, an unerring connoisseur of the arts. Nevertheless, he was more influenced by the indifferent poet and his literary doctrines. Nero now chose the characters from the *Satyricon* as his companions and with them indulged in orgies in all the unsavoury quarters of Rome.

For the moment the austere Seneca had no objections. In fact, it is quite possible that he encouraged his pupil in these pursuits in order to keep his mind off problems of State which he preferred to solve alone or with Burrus. Thus for a number of years the Empire continued to prosper under an increasingly

debauched Emperor. Trajan later described the first five years of Nero's reign as "Rome's greatest period." The young sovereign was, however, fated to get mixed up with Poppæa, an Agrippina in the full flower of her beauty. She was determined to become Empress and, in order to do so, made Nero act as Emperor. Nero was twenty-one when he met her, and already had a respectable wife, Octavia, who put up with her husband's infidelities with great dignity. He also had a mistress, Acte, who was another respectable woman and in love with him. Nero betrayed them both with the licentious, sensual and calculating Poppæa. This moment marks the turning point in his life and the beginning of the tribulations of Rome.

33

NERO

FATE HAD always been unkind to Agrippina and the closing episodes of her life are worthy of an ancient Roman matron. She had no hesitation in giving a downright refusal to her son, Nero, when he came to ask her consent to his divorce from Octavia.

Although he had confined her to a villa, Nero was still frightened of her. He was, however, just as frightened of Poppæa, who refused herself to him and scorned him for his fear of his mother. In the end Poppæa was able to convince him that Agrippina was plotting against him. Not daring to have her executed, he twice tried to have her assassinated; first by poison and then by having her thrown into the river. Agrippina was prepared for this. Perhaps she was kept informed of what was going on in the palace by some faithful servant. The first time she saved her life by taking an antidote, the second time she swam. Nero's guards had to do likewise and follow her over to the other bank. One cannot help wondering

what were the feelings and thoughts of this woman when she found herself pursued by the hirelings of the son for whom she had sacrificed a lifetime. When the killers came up with her, she showed no emotion. She simply said: "Strike here," and pointed to the womb that had given birth to Nero. When the naked corpse of his mother was brought to him, Nero merely remarked: "Funny, I never realised that I had such a good-looking mother."

As in the case of Caligula, there is no other supposition than madness to explain him. Perhaps the blood of the Claudian family was tainted by syphilis, a hereditary disease which affects the brain and appears to have been very prevalent in Rome.

History assures us that Seneca was not involved in this abominable crime. However, since he continued to collaborate with the Emperor, he must have condoned it. Perhaps he hoped to keep Nero back from the brink of the precipice. If he did cherish this hope, he was soon deluded. When he tried to persuade Nero that competing in the Circus and singing tenor in the theatre was conduct unbecoming in an emperor, Nero took no notice. Further, to show how little consideration he now had for his tutor, he ordered the senators to compete with him in these athletic and musical contests. He said that they were in the Greek tradition and that the Greek tradition was superior to that of Rome. On the whole, the senators probably deserved this treatment, but some of them still retained a spark of dignity. Thrascas Pætus and Elvidius Priscus criticised the Emperor openly and his spies accused them of conspiracy. After the murder of his mother Nero had shown a certain amount of clemency but now he indulged in an orgy of bloodshed. As the Treasury (left to him by Claudius in a flourishing condition) had been drained by his extravagance, Nero compelled his victims to leave him their substance. Seneca criticised these measures, but the real reason why he lost his place was because he also criticised his master's poetry. It may have been with a sigh of relief that he retired to his villa in Campania. Here as a writer he tried to make up for his failure

as a preceptor. Burrus had died some months previously and been succeeded by the villainous Tigellinus.

With nobody to keep him in check Nero ran completely wild. Physically, he has been described at twenty-five as having yellow hair worn in plaits, bleary eyes and a bulging paunch over short, rickety legs. Poppæa, now his wife, could twist him round her little finger. Not content with making him divorce Octavia, she forced him to banish her. Since the Romans disapproved of this and adorned her statues with flowers, she persuaded him to have her murdered. Octavia did not die well. She was terror-stricken and begged for mercy. She was barely twenty and should have been the faithful consort of a good husband, not the heroine of a tragedy.

Nero felt no remorse, because, in the meanwhile he had had himself deified. Gods are exempt from examinations of conscience. His pet project now was to build a brand-new golden palace to serve as a temple to himself. He designed it of such colossal dimensions that, in the crowded centre of Rome, he could not find a suitable building site. For some time he had been grumbling that the City had been badly built and that it ought to be entirely rebuilt according to a rational layout. In A.D. 64 the famous fire broke out.

Had he really set fire to the City himself? Perhaps not. He was at Anzio at the time and, returning post-haste, displayed unsuspected energy in rescue operations. The fact that public opinion promptly accused him shows that, even if he did not start the fire, people considered him quite capable of such an act. This time, strangely enough, he did not react to the accusations against him. He did not even prosecute the authors of the pamphlets and lampoons holding him up to public execration. Anticipating other heads of totalitarian states, he took the view that, before repairing the damage, one should find somebody to make responsible. Thus (Tacitus says) he picked a religious sect which had recently established itself in Rome. This sect took its name from a certain Christ, a Jew, who in the

days of Tiberius had been sentenced to death in Palestine by Pontius Pilate.

Nero knew nothing else about them when he arrested all those he could lay hands on and, after a summary trial, put them to the torture. Some were thrown to the wild beasts, others crucified, others smeared with resin to serve as torches. The Romans had not taken very much notice of these people before, but after this mass martyrdom they began to regard them with a certain curiosity. At last the Emperor was able to build the capital exactly as he wanted it. In this task, which took up all his time, Nero showed great ability but, while the new Rome was rising, much finer than the old, Poppæa died of an abortion. Malicious tongues immediately said that during a quarrel her husband had kicked her in the stomach. This may have been so. In any case, it was a blow to Nero, who simultaneously lost the wife he loved and the heir for whom he was hoping. Wandering grief-stricken through the streets, he happened on a youth named Sporus whose features bore a striking resemblance to those of the dead woman. Nero took him back to the palace, had him castrated and married him. "A pity his father did not do the same . . ." commented the Romans.

While the Emperor was superintending construction work on his new palace, his spies discovered a plot to put Calpurnius Piso on the throne. There were the usual arrests, the usual tortures, the usual confessions. One of these gave the names of various intellectuals, including Seneca and Lucan.

Lucan, another Spaniard from Cordova, was a distant cousin of Seneca. He had come to Rome to study law but had made the unforgivable mistake of winning a poetry prize in a contest in which Nero was also a competitor. The Emperor forbade him to write any more. Lucan disobeyed and wrote a rhetorical and mediocre poem, definitely Republican in sympathy, on the Battle of Pharsalus. He could not publish it but he read it aloud in aristocratic circles, where it had great success with those who no longer had the courage to stand up to

tyranny but hankered after freedom. Did he really take part in the plot or was his name put down by police informers knowing of Nero's dislike for this rival? Under interrogation he admitted his guilt and gave the names of other accomplices including, it appears, his mother and his cousin Seneca. Condemned to death, Lucan invited his friends to a big party and ate and drank with them. He then slit his veins and died reciting his own verses against despotism. He was only twenty-six.

Perhaps Seneca first learned that he had taken part in Piso's plot from the Emperor's messenger when the latter arrived in the Campania to inform him of his conviction. He had just written a letter to his friend Lucilius which ended with the words: "As for myself, I have lived long enough and I consider that I have had my deserts. I now await my death." When, however, death actually appeared in the guise of this envoy, he objected, saying that there was no reason to inflict the penalty. For a long time now he had taken no part in politics. He was merely looking after his health, which was liable to break down at any moment. This was the same excuse he had used to Caligula. It had enabled him to live to the age of almost seventy. The envoy returned to Rome but Nero was inexorable. So Seneca calmly embraced his wife, Paulina, dictated a farewell letter to the Romans, drank the hemlock, opened his veins and died much more stoically than he had ever lived. Paulina tried to do likewise, but the Emperor had her veins sutured. Time has blurred the contradictory nature of Seneca, the man, but has preserved his works as a writer. They reached a high standard. He was a past master of the art of essay-writing and of reconciling the principles of self-denial with doing exactly as one pleases. Such a master will never lack pupils.

Having disposed of his enemies, Nero left for a tour of Greece. Here, he said, they understood Art better than in Rome. He competed in a horse race at the Olympic Games, fell off and came in last. The Greeks proclaimed him victor just the same. Nero showed his appreciation of this by

exempting them from tribute to Rome. The Greeks, quick to see how the land lay, let him win all the other contests and organised a vociferous claque in the theatre whenever the Emperor sang. It was strictly forbidden to leave during the performance and some women even had babies there. In return, the Greeks were granted full citizenship.

On his return to Rome Nero decreed himself a triumph and, unable to display any enemy trophies, displayed those he had won as a charioteer and tenor. When he claimed the admiration of his subjects he was in good faith. He thought they really felt it for him. He was, therefore, more astonished than worried when he heard that Julius Vindex had called Gaul to arms against him. Mobilising an army against the rebel, the first thing he did was to order a large number of specially built wagons to carry stage scenery. Between battles he intended to act, play music and sing so that he could be applauded by the troops. While these preparations were going ahead, the news arrived that Galba, the Governor of Spain, had joined Vindex and that the two of them together were marching on Rome.

For a long time the Senate had been waiting for such a chance. Having made certain of the benevolent neutrality of the Prætorian Guard, they proclaimed the rebel proconsul, Emperor. Nero suddenly found himself alone. When he asked an officer of the Guard to accompany him in flight, he received, in reply, a line from Virgil: "Is it, then, so hard to die?"

For him it was very hard. He procured some poison but shrank from swallowing it. He thought of plunging into the Tiber, but could not screw up enough courage. Finally, he hid in the villa of a friend on the Via Salaria, some six miles from the city. Here he heard that he had been condemned to death "in the ancient manner," namely, by flogging. Appalled, he seized a dagger to stab himself but first he tried the point and found that "it hurt." When he heard the sound of hooves outside the door he decided to cut his throat. His hand shook so much that his secretary, Epaphroditus, had to guide it to the carotid artery. "Oh, what an artist dies with me!" he mur-

mured with his last breath. Galba's guards respected his corpse, which was reverently buried by his old nurse and his first mistress, Acte. Strangely enough, for a long time afterwards his grave was covered with freshly gathered flowers. Many people in Rome did not believe that he was dead and thought that he would be coming back. Ideas like these, as a rule, originate from regret or hope.

Could it be that, on the whole, Nero was not so black as he has been painted?

34

POMPEII

POMPEII was destroyed by an eruption and earthquake on the 24th of August in A.D. 79. This calamity earned the city posthumous fame. It had just over fifteen thousand inhabitants, who lived mainly by agriculture, and no great event had ever been connected with its name. On the fatal day Vesuvius was hidden beneath a murky black cloud. From this a torrent of lava surged down and, in the course of a few hours, Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried. Pliny the Elder, who commanded the fleet lying at anchor at Pozzuoli, was, amongst other things, a keen geologist. He sailed his ships there at full speed. Either he wanted to see what was going on or else he intended to evacuate the inhabitants, who were fleeing desperately towards the sea. Blinded by fumes and trampled on in the panic, Pliny was overtaken and buried by the lava. About two thousand people lost their lives in this disaster but, under its shroud of lava, the city was preserved intact. When some two centuries ago archæologists began excavating it what they gradually revealed gives us a very clear picture, not only of the architecture, but also of the way of living of a small provincial town in the Golden Age of the Empire.

The centre of the town was the Forum. This originally must have been the market for cauliflowers, a vegetable for which the district was famous. Later it developed into an open-air theatre, used both for dramatic performances and games. It was surrounded by public buildings. There were the temples of Jove, Apollo and Venus, the town hall and shops. The life of the town obviously centred on the Forum. Behind this lay a maze of narrow alleys, the commercial quarter. It was full of little shops and artisans' workrooms and echoed to the sound of hammers and axes, saws, planes and files. To this uproar was added the shrill shouts of women and children, cats, dogs and street hawkers, still so characteristic of this beautiful but far from silent country. The most persistent traits of a people are their vices. Pompeii gives us some idea of the age of the Italian vice of defacing walls and using them as propaganda vehicles for opinions, loves and hates. Whereas to-day we use posters, chalk or charcoal, our ancestors resorted to "graffiti," or carving on the stone. The method, not the subject matter, is the only thing that varies. It is clear that the Italians have always thought, said and yelled the same things. Titus promised to love Cornelia for ever and a day, Caius invited Sempronius to go and jump in a lake and Julius guaranteed peace and prosperity to everybody if they elected him quæstor. Numerous were the "Vivas" in honour of Majus, an ædile who, at his own expense, had signed up the gladiator Paris to perform in the local amphitheatre. This could seat twenty thousand spectators, five thousand more than the total population of the city. The extra seats were evidently for the use of people from the surrounding countryside.

Houses were comfortable, even luxurious. They had very few windows and only rarely were they centrally heated. Ceilings were of cement, sometimes decorated with mosaics, and floors were of stone. Only the larger mansions had a bathroom and some even had a swimming-pool. There were, however, three public baths, each complete with its gymnasium. Kitchens were well equipped with every kind of utensil: frying-

pans, pots and spits. In one private library two thousand volumes in Latin and Greek were found. Little is known of the furniture because, being made almost entirely of wood, it has crumbled away. However, bronze ink pots, pens, lamps and statues, all in the Greek style, have survived. These are of good quality and refined workmanship.

All this conveys the impression that life in the provincial cities during the prosperous centuries of the Empire must have been comfortable and well organised. Of course none of them could compete with Rome as far as public amenities, variety, social gatherings and entertainments were concerned. On the other hand, their citizens were safe from persecutions or at least suffered from them to a lesser degree. The vices of decadence took longer to reach them and, even then, were tempered by the greater solidity of the sound provincial traditions. It was with good reason that Cæsar and, later, Vespasian tried to fill the gaps in the Roman aristocracy and Senate by admitting the bourgeois provincial families to them. After the fall of Rome one of the reasons why Roman civilisation survived and absorbed the barbarians was that wherever in the peninsula they set foot they found cities with a superior organisation.

Unlike to-day, those in the south were superior to those in the north. This was because, before experiencing Roman civilisation, they had already experienced that of the Greeks. Naples was the most famous of them on account of its temples, its sculpture, its blue sea and sky, the subtle craftiness of its citizens and (as to-day) their indolence. People came from Rome to winter there. The surroundings, Sorrento, Pozzuoli and Cumæ, were dotted with villas. Capri had long been discovered and Tiberius made it fashionable by choosing it as his usual residence. Pozzuoli, owing to its sulphurous waters, was the most famous spa of antiquity.

Another region which abounded in cities with a past was Tuscany. These had been built by the Etruscans. The most important were Chiusi, Arezzo, Volterra, Tarquinia and Perugia, then considered part of that region. Florentia,

Florence, had only just come into being. She was the humblest of these cities and had no idea of what the future held for her.

Farther north, beyond the Apennines, began the fortress cities, built as military strongholds for the armies engaged in the struggle against the warlike Gaulish peoples. These were Mantua, Cremona, Ferrara and Piacenza. Still farther north was the big commercial city of Como, which considered Mediolanum (Milan) as a sort of poor relation. Turin had been founded by the Taurine Gauls, but only began to be a real city when Augustus made it into a Roman colony. Venice had not yet been founded, but the Venetians had already arrived from Illyria and had founded Verona. Herodotus tells us that the chiefs of their tribes used to pool the girls, sell the prettiest by auction and, with the proceeds, provide a dowry for the plain ones. They were thus able to find husbands for all.

This is not a complete catalogue, only a few examples. Roughly speaking, one may say that Italy has been well provided with cities ever since those days. Almost all those existing to-day sprang up at about this time.

In these cities democratic liberties lasted longer than in Rome itself, in spite of the fact that their government was of a very paternalistic type. It consisted of the Curia, a sort of miniature Senate, which, as in Rome, exercised control over magistrates freely elected by the citizens. The choice of candidates was, however, strictly limited to the rich, as, apart from being unpaid, they were expected to make up deficits in the municipal budget out of their own pockets.

The election of a candidate was celebrated with a gigantic banquet to which all were invited. On the occasion of his birthday, or the marriage of his daughter, etc., he had to give another one. Furthermore, success in an appointment, the possibility of standing for it again, or of aiming even higher, depended on the public works and entertainments which the dignitary had paid for with his own money. Inscriptions on stones have been found in many localities testifying to the prodigality (and the vanity) of these administrators, who often

ruined their families to gain the esteem and votes of their fellow-citizens. At Tarquinia, Desumius Tullius, in order to defeat his rival, promised to build public baths and spent five million "sestertii" on them, ignoring the protests of his children. At Cassino a rich widow donated a temple and an amphitheatre. At Ostia, Lucilius Gemala paved the streets. Whenever there was a shortage, all of them used to buy wheat and distribute it free to the poor, who were not always grateful. At Pompeii there are "graffiti" which accuse officials of only having given the people half of what they had salted away by misappropriations when in office.

Until the time of Marcus Aurelius, interference by the central government in the municipal affairs of the provincial towns was rare and almost always such as to encourage rather than hinder their development. The Emperors, almost all of whom were rapacious in the administration of foreign provinces, had a perhaps not altogether disinterested weakness, for Italy. It was here that they recruited their soldiers and supporters. The Republic had always treated the peninsula badly. It had had to conquer and subdue it, and had often been betrayed by it. To the Crown, however, it was by now the hinterland of Rome. The Emperors often used to visit its cities and every visit meant gifts, subsidies and tax exemptions in return for the enthusiastic welcomes which they regularly received. Each sovereign tried to outdo his predecessor in munificence. The Empire was manna from heaven for the Italian provinces. They enjoyed only its benefits—law and order, well-kept roads, brisk trade and a sound currency. They did not have to endure palace plots, police persecution, trials and purges.

35

JESUS

AMONG the Christians massacred by Nero in A.D. 64 for complicity in the burning of Rome was Peter, their leader. After seeing his wife taken away to be tortured Peter was condemned to be crucified. At his request he was crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy of dying in the same position as his Master, Jesus Christ. The sentence was carried out in the very place where the great church bearing his name now stands.

Peter was a Jew from Judæa, one of the provinces most harassed by Imperial misrule. Two and a half centuries previously, by miracles of courage and diplomacy, it had successfully shaken off the Persian yoke and, for about seventy years, had regained its independence under the guidance of its priest-kings, from Simon Maccabæus onwards. Their Court was the Temple of Jerusalem and it was in this city that the Jews stood their ground to beat off the invasion of Pompey, who intended to annex their territory to Rome. They fought with the courage of despair, but would not give up the Sabbath respite which their religion imposed. Pompey noticed this and chose the Sabbath to attack. Twelve thousand people were slaughtered. The Temple was not sacked, but Judæa became a Roman province. A few years later it rebelled and paid for the attempt with the liberty of thirty thousand of its citizens, who were sold as slaves. Later it regained a glimmering of independence under a foreign king, Herod, who tried to introduce Greek civilisation and pagan architecture. Herod was, in his way, a great king, intelligent, ruthless and picturesque. He was clever enough to remain a protégé of Rome without becoming her slave. He presented his subjects with an even more beautiful Temple but it was decorated with those

images which the austere Hebrew faith categorically rejects as sinful and contrary to the Law.

Under his successor, Archelaus, the Jews rebelled again. The Romans once more sacked Jerusalem, sold another thirty thousand citizens as slaves, and Augustus, to settle matters once and for all, made Judæa a second-class province under the governorship of Syria. Shortly before this new arrangement came into force, a minor event took place in the country, which at the time attracted no attention but which, later, was to have a considerable effect on the destiny of all humanity. At Bethlehem, near Nazareth, Jesus Christ was born.

For a couple of centuries the authenticity of this even was put in doubt by a "school of critics" who tried to deny the existence of Jesus. Now all doubts have been removed or, rather, only one remains, of secondary importance: that of the exact date of His birth. Matthew and Luke, for example, say that it was during the reign of Herod who, according to our system of reckoning, died three years before Christ was born. Some say that it was in April, others in May. The 25th December, 753 *ab urbe condita*, was arbitrarily established three hundred and fifty-four years after the event and became official.

History is of little use in helping us to reconstruct the childhood of Jesus. It merely provides contradictory testimony, vague dates, doubtful episodes. It contains little to contradict the version given so poetically by the Gospels: the Annunciation to Mary, Virgin Wife of Joseph the Carpenter, the Birth in the Stable, the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Three Wise Men, the Slaughter of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt. History only helps to give us some idea of the condition of the country at the time Jesus was born and of the inspiration He found there. These are the only elements on which one can rely.

Judæa, or Palestine, was a ferment of religious and patriotic feeling. Its inhabitants numbered about two and a half millions, of whom a hundred thousand were concentrated in

JESUS

Jerusalem. There was no unity of race and creed. In some cities, in fact, the majority were Gentiles, or non-Jews, mostly Greeks and Syrians. The country districts, on the other hand, were solidly Hebrew. The poor peasants and little artisans who inhabited them were thrifty and industrious, pious and austere. They spent their lives in work, prayer and fasting and were awaiting the coming of the emissary of Jehovah, their God. He, according to the Sacred Scriptures (which were also the Law), was to save his people and establish the Kingdom of Heaven. They traded very little. Indeed, it appears that they were entirely devoid of that genius for speculation for which they later became so famous (and feared).

The limited amount of home rule granted them by Rome was administered by the Sanhedrin, or Council of Elders. This consisted of seventy-one members presided over by a High Priest and was divided into two classes: the Conservative and Nationalist Sadducees, who were more interested in earthly matters than heavenly ones, and the bigoted Pharisees, theologians who passed the time interpreting the sacred texts. There was also a third, extremist sect, that of the Essenes, who practised a form of Communism. They pooled the profits from their labours, used implements made with their own hands and ate in silence at a common table. They ate so little that they commonly lived for over a hundred years. On the Sabbath they did not even open their bowels, as they considered it contrary to the Law. The Scribes, to whom Jesus so often refers, were not a sect but a professional class mainly composed of Pharisees. They would roughly correspond to our notaries and clerks of the court. One of their duties was to consult the Sacred Scriptures from which they drew the precepts according to which society was to be regulated.

Not only all politics, but all Hebrew literature and philosophy had a profoundly religious basis (as it still does to-day). The keynote was expectation of the Redeemer, who would one day come to deliver his people from Evil, of which Rome was considered the incarnation. Most of the Jews were convinced

that the Messiah of this Redemption would be a Son of Man and a descendant of the House of David, as Isaiah had prophesied. Had not David, the legendary King of the Jews, driven out Evil and replaced it by Good: love, peace and prosperity?

This hope now began to be shared by other pagan peoples subject to Rome. These peoples had lost their faith in their destinies as nations and therefore translated it on to the spiritual plane. However, in no other country was the expectation so eager and breathless as in Palestine. Signs and portents indicated that the great Appearance was imminent and some people even passed their days in the open space in front of the Temple praying and fasting. Everybody felt that the Messiah could not delay his coming much longer.

Even so, Jesus had some difficulty in getting Himself recognised as the expected Son of Man. It appears that He Himself only realised His divine nature after listening to the sermons of John the Baptist, a distant relation of his, since he was the son of a cousin of Mary. As John was his forerunner, we usually imagine him as being much older than Jesus. Actually, it seems that they were almost the same age. He lived on the banks of the Jordan, clad only in his own long hair, and ate nothing but herbs, locusts and wild honey. Calling on the people to purify themselves by the rite of baptism, he promised them the Advent of the Messiah as a reward for their sincere repentance.

Jesus came to visit John "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius," that is when He must have been about twenty-eight or nine. Jesus substantially accepted John's teachings and made them His own, but refrained, personally, from baptizing others. He then began to spread these teachings among the people. Shortly afterwards, John was arrested by the guards of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Jerusalem. Luke and Matthew tell us that John was arrested because he had criticised the marriage of Herod to Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Salome, the daughter of Philip, so pleased the Tetrarch

by her dancing that he offered to give her anything she asked for. At the suggestion of her mother, she asked for John's head and her wish was granted.

It was after this occurrence that the mission of Jesus entered its decisive stage. He began to preach in the synagogues and, judging by the consensus of testimony which remains to us, there must have been something supernatural about Him which immediately attracted the multitudes. Every now and then He would accompany His preaching with miracles, but He performed them with reluctance. He forbade His followers to exploit them for purposes of publicity and refused to consider them "proofs" of His omnipotence.

Jesus had gathered a group of close collaborators around Him, the Twelve Apostles. The first was Andrew, a fisherman who had been a follower of John. He brought with him Peter, another fisherman, impulsive, generous and, at times, timid to the point of cowardice. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also fishermen. Matthew, on the other hand, was a publican (to-day we would call him a civil servant), that is, a functionary of the hated Roman government. Judas Iscariot administered the common purse of the Apostles.

After the Apostles came seventy-two disciples, who preceded Jesus barefoot to the cities He intended to visit in order to prepare the people for His teachings. Then came a whole throng of His faithful followers, men and women, who lived together in brotherly love, according to the rule of the Essenes.

The Sanhedrin did not, at first, worry very much about Jesus for two reasons. Firstly, because His followers were still few in number and, secondly, because the ideas which He preached were not, on the whole, incompatible with the Law and its dogma. The Advent of the Redeemer and of the Kingdom of Heaven was part of the Hebrew doctrine of the Messiah, as were the moral precepts which Jesus taught. "Love thy neighbour as thyself" and "Turn the other cheek . . ." and the like were already accepted in the religious code of the

Jews. "I have not come to destroy the law of Moses, but to restore it," Jesus was wont to say.

The breach with authority only came about when Jesus announced that He was the Son of Man, the Messiah for whom all had been waiting. The multitude in Jerusalem acclaimed Him as such on His return from a preaching tour in the country round about. The Sanhedrin was alarmed mainly for political reasons. They feared that Jesus might take advantage of the belief that He was the Messiah to provoke a rising against Rome, a rising which would inevitably end in another massacre.

On the evening of the 3rd of April A.D. 30, He was informed that the Sanhedrin had decided to arrest Him on information laid by one of His Apostles. Nevertheless, He dined with them at the house of a friend and, during this Last Supper, told them that one of them was about to betray Him and that He had now but a short time to spend with them. The soldiers took Him that very night in the garden of Gethsemane. When asked, in front of the Sanhedrin, if He were the Son of Man, Jesus replied: "Yes, I am." He was therefore brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and charged with blasphemy.

Pontius Pilate was an official who later finished his career somewhat ingloriously. He was removed for embezzlement and cruelty. However, from the bureaucratic point of view, in the case of Jesus he did not behave too badly. He asked Jesus whether He still maintained His claim to be King of the Jews, but did so in a jocular tone of voice, perhaps hoping that the accused would say no. Jesus, however, answered yes and explained to him the kind of Kingdom He intended to establish. Peter says that He had decided to die in order to redeem the sins of all mankind.

Pilate reluctantly pronounced the sentence which this confession implied: death by crucifixion. He was nailed to the Cross, between two robbers, at nine in the morning. During His agony He wavered for one brief moment, when He mur-

mured: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At three in the afternoon, He died.

Two influential members of the Sanhedrin asked, and obtained, from Pilate permission to bury the corpse. Two days later Mary Magdalen, one of the most ardent followers of Jesus, went to visit the tomb and found it empty. The news flew from mouth to mouth and was confirmed by the earthly appearances of Christ, in flesh and blood, to His Disciples.

Forty days after His official death He ascended to Heaven, according to the Hebrew tradition and the prophecies of Moses, Elijah and Isaiah. His followers then scattered throughout the world to announce the great news of His resurrection and imminent return.

36

THE APOSTLES

AT FIRST this missionary work was only carried on in Palestine and those neighbouring lands where there were Jewish colonies. This was because the Apostles had tacitly agreed that Jesus was the Redeemer of the Hebrew people only and not of all men. The question of the universality of Christianity only arose, and was solved, after Paul's mission to Antioch and his success among the Gentiles of that city.

Paul was for the dissemination of the new faith what Peter was for its organisation. He was a Jew from Tarsus, son of a well-to-do Pharisee (and thus of middle-class origin), and he had inherited that most precious of privileges: Roman citizenship. He had studied Greek and had been a pupil of Gamaliel, the President of the Sanhedrin. He had keen intelligence, a typically Jewish capacity for splitting hairs and an awkward character. He was imperious, impatient and often unjust. Paul's first reaction to Christ (whom he had never met) and

the Christians was one of violent antipathy. He considered them heretics. When Stephen, one of their number, was condemned for breaking the Law, he enthusiastically took part in stoning him. One day he learned that the Christians were gaining proselytes at Damascus and asked the Sanhedrin's permission to investigate their activities there. On the way he was struck by a blinding light and heard a voice say: "Paul, Paul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou?" he asked in amazement. "I am Jesus," came the answer. Paul remained blind for three days. Then he went to be baptized and soon became the most able propagandist of the new Faith.

For three years he preached in Arabia. Then he returned to Jerusalem to obtain Peter's pardon for his past record as a persecutor. Thence, with Barnabas, he went to organise the work of conversion among the Greeks of Antioch. When the Apostles learned that the two missionaries did not, when accepting Gentile converts, insist on circumcision (as Moses had prescribed), they sent for them to know the reason why. With Peter's support Paul won the battle but the dispute broke out again after his second visit to Greece. The majority of the Apostles were still faithful to the Law, frequented the Temple and did not want to break with their people and traditions. If they were to have their way, Paul felt, Christianity would become nothing but a Hebrew heresy. He sustained his theories in public sermons and was in serious danger of being lynched by the crowd. They actually wanted to put him on trial for blasphemy but he was saved by his Roman citizenship, which gave him the right of appeal to the Emperor. Ultimately they sent him by ship to Rome, where he arrived after a highly adventurous voyage.

In the City they listened to him patiently without understanding a word he was talking about. Gathering that it had nothing to do with politics, they treated him well and awaited the arrival of his accusers. They allowed him to choose his own house and merely put a sentry at the door. Paul invited the leaders of the Jewish colony to his house, but was unable to

convince them. Even the few of them who were already Christian repudiated with horror the idea that baptism was more important than circumcision. They far preferred Peter, who arrived shortly afterwards and received a much warmer welcome.

Paul succeeded in converting a few Gentiles, but he remained isolated. Animated, as he was, by implacable missionary zeal, he gave vent to his feelings by writing the famous Epistles to all his old friends in Corinth, Salonica and Ephesus. These still remain the basis of Christian theology. According to some historians he was acquitted and went on to preach in Asia and Spain, but was arrested again and brought back to Rome. It appears that this is not true. Paul was never released. In the bitterness of his solitary exile, he lost faith, little by little, in the imminent return of Christ to earth or, rather, he transferred his hopes to the next world, thus putting his seal on the true essence of the new religion.

We do not know how, when or why he was tried again. We only know that the charge was: "Disobedience to the orders of the Emperor and claiming that the real King was a certain Jesus." It is quite possible that, apart from this, there was nothing against him. The police, however, did not waste time on details and, hearing Paul call Jesus "King," when Nero was already on the throne, they arrested and condemned him. A legend runs that he died on the same day in A.D. 64 as that on which Peter was crucified and that the two, meeting on their way to execution, embraced one another as a sign of peace. This is hardly likely. Peter was in the midst of all the other Christians who were slaughtered wholesale for the fire of Rome. Paul was a citizen and, as such, had the right to a certain amount of regard. In fact, he was only beheaded. Two centuries later the Church built a basilica over the place where he is believed to have been buried, St. Paul's outside the Walls.

How many converts had Christianity made in Rome at the time of the death of the two great Apostles?

It is impossible to give exact figures, but we do not believe

that they were more than a few hundreds, at the most a thousand or so. The fact that the authorities paid little attention to them proves this. The accusation of incendiarism was not part of a policy of persecution. It was only an improvised ruse to divert suspicion from Nero. At the time the massacre seemed to have wiped out the sect once and for all. Then, like so many massacres, it proved to have been a stimulant. This was due to the organisation given to the sect by Peter.

The Christians met in "ecclesiæ"—churches or congregations. These in early times had nothing secret or conspiratorial about them. Comparisons made to-day with the Communist cellular organisation are ridiculous and unfounded. In the "ecclesiæ" they preached love, not hatred. No political propaganda was carried on and, furthermore, there was no shadow of secrecy. Whoever came in was received without suspicion or mistrust. Another of to-day's erroneous beliefs is that the Christians all came from the lower classes, "the scum of the earth," as Celsus was later to call them. Nothing could be more inexact. All classes were represented. They were mainly industrious folk, who set aside what money they had to assist the poorer Christian communities. Lucian, the unbeliever, called them: "Imbeciles who share everything they possess." Tertullian, the convert, corrected him. He called them: "People who share everything the others keep for themselves and keep for themselves the only thing the others share: their wives."

They had only one discrimination and this was forced on them by circumstances. They made a difference between town and country dwellers. For obvious reasons the first converts were from the City. Only in town were regular meetings possible, discontent more acute and minds more critical. In the country, however, traditions and customs had deeper roots and there was greater moral strength to support them. That is why the Christians began to call disbelievers "pagans," that is, villagers, from "pagus" meaning village.

The first aim of the pioneers was to set an example of clean

and decent living. One can imagine the prestige and fascination that this was bound to exert in a capital which was steadily becoming more degenerate and shameless. The Hebrew origin of the new faith and of its first converts is shown by the austerity it imposed. The religious services, which were still limited to prayers, were attended by women, but they were veiled. Saint Jerome used to say that women's hair was enough to distract an angel and wanted to have them all cropped. An orderly domestic life was their fundamental rule. The feast of the Sabbath, also of Hebrew origin, was celebrated with a communal supper, which began and finished with prayers and reading from the Sacred Scriptures. The priest blessed the bread and wine, which symbolised the Body and Blood of Jesus, and the ceremony ended with the kiss of love, exchanged by all. This must have given rise to some theological difficulty, since shortly afterwards it was limited to an exchange between men and men, and women and women, with the recommendation to keep the lips closed and if it were found pleasurable not to repeat it.

Abortions and the suppression of babies were unknown and execrated by the Christians in the midst of a society which practised them on an increasing scale and was gradually dying from them. It was, in fact, obligatory for the faithful to take in foundlings and to adopt and educate them in the new religion. Homosexuality was banned and divorce was only permitted at the request of the wife if she happened to be a pagan. The ban on going to the theatre met with less success. Nevertheless, generally speaking, the rules remained strict, especially when they were observed almost exclusively by Jews. Gradually, with the increase in the numbers and importance of the Gentiles, they became less rigid. The austere feast of Saturday slowly developed into the more cheerful one of Sunday.

On the Lord's Day they gathered round the priest, who read a passage from the Scriptures, led the prayers and preached a sermon. This was the first rudimentary liturgy, which later developed according to a more precise and complicated ritual.

In early times the congregation also took an active part insofar as they were allowed to "prophesy," that is, to expound concepts whilst in a state of religious ecstasy. These had to be interpreted by the priest. This custom had to be abolished because it threatened to give rise to chaos in the very field where the Church was now making every effort to establish order: questions of theology.

Only two of the seven Sacraments were administered at this time. As the first converts were adults, no distinction was made between Baptism and Confirmation. Then, as Christian babies began to be born, the two Sacraments were separated, the second being the confirmation of the first. Marriage was not a religious ceremony; the priest merely gave it his blessing. Much greater attention, however, was paid to funerals. From the moment a man was dead, he became the exclusive responsibility of the Church and everything had to be arranged for his resurrection. Each corpse had to have its own tomb and the priest officiated at its burial. Tombs were constructed after the manner of the Syrians and Etruscans, in crypts excavated in the walls of long subterranean tunnels called catacombs.

This custom lasted until the ninth century and then fell into disuse. The catacombs became the object of pilgrimages. Then the earth covered them and they were forgotten. In 1578 they were rediscovered by pure chance. Their ramifications were so complicated and tortuous that people thought that they had been built as hiding places for the conspiracy and many novels have been based on this hypothesis.

These were the foundations upon which the new religion arose. It was no longer limited to one people and one race, like Judaism, or to a social class, like the paganism of Greece or Rome, where it was considered the monopoly of their citizens. Its moral loftiness, the great Hope it kindled in the hearts of men, and the missionary urge it inspired caused Tertullian to declare with pride: "We are only of yesterday, but already we fill the world."

It was a rabidly anti-Semitic Emperor who involuntarily rendered a great service to the Christians. He committed the colossal blunder of persecuting the Jews and, by dispersing them throughout the world, encouraged the diffusion of the new Faith.

Vespasian came to the throne in A.D. 70 after the fearful interregnum which followed the death of Nero, the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Nero was succeeded by the rebel general, Galba, an aristocrat no worse than many others. He was bald, fat and arthritic and had a mania for economising. As soon as he was proclaimed Emperor, he ordered all those who had received gifts from Nero to return them to the State. This cost him his throne and life since among the beneficiaries was the Prætorian Guard. When, three months after his proclamation, they met him in the Forum riding in his litter they cut off his head, arms and legs. In his place they proclaimed the financier Otho, a fraudulent bankrupt who showed every sign that he would administer public money in the same carefree way that he had handled his own.

Hearing this news, the armies stationed in Germany under Aulus Vitellius and in Egypt under Vespasian rebelled and marched on Rome. Vitellius arrived first, only to bury Otho, who had committed suicide. He then abandoned himself to his one great passion—Lucullan banquets. He was so busy gorging that he neglected to march against the forces of Vespasian which, in the meanwhile, had landed. The bloody battle of Cremona decided this war of succession. Vitellius was beaten and the Romans were treated to an unexampled slaughter. Tacitus says that the people crowded to their windows to cheer

on the contenders as though they were at a football match. In the intervals the combatants looted the shops and set fire to them. If certain of them, accosted by prostitutes, disappeared into doorways with these ladies, they were knifed in the back by clients from the other side. Vitellius was captured in his hiding place as he was preparing to attack his dinner. With a halter round his neck, they dragged him naked, a target for excreta, through the city. He was then submitted to slow torture and thrown into the Tiber.

A city which gloated over fratricide, armies which rebelled, emperors who were pelted with human filth only a few days after being greeted with hosannas wherever they went: this was what had become of the capital of the Empire.

Titus Flavius Vespasian had lived there very little. He had been born at Rieti in the provinces, had then gone into the army and seen quite a good deal of the world. He was not of noble birth, but descended from a middle-class country family and had earned promotion on his own merits. Two qualities he admired above all: discipline and thrift. When he came to the throne he was sixty, but did not look it. He had a completely bald head and his face, open, rugged and honest, was framed by two enormous hairy ears. He detested aristocrats, whom he considered wastrels, and never suffered from the temptation to pass himself off as one of them. When an expert in genealogy came and told him that he had traced his family tree back to Hercules the walls shook with his laughter. When he received some dignitary he would feel the material of his tunic to see whether it was too fine and sniff it for the traces of scent: two refinements he hated.

His first task was to reorganise the army and the Exchequer. The first he put into the hands of regular officers, almost all like himself from the provinces. For the second he took a short cut. He sold all the highest State appointments at fabulous prices. "What does it matter?" he used to say. "They are all robbers, however we promote them. It is much better for them to get their promotion by returning some of their ill-gotten gains to

the State." He used the same method for taxation. Collection was entrusted to officials picked from among the most rapacious. These he unleashed with full powers, in all the provinces of the Empire. Regardless of the effect on the wretched populations, revenue was collected with unprecedented punctuality. However, as soon as the extortions had been completed, Vespasian recalled all the officials to Rome, heaped praises on them and proceeded to confiscate their illicit personal profits. As the budget was now balanced, the money went to compensate the victims. His son Titus, full of puritanical scruples, came to protest against these methods. They were repugnant to his high-minded, somewhat priggish, nature. "When in the Temple I act the priest," replied his father. "With brigands I act the brigand." To increase revenue he invented the little edifices which are still called "vespasians." An entrance fee was fixed for those who used them and a fine for those who did not. There was no choice. Relieving oneself outside cost more than doing so inside. Titus again protested. His father held a coin under his nose, and asked: "Does this smell of anything?"

This upright and worthy son, whom he loved tenderly, was the cynical Emperor's greatest worry. Vespasian did not aim to reform humanity and abolish its vices, merely to keep it in its proper place. To give Titus experience of men he sent him to discipline Palestine, where the last and most terrible rebellion had broken out. The Jews defended Jerusalem with unprecedented heroism. According to one of their historians, two million of them perished: according to Tacitus, six hundred thousand. To stamp out resistance Titus set fire to the city and flames destroyed the Temple. Some of the survivors killed themselves, some were sold as slaves and others fled. Their dispersion, which had begun some six centuries before, now became the authentic "diaspora." Like the soldiers of Napoleon who had *The Rights of Man* in their haversacks, in the bundles of many of these poor emigrants there was the Word of Christ.

Full of paternal pride, Vespasian granted Titus a triumph

which was somewhat out of proportion to the military value of his undertaking and, in his honour, built the famous arch which bears his name.

Soon afterwards it was his turn to be emperor. One day, after a wise reign of ten years, the wisest Rome had enjoyed since Augustus, Vespasian went home to Rieti on holiday. He often went there to visit boyhood friends, hunt the hare, have a chat, eat a plate of crackling pork and beans and play a hand or two of cards; these were his favourite pastimes. Unfortunately he had the fatal idea of taking the waters of Fonte Cottorella for his kidneys. Either the cure was unsuitable or he mistook the dose, for he was seized by a violent colic and at once realised that there was no remedy for it. "Væ," he remarked with characteristic humour, "ut puto deus fio." (Alas, I think I am becoming a God.") This was because in Rome it was the custom to deify all emperors when they died. After three days and nights of dysentery, yellow as a lemon and with beads of sweat standing out on his brow, he still had the strength to get up. He met the astonished gaze of those present with a short laugh to show he realised that he was being theatrical and murmured: "Yes, I know, but what can I do about it? An emperor has to die on his feet."

Titus, who succeeded him, was a very lucky sovereign because he did not have time to make mistakes. He would have been bound to make them, not because of his failings, but because of his good qualities: honesty, frankness and generosity. He never signed a death warrant. Whenever he discovered a plot he used to send a warning message to the conspirators and another to reassure their mothers. During the two years of his reign Rome suffered a terrible fire, Pompeii was buried by Vesuvius and all Italy was devastated by a pestilence. Titus emptied the Treasury to make good the damage. Whilst personally tending the sick he caught the plague and died at the age of forty-two. Everybody except his brother Domitian, who succeeded him on the throne, regretted him.

It is difficult to know what to make of this last representative of the Flavian dynasty. Of contemporary writers, Tacitus and Pliny have given us the blackest, and Statius and Martial the rosiest picture of him. They do not even agree on his physical appearance. The first two describe him as bald and pot-bellied, with spindly legs, the second as being handsome as an archangel, timid and gentle. One thing is certain: he must have suffered a great deal from the preference Vespasian had always shown for Titus. On the death of their father he laid claim to half his power. Titus agreed but then Domitian refused and began to conspire. Dion Cassius says that when Titus fell ill Domitian hastened his end by covering him with snow.

His reign was rather like that of Tiberius and in some respects their characters appear to have been similar. The beginning of their reigns was identical: wise and careful, with a touch of puritanism. Domitian was a keen moralist and engineer. The job he liked most was that of Censor, which gave him the chance to control morals. The ministers he gathered around him were technicians particularly well qualified to rebuild the fire-devastated city. He did not want war. When Agricola, Governor of Britain, tried to push forward the frontiers of the Empire as far as Scotland he relieved him of his command. Perhaps this was his most serious mistake. Agricola was father-in-law to, and adored by, Tacitus, who took it upon himself to pass judgment on all the men of his time. Perhaps it is not to be wondered at that the great historian took such a poor view of Domitian.

Unfortunately, it takes two to keep the peace and Domitian had to reckon with the Dacians. They crossed the Danube, beat the Roman generals and compelled the Emperor to take over command of the army. He was making progress when the governor of Germany, Antoninus Saturninus, rebelled with a number of legions. This forced the Emperor to make a premature and unfavourable peace with the Dacians and perhaps gave rise to his obsessions. He began to see plots everywhere and established the most exaggerated of personal cults. Sitting

on a real throne he could insist on being called "Our Lord and God." Visitors had to kiss his feet. He, too, like Nero, banished all philosophers from Italy because they denied his absolute power. Christians he beheaded because they denied his divinity. The senators hated him, flattered him and countersigned his death sentences. These senators also included Tacitus, his implacable future critic.

In a fit of persecution mania Domitian suddenly remembered that his secretary, Epaphroditus, was the same man who, a quarter of a century before, had helped Nero to cut his throat. Fearing a repetition of that event, he sentenced him to death. This alarmed the other officials of the Palace so that they organised a plot in which even the Empress Domitia took part. One night they stabbed him, Domitian defending himself savagely to the bitter end. He was forty-five years old and for fifteen of them he had reigned, first as the wisest, and then as the most disastrous, of sovereigns.

Thus, in the obscurity from which it had risen, ended the second dynasty of the successors of Augustus. Of the ten emperors who had succeeded one another in the course of a hundred and twenty-six years (from 30 B.C. to A.D. 96), seven had died a violent death. There was something fatally wrong with a system which turned even well-disposed men into the bloodiest of tyrants. This something was a much more positive factor than the hereditary disease which had perhaps tainted the blood of the Julio-Claudians. Its origin must be sought in the transformation Roman society had undergone during the last three centuries.

EPICUREAN ROME

THE ROME of this period, which is generally called Epicurean, had a population which some estimate at a million, others at a million and a half. It was divided into the usual orders and classes. The aristocracy was still numerous but, apart from the Cornelli, chroniclers of the time no longer mention the great names of the past: the Fabii, the Æmili, the Valerii, et cetera. Decimated firstly by wars, to which they contributed a high proportion of casualties, then by persecutions and finally by birth-restrictive practices, these illustrious families were virtually extinct. They had been replaced by others, with fewer ancestors and more money, who came from the industrial and commercial middle classes of the provinces.

"In high society to-day," Juvenal used to say, "the best thing is to have a barren wife. Everybody will be agreeable to you, hoping to be remembered in your will. If your wife is capable of childbirth, who can tell that she will not present you with a little negro?"

Juvenal was exaggerating a little, but the evil he denounced was real enough. Marriage which, during the Stoic period, had been a sacrament and was to become so again with Christianity, was now a casual adventure. Having children, once considered a duty to the State and the gods (who only promised an after-life to those who left somebody to look after their tombs), was now regarded as a wearisome nuisance to be avoided. Though infanticide was no longer permitted, abortion was a common practice. If it were unsuccessful, the newborn baby was simply left at the foot of a "colonna lattaria," so called because professional state-employed wet-nurses went on duty there to feed the foundlings.

Under the influence of these customs, the biological and racial structure of Rome had changed. What citizen had not a few drops of foreign blood in his veins? The Greek, Syrian and Israelite minorities put together made up a majority. Even in the time of the Cæsars the Jews were so strong, thanks to their united front, that they constituted one of the principal props of the régime. Few of them were rich, but on the whole, they formed a disciplined and industrious community of sound morals. One cannot say the same for the Egyptians, Syrians and other Orientals, who controlled the murkiest commercial activities.

Unless she were really hard up, the Roman mother who had had a child immediately got rid of it by turning it over first to a wet-nurse, then to a Greek governess (the equivalent of to-day's English or German nanny), and finally to a "pedagogue," another Greek, to be educated. Failing this, she sent him to one of the schools which by now had sprung up almost everywhere. These were not State schools, but private, co-educational ones run by "magistri." The pupils attended elementary classes until they were twelve or thirteen, when the sexes were separated. The girls completed their education in special colleges where the principal subjects taught were music and dancing. The boys went to a secondary school directed by "grammarians" who, being for the most part Greek, laid emphasis on the Greek language, literature and philosophy. Thus Roman culture was almost entirely overlooked. The courses of the rhetoricians took the place of the university and these had no fixed curriculum. There were no examinations, no theses, no degrees. There were only lectures followed by discussion. These courses cost up to two thousand "sestertii," somewhere between £125 and £150 per annum. Petronius complains that they only taught abstractions of no practical value in everyday life. They did, however, develop the typically Roman predilection for controversy, sophistry and quibbling, vices which have been inherited by the Italians.

The wealthier families sent their sons to finishing schools

abroad: Athens for philosophy, Alexandria for medicine and Rhodes for oratory. They spent so much money on keeping them there that the thrifty Vespasian, to put a stop to the drainage of currency, preferred to engage the most illustrious professors in those cities and bring them to Rome. Here they taught in State institutes and were paid a hundred thousand "sestertii" a year.

The morals of these youths, even in Stoic times, had never been outstanding. After the age of sixteen it was taken for granted that the boy would go to the brothel and nobody paid much attention if, apart from women, he had an affair or two with men. This was in primitive times, when the bawdy houses had been fourth-rate and the boy's period of debauchery finished when he was called up for military service. He then got married and started on a life of austerity. In these times, however, young men got themselves exempted from military service and the brothels had become luxurious. The inmates were expected to entertain clients not only with their more obvious charms, but with conversation, music and dancing, rather like the geisha girls in Japan. Clients continued to patronise them even after they were married.

Things were a little stricter for girls as long as they remained such, but they generally got married before they were twenty. Otherwise, after that they were considered old maids. Married, they enjoyed almost the same amount of liberty as their husbands. Seneca considered a husband lucky if his wife made do with only two lovers. One epitaph on a tomb runs as follows: "For forty-one years he was faithful to the same wife." Juvenal, Martial and Statius speak of middle-class women competing in the Circus, driving their own gigs through the streets of Rome and stopping under the porticos for a chat, "offering," as Ovid says, "the delicious sight of their bare shoulders to the passer-by."

Bluestockings also flourished. Martial's friend, Theophila, was able to discourse fluently on the subject of Stoic philosophy. Sulpicia wrote poetry—mainly about love. Women organised

clubs where lectures were given on "Duties to Society," a very popular topic in all societies where such duties are lightly regarded.

People had put on weight. The statues of this period, compared with the bony, angular effigies of Stoic Rome, show us a softer race, fattish from idleness and over-indulgence at the table. Beards are no longer worn. The "tonsors" have increased in numbers and the first shave is an occasion marking a boy's entry into adult life. Most men wore their hair cropped close but certain dandies let theirs grow and wore it in plaits. The purple toga having become the exclusive privilege of the Emperor, all the others now wore a white tunic or shirt and sandals with the thong inserted between the toes.

Women's fashions had also become more elaborate. No self-respecting lady ever spent less than three hours in the morning (with the aid of half a dozen female slaves) over her coiffure. Many pages of literature were devoted to this art. Bathrooms were littered with razors, scissors, hairbrushes, creams, powders, cosmetics, oils, and soaps. Poppæa had invented a face mask soaked in milk to wear at night to improve the complexion and this had been widely copied. The milk bath was quite commonplace and wealthy women used to travel followed by herds of cows so that they would always have a supply of fresh milk available for the purpose. Specialists prescribed diets, exercises, sun treatment and massage. Certain "tonsors" made their fortunes by creating original hair styles, hair swept back or gathered in a chignon at the nape of the neck, kept in place by a net or pretty ribbons.

Underwear was of silk or linen and the brassière was just coming into fashion. Stockings were not worn. Shoes also were elaborate, made of soft, light leather, embroidered with gold filigree. They had high heels to remedy that unfortunate defect of Roman women known as duck's disease.

In winter, furs were worn, and these were usually presents from husbands or lovers stationed in the northern provinces of Gaul and Germany. In all seasons great display was made of

jewellery, a ruling passion with these ladies. Lollia Paulina used to go about with forty million "sestertii," scattered about her person in the shape of precious stones. Pliny gives us a list of over a hundred varieties. One senator was proscribed by Vespasian because he wore an opal ring reputed to be worth tens of thousands of pounds. The strait-laced Tiberius tried to restrain this exhibitionism but failed. If the luxury trades had been abolished, Rome would have risked an economic crisis.

Interior decoration was on a par with this magnificence and perhaps even surpassed it. A palace worthy of the name had to have a garden, a marble portico and not less than forty rooms. It contained salons with onyx or alabaster pillars, walls inlaid with precious stones, floors and ceilings of mosaic, cedar-wood tables with ivory legs, Oriental brocades (Nero had spent nearly £200,000 on these), Corinthian vases and wrought-iron beds with mosquito-netting. There were about a hundred servants: two behind the place of each guest to serve his meals, two to take his shoes off simultaneously when he went to bed, and so on.

The great Roman aristocrat of this period rose at about seven in the morning. The first thing he did was to receive his clients for a couple of hours, offering each of them his cheek to kiss. After a frugal breakfast he received and returned the visits of his friends. This was one of the most rigidly observed obligations of Roman social life. To refuse to give assistance to a friend making his will, to attend his son's wedding, to read his poetry, to support his election or to guarantee his promissory notes was regarded as very bad form. Only after the fulfilment of these duties was one free to think about one's own personal affairs.

This rule also held good for people of a more modest standing. The middle classes worked until midday, ate a light lunch and then went back to work. However, all of them sooner or later, according to their working hours, used to meet at the public baths. There has never been a people as clean as the Romans. Although every palace had its own swimming-

pool, there were over a thousand baths open to the general public, each one with an average capacity of a thousand clients at a time. They were open from dawn till one o'clock for women and from two till sunset for men; later mixed bathing came in. The entrance fee, service included, was about two-pence. Having undressed in a cabin, one went to the gymnasium to practise boxing, throwing the javelin, basketball, jumping or throwing the discus. Then one went for a massage. Finally, the actual bath began, which followed a strict procedure—first the "tepidarium" of warm air, then the "calidarium" of hot air, then the "laconicum" of steam, where soap, a novelty from Gaul, was used. Finally, to obtain a healthy reaction, one plunged into the icy water of the swimming-pool.

After all this one dried off, anointed oneself with oil, dressed and went into the gaming-room to play at chess or dice. Otherwise one went into the lounge to talk to the friends one was certain to meet there. One could also have dinner in the restaurant and, even if it was on a modest scale, it still consisted of six courses, two of which were of pork. One ate lying on the "triclinium," a sort of divan with room for three, to relax the body after the exercise taken shortly before. The left arm rested on a cushion to support the head, the right was used to take food from the table. The cooking was dull and included many sauces derived from animal fats. However, the Romans had cast-iron digestions and gave proof of this on the occasion of the banquets which they frequently gave.

These started at four in the afternoon and lasted far into the night when they did not continue till morning. The tables were decorated with flowers and the air was perfumed. The servants, in rich liveries, had to be at least twice as numerous as the guests. Only rare and exotic dishes were served. "For the fish course," said Juvenal, "the fish should cost more than the fishermen." Lobster was much sought after and purchasers used to pay up to £35 each for them. Vedius Pollio was the first to try to breed them. Oysters and thrushes' breasts were highly esteemed delicacies. Apicius created a social position for

himself by inventing a new dish, *pâté de foie gras*, by fattening his geese on figs. This Apicius spent an enormous fortune in dinners and when he realised that he had consumed all but a half million pounds he considered himself penniless and so committed suicide.

These banquets used to develop into orgies. The host would offer precious gifts to his guests and servants passed from table to table distributing emetics so that they could go on eating.

Belching was permissible. It was, in fact, a sign, as in the Orient to-day, of one's appreciation of the excellence of the food.

39

THE ECONOMY

ROME was not an industrial city. It only had two big factories, a paper-mill and a dye-works. Ever since those ancient times, however, its real industry has always been politics, then as now regarded as more likely to offer opportunities of getting rich quickly than mere hard work.

The main sources of gain of the Roman gentry were (a) trafficking in the corridors of the various Ministries and (b) plundering the provinces. They spent a good deal of money on gaining entry to a career but, once they had achieved senior administrative rank, they repaid themselves well and quickly. The proceeds they invested in agriculture. Junius Columella and Pliny have left us a clear picture of this class of landowner and of the methods they used for exploiting their farms. The smallholdings which, with their agrarian laws, the Gracchi, Cæsar and Augustus had tried to institute had not been able to stand up to competition from the big estates. A war or a year of drought was enough to ruin them, to the advantage of the large properties, which were able to survive these misfortunes.

Some of them were as vast as kingdoms, says Seneca, and were looked after by slaves who cost nothing, but these had absolutely no regard for the land. They specialised in cattle-breeding, which was more profitable than growing wheat. Pastures of twenty-five or fifty thousand acres with ten or twenty thousand head of cattle were not uncommon.

Between the reigns of Claudius and Domitian a slow transformation began to take place. The long period of peace and the extension of full citizenship to the provinces had cut down the supply of slaves. These became rarer and, consequently, more expensive. Improvement in breeding brought on a crisis of over-production of cattle and it was difficult to obtain enough fodder for them. As a result prices fell. Many cattle breeders found it more profitable to return to agriculture and divided up their properties into smaller lots which they rented to tenants. These were the forerunners of the peasants of to-day and if what Pliny says about them is true, they much resembled them. They were tenacious, solid, avaricious, suspicious and conservative. They understood farming and it was in their own interest to make it pay. They immediately adopted the use of fertilisers, the rotation of crops and the selection of seeds. Fruit growers imported vines, peaches, apricots and cherries and, after rational experiments, planted vineyards and orchards. Pliny enumerates twenty-nine varieties of figs. Wine was produced in such quantities that Domitian, to avert a crisis, forbade the planting of new vineyards.

To make them more independent, minor industries, on a family and artisan basis, sprung up around these agricultural nuclei. A farm was considered rich in proportion to its ability to supply its own needs. There was the abattoir, where they slaughtered the animals and made sausages. There was the wood store, the saw-mill and carpenter's shop for making furniture and farm carts. There was the oven for baking bricks. Hides were tanned to make shoes, wool was woven and made into clothes. There was no trace of that specialisation which to-day makes work so dreary and turns the workman into an

automaton. The industrious peasant of those days unyoked his oxen from the plough and became a carpenter or set about hammering iron to make hooks or pots. The lives of these farmer-artisans were then much fuller and more varied.

The only industry which was operated more or less according to present-day standards was mining. Theoretically the State owned the mineral rights but the exploitation of these was leased, on moderate terms, to private prospectors. Personal interest led these prospectors to discover sulphur in Sicily, coal in Lombardy, iron on Elba, marble in Lunigiana, and the uses to which these raw materials could be put. Production costs were negligible because work in the mines was carried out exclusively by slaves and convicts, who did not have to be paid or insured against accidents. Judging by the state of the mines, there must have been a number of disasters every week, with thousands of dead. Roman historians, however, fail to mention these episodes, presumably because they were not news. Building was another great industry, with its innumerable specialists ranging from timberjacks to pump-makers and glaziers. In spite of all this, authentic industrial capitalism could not develop, largely because a hundred slaves cost less than a machine would have done and mechanisation would have created an insoluble unemployment problem.

Even so, many public services were better organised at this time than, say, in eighteenth-century Europe. The Empire had over sixty thousand miles of highway. Italy alone had about four hundred major roads along which an intense traffic passed in an orderly manner. Their paving permitted Cæsar to cover nine hundred miles in eight days and the messenger sent by the Senate to Galba to announce the death of Nero only took thirty-six hours to travel three hundred miles. The post was not public although it was called "*cursus publicus*." Modelled by Augustus on the Persian system, it was reserved for State correspondence. Private citizens could only avail themselves of it by special permission. Luminous signals took the place of the telegraph, flashing lights from hill-top to hill-top,

and this system remained substantially unchanged until the time of Napoleon. Private mail was carried by private companies or entrusted to friends or passing travellers. However, some important personages like Lepidus, Apicius and Pollio had their own private service and were extremely proud of it.

Communications and staging points were magnificently organised. Every kilometre there was a stone indicating the distance from the nearest town. Every ten kilometres there was a staging point with a tavern, bedrooms, stables and fresh horses for hire. Every thirty kilometres there was a hostelry offering the same services, but larger and better equipped. Routes were patrolled by the police, who, however, were never able to make them completely safe. Aristocrats used to travel accompanied by entire trains of wagons in which they used to sleep guarded by their armed servants.

Touring was almost as flourishing as it is nowadays. Plutarch waxes ironical about the globe-trotters who infested the City. As in the case of the young Englishman of the last century, the education of the young Roman was not complete until he had made the Grand Tour. This usually meant Greece. They went there by sea and embarked either at Ostia or Pozzuoli, the two great ports of the time. The poorer ones took one of the numerous cargo boats bound for the Orient to pick up freight, or the richer used sailing vessels, of up to a thousand tons. They were four hundred and fifty feet long and had luxurious cabins. Under Augustus piracy had almost completely disappeared, for he had built two large permanent fleets in the Mediterranean to stamp it out. Thus ships also voyaged at night, though they almost always kept near the coast for fear of storms. There were no schedules because everything depended on the winds. Normally ships made five or six knots and the voyage from Ostia to Alexandria took about ten days. Tickets, however, were not expensive. The voyage on a cargo boat to Athens did not cost more than sevenpence. The crews were well trained and not unlike those of to-day in manners and words. The masters of such ships were trained

mariners who gradually changed their calling into an exact science. Hippalus discovered the periods of the monsoons and the voyage from Egypt to India, which previously took six weeks, now began to take one. The first charts and the first lighthouses began to make their appearance.

All this took place rapidly because, as well as soldiering and the law, the Romans had a passion for engineering. They never carried their mathematical studies to the abstract heights that the Greeks did but they applied them much more practically. The draining of Lake Fucinus was a real masterpiece, and the roads they built are models even to-day. The principles of hydraulics were discovered by the Egyptians, but it was the Romans who put them into practice with aqueducts and sewers of colossal proportions. To them we owe the splashing of the fountains in Rome to-day. Frontinus, who laid out the hydraulic system, also described it in a manual of great scientific value. Rightly, he contrasts these public utility works with the complete uselessness of the Pyramids and so many Greek constructions. His words sum up the genius of Rome, practical, positive, at the service of the community and not at the æsthetic whim of individuals.

It is difficult to say how far the economic development of Rome and the Empire was due to private enterprise and how far to the State. The latter owned all mineral rights, extensive state lands and probably some war industries. It guaranteed the price of grain by buying in bulk and intervened directly with great public works to keep down unemployment. It also used the Treasury as a bank and lent money to private citizens against solid guarantees and at a high rate of interest. Even so, it was not very rich. Under Vespasian, who increased its revenue and administered it rigorously, this did not exceed sixty million pounds a year, raised mainly by taxation.

On the whole, one can say that the State was more liberal than socialist. It even left to the initiative of its generals the right to coin money in the provinces they governed. The complex monetary system which resulted suited the bankers to

perfection and on it they based all their diabolical inventions: savings books, bills of exchange, cheques and money orders. They founded credit institutes with branches and agents in every part of the world and this complicated organisation made booms and crises inevitable.

One of these disastrous cycles occurred under Augustus. When he returned from Egypt with the immense treasure of that country he put it into circulation to promote trade, then languishing. This inflationist policy achieved its purpose, but it also stimulated prices, which rose to astronomical heights. Finally, Tiberius had to break this vicious circle by withdrawing currency. Those who had contracted debts, counting on the continuation of inflation, found themselves short of ready money and hurried to withdraw it from the savings banks. Those of Balbus and Ollius had to meet colossal obligations in a single day and were compelled to close. The industries and commercial houses who drew on them could not pay their suppliers and had to close down too. Panic spread like wildfire. Everybody rushed to withdraw his deposits from the banks. Those of Maximus and Vibo (the strongest) were also unable to meet all demands and called on that of Pettius for help. The news spread like lightning and, by presenting their savings books, the clients of Pettius prevented him from rescuing his colleagues. The interdependence of the various provincial and national economies within the framework of the vast Empire was shown by the simultaneous runs on the banks of Lyons, Alexandria, Carthage and Byzantium. It was clear that a wave of depression in Rome had immediate repercussions to the very fringes of the Empire. Even in those days one bankruptcy led to another and there were numerous suicides. Many small farms in debt up to their hilt could not wait until the next harvest and had to be sold at whatever they would fetch, to the advantage of the big estates, which were in condition to hold out. Usury, kept in check by the growth of the banks, flourished again. Prices came toppling down. In the end Tiberius had to reconcile himself to the fact that deflation was

as great an evil as inflation. Reluctantly he distributed some sixty million to the banks to be put into circulation but gave orders that they were to be lent for three years free of interest.

The fact that this measure was sufficient to revive the economy, unfreeze credit and renew confidence shows the enormous importance of the banks, or, in other words, the basically capitalist nature of Imperial Rome.

40

ENTERTAINMENT

WHEN Augustus came to the throne the Roman calendar contained seventy-six holidays, more or less the same number as to-day. When his last successor fell, there were one hundred and seventy-five—a holiday every other day. They were celebrated by the "scenic and Circensian games."

The scenic games were no longer the pompous and solemn classical dramas which had died out after a short vogue (much more rapidly than they had come in). There is something about the air, not only of Rome, but of all Italy, which makes people indifferent to the serious theatre. Dramas were still written in this first century of the Empire, but only as poetical exercises. In the salons, where their authors read them aloud, they had a limited number of listeners, but they were never performed by actors for audiences in the theatres. The uneducated, mainly foreign, public knew only elementary Latin, and far preferred pantomime, in which the action is explained by gesture and dancing rather than by the spoken word. The tradition of a certain type of actor dates back to this time. Crude and vulgar, rolling their eyes, grimacing, and gesticulating, favourites like *Æsop* and *Roscius* with their risqué sketches and double meanings became the pets of high society, the lovers of prominent aristocratic ladies, and would do anything for

publicity. They earned and left staggering sums. There were also women in their companies who, owing to their profession, were officially put on the same footing as prostitutes; having nothing to gain by modesty they contributed brazenly to the obscenity of the performances.

A craving for applause often induced these actors to present scenes full of political allusions in spite of the censors. This is a common phenomenon in tyrannical régimes, where nobody dares say anything but where everybody is delighted by anyone who does. The evening of Vespasian's funeral an actor parodied the corpse sitting up in his coffin and asking the undertakers: "How much is this funeral costing?" "Ten million sesterii." "Well, give me a hundred thousand," said the corpse, "and throw me in the Tiber." The shrewdness of the thrust lay in its keeping with the dead man's character. The irreverent actor came to no harm because Vespasian's successor was Titus. A few years previously Caligula had had the author of a much less disrespectful allusion burnt alive.

Whilst the theatre degenerated into a variety show, the fortunes of the Circus continued to soar. Large mural posters, like those of the cinema to-day, announced forthcoming sporting events. They were the talk of the town, like our football championships, and were discussed eagerly at home, at school, in the Forum, at the baths and in the Senate. Even the newspaper, *Acta Diurna*, reported and criticised them. On the day of the contest, crowds of a hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand, carrying handkerchiefs with the colours of their favourite team, used to flock to the Circus Maximus, just as they do to the stadium to-day. High officials had separate boxes with marble seats adorned with bronze. The rest settled themselves on wooden benches, but not until they had poked about in the horses' droppings to see whether they had been properly fed. They then backed their fancies, and supplied themselves with sandwiches and cushions, because the show lasted all day. For himself and his family, the Emperor actually had an apartment with bedrooms where he could take a nap between

contests and, of course, there was the inevitable bathroom for ablutions and such-like.

As to-day, horses and jockeys belonged to private stables, each with its own racing colours. The most famous were the Reds and the Greens. Horse races alternated with chariot races, two-, three-, or four-in-hand. The drivers, almost all slaves, used to wear metal helmets and held the reins in one hand and a whip in the other. A knife was hung around their necks with which to cut the traces in case of a fall. These were frequent as the races were run without regard for danger, like the Palio of Siena to-day. They had to complete seven laps of the oval arena, avoiding the "metæ" and hugging the bends as closely as possible. The light chariots easily collided with one another and drivers and steeds went rolling over in a heap amid shafts and wheels to be trampled by other oncoming teams: all this to the roars of the public, which terrified the horses.

The most eagerly awaited numbers were the gladiatorial combats. These were between animal and animal, man and animal, and man and man. The day Titus inaugurated the Colosseum all Rome gasped in amazement.

The arena could be lowered and flooded to form a lake or raised again, transformed by different scenery, to represent part of a desert, for example, or a jungle glade. A marble gallery was reserved for high authorities, and in the centre of this towered the Imperial box with all its accessories. Here on ivory thrones sat the Emperor and Empress and anyone could approach the sovereign to plead for a pension, a transfer or mercy for a condemned man. At each corner fountains cast jets of perfumed water into the air and at the back tables were laid for refreshments between one turn and another. Everything was free: entrance, seat, cushion, roast viands and wine.

The first number was a parade of exotic wild animals, many of which the Romans had never seen before. What with elephants, tigers, lions, leopards, panthers, bears, wolves, crocodiles, hippopotamuses, giraffes, lynxes, et cetera, ten thousand wild beasts filed past and many of them were in fancy

dress to caricature historic or legendary personages. The arena was then lowered and reappeared ready for combat; lions against tigers, tigers against bears, leopards against wolves. At the end of this performance only half of these poor beasts were still alive. Again the arena was lowered and came up as a "plaza de toros." The "corrida," already practised by the Etruscans, had been imported to Rome by Cæsar, who had seen it in Greece. Cæsar had a weakness for these spectacles and had been the first to stage a battle between lions for the entertainment of his countrymen. Bullfights had great success with the Romans and were always in demand. The "toreros" did not know the tricks of the trade and thus faced almost certain death. They were, in fact, chosen from slaves and convicts (like all the other gladiators, for that matter). Many of them did not even fight. They were supposed to represent mythical characters, but the tragic ends they had to undergo had nothing mythical about them. As propaganda for patriotism one of them was made to appear as Mutius Scævola and burn his own hand on the coals, another, as Hercules, was cremated alive on a pyre and another, as Orpheus, was torn to shreds as he played the lyre. These were considered such edifying spectacles that the young were admitted to them.

Battles between gladiators came next on the programme. These were all men condemned to death for murder, robbery with violence, sacrilege or mutiny, the crimes punishable by death. However, whenever there was a shortage of gladiators, obliging tribunals used to issue death sentences for much less serious offences. Rome and its emperors could not do without their ration of human flesh to butcher. Even so, there were some volunteers and not all of them came from the lower orders. They attended special schools before fighting in the arena and these were perhaps the most serious and rigorous schools in Rome. One entered them rather as one enters a seminary, having sworn that one was prepared to be "flogged, burnt and stabbed." Every time they fought the gladiators had an even chance of being killed, but they also had an even chance of

becoming popular heroes, to whom poets dedicated their verses, sculptors their statues, ædiles their streets and ladies their favours. Before the contest they were offered a gigantic banquet and if they lost they were expected to die with complete indifference. They were called by various names according to the weapons they used. Every show in the Circus contained numbers of these duels. They did not always end fatally. If the loser displayed great courage and skill he might even be reprieved by the crowd which, on these occasions, made the gesture of the upturned thumb. In one of the shows put on by Augustus (it lasted eight days), ten thousand gladiators took part. Guards, dressed as Charon and Mercury, used to prod the fallen with sharp forks to see whether they were dead and those who feigned death were beheaded. Negro slaves then piled up the corpses and brought on fresh sand for the subsequent combats.

Even the strictest moralists raised no objection to this delight in bloodshed. Juvenal, who criticised everything, was mad about the Circus. Tacitus had moments of doubt but came to the conclusion that the blood shed in the Circus was "vile" and justified it by the use of this adjective. Even Pliny, the most civilised and modern gentleman of the period, found that these massacres had educational value since they accustomed the spectator to a stoic contempt for life. Statius and Martial, the two poets who sang the praises of Domitian, practically lived at the Circus and drew poetic inspiration from it. Statius was a former Neapolitan actor who had made himself a name with a bad poem, *The Thebais*. When he was invited to dinner by the Emperor, so that all Naples should know about it he wrote a book depicting Domitian as a god and dedicated to him his *Silvæ*, the only meritorious poems he ever wrote. He died at the age of thirty-five, when his star had already been eclipsed by that of Martial, poet laureate of the Circus and the bordello.

Martial was a Spaniard from Bilbao who came to Rome when he was twenty-four. He was a protégé of his compatriots

Seneca and Lucan; at that time the Spaniards abroad helped one another as Sicilians do nowadays. He was not a great poet but he was a master in the use of the biting comment which leaves toothmarks. "My pages bear the imprint of men," he used to say and it was true. His characters are riff-raff because he chose them from among the ignominious company of whores and gladiators. This is why they are so vivid in their frank vulgarity. He himself was not unrepresentative of his subjects. He fawned on Domitian, slandered his benefactors and lived in the underworld squandering his money on wine, dicing and betting on the races. Fortunately, he did not know the meaning of the word "rhetoric," and his *Epigrams* remain the most perfect examples of their kind while the account he has left us of Rome is, perhaps, the most lifelike. He finally returned to Bilbao, then only a small town. Here he lived by sponging on a friend who gave him a villa. From Rome he took away only one regret, and that was for the Circus. The bordello he was no longer of an age to regret.

Seneca alone condemns the gladiatorial games, which he says he did not patronise. He only once visited the Colosseum and was appalled. "Man, the most sacred thing to man, is killed here for sport and amusement," he wrote when he got home.

The real fact of the matter is that this "sport and amusement" corresponded exactly to the moral level of a Rome which was not yet Christian but no longer even pagan. Its Emperor was the High Priest or Pope of a State religion which had no objections to such abominations for the simple reason that it had no religious content. It continued to celebrate feasts with an increasingly elaborate ritual, to build ever more magnificent temples and to create new idols such as Anna and Fortuna. Only marble capitals supported these temples; of faith there was none. This was the monopoly of the few hundred (or thousand) Christians, mostly Jews. Instead of going to the Circus to gloat over the deaths of men they met in their little "ecclesiæ" to pray for their souls.

4 I

NERVA AND TRAJAN

DOMITIAN's killers had not given their victim time to nominate his heir. The Senate, which had never officially recognised this right of the emperors but which, in practice, had always accepted their choice, took advantage of this situation to elect one of its own members as successor.

Marcus Cocceius Nerva was a man of the law whose hobby was poetry but he was afflicted by neither the quarrelsomeness of the lawyer nor the vanity of the poet. He was a large, tall man who had never harmed anybody, had never been ambitious and at the end of his reign could justly say that he had never done anything that might have made his return to private life risky.

Perhaps it was not so much for his good qualities that they elected him as because he was already sixty-six and had a weak stomach, grounds for assuming that his reign would be short. It lasted only two years, in fact, but they were enough for Nerva to right the wrongs of his predecessor. He recalled the proscripts, distributed extensive lands to the poor, exempted the Jews from the tribute that Vespasian had imposed on them, and put the State's finances on a sound basis. This did not prevent the Prætorian Guards, who did not care for this new master who resisted their arrogant demands, from besieging him in the Palace, killing a few of his advisers and insisting on the handing over of Domitian's executioners. Nerva, in an attempt to save his servants, offered his own head in exchange. When this offer was turned down he tendered his resignation to the Senate, who refused it. Nerva never took any decision without consulting the Senate or contrary to their opinion. On this occasion, too, he yielded. Perhaps he felt that the end was near. The little

time that was left to him he spent in finding an heir who met with the Senate's approval. Having no sons of his own, and to prevent the Prætorian Guard from choosing his successor, he adopted one. The choice of Trajan was perhaps the greatest service Nerva ever rendered to the State.

Trajan was a general who, at that moment, was commanding an army in Germany. When he learned that he had been proclaimed Emperor he received the news with composure. He sent a message to thank the senators for their confidence in him and assured them that he would come and assume power as soon as he could find the time. He did not find it for two years, having first to settle accounts with the Teutons. Born forty years before in Spain of a family of Roman functionaries, he had followed the family calling to become half-soldier and half-administrator. He was tall, strong and of Spartan habits, brave as a lion but not ostentatiously so. His wife, Plotina, declared that she was the happiest of spouses because though he may have deceived her occasionally with some young man he never did so with other women. He passed as a man of culture because he always used to take Dion Chrysostom along with him in his command vehicle. Chrysostom was a famous rhetorician addicted to long discourses on philosophy. One day, however, Trajan confessed that he had never understood a single word of Dion's outpourings: had never even listened to them, in fact, but allowed himself to be lulled by their silvery sound whilst he thought of other things.

When Trajan finally found the leisure to come and be crowned, Pliny the Younger was assigned the task of addressing a "panegyric" to him. In this Trajan was courteously reminded that, as he owed his election to the senators, he ought to consult them before taking decisions. Trajan listened to this part of the speech with nods of approval to which nobody attached much belief: mistakenly, as it turned out. Power never went to his head and even the threat of conspiracies did not change him into a suspicious and bloody despot. When he discovered Licinius Sura's plot, he went to dinner with him and not only

ate everything that was put on his plate, but even had himself shaved by the conspirator's barber.

He was a demonic worker and drove his subordinates hard. Many a slothful senator was sent to inspect and reform provincial administration and one gets a good idea of his efficiency and energy from the surviving letters he exchanged with these inspectors. His political views were those of an enlightened Conservative. He believed more in sound administration than in sweeping reforms. He did not approve of violence, but knew when to use a firm hand. This was why he did not hesitate to declare war on Dacia (the present-day Rumania) when its king, Decebalus, threatened the conquests he had made in Germany. The campaign was brilliant. The beaten Decebalus surrendered but Trajan spared his life and throne and merely imposed vassalage on him. Such clemency, novel in the annals of Roman history, was ill-rewarded. Two years later Decebalus rebelled again. Again Trajan defeated his perfidious enemy, pillaged the Transylvanian gold mines and with the proceeds celebrated his victory by an unbroken four months of games involving ten thousand gladiators. The surplus enabled him to carry out a programme of public works destined to make his reign one of the most memorable in the history of town planning, engineering and architecture.

An imposing aqueduct, a new port at Ostia, four great highways and the amphitheatre at Verona were among his major achievements. The best known, however, is the Forum of Trajan, due to the genius of Apollodorus, a Greek from Damascus. This architect had previously, in a few days, built for him a wonderful bridge over the Danube which had enabled him to overthrow Decebalus. To raise the column which still stands in front of the Basilica Ulpia eighteen blocks of special marble, weighing fifteen tons each, were brought from Paros: a miracle for those times. Two thousand figures, in a vaguely neo-realistic style, were carved on it in bas-relief. Much importance is given to realism in the scenes illustrated. The carvings are too crowded to be beautiful but from the docu-

mentary point of view they are very interesting and this is what must certainly have pleased Trajan about it.

After six years of peace, during which time he was kept busy with his reconstruction work, Trajan began to long for the camp again. Although he was almost sixty he made up his mind to complete the work of Cæsar and Antony in the East by advancing the frontiers of the Empire to the Indian Ocean. He was successful and marched triumphantly through Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria and Armenia, all of which were reduced to the status of Roman provinces. He built a Red Sea fleet and certainly regretted being too old to sail away with it and conquer India and the Far East. It was not enough, however, to leave garrisons in these countries to ensure lasting order. Before Trajan got home, widespread revolts had broken out behind his back. The weary warrior wanted to turn back and stamp them out himself, but was prevented from doing so by his dropsy. In his place he sent Lucius Quietus and Marcius Turba and resumed his journey to Rome, hoping to arrive before he died. Paralysis struck him down at Selinus in A.D. 117 in his sixty-fourth year. Only his ashes returned to Rome and these were buried beneath his column.

Nerva and Trajan were certainly two great emperors but, apart from the many real merits for which they are remembered, they had an extraordinary stroke of fortune: that of earning the gratitude of a historian like Tacitus and a diarist like Pliny. The testimony of these two has had a decisive effect on the verdict of posterity.

Tacitus, who wrote the lives of so many other people, forgot to tell us anything about himself. We do not know where exactly he was born and we are not even sure that he was the son of the Cornelius Tacitus who was governor of Belgium. His family must have belonged to the wealthy middle classes which later became part of the aristocracy. He was much prouder of his wife's family than he was of his own. She was the daughter of that Agricola, proconsul and governor of Britain, whom Domitian had made the mistake of dismissing. We only know

this Agricola from the biography written by his son-in-law, who was a past-master in the art. However, since Tacitus had all the gifts of a great writer except that of objectivity, we cannot tell whether this portrait is really a good likeness. We only know that the admiration of Tacitus for his father-in-law must have been sincere.

Tacitus was a great lawyer. Pliny considered him a greater one than Cicero himself. It is to be feared, however, that he wrote history by the same standards he used when defending his clients, that is by making a case rather than by establishing the truth. His first historical effort dealt with the years between Galba and Domitian, a period of which he had been an eye-witness. His masterly diatribe against tyranny had such success in those aristocratic circles which had been its chief victims that he then went back to the reigns of Nero, Claudius, Caligula and Tiberius. Tacitus recognises quite honestly that, in Domitian's time, he had bowed to the arbitrary whims of that sovereign and as a senator had condoned his injustices. It is not difficult to infer that his love of liberty must have dated from that period. He wrote fourteen books of history, of which only four still exist, and sixteen of annals, of which twelve have survived. He also wrote various other works, such as the *Life of Agricola* and a treatise on the Germans in which, with extraordinary polemical skill, he extols the virtues of that race and thus, by inference, denounces the shortcomings of the Romans.

Tacitus should be read judiciously. One should not expect sociological or economic analyses from him. One should be satisfied with his really great reporting, perfect in the mechanism of its narrative, its flow and suspense. His pages are peopled with personages who are probably largely invented, but so extraordinarily well drawn in his vigorous style (achieved by no other writer after him) that they remain etched on the memory. His authorities are questionable and he probably never even bothered to check them. He goes by hearsay, quoting such sources as suit him, even if untrue, and discarding such as do not, though they happen to be true. His one aim is to propound

his own doctrines: that Freedom is the highest expression of Good, that Freedom can only be guaranteed by Aristocratic Oligarchies, that Character is more important than Brains and that reforms are only a step in the wrong direction. Perhaps he might have been greater as a writer of fiction than as a historian.

Less brilliant and colourful, but more circumstantial and credible, is the picture of the society of that time left us by Pliny the Younger. Pliny was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He had a rich uncle, who left him his name and fortune, an excellent education, a virtuous wife and a nature which enabled him to see the brighter side of everything and everybody. He was, in fact, a "gentleman" in the tradition of Atticus. Born at Como, he started life as a lawyer. Tacitus offered to share with him the honour and onus of the prosecution of Marius Priscus, an official accused of malpractice and cruelty. Pliny accepted but, instead of arraigning the accused, pronounced a declamatory encomium of his colleague lasting two hours. When it came to his turn, Tacitus returned the compliment.

Various missions entrusted to Pliny he carried out with efficiency and honesty; those in diplomacy particularly, for which Trajan, a good judge of men, often picked him. His fundamental quality was, in fact, "tact." It is enough to read the letter he wrote to his old preceptor, Quintilian, the great jurist, apologising for being unable to give him more than fifty thousand "sestertii" for his daughter's dowry: he seems to be asking a favour instead of offering one. Whenever he was sent on some mission or tour of inspection, he refused to accept a salary or his expenses and filled his baggage with presents for the wives of the governors, generals and prefects he would meet on his travels. So as to be able to discuss literature, he always, at his own expense, took somebody along with him, usually Suetonius, for whom he had a weakness. With his passion for writing letters to all and sundry he kept up his relations wherever he went and invitations were showered on him. He always replied in writing: "I accept your invitation to dinner,

my friend, but on condition you let me go home early and treat me frugally. Let there be philosophic converse at the table, but let us partake of it in moderation."

"Moderation": this sums up his ethics, æsthetics and dietetics. Pliny did everything in moderation, even falling in love. In his descriptive letters to the Emperor, his colleagues, relations and clients, he wrote about everything with moderation. These letters are the best of his writing that remains and the light they throw on the society and customs of his time renders them particularly precious to us.

42

HADRIAN

It is possible that so fortunate an event as the accession of the greatest emperor of antiquity was due to an adulterous love affair. Nevertheless, Dion Cassius swears that Hadrian had only one qualification for taking the place of Trajan, who had left no heir: that of being the lover of Trajan's wife Plotina.

Hearsay should always be treated with a certain amount of reserve, especially when it concerns extra-conjugal relations, but Plotina certainly did have a hand in getting Hadrian crowned. They were, though not by blood, aunt and nephew, not in itself regarded as an impediment by the Romans. Trajan and Hadrian came from the same town, both having been born at Italica in Spain. Hadrian was so called because his family originally came from Hadria (now Adria). He was twenty-four years younger than Trajan, who, in his dual capacity as friend of the family and legal guardian, had brought him to Rome. He was a lively boy, who took a keen interest in everything—mathematics, music, medicine, philosophy, literature, sculpture, geometry; he studied them all eagerly and was quick to learn. Trajan gave him his niece, Vivia Sabina, in marriage. It was

an icily respectable marriage, from which issued neither love nor children. Sabina, beautiful as a statue (and as cold), was heard to mutter that her husband had more time for his horses and dogs than he had for her. Even so, Hadrian took her with him on his travels, overwhelmed her with attentions and dismissed his own secretary, Suetonius, for once referring to her with scant respect.

Hadrian was barely forty when he came to the throne and his first move was to settle as soon as possible the military situation left by Trajan. He had never approved of the warlike enterprises of his predecessor and as soon as he succeeded him, withdrew the armies from Persia and Armenia, much to the disgust of their commanders, to whom a purely defensive policy meant the beginning of the end of the Empire as well as their own careers, honours and other perquisites. It has never been clear how it came about that four of the most valorous and influential of them were shortly afterwards put to death without trial. Hadrian was on the Danube at the time, seeking a permanent settlement with the Dacians which would exclude further conflict. He hastened to Rome. The Senate took full responsibility for the executions on the grounds that the generals had been conspiring against the State. Nobody believed in Hadrian's innocence, but the matter was dropped when he distributed a milliard of "sestertii" among the citizens, cancelled their debts to the State and entertained them for weeks on end with magnificent displays at the Circus.

These beginnings caused many Romans to fear a return to the methods of Nero and their suspicions were confirmed by the fact that Hadrian used to sing, paint and compose as Nero had done. However, it was soon realised that these artistic tendencies had nothing pathological about them. Hadrian only indulged in them in the spare time which his activities as a scrupulous and able administrator left him. He was a tall, handsome, elegant man, with curly hair and a fair beard, which the Romans copied. Perhaps they did not know that he had only grown it to hide certain ugly bluish patches on his cheeks. It

is not easy to understand his complex and contradictory character. Usually he was courteous and good-tempered, but sometimes he was harsh to the point of cruelty. In private life he was sceptical and derisive of the gods and oracles. When he performed his duties as Supreme Pontiff, however, he would tolerate no signs of irreverence. Nobody knows what his personal beliefs were.

Perhaps he believed in the stars because every now and then he dabbled in astrology and was highly superstitious about eclipses and the tides. Nevertheless, he considered religion a mainstay of society and hence took the attitude he did towards irreverence in public. After he had had Apollodorus put to death for a scornful refusal, he personally supervised the plans for the new temple to Venus and Roma.

Intellectually he tended to Stoicism and was an admirer of Epictetus, whose works he had carefully studied. However, he never bothered to put its precepts into practice. He took his pleasures wherever he found them, with good taste but without shame or remorse, with either sex but without ever losing his head to the objects of them. Though he liked eating well he hated banquets, preferring intimate dinners with a few companions chosen for their excellence in conversation. He also founded a university, to the faculty of which he appointed the greatest masters of the time, most of them Greek. These and their pupils were his usual dinner guests. He used to argue fairly and accepted criticism and contradiction. One day, in fact, he chided Favorinus, a Gaulish intellectual, for giving in to him too often. "A man who bases his arguments on thirty divisions in arms is always right," replied the young philosopher. The Emperor was so pleased that he repeated the remark for the amusement of the Senate.

His most extraordinary characteristic was that he did not feel that he was indispensable. Indeed, he did everything possible to avoid becoming so or being taken for the usual "man of destiny" most absolute monarchs think, and hope others will think, they are. His constant aim was to set up effective

bureaucratic organisation which only needed senatorial supervision. He had a talent for orderliness and sought to achieve this by simplifying the legal code, which had fallen into a state of chaos. In this task, which he entrusted to Julian, he preceded Justinian.

Hadrian was also in favour, for purely selfish reasons, of a rational division of duties which would allow the apparatus of the State to function almost automatically. He enjoyed travel and wished to be free of worry that in his absence affairs would be mismanaged or not managed at all. He was thus able to make very long tours, lasting as long as five years, so as to get to know the Empire and its outposts really well. Four years after his coronation he left for a detailed inspection of Gaul. He travelled like any private citizen, with few precautions for his safety, very limited baggage and a retinue almost entirely composed of technicians. He pounced without warning on governors and generals and these had to give an account of their administration down to the last detail. He would then give orders for a new bridge or road and award promotions or reprimands. If opportunity arose, he, the man of peace, would take command of a legion to settle by a battle the question of a doubtful frontier. On foot, at the head of his infantry, he was capable of marching up to twenty-five miles a day and never lost even a skirmish.

From Gaul he crossed into Germany, where he reorganised the garrisons and made a profound study of the natives, whose primitive strength he eyed with admiration and foreboding. He then sailed down the Rhine and across to Britain, where he ordered the construction of his famous Wall. Returning to Gaul, he went on to Spain where, at Tarragona, he was attacked by a slave. In spite of the man's strength, Hadrian disarmed him and handed him over to the doctors, who pronounced him insane. Hadrian thereupon pardoned him. From Spain he crossed over to Africa where, at the head of a couple of legions, he stamped out a Moorish revolt before going on to Asia Minor.

In Rome they began to be concerned about their absentee Emperor. When they heard that he had boarded a ship up the Nile with a new guest among his suite, gossip began to take on a malicious tinge. This new guest was an extremely good-looking Greek youth, with curly hair and languid eyes, called Antinous.

It seems to have been fated that, from Cæsar onwards, any Roman of high consequence who landed in Egypt should become involved in an unfortunate emotional entanglement. We do not know exactly what the relations were between Hadrian and Antinous. Sabina, who accompanied the Emperor, seems to have raised no objection to the youth's presence. The circumstances of his death, however, have never been satisfactorily explained. It appears that he was drowned in the river. This was a terrible blow to Hadrian. "He wept," says Spartianus, "just like a woman." Hadrian had a temple erected in his honour and round this temple built a city, Antinopolis, which rose to importance in the time of Byzantium. According to a legend, which is perhaps of a later date than the actual events, Antinous killed himself because he had learned from the oracles that the plans of his protector would only succeed if he himself were dead. Certainly, by disappearing from the scene, the boy rendered one valuable service: that of leaving the succession open to a monarch of the stature of Antoninus. If Antinous had lived, perhaps Rome might have found herself encumbered with him as Emperor.

The man who returned to Rome after this tragedy was no longer the gay and jovial sovereign who had set out. He had become something of a misanthrope. Whereas before he had abandoned his desk with relief, happy to enjoy his leisure and knowing exactly what to do with it, he now seemed to dread the empty hours and spent them in writing. A grammar, some poems and an autobiography are the results of this solitude. His main occupation, however, was his building programme. He rebuilt the Pantheon, which had originally been built by Agrippa and destroyed by fire. For this he adopted the Greek

style, which he preferred to the Roman, and there is no doubt that it remains the best-preserved monument of antiquity. When Pope Urban VII dismantled the ceiling of the portico, he recovered enough bronze to forge over a hundred cannon as well as the canopy over the High Altar in Saint Peter's, which still exists to-day.

Another of his architectural masterpieces was the villa round which Tivoli later sprang up. There was everything: temples, a hippodrome, libraries and museums. For two thousand years the armies of the whole world have come here for loot and have always found it. As soon as Hadrian went to live there his health began to fail. His body became swollen and he suffered from copious nose-bleeds. Feeling that the end was near, he sent for his friend Lucius Verus, adopted him as his son and started training him for monarchy. Unfortunately, Verus died soon afterwards.

Hadrian's choice then fell on Antoninus, to whom he gave the title of "Cæsar," keeping that of "Augustus" for himself. From then on the title of Cæsar was given to all heirs-apparent.

Hadrian's sufferings were so atrocious that all he longed for was death. He had one tomb built on the far side of the Tiber, access to which was gained by a special bridge, the Ponte Elio. To-day it is that great mausoleum called Castel Sant'Angelo. One day, when the building was already completed, the Stoic philosopher Euphrates came to ask Hadrian's permission to commit suicide. The Emperor gave his consent and then discussed with him the uselessness of life. When Euphrates had drunk the hemlock, he ordered some to be brought for himself so that he could follow the philosopher's example, but nobody would bring him any. He commanded his doctor to do so but, in order not to disobey, the doctor killed himself. He begged a servant to get him a sword or a dagger, but the servant fled. "Behold a man," he exclaimed in despair, "who has the power to put to death anybody he pleases, but not himself."

At the age of sixty-two, after a reign of twenty-one years, he finally closed his eyes. A few days before his death he had

composed a little poem recalling the days gone by, which is, perhaps, one of the most exquisite of Latin lyrics: "*Animula vagula, blandula hospes comesque corporis . . .*"

With him died not only a great emperor, but also one of the most complex, disquieting and captivating personalities in all history, and perhaps the most modern of all the characters of the ancient world. Like Nerva, on leaving Rome he rendered her a signal service: that of designating as his heir the man least likely to cause him to be regretted.

43

MARCUS AURELIUS

THE TITLE of "Pius" was given posthumously to Antoninus by the Senate. It also called him "Optimus princeps," the best of princes. His successor, Marcus Aurelius, however, used to call him a "monster of virtue" and, when in a difficulty, would say to himself: "Do what Antoninus would have done in this case." This was not as easy as it sounded. The difficulty was knowing what Antoninus would have done.

He was no longer a young man when, in A.D. 138, he came to the throne, being already over fifty. Even so, if one had asked one of the many Romans who acclaimed his succession with joy what they were so happy about, he would have been at a loss for an answer. Up to that time Antoninus had done absolutely nothing worthy of note. He was an excellent lawyer but, as he distinctly disliked oratory, he practised little and for what little he did practise took no pay, since he was very rich. His family were bankers who had come from France a couple of generations before. He had received an upper middle-class education and had studied philosophy, but only superficially; his primary interest was religion. He was reverent but not bigoted. Probably he was one of the last of the Romans to believe

sincerely in the gods, or at least to behave as though he did. He was knowledgeable about literature and protected many writers, but treated them somewhat loftily, with indulgent and aristocratic detachment, as though they were purely decorative elements of society, not to be taken too seriously. He was broad-shouldered with a placid and serene expression and everybody liked him for his kindliness, his genuine sympathy with the misfortunes of others and the discretion he showed in hiding his own. Nevertheless, this man so universally liked had one enemy in his own home: his wife. Although Faustina was beautiful, she was, to say the very least, lively. Even if one discounts generously everything said about her she was still enough to drive any husband out of his wits. They had two daughters, one of whom died. The other took after her mother and treated her poor husband, Marcus Aurelius, very similarly. Antoninus suffered in silence. When Faustina died he erected a temple and created a foundation for the education of poor girls in her honour. He had only reproached her once in his life. This was when she had just become Empress and wanted a few luxuries. "Don't you realise," he asked her, "that we have now lost everything we had?"

These were not idle words, because the first thing Antoninus did as Emperor was to pour his huge private fortune into the coffers of the State. On his death his personal patrimony was nil, while that of the Empire amounted to two milliards and seven millions of "sestertii," a figure never again to be reached. He achieved this result by judicious but not miserly administration. He revised and reduced Hadrian's reconstruction programme, but did not cancel it. For every item of expenditure, even the most trivial, he used to ask the authorisation of the Senate, to whom he accounted for the last penny. With its approval he also went ahead with the reorganisation and liberalisation of the laws begun by his predecessor. For the first time the rights and duties of married couples were made equal, torture almost completely abolished and the killing of a slave proclaimed a crime.

Unlike the restless and inquisitive Hadrian, he was of a sedentary temperament and respected office hours like a perfect bureaucrat. It does not appear that he ever went, even for one day, any farther than Lanuvium, where he had a villa and where he used to spend the week-end fishing or hunting with his friends. Since he had become a widower he had taken a concubine (much more faithful to him than his wife had ever been), but he kept her secluded and did not let her mix in affairs of State. All he wanted was peace. Perhaps he wanted it a bit too much, that is to say, at the expense of the Empire's prestige. In Germany, for example, he showed excessive docility, thus encouraging the boldness of the rebels. However, there is no foreign writer of the period who does not praise the order and tranquillity which the world enjoyed under him. According to Appian, Antoninus was literally besieged by ambassadors of various countries begging to be annexed to the Empire. Like all happy ones, his reign, although it lasted twenty-three years, produced no history or great events. "The ideal," says Renan, "seemed to have been attained: the world was governed by a father."

At the age of seventy-four Antoninus fell ill. As it was possibly the first time in his life, although the symptom was only a stomach-ache, he felt that his time had come. He already had a Cæsar on hand. The dying Hadrian himself had indicated him in the person of the seventeen-year-old Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus's nephew. He sent for him and said to him in effect: "Now it's up to you." He then ordered his servants to take the gold statue of the goddess Fortuna to Marcus's rooms, gave the duty officer the password for the day ("Equanimity") and said that he wished to be left alone to sleep. He then turned over in bed and actually went to sleep for ever.

At this time (A.D. 161) Marcus was forty. He was one of those rare beings who are born lucky and admit it. "I owe a great debt to the gods," he wrote. "They gave me good grandparents, good parents, a good sister, good teachers and good friends." Amongst the latter had been Hadrian, who used to

visit his house and had taken a great liking to Marcus even as a little boy. The reason for this friendship was their common Spanish origin. The Aurelii also came from Spain where, for their honesty, they had earned the surname of "Verus." When the boy was orphaned at the age of a few months, his grandfather, then consul, had taken care of him. He must have had great faith in this grandson, judging by the number of preceptors he gave him: four for grammar, four for rhetoric, two for jurisprudence, six for philosophy and one for mathematics, a total of seventeen. How the lad ever managed to learn anything it is difficult to imagine. Cornelius Fronto, the rhetorician, was his favourite amongst these pedagogues, but he despised the subject he taught. Legal quibbling and verbosity were the characteristics he admired least in his fellow-countrymen. In philosophy, on the other hand, he took a keen interest. He preferred Stoicism and, not content with studying it deeply, he even wished to practise it. At the age of twelve he had the bed taken out of his room, slept on the bare floor and went on such a strict diet that in the end his health was affected. He did not complain. He merely thanked the gods for having kept him chaste and capable of restraining his sexual impulses until the age of eighteen.

He might have become one of the more puritanical priests of the cult of Stoicism, as was a custom at the time, if Antoninus had not made him "Cæsar" and taken him in to share in the government while still an adolescent. He adopted him, together with Lucius Verus, son of the man whom Hadrian had nominated as his heir but who had died before him. This Lucius was quite a different type. He was worldly and lecherous and was not in the least upset when Antoninus later excluded him and designated Marcus as sole Cæsar. Nevertheless, Marcus, mindful of the wishes of Hadrian, called in Lucius to share the throne and gave him his daughter, Lucilla, in marriage. Unfortunately, loyalty in politics is not always a wise counsellor.

When Marcus was crowned, all the philosophers of the

Empire rejoiced, expecting to see the triumph of their ideas and the foundation of Utopia. They were disillusioned. Marcus was not a great statesman. He knew nothing about economics. For example, he used to get his estimates all wrong and from time to time his accounts needed auditing and checking. However, from the apprenticeship he had served under Antoninus, that enlightened and somewhat sceptical Conservative, he had learned his lesson about men. Knowing that laws are not enough to reform human nature, he, like his two producers, was content to reform the legal code. But he did so half-heartedly, as though he did not have much faith in the improvements that this would bring about. As a moralist he considered a good example more efficacious. He set one by leading an ascetic life which his subjects admired but were not tempted to imitate.

Events did nothing to help him. He had hardly come to the throne when the Britons, the Germans and the Persians, encouraged by the docility of Antoninus, began threatening the frontiers of the Empire. Marcus sent Lucius east with an army but when he got as far as Antioch he met Panthea and stopped. She was a local Cleopatra and Lucius was another Mark Antony, but without the latter's courage and military genius. As soon as he saw this remarkable woman, he lost his head completely. She is said to have contributed to his loss of memory with philtres but if she was really as lovely as she has been described she could not have had any need of them.

Marcus did not protest against this behaviour on the part of Lucius, who continued to linger with Panthea while the Persians overran Syria as they pleased. He discreetly sent an order to Avidius Cassius, his colleague's chief of staff, with instructions to carry it out to the letter. This strategic plan, it is said, revealed great military ability. While Lucius was enjoying himself in Antioch, his army overwhelmingly defeated the Persians. He only resumed command of it to be crowned with laurel on the day of the triumph awarded him. Unfortunately, together with the spoils of the beaten enemy, he

brought his country the germs of the plague. This was a terrible scourge which, in Rome alone, caused the death of over two hundred thousand people. Galen, the most celebrated physician of the time, says that its victims were racked with a hacking cough and covered with pustules. Their breath, too, was malodorous. All Italy was infected by this plague and towns and villages were deserted. People crowded the sanctuaries to implore the protection of the gods. All work ceased and, in the wake of this epidemic, came famine.

The Emperor devoted himself to nursing in the hospital wards. Science at that time could, unfortunately, offer no remedy. To crown these public calamities came private griefs. Faustina, the daughter Antoninus had given him as a wife, was in every way the image of her mother and bore the same name. She was beautiful, gay and unfaithful. Her adulteries were not proven, but they were the talk of Rome. It may be that there was some excuse for her. Her husband, ascetically absorbed in his priestly calling of "first servant of the State," could not have afforded much stimulation to so high-spirited a young woman. Marcus, as courteous as his predecessor and father-in-law, surrounded her with attentions and tenderness and never uttered a word of complaint. In his *Meditations*, in fact, he thanked the gods for having given him such a devoted and affectionate wife. Of the four children born of this marriage, one daughter was dead and the other had become the wretched wife of Lucius, whose one kindness to her was to leave her a widow. The other two were twins whose real father (all Rome said) was a gladiator; one of them died at birth and the other, named Commodus, was already renowned at seven for his beauty and his prowess as an athlete. His aversion to study and his unbridled passion for the Circus, in particular combats with wild animals, were already the despair of his tutors. Marcus, however, adored him.

The mortality caused by the plague and famine had made Rome a gloomy and despondent city. Prematurely aged by all these tribulations before he was fifty and a martyr to insomnia

and what may have been a gastric ulcer, Marcus hardly had time to deal with the problems rapidly succeeding one another. The Germanic tribes now started reaching out towards Hungary and Rumania. When Marcus put himself at the head of the legions many smiled. This gaunt and fragile little vegetarian hardly seemed to bear the mark of a great leader. Yet seldom had the legions fought with such dash as they did under his direct command. This man of peace for six long years fought and defeated one after another the most aggressive of foes, the Quadi, the Longobards, the Marcomanni and the Sarmatians. Nevertheless, alone in his tent after a day of battle, he opened his book of *Meditations* and wrote: "When a spider catches a fly in his web, he thinks he has done something extraordinary. He who captures a Sarmatian thinks the same. What neither of them realises is that they are a couple of petty thieves." This consideration did not, however, deflect him on the following day from another attack upon the Sarmatians.

Marcus was in Bohemia, completing a brilliant series of victories, when Avidius Cassius rebelled in Egypt and proclaimed himself Emperor. This was the ex-chief of staff of Lucius who, by adopting Marcus's plan, had beaten the Persians. Marcus concluded a rapid and generous peace with his enemies, assembled the troops and told them that, if Rome agreed, he was quite willing to abdicate in favour of his rival. He then returned to Rome, where the Senate unanimously declined his offer. While Marcus was advancing towards Cassius, the latter was killed by one of his own officers. Marcus regretted that he had been unable to pardon him. He stopped at Athens for an exchange of views with the local exponents of the various philosophical schools and then returned to Rome. Here he reluctantly submitted to the triumph accorded him and shared it with Commodus who, by now, was famous for his prowess as a gladiator, his cruelty and his filthy language.

Perhaps it was partly to distract him from these practices that Marcus resumed the war against the Germans, taking the boy with him. He was on the verge of final victory when, in

Vienna, he fell ill. For five days he refused to eat or drink. On the sixth he rose, presented Commodus to the assembled troops as their new emperor and begged him to carry forward the frontiers of Rome as far as the Elbe. He then went back to bed, covered his face with the sheet and awaited his death.

His *Meditations*, written in his tent in Greek, have been handed down to us. They are not a great work of literature, but they contain the loftiest moral code left to us by the classical world. When the conscience of Rome was flickering out, this Emperor was its brilliant, final gleam.

44

THE SEVERI

WHEN presenting Commodus to the soldiers as his heir,¹ Marcus had referred to him as the "Rising Sun." To the eyes of his putative father he apparently did appear so. The legionaries, too, approved of the foul-mouthed youth with the appetite as well as the strength of a horse in the belief that he would be more of a soldier than his father. Their dismay can therefore be imagined when, instead of exterminating the enemy caught like rats in a trap, he offered them a hasty and ill-considered peace. Twice these turbulent Germans had been saved by a miracle, miracles for which Rome was later on to pay dearly.

Commodus was by no means a coward but the only battles he really loved were those against gladiators and wild beasts in the arena. On getting up in the morning he declined breakfast until he had slaughtered his daily tiger. As there were no tigers in Germany he was in a hurry to get back to Rome, drawn by those which the governors of the Orient had orders to ship back wholesale. This was why, regardless of the Empire and

¹ The Senate had renounced its right to elect new emperors in favour of that system of adoption which, from Nerva onwards, had worked so well. Now it accepted the restoration of the hereditary principle represented by this new monarch.

its destiny, he signed this disastrous peace which left every problem unsolved.

As in the cases of Nero and Caligula, even discounting most of what his contemporaries have written about him, there is still enough left for us to condemn Commodus as a dangerous character. A gambler, a lecher and a drunkard, he appears only ever to have had one real affection, for a certain Marcia. As she was a Christian, it is rather difficult to reconcile her austere faith with such an association. However, it is possible that it served to protect her co-religionists from persecution.

A crisis arose when informers told Commodus of a plot against him headed by his aunt, his father's sister, Lucilla. Without troubling to seek proof he killed her and inaugurated a new reign of terror. Cleander, the commander of the Prætorian Guard, was appointed to carry it out. For the first time since the days of Domitian, Rome cowered before outrages perpetrated by these troops. Finally, the population, more out of fear than courage, besieged them in the Palace and demanded Cleander's head. Commodus yielded without hesitation and replaced him by Lætus.

Lætus, a wiser man, realised that, once he had accepted the post, he was certain to be killed either by the people for trying to please the Emperor or by the Emperor to please the people. There was only one way out of the dilemma and that was to kill the Emperor first. With Marcia's complicity this was the solution he adopted. Marcia undertook to give her royal lover a poisoned drink but so rugged was his constitution still at thirty that the poison had to be supplemented by strangulation. This was the 31st of December, A.D. 192, and complete anarchy followed.

The senators, delighted at the death of Commodus, acted as though they themselves had been responsible for it and elected as his successor one of their own number, Pertinax, who accepted most reluctantly. To put the financial situation on a sound basis, he had to economise and, to economise, he had to dismiss useless functionaries, including the Prætorian Guard.

After two months he was found dead, murdered by members of the Guard, which then announced that the throne was up for sale to the highest bidder. Didius Julian, an immensely wealthy banker, was peacefully having dinner in his palace when his highly ambitious wife and daughter burst into the room, flung his toga around him and ordered him to hurry off to the auction. Hesitant, but fearing his womenfolk more than the unknown hazards of the throne, Didius offered the Prætorians three millions per man and emerged the winner.

The Senate had sunk pretty low, but not quite so low as to confirm such a transaction. It secretly sent desperate appeals for help to the generals stationed in the provinces. One of these, Septimius Severus, appeared with an offer twice Julian's which was accepted. The banker was shut up, weeping, in a bath-room and there decapitated.

For the first time an African of Jewish origin ascended the throne. Rome had not chosen him. The Senate had, in fact, favoured another general, Albinus. However, by the time Septimius had put to death all his opponents and conclusively transformed the Empire into a hereditary monarchy of a military character, no further objections were raised. It was monstrous that things should have come to this pass, but once they had—and certainly through no fault of Septimius—he had no other choice. A strong hand was needed to restore control and this Septimius possessed. He was a sturdy, handsome man of about fifty, an excellent strategist and a witty talker who did not mince words. Of a well-to-do family, he had studied philosophy at Athens and law at Rome, but still spoke Latin with a marked Phœnician accent. He certainly did not have the moral fibre of an Antoninus or a Marcus Aurelius nor had he the intellectual complexity of a Hadrian. He was, basically, a cynic but a straightforward and honest one with an acute sense of reality. His one aberration was astrology and it was responsible for a marriage which boded ill for Rome. When his first wife, a good and simple woman, died, he was in Syria. The widower immediately consulted the stars and learned that a

meteorite had fallen in the neighbourhood of Emessa. He went there and found that over this celestial fragment a temple had been built, in which it was venerated. The caretakers were a priest and his daughter, Julia Donna, who, as it happened, was of a rare beauty. A first encounter was sufficient to convince Septimius that this was the bride indicated by the stars. She was an intelligent and cultivated woman who, as Empress, presided over a literary salon to which she introduced the customs and fashions of the Orient. Julia frequently deceived her husband, who was too busy to notice. This misfortune was of a purely private nature. What was much more serious was the fact that she gave birth to Caracalla and Geta.

Septimius reigned for seventeen years, only addressing himself to the Senate to issue orders, and spent most of them waging wars. One great, but dangerous novelty which he introduced was that military service was made obligatory for all citizens, with the exception of the Italians, to whom it was forbidden. This was official recognition of the irremediable military decadence of the country. From now on it was to be at the mercy of foreign legions. With these legions Septimius fought a series of successful wars, not merely to reinforce the frontiers but also to keep their garrisons in training. He was just finishing off the latest of them when, in A.D. 211, death laid him low in Britain. The same man who had reproached Marcus Aurelius for designating Commodus as his heir now nominated Caracalla and Geta. Perhaps it was because he too was a father? Or because, having always been far away from them, he did not know them, or simply did not care. To one of his henchmen he once said: "I have got exactly where I wanted. I now realise that it was not worth the trouble." To his two heirs he left the advice: "Never be stingy with your soldiers and everything else will take care of itself."

The advice was unnecessary. Caracalla and Geta cared so little for anything else, including their father, that they ordered the doctors to speed his death.

Of the two Caracalla was the Commodus of the situation

and lost no time in showing it. Discontented with having to share the throne with his brother, he had him murdered, condemned twenty thousand citizens suspected of being his followers to death and, mindful of his father's advice, got on the right side of the discontented soldiery by filling their pockets with sesterces. He was not deliberately wicked, just completely amoral. Every morning, as soon as he woke, he would wrestle with a live bear, at table sit down with a tiger as his companion and at night sleep between the paws of a lion. He would not receive the senators thronging his antechamber but was affable with the soldiers and heaped favours on them. He extended citizenship to all males in the Empire, but only to increase the revenue from death duties. Only citizens were subject to them.

He took little interest in politics, preferring to leave such matters to his mother, who was not without experience but inclined to indulge her personal likes and dislikes. Julia dealt with the correspondence and received in audience ministers and ambassadors while her son studied the career of, and prepared to imitate, Alexander the Great. He recruited a "phalanx," equipped it just like those of his hero and marched off to Persia. In battle, however, he forgot that he was the general. It amused him much more to play the soldier and challenge the enemy to single combat. Finally, the legionaries, bored with much marching on aimless campaigns which produced neither victories nor booty, stabbed him to death.

Julia Donna, having lost everything, husband, throne and sons, was deported to Antioch, where she died of self-starvation. She left, however, a sister, Julia Mesa, who was as cunning and ambitious as herself. Mesa had two grandsons, children of two of her daughters. One was called Varius Avitus and, under the pseudonym of Heliogabalus (meaning "Sun-god"), was a priest at Emessa, the place of origin of the Empress's family. The other, Alexian, was still a baby. Mesa spread the rumour that Heliogabalus was the natural son of Caracalla, and the legionaries in Syria, who had been converted to the local religion, accorded the fourteen-year-old priest their allegiance

as the representative of God. They proclaimed him Emperor and, together with his grandmother and mother, brought him in triumph to Rome. In consequence, one fine day in the spring of A.D. 219, the City witnessed the arrival of the strangest of its "Augusti": a lad completely dressed in red silk, with rouged lips, hennaed eyelashes, a string of pearls round his neck, emerald bracelets and anklets and a diamond crown on his head. Rome acclaimed him nevertheless. By now even the most fantastic of masquerades had lost the power to scandalise.

But the real Emperor was again a woman: Mesa, the sister of Julia. Heliogabalus regarded the throne as a toy and treated it as such. His favourite pastimes seemed innocent enough, harmless pranks, lotteries with unexpected prizes, practical jokes and card games. He did, however, enjoy extravagant living and, as he wanted the best of everything, he spent money like water. He never travelled with less than five hundred wagons in his train and was prepared to spend a fortune on a phial of rare scent. When a seer prophesied that he would die a violent death, he emptied the State coffers to purchase all the most refined instruments of suicide: a gold sword and a whole collection of silk nooses and diamond-encrusted caskets for hemlock. Occasionally he would remember his religious background and have mystical crises. On one occasion he circumcised himself and on another he tried to emasculate himself. He had the famous meteorite of his maternal great-grandfather sent over from Emessa and built a temple for it. He even offered to recognise the religions of the Jews and Christians as the State religion if the former would substitute for Jehovah and the latter for Jesus his precious bauble.

Mesa realised that her grandson was a menace to the dynasty so she persuaded him to adopt his young cousin, Alexian, and to designate him Cæsar under the imposing name of Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander. Then, with the easy detachment characteristic of her family, she had him murdered together with his mother, her own daughter.

It is odd that such a horrible crime should have given rise

to the reign of a saint. Alexander Severus, who was only fourteen, did honour to his name. He studied diligently, slept on a hard couch, ate sparingly, took cold showers even in winter, dressed like anybody else and had only inherited one trait from his predecessor: impartiality towards all religions, with pronounced sympathy for the moral code of the Jews and Christians. He ordered their precept: "Do as you would be done by" to be graven on many public buildings. He used to discuss religious questions with an open mind in theological circles and in this was encouraged by his mother, Mammaea, who had taken the place of Mesa. She had leanings towards Christianity and a respect for the genius of Origen, an ascetic who had moved by way of Stoicism to the new Faith.

Nevertheless, while sympathetic to her son's unworldly interests, Mammaea, counselled by Ulpian, Alexander's old tutor, ruled the earth by him with considerable efficiency. She pursued an intelligent economic policy, reduced the influence of the army and gave back part of its powers to the Senate. She only committed one injustice and this was to her daughter-in-law. Having made her Alexander's wife, Mammaea became jealous of her and had her banished. When the Persians began to renew their threats, she left with her son at the head of the army to drive them back. Alexander, before joining battle, sent the enemy king a letter in which he tried to convince him not to insist on fighting. The latter took this as a sign of weakness, launched his attack and was beaten. Later, Alexander, who sincerely hated war, tried to avoid one with the Germans by meeting their emissaries in Gaul and offering to pay them an annual tribute if they would withdraw.

It was, perhaps, the only mistake he ever made and it cost him dear. The legions, though no longer thirsting for battle, had not yet sunk so low as to buy peace. In indignation they rebelled. Alexander, his mother and all their suite were killed in their tents. Julius Maximinus, the general commanding the army in Pannonia, was proclaimed Emperor in his stead. The year was A.D. 235.

DIOCLETIAN

THE ANARCHY which followed the death of Alexander Severus lasted fifty years, that is, until the time of Diocletian. This period is difficult to treat as part of the history of Rome because of its utter confusion. It even becomes difficult to follow the succession to the throne and there is little hope that the most zealous of readers will remember the names of all those who, after murdering his predecessor, occupied it. A brief note will suffice.

Maximinus was nearly seven feet tall and broad in proportion. His fingers were so big that he used his wife's bracelets as rings. Son of a Thracian peasant, he suffered from such a sense of inferiority because of his general ignorance that during the three years of his reign he never set foot in Rome, preferring the company of the soldiers with whom he had grown up. To finance wars, his only amusement, he taxed the rich so heavily that they set up Gordian, the proconsul of Africa, a cultured and courteous old gentleman of eighty, in opposition to him. Maximinus killed his son in battle and Gordian committed suicide.

His supporters then turned to Maximus and Balbinus, whom they proclaimed co-Emperors. Maximinus was on the point of defeating them both when he was assassinated by his own troops. His rivals were unable to enjoy their advantage since they immediately suffered the same fate at the hands of the Prætorian Guard, who put their own candidate, another Gordian, on the throne. The legionaries in turn disposed of this Gordian as he was leading them against the Persians and elected Philip the Arab who received the same treatment from Decius at Verona.

Decius succeeded in remaining Emperor for two years, a long reign by contemporary standards. He put in hand several radical reforms, including the restoration of the ancient religion in opposition to Christianity, which he wanted to stamp out. He was, however, defeated and killed by the Goths. His place was taken by Gallus, who was assassinated shortly afterwards by his own soldiers. These then proclaimed Æmilianus but, a few months later, turned against him as well.

The next on the throne was the sixty-year-old Valerian, who found himself with five simultaneous wars on his hands: against the Goths, the Alemanni, the Franks, the Scythians and the Persians. He went personally to cope with the Eastern enemies, leaving his son, Gallienus, to deal with the Western ones. Valerian was taken prisoner and thus Gallienus became sole Emperor. Under forty, he had courage, determination and brains. In other times he would have made a magnificent sovereign but by now no human power could fend off catastrophe. The Persians were in Syria, the Scythians in Asia Minor and the Goths in Dalmatia. The Rome of Cæsar, not to mention that of Scipio, would have been able to overcome these simultaneous disasters. That of Gallienus was merely a drifting wreck which could only be saved by a miracle.

In the Orient something like a miracle did actually occur. Odenathus, who governed Palmyra on behalf of Rome, routed the Persians and proclaimed himself King of Cilicia, Armenia and Cappadocia. On his death he left the throne to Zenobia, the greatest queen of the East. With the subtle arts of a woman she combined the mind, courage and steadfastness of a man. Officially she acted in the name of Rome and, as its representative, annexed Egypt; in practice hers was an independent kingdom which had sprung up within the boundaries of the Empire. At the same time, however, it acted as a bulwark against the Sarmatian and Scythian hordes now sweeping down from the north after having already overrun Greece. Gallienus as a result of a close-fought battle managed to hold them off, only to be killed in due course by his own troops. Against his

successor, Claudius II, the barbarians, returning in greater force than before, launched an attack which, had it been successful, would probably have meant the end of Rome itself. So great was the slaughter that it led to a pestilence from which Claudius himself died in A.D. 250.

At this juncture a really great general finally came to the throne. Domitius Aurelian was the son of a poor Illyrian peasant and was called by his soldiers "Hand on the Hilt." He had always been a soldier, but he also had the qualities of a statesman. Realising immediately that he could not take on all these enemies at once, he tried winning over some of them by diplomacy. To the Goths, the most dangerous, he gave Dacia to keep them quiet and then attacked, separately, the Vandals and Alemanni, who had already invaded Italy and whom he routed in three successive battles. He was fully aware, however, that these victories had merely delayed the ultimate catastrophe. This was why he took a measure which sealed the fate of Rome and marked the beginning of the Middle Ages. He ordered all the cities of the Empire to surround themselves with walls and proclaimed that henceforth each was to rely on its own forces. The central power was abdicating.

Nevertheless, this realistic assessment of the future did not deter Aurelian from doing his duty to the utmost. Unwilling to acknowledge Zenobia's *de facto* independence he marched against her and defeated her. Having put her adviser and Prime Minister, Longinus, to death, he took her prisoner in her own capital and brought her to Rome in chains. She was confined in a splendid villa at Tivoli where she grew old in peace and was given a fair measure of freedom. For a moment Rome thought of herself as *caput mundi* again and gave the title of "Restitutor" to Aurelian, who now tried to consolidate his work on a political and moral basis. This strange man, who saw everything with such disillusioned clarity, tried to put an end to the religious conflict which tormented the Empire by creating a new faith which would reconcile the old deities with the new Christian God. He invented the "God of the Sun,"

for whom he had a magnificent temple built. Under him, for the first time, the official religion became monotheistic, in other words, it recognised only one god, even if it was the wrong one. In any case, it was a great step forward towards the final triumph of Christianity. Aurelian claimed to have been invested with the supreme power by this unique god and not by the mere mortals of the Senate. He thus sanctioned the principle of absolute monarchy which proclaims itself such "by divine right"—a principle which was to survive and flourish for a great many centuries.

It did not save Aurelian, however, from the same fate as so many less loftily appointed predecessors. Nor did the Senate apparently take it into account when electing in his place Tacitus, a descendant of the illustrious historian, who only accepted because he was already seventy-five and had nothing to lose. He only survived six months, in fact, and was thus able to die in his bed. After him, in A.D. 266, came Probus, a man of probity by name and nature. Unfortunately for him he was also a dreamer. Having won several minor wars against the Germans, who continued their forays up and down the frontiers, he set his soldiers to reclaiming the land, thinking to settle them on it as peasants. Preferring to live by pillage, they killed him, but immediately repented and raised a monument to his memory.

And so the way was opened for Diocletian, the last real Roman Emperor. The son of a Dalmatian freedman, he had grasped the truth that, for the seeker after power, neither a political nor a military career offered the same advantages as a strategic post in the Palace, and it was from the command of the Prætorian Guard that he ascended the throne. He similarly grasped the truth that, once crowned, it was best to remove himself from the Palace before he met the same violent end as his predecessors, indeed to remove himself from Rome altogether. Almost his first important decision, therefore, was to transfer the capital to Nicomedia in Asia Minor. The Romans were offended, but Diocletian was able to justify the

step on the ground of military necessity: the City was no longer at the centre of the Empire, and the defender of the threatened frontiers had need to be near them. The supreme authority itself was then divided. Diocletian, with the title of Augustus, and the bulk of the army stood guard over the Eastern frontiers, as Valerian had done. To the equivalent duty on the Western frontiers, with headquarters in Milan, he nominated Maximianus, who also bore the title of Augustus. Each of the two "Augusti" chose his own Caesar: Diocletian selected Galerius, who set up his capital at Mitrovizza in what is now Yugoslavia, and Maximianus appointed Constantius Chlorus (so named from the pallor of his face) to exercise control from Trier in Germany. Thus the so-called Tetrarchy was formed, in which Rome had no part, not even a secondary one. She was merely the largest city in an Empire which was becoming less Roman every day. All that remained were the theatres, the circuses, the palaces of the great, the gossip, the intellectual salons and the presumption. The brain and heart had already emigrated elsewhere.

The two Augusti solemnly pledged themselves to abdicate after twenty years in favour of their respective Caesars and, with this in view, married them off to their own daughters. At the same time, however, Diocletian completed the transformation of the State, already begun by Aurelian, into an absolutism which flatly contradicted the nominal decentralisation of power. It was a socialist experiment which included a planned economy, the nationalisation of industry and the multiplication of the bureaucracy. Money was attached to a gold standard which remained unchanged for over a thousand years. The peasants were bound to the land and thus became "slaves of the glebe." Workmen and artisans were "frozen" in hereditary corporations, which none of them could abandon. State supply depots were set up. The system plainly could not work without strict price controls, and these were established in A.D. 301 by means of a famous edict which still remains one of the masterpieces of controlled economy. Everything was foreseen and regulated

except the natural human tendency towards evasion and ingenuity in contriving it. As a counter-measure Diocletian had to increase indefinitely the number of government inspectors. "In this Empire of ours," grumbled the liberal Lactantius, "one out of two citizens is a civil servant." Informers, supervisors and controllers swarmed everywhere. In spite of this, goods were withheld from the State depots and sold on the black market. Desertions from the corporations of arts and crafts became a daily occurrence. Arrests grew so numerous and punishments so heavy that fines drained away the fortunes of millionaires to nothing. Now, for the first time in the history of the City, Roman citizens were seen to cross the "limits" of the Empire (the Iron Curtain of that time) to seek refuge among the "barbarians." Up to then it had been the "barbarians" who had sought refuge within the Empire, regarding its citizenship as the most precious of treasures. It was the beginning of the dissolution.

Nevertheless, constraint was the only remedy that Diocletian could try. Its aim was to lace the Roman world in a steel corset to stop it from falling apart. Although ineffective, it was imposed by circumstances and, in spite of its many shortcomings, it did do some good. Constantius and Galerius, the military chieftains, carried the Roman standards back to Britain and Persia. At home order reigned, even if it resembled the peace of the cemetery. Everything had become sterile and withered. Every trade had become a hereditary caste whose main interest lay in elaborating a complicated and Oriental-sounding title for itself. For the first time the Emperor had a real court with all the ceremonial trimmings. Diocletian proclaimed himself the reincarnation of Jove (Maximianus, more modestly, that of Hercules). He insisted on being addressed as "Dominus" and by and large behaved just like an Emperor of Byzantium some years before the capital was transferred there. However, he did not abuse his absolute powers and being a level-headed man with a sense of humour perhaps inwardly he laughed at them. He was also a shrewd administrator and an impartial judge and,

when his twenty-year term of sovereignty expired, he kept the pledge he had made when he ascended the throne.

In A.D. 305, with a solemn ceremony held simultaneously at Nicomedia and Milan, the two "Augusti" abdicated, each in favour of his own "Cæsar" and son-in-law. Diocletian, who was only fifty-five, retired to the beautiful palace he had built for himself at Split on the Dalmatian coast and never left it again. Some years later, when Maximianus asked him to intervene to put an end to the war of succession which had broken out as a result of the new Tetrarchy, he replied that such an invitation could only have been issued by someone who had never seen how well the cabbages came up in his kitchen garden. He returned a refusal.

Although he lived to the age of sixty-three, nobody has ever known his real opinion of the anarchy which set in immediately after his retirement. He had done everything humanly possible. He had delayed it for twenty years.

46

CONSTANTINE

FLAVIUS VALERIUS CONSTANTINE was the bastard son of Constantius Chlorus, the Cæsar of Maximianus, who was now the new Augustus of Milan. His mother was Helena, an Oriental serving-maid who had been his father's concubine. When Diocletian had made Constantius "Cæsar" at Trier, he had insisted on his getting rid of her and marrying Theodora, the daughter of Maximianus. Young Constantine had not had much of an education from his stepmother, but he had had excellent training in the army, which he had joined as a mere boy. Galerius, the Augustus of Nicomedia, sent for this brilliant young officer with the intention of holding him as a hostage in

case of disagreement with his father, his colleague in Milan. Constantius was supposed to be his subordinate and, as Cæsar, Galerius had imposed Severus on him. For himself he had chosen Maximinus Daia. Constantine, uneasy in Galerius's care, crossed the whole of Europe to join his father in Britain. During this campaign he was of valuable assistance to Constantius until he died some months later at York. The troops, with whom he was highly popular because of his military prowess, acclaimed him Augustus, but Constantine preferred the more modest title of Cæsar. "It leaves me in command of the legions," he said, "without whom my life would not be worth very much." Galerius, the reigning Augustus, reluctantly confirmed the appointment.

In the meantime at Milan two pretenders were disputing the title of Augustus. The rightful claimant should have been Severus, who was already Cæsar. Maxentius, however, the son of Maximianus, with the support of the Prætorian Guard, put forward his own candidature. Fearing that he might not attain his ends by himself, he appealed to his father for help. Maximianus resumed the title he had abdicated simultaneously with Diocletian, and father and son together marched against Severus, who was killed by his soldiers. Galerius, from Nicomedia, tried to settle the dispute by nominating an Augustus of his own, a certain Licinius. This was the cue for Constantine also to proclaim himself Augustus. To add to the general confusion, Maximinus Daia, the Cæsar of Galerius, did likewise. Thus Diocletian, peacefully watering his cabbages at Split, learned that his Tetrarchy had become a Hexarchy, composed entirely of Augusti, all at war with one another.

The end of all this confusion also marked the end of the pagan and the beginning of the Christian era. On the 27th of October A.D. 312, the two major contenders for the throne, Constantine and Maxentius, faced each other with their armies about twelve miles north of Rome. Constantine, by a cunning manœuvre, had trapped Maxentius with his back to the Tiber. Constantine looked up at the sky and, as he later told the

historian Eusebius, saw a fiery cross appear with the following words on it: "In hoc signo vinces," "Under this sign you shall conquer."

That night, in his sleep, a voice echoed in his ears exhorting him to paint the Cross of Christ on the shields of his legionaries. At dawn he issued the necessary orders and, in place of the standard, he raised a "labarum" bearing a cross entwined with the initials of Jesus. The banner flying over the enemy army bore the symbol of the Sun, imposed by Aurelian as the new pagan god. For the first time in the history of Rome a war was fought in the name of religion. The Cross won and, as the Tiber swept the teeming corpses of Maxentius and his soldiers out to sea, it seemed to be sweeping away the last remnants of the ancient world.

Not all was settled, for there were still Licinius and Maximinus to be reckoned with. Constantine met Licinius in Milan in A.D. 313 and the upshot of their interview was the division of the Empire between the two of them as Augusti and the compilation of that famous edict which proclaimed the State's tolerance for all religions alike and restored to the Christians all the property confiscated from them during the recent persecutions. Maximinus died, Licinius married the sister of Constantine and for the moment it seemed that the two emperors were ready for a peaceful Dyarchy.

One year later they were again at daggers drawn. Constantine defeated an army of Licinius in Pannonia and the latter retaliated by resuming the persecutions of the Oriental Christians. Constantine was not yet officially converted, but the Christians, who by now formed the overwhelming majority if not the totality of his army, regarded him as their champion. This army was a hundred and thirty thousand strong and he personally led it against the hundred and sixty thousand defenders of paganism under the orders of Licinius. Twice Constantine won the day, first at Adrianople and then at Scutari. Licinius surrendered and for the moment his life was spared. The following year, however, he was strangled. In this

manner, the Empire was restored in the name of Christ. There was nothing Roman about it except its name.

What, then, had happened? When we last saw the Christians in Rome they were in the infancy of their organisation. They were at first a few hundred, then a few thousand souls, almost all of them Jews, grouped into small "*ecclesiæ*," which had little connection with one another. Their doctrine was still in a state of flux. The Gentiles regarded them with indifference rather than hostility. Their scattered and scanty cells were united by the belief that Jesus was the Son of God, that His return to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth was imminent and that faith in Him would be rewarded by Paradise. Now, however, wide differences of opinion were beginning to creep in over the date of His return. Some people saw its harbingers in the calamities which were befalling the Empire. Tertullian said it was to be expected after the fall of Rome and this seemed to be so imminent that a bishop of Syria, together with his flock, actually set out for the desert, sure of meeting the Lord there. Barnabas, on the other hand, proclaimed that it was not due for another thousand years. Only much later did Saint Paul's theory prevail. This transferred the Kingdom of God to the life beyond the grave. Nevertheless, during this early period, enormous impetus was given to the spreading of the Faith by the expectation of the imminent establishment of the Kingdom, with the immediate promises this implied.

However, there were other points of doctrine which threatened to give rise to definite heresies. Celsus, one of the most violent anti-Christians, wrote that the new religion was divided into sects and that each individual Christian interpreted it as he saw fit. Irenæus gives a list of about twenty of these sects. To obtain a final ruling on what was true and what was false, a central authority was necessary.

The first decision to be taken, at the end of a controversy lasting two centuries, was where its capital was to be situated. The new religion had been born in Jerusalem, but in favour of

Rome there were the words of Jesus: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my Church." The fact that the world was governed from Rome and not from Jerusalem carried more weight than mere argument. Tertullian declares that the dying Peter had entrusted the future of the Church to Linus, but the first certain successor is the third, Clement. A letter from him to the other bishops, couched in authoritative terms, still exists.

These bishops used to meet increasingly often in their Synods and these Synods were the supreme arbiters of the Christian religion, called Catholic because it was universal. The title of Pope only became exclusive to the Supreme Pontiff four centuries later. Up until then it was given to all bishops alike to emphasise their equality.

This was the first primitive organisation which the Church used to fight its war on two fronts: the external one with the State and the internal one with heresy. We do not know which was the more dangerous. We only know that, by the end of the second century, the Church had begun to perturb the Romans so much that Celsus, one of the most cultivated of them, dedicated his whole life to the study of how it functioned and wrote an accurate and extremely well-informed book about it. He is, however, one-sided and vindictive in the conclusions he draws. These boil down to the assumption that a Christian could not be a good citizen. As long as the State was pagan, there was a certain amount of truth in what he said, but the fact remained that paganism no longer had any supporters. Even those who refused to embrace the new Faith had no arguments in defence of the old. Like Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, Plotinus can only be described as a pagan philosopher insofar as he was never baptized. But as in their case, all his morality is already Christian.

Even when they denied the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles, all the great minds of the time pondered deeply over it. Although Tertullian came from Carthage, he had the precise legal mind of the Roman and was a great lawyer. On

his conversion he extracted from the Gospel a practical design for living, drawn up with the precision of the text of a law. This vigorous orator, who spoke like Cicero and wrote like Tacitus, was a quarrelsome and sarcastic character, but he was invaluable to the Church. After so much Greek theology and metaphysics it needed organisers and codifiers. In his frenzy of zeal Tertullian almost ended by becoming a heretic. In his old age he became cantankerous and criticised orthodox Christians for being too lukewarm, indulgent and soft. He embraced the sterner creed of Montanus, a sort of Luther born before his time, who preached the return to a more austere Faith.

Another stalwart propagandist was Origen, the author of over six thousand books and leaflets. When he was only seventeen his father was condemned to death for being a Christian. The boy begged to be allowed to share his martyrdom and, to prevent this, his mother hid his clothes. In his last letter to his father the boy wrote: "Do not, I beg you, renounce your Faith for love of us." He led the life of an ascetic, fasting and sleeping naked on the floor, and in the end emasculated himself. As a matter of fact, Origen was the classic type of Stoic and had his own interpretation of Christianity which for a while was accepted, but not by everybody. Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria, considered it incompatible with his cloth and revoked his ordination. With commendable zeal the unfrocked priest continued to preach and to confute the theories of Celsus in a work which has remained famous. When he was put in prison and tortured, he did not deny his faith and he died, as he had lived, poor and beyond reproach. Two hundred years later his theories were censured by the Church. By then she had the authority to do so.

The Pope who did most to consolidate the organisation of the Church in those first difficult years was Calixtus. Many considered him an adventurer, saying that he had been a slave before his conversion and that he had made money by somewhat dubious methods. They added that, becoming a banker, he had defrauded his clients, had been sentenced to hard

labour and had escaped by subterfuge. The fact that, as soon as he became Pope, he decreed that true repentance was enough to wash away any sin, even a mortal one, may have given credibility to these rumours. Nevertheless, he was a great Pope and he eradicated the heresy of Hippolytus and definitely asserted the authority of the central power. Decius, an implacable enemy of the Christians, used to say that he would rather have a rival Emperor than a Pope like Calixtus in Rome. In many ways, under him, the Papacy really became Roman. From the pagan priests of the City he borrowed the stole, the use of incense, candles on the altar and the architecture of the basilicas. Not all these acquisitions were of a formal nature. The founders of the Church looked with particular attention at the administrative framework of the Empire. They copied it by putting an archbishop by the side of and in opposition to the governor of every province and a bishop by the side of and in opposition to every prefect. As the State began to drift and its political influence waned, the representatives of the Church assumed this influence. By the time Constantine came to the throne, many of the duties of the prefects (who had greatly declined in quality) were carried out by the bishops. It was obvious that the Church was the naturally appointed heir to the crumbling Empire. The Jews had given the Church their ethics, and the Greeks their philosophy; Rome was now giving her her language, her practical and methodical spirit, her liturgy and her hierarchy.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIANS

THANKS to a series of bad novels and even worse films, many people think that Nero is the chief villain as far as persecuting the Christians is concerned. This is a mistake. True, Nero condemned a certain number of Christians to death for the fire of Rome, but with the sole object of turning people's suspicions from himself. It was a purely diversionary manoeuvre and not rooted in any serious resentment on the part of the people or State against this religious community. It was, in fact, one of the most peaceful and, in common with all the others in Rome, it enjoyed a wide measure of tolerance. The City offered hospitality to the gods of all foreigners who came to live there and in this lived up to her name of *caput mundi*. Over three thousand of these gods lived there peacefully together. Even when a foreigner applied for citizenship there were no religious conditions attached.

Discord first arose when it was laid down that the Emperor had to be recognised as a god and worshipped as such. For the pagans this offered no difficulty at all. Their Olympus was so full of gods that one more, whether he was called Caracalla or Commodus, made no difference. On the other hand, the Jews and the Christians (the police could never tell the difference between them) only worshipped one God and were not prepared to compromise over Him. As a result, even before Nero, a law had been passed exempting them from this gesture, for them tantamount to abjuration. Nero and his successors had scant regard for the law and this gave rise to the first misunderstanding, which laid bare other and deeper differences. It was not by mere chance that Celsus, the first to make a serious study of the Christians, said that refusal to worship the Emperor was,

substantially, a refusal to submit to the State, of which, in Rome, religion was merely an instrument. He also discovered that the Christians placed Christ above Cæsar and that their moral code was in violent contrast to that of Rome, which regarded the gods as the foremost servants of the State. Tertullian, in reply, agreed with him, saying that the superiority of Christianity lay precisely in this and that his accusations were well founded. He went even further. He declared that it was the duty of a Christian to disobey a law which he found unjust.

As long as only philosophers were concerned in this debate it merely gave rise to wrangling but when the Christians had increased in numbers and their conduct attracted the attention of the people, the latter began to nurture mistrust of them and this feeling was cunningly played upon by propagandists. The same technique has since been widely used against the Jews. People began to say that they practised exorcisms and magic, that they drank human blood, that they worshipped an ass and had the Evil Eye. The cry of "Down with the anointers" was raised and the atmosphere of the pogrom and witch-hunt was created.

After Nero's time aversion towards them developed into a mounting tide of hate. The law which established the death penalty for professing the new faith was not merely due to the whim of some emperor but was the result of an upsurge of collective animosity. As a matter of fact, most emperors tried to evade this law or to apply it with indulgence. Trajan wrote to Pliny praising his lenience: "I approve of your methods. An accused man who denies being a Christian and proves it by an act of submission to our gods should most certainly be acquitted." Hadrian, as a good sceptic, went one better. He granted pardon for a simple gesture of formal repentance. Nevertheless, it is difficult to stand up against a wave of popular hatred, especially when it breaks out on the occasion of some calamity. These were regularly put down to the indignation of the gods for the tolerance shown towards the irreverent Christians. In Rome the pagan religion was dead but super-

stition was still very much alive. The poor devils were held to account for every earthquake, pestilence or famine. Even the saintly Marcus Aurelius, whose reign abounded in catastrophes, could not resist these outbursts and was compelled to yield. Attalus, Potinus and Polycarp were among the most illustrious of these martyrs.

Persecution began to be systematic under Septimius Severus, who declared baptism a crime. By this time, however, the Christians were strong enough to react and did so with a propaganda campaign which defined Rome as the "New Babylon," took a favourable view of its destruction and proclaimed that military service was incompatible with the new faith. It was an open incitement to defeatism and aroused the ire of those patriots who were unwilling to fight for the Fatherland, threatened by external enemies, but who were inexorable with internal, unarmed adversaries. Decius thought that this wave of indignation could be exploited to reinforce national unity and pandered to it. He organised a great ceremony of homage to the gods and gave solemn warning that the names would be taken of all those who did not attend. Many apostasies were caused by fear, but there were many acts of heroism, rewarded by torture. Tertullian had said: "Do not weep for the martyrs. They are our seed." A terrible and merciless truth. Six years later, under Valerian, the Pope himself, Sixtus II, was put to death.

The greatest battle was against Diocletian. It is curious that such a great emperor did not see the uselessness or, rather, the contrary effect of such an action. It appears that a fit of temper was responsible for this. One day, when he was officiating as Supreme Pontiff, the Christians around him made the sign of the Cross. Irritated, Diocletian ordered all his subjects, civilian and military, to repeat the sacrifice. Whoever refused was to be flogged. The refusals were numerous and the Emperor gave orders that all Christian churches be razed to the ground, all their goods confiscated, their books burned and their members killed.

These orders were still being carried out when he retired to Split. Here he had time to spare for meditating on the results of his persecution. The Christians came through with flying colours and thus definitely confirmed their triumph. The *Acts of the Martyrs*, which describes, possibly with some exaggeration, the tortures and deaths of the Christians who did not abjure their faith was a formidable propaganda weapon. It spread the conviction that the Lord rendered insensible to sufferings all those who endured them in His name and flung open to them the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We cannot say whether or not Constantine was convinced of this when he had the Cross of Christ stamped on his "labarum." His mother was a Christian, but had not had much say in his education. This the boy had picked up among the soldiers in camp, where he had been surrounded by pagan philosophers and orators. Even after his conversion, he continued to bless the armies and harvests according to the pagan ritual. He rarely went to church and, to a friend who asked him the secret of his success, he replied: "It is Fortune that makes an emperor of a man." He was high-handed in his dealings with priests and only gave them a free hand in theological matters, not because he recognised their authority but because he had not the slightest interest in such questions. According to contemporary Christians like Eusebius, who had the best of motives for being grateful to him, he was little short of a saint. The more objective opinion is that he was a cool, calculating, far-sighted politician with a good deal of common sense. Having personally observed the failure of persecution, he preferred to abandon it.

It is also very probable that this appraisal of the situation was influenced by other, more complex factors. He must have been greatly impressed by the superior morality of the Christians, by the decency of their lives and by the revolution they had brought about in the habits of an Empire now devoid of morals. By this time, if one wanted to find a good writer, a reliable lawyer or an honest and efficient official, one had to

look for him among the Christians. One could honestly say that there was no city in which the bishop was not a better man than the prefect. Could not, perhaps, these aged and corrupt bureaucrats be replaced by the irreproachable prelates and could not the latter be made the backbone of a new Empire? Revolutions are not successful because of their ideas, but when they succeed in producing a ruling class better than that of their predecessors. This was just what Christianity had succeeded in doing.

Constantine began by giving the bishops the powers of judges in their own districts or dioceses. Then he exempted Church property from taxation and recognised the association of the faithful as "juridical bodies." He had his son baptized and gave him a priest as tutor. Finally, he revoked the Edict of Milan, which guaranteed complete tolerance to all religions on an equal basis, and gave supremacy to Catholicism which, from that moment onwards, became the State religion. The decrees of the Synod were now binding on all citizens.

Acting more as Pope than as monarch, Constantine summoned the first Œcumenical (universal) Council of the Church to settle the internal dissensions which were rending it. Out of State funds he provided the means for three hundred and eighteen bishops and innumerable lesser prelates to travel to Nicea, near Nicomedia. There were serious problems to be solved. A number of ascetic extremists had seceded from the priesthood because, in their eyes, it was too inclined to compromise and too attached to worldly goods. They had started a monastic movement.

Almost at the same time Donatus, the Bishop of Carthage, had launched a proposal which immediately gained supporters, that priests who during the persecutions had abjured out of fear and those who had been baptized by them should be dismissed. The proposal was rejected but gave rise to a schism which was to last for centuries. The greatest danger, however, was Arius, a preacher from Alexandria, who attacked the doctrine at its very foundations by denying the consubstantiality

of Christ with God. His bishop had excommunicated him, but Arius continued to preach and win proselytes. Constantine sent for the two litigants and tried to act as mediator between them so as to get them to come to a compromise. This attempt failed and the rift had widened and deepened. This was the main reason why the Council had become necessary.

As Pope Silvester I was too old and ill to attend, Athanasius brought the action against Arius, who replied with courage and honesty. He was a poor, sincere, melancholy man, who erred in good faith. Of the three hundred and eighteen bishops, only two supported him to the end and were excommunicated with him. Constantine was present at all the hearings, but only rarely intervened to exhort the contestants to calm and clear thinking when the argument became heated. When the verdict confirmed the divinity of Christ, and condemned Arius, he drew up an edict which banished the heretic and his two supporters, ordered his books to be publicly burnt and established the death penalty for anybody guilty of concealing them.

Constantine wound up the Council by offering a great banquet to the participants and then set about organising his new capital which, with a solemn ceremony, he dedicated to the Virgin. He called it "New Rome" but posterity, in his honour, named it Constantinople.

We do not know whether he realised that the transfer of the capital virtually meant the end of the Roman Empire and would give rise to a new one. This would, indeed, continue to call itself Roman, but Italy would be reduced to the status of a province with Rome as its capital.

Constantine was a strange and complex personality. Publicly he made a great display of Christian fervour but in family matters he did not show nearly as much subservience to the teachings of Jesus. True, he sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to pull down the temple of Aphrodite, which profane Roman governors had built over the tomb of the Redeemer. (Eusebius says the Cross on which He had died was found here.)

Immediately afterwards, however, he had his wife, son and nephew put to death.

He had been married twice: first to Minervina, who had borne him Crispus, a brilliant officer who had covered himself with honours during the campaigns against Licinius, and then to Fausta, the daughter of Maximianus, who had given him three boys and three girls. It appears that Fausta, to get Crispus excluded from the succession, denounced him to the Emperor for having tried to seduce her. Hereupon Helena, who had a weakness for Crispus, told Constantine that Fausta had been the one to seduce her stepson. To make quite sure of things, the Emperor gave short shrift to both. As for his nephew Licinianus, the son of his sister Constantia and Licinius, Constantine is said to have put him to death for conspiracy.

One does not read a word of all this in the *Life of Constantine*, written as a panegyric by Eusebius. Logically he aimed at extolling the virtues of the man who had raised a persecuted sect up to be the Church of the Empire. Constantine was not the saint his biographer makes him out to be. He may have been a great general, a wise administrator and a statesman of vision, but he, too, made mistakes.

On Easter Day, A.D. 337, on the thirtieth anniversary of his coming to the throne, he realised that his end was near. He asked for a priest and received the sacraments. Then, putting off the Imperial purple he dressed in the white robe worn by those about to be baptized and calmly awaited death.

CONSTANTINE'S HERITAGE

CONSTANTINE was the only successor of Augustus to remain on the throne for over thirty years but he ruined his great work of reconstruction by the most absurd of wills. It divided the Empire into five portions and these were assigned to his three sons, Constantine, Constantius and Constans, and his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalian.

This, to us, is astonishing, since he must have seen the strife caused by Diocletian's division and the evils it had stirred up. Even so, once he had made up his mind, he might at least have taken the precaution of giving his three sons names which distinguished them a little better.

The garrison regiments of the capital somewhat simplified the historians' task by weeding out some of the rivals. No sooner was Constantine's corpse lowered into its grave than they rebelled and indulged in a massacre in which two of the five heirs, Dalmatius and Hannibalian, perished. They also killed the half-brothers of the dead man and all their sons except two. These were Gallus and Julian, who were banished and of whom we shall hear more presently. An unspecified number of important officials suffered the same fate at the hands of the soldiery. Constantinople had hardly been built when that series of slaughters which were to punctuate its history was inaugurated.

Did Constantius really give orders for this butchery, as he was later said to have done? It is hard to say. He is known to have been in the city when it took place, he did nothing to prevent it and he was the one who stood to gain the most from it. He arranged a meeting with his two brothers at Smyrna and with them agreed on a second partition. For himself he

kept all the Orient, with Constantinople and Thrace; to Constans, the youngest, he gave Italy, Illyria, Africa, Macedonia and Achæa, but submitted him to a sort of vassalage to Constantine II, whose share was all Gaul.

If Constantius had designed this clause for the purpose of stirring up rivalry between the two so as to remain arbiter of the situation himself he succeeded only in part. Within three years they were at war. In the first battle Constantine, who was of an impetuous temperament, incautiously advanced too far, fell into an ambush and was killed. Constans lost no time in annexing all his possessions. Constantius, who was perhaps hoping for a long war which would have exhausted both contenders, was left with only one rival, but this rival was now stronger than he was.

Once again fortune came to his aid in the form of a plot against Constans. Since he was a good general, the latter was winning battle after battle against the rebels in Gaul. As a statesman, however, he was inferior. He oppressed his subjects with taxes, irritated them by his obstinacy and scandalised them by his habits. Magnentius, a commander of the barbarian militia, murdered him and proclaimed himself Emperor. Vetranio, who commanded the troops in Illyria, and Nepotianus, the nephew of the dead man, promptly issued similar proclamations on their own behalf.

Constantius now had a legitimate excuse for intervening in the West to see that justice was done. At this moment he had just concluded an armistice with Sapor, King of Persia, who up till now had been giving trouble and had been keeping his armies tied up. However, he was now free to lead them against the usurpers. He accompanied his military initiative with a cunning piece of diplomacy, an art in which he excelled. Vetranio, duped, met and joined forces with him on the plain of Serdica, where he knelt and begged his pardon. This was granted and Vetranio was given promotion and some decorations. The two armies then marched together against Magnentius, defeated him in Hungary and pursued him into Spain.

Here he was driven to commit suicide, together with his brother, Decentius, and the Empire was thus reunited under a single ruler.

Unlike his father, Constantius was not a great general. He disliked wars and tried to avoid them. However, when he had to go to war he made a thorough though cautious business of it and risked his life courageously. He had a strict sense of duty and performed it regardless of sacrifice and expense. He was a solitary and suspicious man, gloomy and silent. He had no enthusiasm or human warmth and was neither vicious nor self-indulgent. In many respects he resembled Philip II of Spain and Franz Josef of Austria. Like them, he was pious, but he did not add the two other theological virtues to his faith: hope and charity. He was, in fact, a pessimist and incapable of indulgence. He believed that it was very often necessary to burn a body in order to save a soul. He had been married three times, not for love, but because he wanted an heir. None of his three wives had produced one and now he found himself without a successor. His two brothers had also been too busy to see to the matter and the only survivors of the once numerous progeny of Constantine were the two boys who had weathered the massacre of A.D. 337, Gallus and Julian.

They had been leading a dreary, lonesome existence for years in a small Cappadocian town under the tutelage of Eusebius, an Arian bishop, who seems also to have been somewhat deficient in charity. Their mother, Basilina, was already dead when Gallus, then ten, and Julian, six, had witnessed the slaughter of their father, uncles, cousins and household servants. Both of them learned later that, directly or indirectly, Constantius had been responsible for the massacre and here he was suddenly taking an interest in them.

Constantius chose Gallus, the elder, who from one day to the next found himself the husband of Constantina, sister to the Emperor. He was immediately nominated Cæsar and enthroned at Antioch with almost absolute powers. Being notoriously of limited mental capacity, he lost his head in this

abrupt change in his circumstances. What he had seen as a boy had led him to believe that murder and treachery were the normal course of events and in self-defence he took the least suspicion for proven fact and put all suspects to death. Before Constantius had time to realise the mistake he had made, Gallus had murdered not only single individuals but entire populations. Fearing that, if he deposed Gallus, he might provoke him to open rebellion, the Emperor pretended to notice nothing; he kept on friendly terms with him and invited him to Milan, where he happened to be at the time. Somewhat worried, Gallus first sent Constantina to discover Constantius's intentions, but she died on the journey. Gallus then had to go in person but, when he got to Pannonia, he was arrested by a detachment of soldiers and taken to the same castle in Pola where Constantine had had his first-born, Crispus, put to death. A summary trial was held which went very smoothly, thanks to the well-remunerated evidence of a court eunuch, and the death sentence was carried out on the spot.

Constantius, once more without an heir, was getting old. The day he decided to get rid of Gallus he had also sent Julian back into confinement, suspecting that he might have been his brother's accomplice. However, he was the only one who still had the blood of Constantine in his veins and, having no other choice, Constantius after much hesitation sent for him and proclaimed him Cæsar.

The result at once turned out to be excellent. Julian had the reputation of being an idler who was only interested in literature and philosophy, but, as soon as he was given any responsibility, he discharged it brilliantly. When the Emperor handed over to him the western provinces, then in open rebellion, he had never seen a barracks. At first Julian let the generals handle matters, but studied their moves very carefully. Then he took effective command of the troops, confronted the hordes of Franks and Alemanni, who had slipped across the Rhine, and wiped them out. He then subdued the rebellion of the natives and re-established Imperial authority over

Britain. Never had the title of Cæsar been given more appropriately.

Unfortunately, the Persian King, Sapor, chose this moment to resume hostilities and, to fend off this threat, Constantius asked Julian to send him part of his army. Julian, who had taken a liking to soldiering, obeyed, but with reluctance. We do not know how much of an effort he made to conceal his ill-humour at being parted from his troops. The fact remains that they were sure of interpreting his wishes correctly when they refused to obey and even acclaimed him Emperor. Julian hastily wrote to Constantius disclaiming all responsibility for this disobedience. When Constantius replied that he would pardon him if he would renounce the title and make an act of submission to him, instead of agreeing Julian marched against him at the head of his army.

The war never took place because Constantius, who had already marched forth, died on the way. When his will was opened, everybody was completely dumbfounded to find that he had nominated as his sole heir the man he had set out to defeat and whom, had he succeeded, he would probably have killed. As usual, reasons of State had outweighed sentiment. Realising that the ingrate was a great politician, he had made him his successor. Julian returned the compliment by giving him a solemn funeral, going into mourning and shedding tears over his coffin.

Rivers of ink have flowed on the subject of Julian, as if those he himself poured out were not more than sufficient. He could not stop writing and had a mania for proclamations, panegyrics and semi-political, semi-philosophical essays. Possibly the importance of this emperor, who only ruled twenty months, has been overrated.

The reason that such a fuss has always been made about him is that the intention of replacing Christianity with paganism has been attributed to him. Already Constantius had had to devote the greater part of his time to religious questions. Apart from being Emperor, he had, in fact, acted as Pope, intervening

in the internal quarrels of the Church between Donatists, Arians and Meletians. He was a Christian and a fervent one too, but, more like a pagan, he considered the Church an instrument of the State and, under the excuse of protecting it, meant to keep it under his control.

The same interest in religion was manifested by Julian, but his point of view was diametrically opposed to that of Constantius and earned him the title of "Apostate." There is no doubt that Bishop Eusebius was largely to blame for Julian's dislike of the new faith. As his tutor, he had not spared the cane during lessons on the catechism. The only human affection he had felt during his confinement in Nicomedia was for Mardonius, an old Scythian servant, who used to read him Homer and the Greek philosophers. We do not know whether Mardonius was pagan or Christian. We only know for certain that he was steeped in the classics and that he transmitted his love of them to his master and pupil. Looking around him, Julian did not think much of the Christians he saw. He was doubtless not a profound thinker. A glance at his writings is enough to convince one of this. At times his reasoning is quite incoherent. He had an excellent memory, but understood nothing of art. He used to get worked up about the details of philosophical problems of secondary importance and lose the thread of the main ones, and delighted in high-flown quotations. He was bound to confuse the Church with its second-rate pastors and to take an equal dislike to both. However, the idea attributed to him, which he may really have cherished, that of the return of paganism, does not redound to his intelligence as a politician. Any return in politics is likely to prove a mistake.

The famous "Apostasy" of Julian was mainly a question of agnosticism. He took no interest in the heresies which continued to rend the Church and it is probable that he welcomed them. He granted freedom of worship to the Jews and permitted them to rebuild the temple of Solomon. When its framework was destroyed by an earthquake, Christian writers naturally claimed

that it was the punishment of Heaven. It has been said that he actually encouraged the celebration of the ancient pagan rites, but this has never been proved. In any case, he could not have got much satisfaction out of it because either people did not co-operate or did so half-heartedly and without enthusiasm. At Alexandria, Bishop Georgius was killed by the pagans and at Antioch the temple of Apollo was burnt down by the Christians. In neither case did Julian take disciplinary action. He desired to be impartial.

It is impossible to say where this reactionary religious policy would have carried him if Sapor had not compelled him to take up arms again. He prepared for the difficult and dangerous expedition with his usual care, mustering a huge army and fitting out a fleet of a thousand ships to sail down the Tigris. The first encounters went well for him but the city of Ctesiphon, with its formidable fortifications, held out and he was eventually forced to retire. But, the ships being unable to sail upstream, Julian gave orders for them to be burnt. Although it was the only course open to him, this decision demoralised and angered the soldiers. The countryside was poor, stony, sun-scorched and hostile. The Persian cavalry harassed their march and inflicted heavy casualties with their darts. One of these wounded Julian in the liver. The Emperor, trying to pluck it out with his hands, enlarged the wound and started a fatal hæmorrhage. Realising that his last hours had come, he called two philosopher friends, Maximus and Priscus, to his bedside and calmly discussed with them the immortality of the soul. They say that, at a certain point, he put his hand in the wound and, flicking a few drops of blood into the air, angrily exclaimed: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" However, it is uncertain whether this is true.

AMBROSE AND THEODOSIUS

JULIAN's successor was chosen by the army from among its own officers as it continued to retreat. This was natural considering the gravity of the emergency. The man elected was a certain Jovian who was destined to accomplish one action only as Emperor. It was a stupid and cowardly one. He concluded a hasty peace which gave Armenia and Mesopotamia to the Persians as fruits of a victory they had not won. Thereupon Jovian fell ill and died before reaching the capital.

Again the army halted to elect a new emperor and this time their choice fell on Valentinian, an excellent general who was the son of a Pannonian ropemaker. It is said that Julian had previously debarred him because he would not renounce Christianity. Overwhelmed by the load of responsibilities which his accession heaped on his shoulders, he divided them equally with his brother. To Valens he left Constantinople and the eastern provinces, keeping for himself the western ones of which Milan was now the capital. This was in A.D. 364.

Both brothers were immediately faced by two major problems. Valens had to deal with the revolt of Procopius who, as Julian's only relative, put himself at the head of the troops in Cappadocia and had himself proclaimed Emperor. Procopius was defeated, taken prisoner and beheaded. Valentinian had to cope with the Alemanni. They had been frightened of Julian because he had beaten them soundly but on the news of his death they began invading Gaul again. The Emperor encircled them on the Rhine and wiped them out. He then sent his best general, Theodosius, to Britain where he re-established order by trouncing the Saxons and Scots. This worthy soldier,

however, was ill-rewarded for the services he had rendered. On being sent to Africa to put down disorders there he fell victim to the intrigues of certain corrupt and libellous officials. He was accused of treason, condemned to death and beheaded.

Valentinian, who had also been duped, certainly made this mistake in good faith. His mind was not exactly brilliant but he had common sense and a resolute and straightforward character. Unfortunately he was subject to fits of anger and in outbursts of fury he made the two greatest mistakes of his life. Signing Theodosius's death warrant was one, and the other resulted in his own demise. One day when he flew into a violent rage with the rebellious Quadi he dropped dead from a stroke.

It was now November of A.D. 365 and this time the question of the succession was already settled. Eight years previously Valentinian had appointed as his colleague his son Gratian, whom he had married at the age of fifteen to Constantia, the posthumous daughter of Constantius, whose widow had later married Procopius. Although she was widowed a second time, she had had another child, Valentinian II. To put it more clearly, Valentinian had, apart from his brother Valens, to whom he had given the eastern part of the Empire, a son named Gratian. This boy had married Constantia, the daughter of the Emperor Constantius. Her mother, Justina, on becoming a widow, had married the usurper Procopius by whom she had a son, Valentinian. This second Valentinian was therefore half-brother to Constantia.

Now this Justina was a highly ambitious woman. She had schemed and intrigued so much that she had managed to get Valentinian to appoint as his colleague not only Gratian but also Valentinian II. At the time he was only four years old. Thus, on the death of the Emperor, Valens remained at Constantinople while young Gratian ascended the throne of Milan. Gratian was regent for Valentinian II until such time as he was old enough to share in the government.

It was an awkward moment because just then hordes of

Huns, the most terrible barbarians of all, were sweeping down from Russia. They had already run up against the Goths, who formed a federation under their king, Hermanric, on the eastern confines of the Empire. In terror Hermanric asked Valens to annex them, promising in return to act as his outposts. Valens, after much hesitation, accepted, but soon thought better of it when he saw these new subjects, some two or three hundred thousand strong, indulging in their customary pillage and brigandage. He had been on the point of renewing the war against the Persians but had to postpone his plans and hasten to Adrianople, which had been occupied by the troublesome Goths. Instead of waiting for his nephew Gratian, who was due to arrive from the north, thus gripping the enemy in a vice, Valens attacked on his own and lost all his army. He himself was wounded and was burnt alive in a hut to which his attendants had taken him.

Gratian did not dare attack alone. Although he was only twenty he had already proved to be a good general. He now showed good sense. He retired cautiously and stationed his forces in defence of Illyria and Italy. Realising that he could not share the responsibilities of the Empire with his infant half-brother-in-law, Valentinian II, he decided to appoint a colleague for the East. He very wisely chose the general Theodosius, son of the one whom Valentinian had unjustly executed in Africa, and entrusted the eastern Empire to him.

In the meanwhile another very important personage had appeared on the scene. This was Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, now venerated as a saint by the Italians and the Lombards in particular. Originally he had not been a priest nor had he been educated in a seminary. He was a first-class civil servant and until A.D. 374 had been governor of Liguria and Æmilia. In this capacity he had had to arbitrate in the controversies which had raged between Arians and Catholics in those dioceses. He had done so well that on the death of Bishop Ausentius, an Arian, he was appointed as his successor. At the time he had not even been baptized and the choice appeared highly irregular.

Nevertheless, Valentinian I, who had a high opinion of him, confirmed it. In the course of a few days Ambrose received the sacraments, Holy Orders and his mitre.

A man of immense ability and enjoying the complete confidence of Valentinian, the new bishop gave invaluable assistance to his sovereign in carrying on the struggle against paganism and the Arian heresy. This heresy, after the death of Valens who had been ensnared by it, no longer commanded many supporters. Theodosius, who may have owed his appointment largely to Ambrose, was a zealous executor of orders in religious matters. Paganism was more or less exterminated. Within and without the Christian faith Catholicism had triumphed.

Unfortunately, on the strictly political side, things did not go so well. Magnus Maximus, the Governor of Britain, contemptuously critical of Gratian, rebelled against him. The insurrection had supporters even at the young Emperor's court, which at the moment happened to be in Paris. He was stabbed whilst trying to escape. Maximus hypocritically deplored the incident in a letter to Theodosius. In this he proposed leaving Italy to Valentinian II under the regency of his mother and Ambrose, and ruling over the western provinces himself.

Theodosius was an honest man but slow in coming to a decision; his enemies said that he could never make up his mind. The death of Gratian, the friend and colleague to whom he owed so much, had angered him. However, under the circumstances in which the Empire now found itself, with the Goths giving trouble and the Huns and Persians at the gates, he rejected the idea of a war. Instead he sent a vague and dilatory reply which Maximus took to be favourable. Forgetting the accusations of servility he had made against Gratian, Maximus, to curry favour with Ambrose, displayed great zeal in the struggle against the heretics. Nevertheless, in spite of his undertaking to Valentinian II he coveted Italy. With the excuse of reinforcing the frontier garrisons he managed to send there various military units which were loyal to him. Things would

certainly have ended up in another regicide if Justina, in alarm, had not hastened to Theodosius, taking her son with her as well as her daughter Galla, who was already a famous beauty.

Theodosius fell in love with her at first sight and was persuaded to punish the usurper, a thing which political calculation had failed to do. The battle was fought in Pannonia and the defeated Maximus was beheaded. Theodosius married Galla and escorted his mother-in-law and young brother-in-law back to Milan. He spent some time with them there, thus seeing a sort of precedent for the tutelage of the Western Empire by that of the East.

In the meantime Ambrose had continued to wage war on heresy. The Arians, who had been put out of action by Theodosius in Constantinople, were protected by Justina in Italy and she had educated Valentinian in accordance with their teachings. She now demanded that at least one church should be granted to them. Ambrose refused and Valentinian sentenced him to banishment. Ambrose did not budge; sanctity proved compatible with obstinacy. Immediately after this other sensational events took place. The Christians of Callinico burnt down a synagogue. Theodosius, who was still in Milan, ordered it to be rebuilt at the expense of the guilty parties. Ambrose went to demand the annulment of the order and, as he was not received, he resorted to the pen: "I am writing to you so that you may hearken to me in your palace. Otherwise, I will make you hearken to me in my Church. . . ."

What had happened to the world that a priest could take the liberty of passing judgment on the supreme head of a state of which, until quite recently, he himself had been no more than an official? Had Theodosius been Valentinian I he, too, might have expired of rage. As it was, he yielded in silence. Soon afterwards he had to take action against the Thessalonians for massacring some guards who had been guilty of arresting a charioteer idolised by the public. True, his treatment was somewhat harsh but this time it was not a question of religion.

Nevertheless, even on this occasion, Ambrose denounced the Emperor from the pulpit, refused to receive him and forbade him to enter a church until he had done solemn and humble penance. It was the triumph of spiritual over temporal power and a special hymn was composed to celebrate it: the "*Te Deum laudamus*."

Paganism made one more effort with Arbogast, a Frankish chieftain, who had remained faithful to it and who had rendered signal services to the Empire under Gratian. He was now commander of Valentinian's guards but he despised this youth who knelt before Ambrose and kissed his ring. One day the young Emperor was found dead in his bed. Arbogast said that he had committed suicide but did not try to take his place. He realised that the Roman Empire, decadent though it was, had not yet reached the point of accepting a barbarian like himself on the throne. Instead he installed Flavius Eugenius, head of the civil service, keeping the command of the army for himself.

Theodosius did not immediately react but waited two years before meting out punishment. During this period Arbogast forced Eugenius to pursue a policy of tolerance and co-existence between the two religions but had in the end to conclude that paganism could not be resurrected even by force.

In A.D. 394 the Emperor and the usurper went to war. Flavius and Arbogast, who waited for the enemy in Italy, dotted the passes of the Eastern Alps with statues of Jove who, armed with golden thunderbolts, thus made his final appearance among men. Theodosius, before setting out, had gone to the desert of Thebais to visit an anchorite who prophesied his victory. Each of the two armies had, so to speak, mobilised its own god. In fact, the battle was decided by a sort of meteorological miracle: an extremely violent north wind blew into the faces of the Flavians, almost blinding them. Jove, Arbogast and Eugenius were all overtaken by the same disaster. Though nominally the battle was won by the Roman Emperor

Theodosius in the name of Jesus, the real authors of the victory were pagan Goths under the command of Alaric.

The victorious Theodosius entered Milan and died there of dropsy. This Roman emperor was not yet fifty and had never been to Rome, which by now was isolated from major politics. He had been a good sovereign but not a great one, loyal and honest, though somewhat vacillating and timid.

He left two sons: Arcadius aged eighteen, and Honorius aged eleven.

50

THE END

THE Western Empire, which fell to the lot of young Honorius, had already been regarded by Theodosius as a satellite of the Eastern Empire. A bishop had placed it under the spiritual tutelage of the Church and for self-preservation it had had to accept pagan barbarian peoples within its own boundaries, peoples who were completely ignorant of the concept of the State and the rights of citizens. Furthermore, it was crumbling internally. No longer garrisoned by the army, which foreign wars drew away to the frontiers, the little towns of the provinces relied increasingly for their defence on minor lordlings who kept their own private armies. These were called "Potentes" and, as the Central Authority became progressively weaker, so did their independence increase. From Diocletian onwards this trend was facilitated by legislation which divided society into rigid categories. The peasant had become a mere serf of the glebe, irrevocably bound to the land and his master. Similarly the artisan was bound to his trade. By now everyone was born to his own unchangeable destiny. Anyone who abandoned farm or workshop was doomed to starvation because, even if he avoided arrest by the police when the hue and cry had been

raised, he could not find another job. Even the rich, if they transferred or lost their riches, had to continue paying taxes. Otherwise they ended up in prison.

These laws, grotesque as they may seem, were imposed by circumstances. Crumbling skeletons have to be put in plaster. The plaster does not prevent their decomposition but it retards it. The new dispensation, however, meant the end of Rome, of her civilisation, of her juridical order, which had made every man the master of his own fate and all men equal in the eyes of the law. It was the end of that Rome whose citizens had been not just subjects, but the principal actors. The Middle Ages had begun. The lordling supplants the State, to which he stands up with increasing success, until he splits it up into a myriad of feudal domains, each headed by its own heavily armed Seigneur. Under his rod of iron there is an amorphous mass of defenceless dependants, left to their own devices and deprived of all their rights, even that of changing their jobs or abodes.

The eleven-year-old Honorius, heir to this tottering edifice, was upheld by the general Stilicho. He was a Vandal, a barbarian of German stock, and his appointment shows the level to which the Romans were reduced. Of all the officers in the army only he possessed the necessary qualities of loyalty, courage and shrewdness. Before Theodosius was even cold in his grave the situation which arose between Milan and Constantinople enabled him to give proof of them. Although the late Emperor had divided the Empire into two, he had omitted to state which provinces were to belong to which half. Arcadius, who had inherited the throne of the East and whose equivalent of Stilicho was a certain Rufinus, regarded Dacia and Macedonia as his own perquisites. A dispute broke out between the two capitals. Alaric who, in spite of promises, had never been rewarded for the help he had given to Theodosius during the war against Arbogast, marched on Constantinople. He would certainly have laid waste to it had not Rufinus persuaded him that Greece was better worth conquering. The

Empire, incapable of self-defence, saved its capital at the expense of the provinces.

The only man to be indignant was the barbarian Stilicho. At the request of Arcadius he sent a detachment of troops to Constantinople but gave orders for their commander, another barbarian named Gaina, to kill Rufinus. These orders were duly carried out and the Court Chamberlain, Eutropius, an enemy of the dead man, was appointed in his place. It was thus possible for the two Imperial brothers to come to an agreement. Stilicho at once took advantage of this situation to settle with the Goths, who were ravaging the Peloponnese. He had already bottled them up in the Isthmus of Corinth when Constantinople, jealous of a Western success, made an alliance with them and ordered the general to withdraw. Stilicho was furious but obeyed. One reason was that just at this moment Africa, with the secret connivance of Arcadius and Eutropius, had revolted, whilst fresh waves of barbarians were pouring into the Balkans. Furthermore, Alaric, the ally of Constantinople, having marched through Albania and Dalmatia, had debouched into the Po Valley itself. The unfortunate Vandal general, the only one who still believed in the Empire and served it faithfully, was forced to spend his days in the saddle, galloping from place to place to stop the gaps which were continually opening. He returned to Italy and defeated Alaric but did not destroy his forces. His idea was to make an alliance with him to beat off other more overwhelming enemies. Unable to rely on Milan which, being without natural defences, was at the mercy of anybody, he transferred the capital to Ravenna, an unimportant town surrounded by malarial marshes which made its siege impossible. This was in the year A.D. 403.

The transfer was effected just in time to avoid invasion by another race of Goths. These were called Ostrogoths to distinguish them from the Visigoths of Alaric. They crossed the Alps and swept down the peninsula, overrunning it as far south as Tuscany. It was the first time since the days of Hannibal that Italy had had to swallow such an affront. Stilicho took a year

to muster his troops and only in A.D. 406 did he raise enough to surprise and exterminate the Ostrogoths at Fiesole. Simultaneously Vandals, Alani and Suevi broke through the Roman defences at Mayence and entered Gaul. A usurper called Constantine also crossed to Gaul from Britain and put the barbarians to flight, but instead of retreating to where they had come from they overran Spain. All the fairest provinces of the West were virtually lost and Italy was isolated.

In this chaos, which was enough to make anybody lose his head, the only man to keep his clear was Stilicho. Whilst negotiating the help of Alaric, he attempted to mobilise the Italians. The latter not only refused to help but accused him of capitulation before the barbarians. Seeing that they refused to supply him with soldiers, he had nothing with which to defend Rome. Honorius, alarmed and quite oblivious of the signal services his faithful captain had rendered him these last ten years, gave orders for his arrest. Stilicho could easily have rebelled since the few troops the Empire possessed were loyal to him alone, but he had too much respect for authority to do so. He was murdered in a church in Ravenna. This was perhaps the most stupid, ignoble and catastrophic crime ever committed in the name of Rome. It not only deprived the Empire of its most able servant but made abundantly clear to such of the barbarians as were still faithful to it the depths to which it had sunk. These barbarians were the élite of the army and the civil service, and it was they who kept the standards aloft. They believed in the prestige of Rome, and Rome, by the murder of Stilicho, destroyed this prestige with her own hands.

From now on everything went from bad to worse. Instead of coming to Italy as an ally, Alaric came as a conqueror. He offered terms to Honorius, who rejected them with a haughtiness which might have seemed noble had it been accompanied by some act of courage. As things were, it merely seemed ridiculous bravado, coming from a man safely tucked away in his stronghold at Ravenna. Defended by little more than his army of mosquitoes, he abandoned the rest of Italy to the

enemy. Alaric marched straight on Rome and laid siege to it. The world held its breath. What next? How dared anyone besiege Rome?

When the City surrendered without striking a blow, Alaric himself seems to have been awe-stricken. He forbade his soldiers to enter and went in alone and unarmed to ask the Senate to depose Honorius. The Senate, by now only a figurehead, immediately agreed. The following year, however, he returned and, since Honorius had not left the throne, he quartered his whole army on the City. Nevertheless, he prevented, or tried to prevent, his troops from pillaging. Amazed and frightened at their own audacity, the barbarians explored the City. In the German forests whence their ancestors had come Rome had always been looked upon as a fabulous and unattainable mirage. Far from despoiling, they were despoiled by a people who had forgotten how to fight but had learned to steal. Even the victorious Alaric became a prisoner once he had set eyes on Galla Placidia, the beautiful daughter of Theodosius, sister to Honorius and Arcadius. From that moment the King obeyed by all the Goths was at the beck and call of a queen. He took her with him, treating her with all the deference due to her rank, on his last venture, an expedition to Africa. Whilst preparations were being made for it on the Calabrian coast, he died at Cosenza. His soldiers had a huge magnificent underground tomb built for him. Then, lest anyone should learn the secret and violate it, they massacred all the slaves who had been employed in its construction. His wife's brother, Adolphus, was proclaimed his successor. He was an extremely handsome young man, who for some time had been Galla Placidia's lover.

The violation of Rome in A.D. 410 and the preference of a princess of the blood royal for the unadorned tent of a barbarian chieftain rather than the sophisticated Imperial Court plunged the whole world into dismay. The pagans attributed it to the vengeance of the gods for the treachery of mankind. The Christians, who had struggled with Rome for four centuries,

suddenly felt bereaved by her fall and saw in it the sign for the coming of the Antichrist. "The source of our tears has dried up," mourned Saint Jerome.

Only Honorius did not seem to care. Hidden away in the marshes of Ravenna, he refused his consent to the marriage of Galla and Adolphus. Regardless of the chaos into which Italy was rapidly falling, he continued to vegetate until A.D. 423, when he died in the flower of his misspent youth. Some time before Adolphus, too, had been killed, stabbed to death by a barbarian, and Galla had returned a widow. Honorius forced her to marry Constantius, an elderly general, and, having no heir of his own, designated Valentinian III, the son born of this marriage, as his successor.

In Constantinople Arcadius was also dead and had left a small boy, Theodosius II, on the throne. At this juncture it is tragi-comical to see the two halves of the Empire, both of them under the threat of the same disaster, indulging in futile quarrels over their boundaries. With the whole Empire already in the hands of the barbarians, the two Roman Emperors, first cousins, were disputing the theoretical sovereignty over provinces already out of their hands. In Africa alone Rome gave one final sign of pride and courage. Here Boniface, a general who had already been condemned for high treason, and Bishop Augustine were being besieged by Genseric's Vandals at Hippo. It was at the height of the battle, in which he fell, that the prelate completed his crowning work: *The City of God*.

The increasing ascendancy of the Germanic over the Roman element is symbolised and summed up by the vicissitudes of the Imperial family. Valentinian III was on the throne of Ravenna but the power behind it was Placidia. She had chosen as her right-hand man Ætius, another barbarian and a worthy successor to Stilicho. Having shown that she had no faith in the Romans as husbands, one can well imagine how little she had in them as generals and statesmen. When Attila appeared on the horizon with his terrible Huns, she made her daughter

Honorius do what she herself had done with Adolphus—offer herself to him as a wife.

Attila, however, was not Alaric. Instead of losing his head over Honorius, he demanded the most exorbitant dowries: all Gaul. This was the finest province of the Empire and, although the Imperial sovereignty over it was purely theoretical, the Court of Ravenna could not give it up. Attila overran it nevertheless and Ætius was compelled to take up arms against him. To raise the necessary army he had to perform a miracle of diplomacy; he managed to enlist the aid of Theodoric, King of the Visigoths. The titanic battle was fought on the Catalaunian Fields near Troyes. The Romans won, but they were Roman in name only. It was merely a question of the defeat of barbarians by barbarians. Even the commander-in-chief of the victors was himself a Romanised barbarian. He remained master of the field but did not pursue the enemy, who retired in good order. Was he not strong enough or did he hope to make allies of them as Stilicho had been able to do with the Goths?

In A.D. 452 Attila reappeared. This time, instead of attacking Gaul, he marched on Italy. Valentinian who, on the death of his mother, had taken over the reins of government, did not wish to repeat Honorius's undignified mistake of leaving Rome to its fate. Against the advice of Ætius, who counselled him to escape to the Orient (partly in order to get rid of him), he moved to Rome to share its destiny. Here he came to an agreement with Pope Leo I to send a delegation of senators to Attila, by now encamped on the Mincio.

Legend tells us that Attila was intimidated by the threat of excommunication if he dared attack Rome. As he was a pagan it is hard to see what possible effect this could have had on him. The fact remains, however, that, instead of crossing the Apennines, he recrossed the Alps. The following year he died. Of the vast ephemeral Empire that he had founded, stretching from Russia to the Po, nothing remained. Not even his people. They were dispersed and rapidly absorbed by the Slav and

Germanic populations among whom they had set up their camps as overlords.

For Italy and Europe the end of this dangerous enemy was a great relief. For Ætius, who had remained barricaded in Ravenna and had not collaborated, it was a bitter blow. Valentinian, who had always resented this arrogant servant, took the opportunity of getting rid of him (just as Honorius had got rid of Stilicho). One day, during an argument, he ran him through with his sword. It was another fatal mistake. Immediately all the barbarians encamped throughout the provinces arose and, though they had accepted a theoretical vassalage, one of them killed Valentinian himself on the Campus Martius. This was the signal for Genseric, King of the Vandals. The master of Africa now arrived with his army, proclaiming himself the Emperor's avenger. What he really wanted was to put his son, Huneric, in the dead man's place by marrying him to Eudocia, Valentinian's daughter. The wedding actually took place, but while the soldiery were celebrating it by systematically sacking the City (thus giving the word Vandal the meaning we all know), in Gaul Theodoric II named a new emperor, a protégé of his named Avitus.

Genseric hastened back to Africa taking with him the spoils of war: a daughter-in-law, her mother (the widow of Valentinian), the latter's other daughter, Placidia, and some thousands of highly placed Romans, including a few dozen senators. This meant that he now regarded Rome as his own private domain. On arrival home he fitted out a fleet and occupied Sicily, Corsica and southern Italy.

Avitus also had a great general in his service, a barbarian, of course. This was Ricimer, a man of the same calibre as Stilicho and Ætius. Ricimer defeated the enemy in a great naval battle and then deposed Avitus. Avitus took comfort in the Faith and had himself consecrated Bishop of Piacenza. Only four years later, in A.D. 473, did he designate Majorian as his successor.

Avitus only did this in an attempt to discipline the Vandals,

the Visigoths and all the other barbarians who had been taking advantage of the fact that there was no emperor to proclaim themselves formally independent. It did little good. The barbarians continued to do just what they liked. Majorian attempted an expedition against Genseric, who destroyed his fleet by treachery. Ricimer, furious that Majorian wanted to rule in earnest, had him killed and replaced him with Libius Severus, a more malleable character. Genseric, however, had other views. Having given up the idea of putting his son, Huneric, the husband of Eudocia, on the throne, he was now supporting the senator Anicius Olybrius, who had married Placidia, the sister of his daughter-in-law. He now began a new war against Rome or, rather, he intensified the one he had been waging against her for years.

To defend himself Ricimer resorted to Constantinople. Severus had died and so, to gain the support of the capital of the East, he offered the throne to her nominee. This was Procopius Anthemius, who came to Italy and was crowned in A.D. 467. Anthemius now fitted out a fleet of a thousand ships and launched them against the Tunisian coast with a hundred thousand men under the command of the General Basiliscus. On landing, all Basiliscus did was to offer a five days' truce to Genseric, who profited by it to attack and set fire to his ships. The general has been accused of treachery. Actually, the treachery had been on the part of the Court of Constantinople which had made a secret alliance with the king of the Vandals. Genseric then went over to the offensive and sacked Rome for the third time. Ricimer accepted Olybrius as emperor but they both died in that same year (A.D. 472).

The Vandals now tried to put Glycerius on the throne, but Constantinople refused to recognise him and appointed Julius Nepos in his stead. In order to keep him out of the clutches of Genseric, they bought a disastrous peace from him, recognising his suzerainty not only over all Africa, but also over Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and the Balearics. The following year Euricus, King of the Visigoths, obtained Spain in return for his

CONCLUSION

neutrality. Burgundians, Alemanni and Rugii divided up the rest of Gaul and the Western Empire was reduced to Italy alone. Nepos ordered the general Orestes to disband the army which he could no longer afford to keep. The barbarians who composed it mutinied. Orestes took command and Nepos fled to join Glycerius in Dalmatia, the same Glycerius he himself had banished after usurping his throne.

Orestes proclaimed his own son, Romulus Augustus, as emperor. By the irony of fate this boy, who was destined to be the last Emperor of Rome, had the same name as the first. The triumphant barbarian soldiers now claimed lands in the heart of the peninsula itself. Some wanted the Po Valley, others Emilia, others Tuscany. Odoacer, one of their officers, headed a rebellion and attacked, defeated and killed Orestes at Pavia. Romulus Augustus, whom historians have called "Augustulus," or "the little Augustus," to distinguish him from "the Great," was deposed and confined in the Castel dell'Uovo at Naples with a princely allowance. Odoacer then sent the Insignia of Empire to the Eastern Emperor, Zeno, saying that from now onwards he intended governing Italy as his second in command.

This time it really was the end. Even the name had gone. The eagles had flown and the Middle Ages were beginning.

51

CONCLUSION

THIS, too, is the end of our story. Rome, like all great Empires, was not overthrown by external enemies but undermined by internal decay. The actual moment of its fall does not date from the deposition of Romulus Augustulus, but from the adoption of Christianity as the official State religion and the transfer of the capital to Constantinople. This double event opened a new chapter for Rome.

Most historians maintain that the catastrophe had two prime causes: Christianity and the pressure of the barbarians from north and east. We do not believe this. Christianity destroyed nothing. It merely buried a corpse, the corpse of a religion in which nobody any longer believed. It then filled the gap thus created. A religion is not important just because it builds temples and performs certain rites but because of the code of moral conduct to which it gives rise. Formerly paganism had supplied this code, but, by the time Christ was born, it had already become obsolete. Consciously or unconsciously, mankind awaited another. It was not the rise of the new Faith which caused the decline of the old. It was the decline of the old which favoured the rise of the new. The extremely perspicacious Tertullian said so openly. According to him, the whole pagan world was already on its death-bed and the sooner it was buried the better for everybody.

As for enemies, Rome had been accustomed to coping with them for a thousand years. She fought them and won. The Visigoths, Vandals and Huns were no fiercer nor were they better warriors than the Cimbrii, the Teutons and Gauls who crossed the Alps only to be met and destroyed by Cæsar and Marius. Nothing warrants the belief that Attila was a greater general than Hannibal, who beat the Romans in ten battles and still lost the war. Attila merely found himself up against a Roman army composed entirely of Germans, officers included. (Gallienus had forbidden even senators to serve in the army.) Rome was already occupied and garrisoned by foreign soldiery. The so-called "invasion" was only a changing of the guard between barbarians.

This military crisis was the result of a more complex decadence of a mainly biological nature. It had begun among the upper classes in Rome (in Naples they say "fish always begins to stink at the head") with the loosening of family ties and the spread of birth-control and abortive practices. The proud old aristocracy had been one of the greatest ruling classes the world has ever seen. For centuries it had set an example

CONCLUSION

of integrity, courage, patriotism, in short of the "Roman character." After the Punic Wars and, more so, after Cæsar, it began to set an example of self-indulgence and vice. True, the families which composed the aristocracy had been decimated by political persecutions and wars in which their offspring had sacrificed themselves nobly. The main reason, however, why they became extinct was the lack of children. Great reformers like Cæsar and Vespasian tried to replace them with more solid dynasties of country gentlemen from the provinces. These, in their turn, also became corrupt and the second generation were degenerate dandies of the type who would have been recognisable in the twentieth century.

This bad example was quick to spread. Already in the days of Tiberius there were State contributions to peasants to encourage them to have large families. Already, quite apart from plagues and wars, birth-control was also practised in the country where the population was thinning out. Pertinax offered abandoned farms free to anybody who guaranteed to cultivate them. Foreigners poured into this material void, which was the result of a moral void. They came in, especially from the East, in such overwhelming numbers that Rome had no time to absorb and weld them into a new and vital society. The process of assimilation had worked well up to Cæsar's time. He had invited the Gauls to participate in the life of the City and had made them citizens, civil servants, officers and even senators. This, however, was impossible with the Germans, refractory as they were to classical civilisation. As for the Orientals, they were a disaster. They fitted into the civilisation, but only to corrupt it.

Politically, the result of all this was the despotism introduced by Tiberius. Only in a few cases was it enlightened. It is silly to criticise Tiberius and throw all the blame on him for the catastrophe. Despotism is always an evil but there are situations which render it necessary. Rome was in one of these when Cæsar initiated it. Brutus, his murderer, if he was not inspired by vulgar ambition, was certainly a poor devil who thought he

could cure the dread disease by stamping out the symptoms while leaving the germ. Even the planned socialist experiment of Diocletian was an evil which solved no problem. Circumstances made it necessary as a last desperate resort.

To take a long view of events and to try to explain them, one might say that Rome was created for a mission, that she accomplished it and died on its completion. This mission was to embody all the civilisations which had preceded her (those of Greece, the Orient, Egypt and Carthage), to fuse them into one and then to spread the resulting amalgam all over Europe and the Mediterranean basin. She did not contribute much in the fields of philosophy, art or science. She did, however, provide the roads along which they travelled, the armies to defend them, a formidable legal code to ensure their orderly development, and a language to render them universal. Neither did she invent a political system. Monarchies and republics, aristocracies and democracies, liberalism and despotism, had all been tried before. Rome created models of them and in all of them her practical, systematic genius is clearly to be seen.

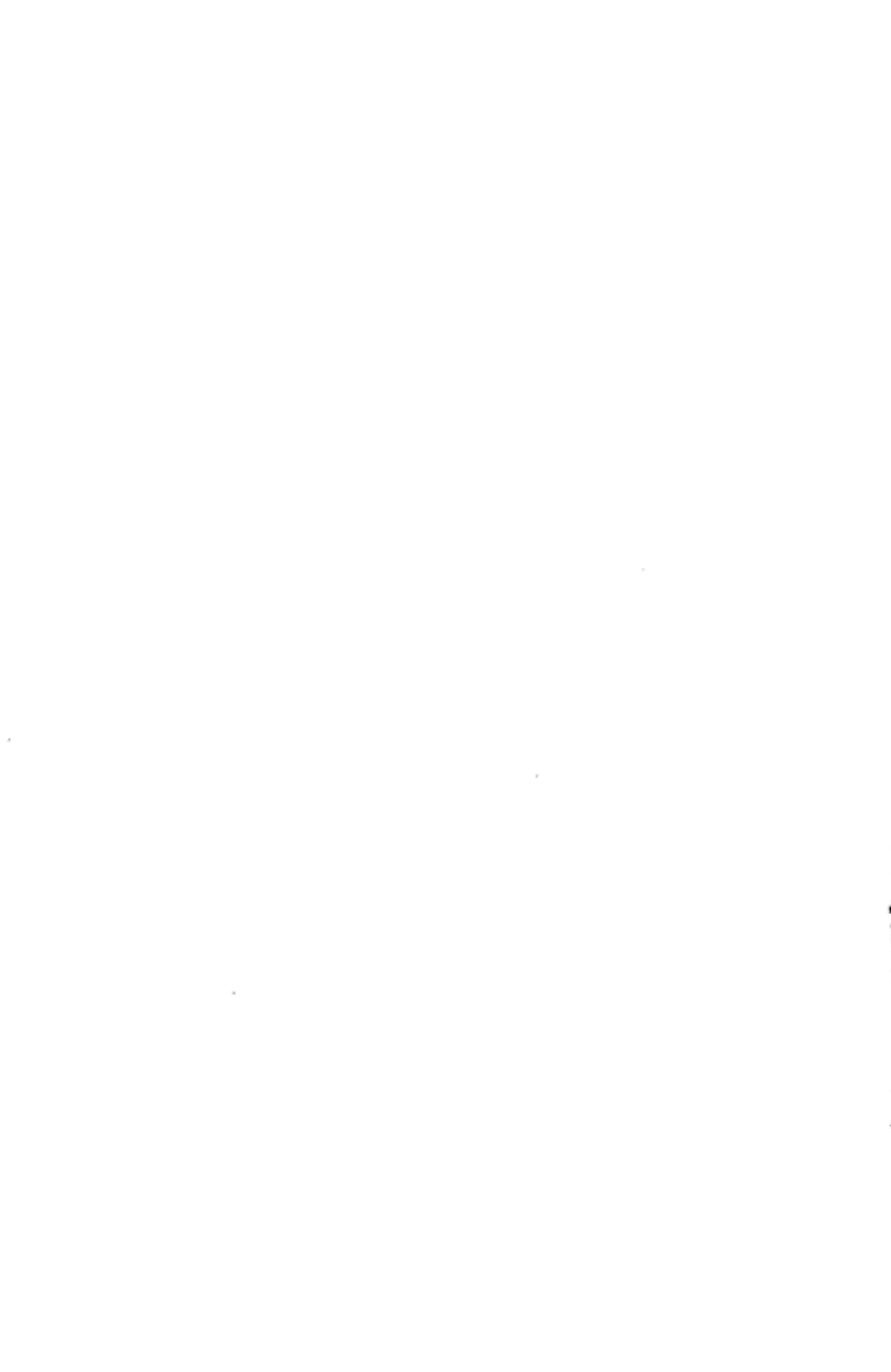
When Constantine abdicated, she passed on her administrative structure to Constantinople which, in accordance with it, lasted another thousand years. Even Christianity, in order to triumph throughout the world, had to become Roman. Peter himself was well aware that the missionaries of Jesus could only conquer the earth if they took the Appian, Cassian, Aurelian and other highways built by Roman engineers and avoided those unreliable tracks which merely led to the desert. His successors called themselves Supreme Pontiffs like those who had presided over the religious affairs of the Pagan city. To mitigate the austere Hebrew ritual, they introduced many pagan elements into the new liturgy, such as the splendour and pageantry of certain ceremonies, the Latin tongue and even a hint of polytheism in the veneration of the Saints.

Thus, as the hub of Christianity and no longer as the political capital of an Empire, Rome prepared to resume her

CONCLUSION

position as *caput mundi*. This she was to remain until the Reformation.

No city in the world has ever lived such a wonderful adventure. Her history is so great that even the gigantic crimes with which it is strewn pale into insignificance. Perhaps one of the troubles about Italy is that it has for its capital a city whose name and past are out of all proportion to the unassuming nature of its present inhabitants. When they shout: "Forza Roma!" they are merely cheering for a local football team.



Brief Chronological Table

Chapters 1 to 6

- 753 B.C.-510 B.C. Founding of the City by Romulus. Romulus is succeeded by other Kings: Numa Pompilius, Tullus Hostilius, Ancus Martius and the Tarquins who are finally expelled and the Republic established in 510 B.C.

Chapters 7 to 11

- 493 B.C.-264 B.C. Rome expands over the Italian mainland.

Chapters 12 to 18

- 264 B.C.-146 B.C. The Wars against Carthage. Regulus, Fabius, Cato, the Scipios.

Chapters 19 to 22

- 133 B.C.-79 B.C. The Gracchi, Marius, Sulla. The Civil Wars.

Chapters 23 to 28

- 70 B.C.-30 B.C. The last years of the Republic. Pompey, Cicero, Caesar, Mark Antony.

Chapters 29 to 36

- 30 B.C.-A.D. 68 The Julio-Claudian Emperors: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero. The beginning of Christianity.

Chapters 37 to 40

- A.D. 69-96 The Flavian Emperors: Vespasian, Titus, Domitian.

Chapters 41 to 43

- A.D. 96-180 The Golden Age of the Empire. Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius.

Chapter 44

- A.D. 180-235 Decline of the Empire. Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Heliogabalus, Alexander Severus.

ROME: THE FIRST THOUSAND YEARS

	Chapters 45 to 48
A.D. 284-337	Diocletian and Constantine. The Division of the Empire and the Establishment of Christianity.
	Chapters 48 to 50
A.D. 337-476	Final Decline and Collapse of the Western Empire.

Index

- ABEONA, 70
 Abortion, 273, 281
 Abruzzi, 60, 121
 Acca Larentia, 12
 Achaean League, 131, 134
Acta Diurna, 197, 294
 Acte, 252, 258
 Actium, 227-228
 Actors, 146, 149, 293-294
 Adolphus, 362, 363, 364
 Adrianople, 333, 354
 Adriatic Sea, 62, 113, 115
 Aediles, 75
 Aedui, 202
 Aemilianus, 326
 Aeneas, 11, 14
Aeneid (Virgil), 235
 Aequi, 34, 54, 55, 56, 58
 Aesculapius, 86
 Aesop, Claudius, 293
 Aetius, 363, 364, 365
 Aetolian League, 131, 132, 133
 Afranius, 209
 Agathocles of Syracuse, 106
 Agrarian reforms, 156, 158, 160, 214, 287
 Agricola, 279, 302
 Agriculture, 31-32, 90, 99, 153-154, 156, 158, 287-289
 Agrigento, 108, 109, 155
 Agrippa, Marcus, 225, 227, 228, 229, 231-232, 233, 242
 Agrippa, Menenius, 54
 Agrippina, 242, 243, 244, 249, 250-251, 252-253
 Aix-en-Provence, 163
 Alani, 361
 Alaric the Goth, 358, 360, 361-362
 Alba Longa, 11-12, 16, 24, 30, 46
 Albania, 208, 360
 Alemanni, 326, 327, 348, 352
 Alesia, 203
 Alexander the Great, 99, 129-130, 131
 Alexandria, 211, 225, 226, 228, 351
 Alps, 117-118
 "Ambarvalia," 88
 Ambrose, Saint, 354-355, 356-357
Amphitryon (Plautus), 148
 Amulius, 12, 13
 Amusements, 96, 146-150, 293-298
 Ancestor spirits, 69
 Ancus Martius, 28, 30, 34, 35
 Andrew, Saint, 267
Andria (Terence), 148
Annals (Ennius), 147
 Anthemius, Procopius, 366
 Antinopolis, 309
 Antinous, 309
 Antioch, 226, 269, 270, 315, 322, 347, 351
 Antiochus, King, 127, 133, 140
 Antipater, 130-131
 Antonia (mother of Germanicus), 242, 243, 245, 246
 Antoninus, Titus, 310, 311-313, 314, 315
 Antonius, Lucius, 225, 226
 Anzio, 254
 Apennines, 61, 62
 Apicius, 286-287
 "Apollo of Veii," 23
 Apollodorus (architect), 301, 307
 Appianus, 161
 Appian Way, 66, 91
 Appius Claudius, 58-59, 64, 66, 108-109
 Appius Claudius the Blind, 75, 83, 90, 91
 Apulia, 61, 155
 Aqueducts, 90, 291
 Arbogast, 357
 Arcadius, 359-360, 363
 Archelaus, 264
 Archimedes, 122
 Archites, 62
 Ardea, 56, 57
 Arezzo, 20, 24, 45, 46, 260
 Arians, 354-355, 356
 Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, 168
 Ariovistus, 198, 199
 Arius, 342-343
 Armenia, 302, 306, 352
 Arminius, 233
 Army, 29, 33, 40, 73-74, 77, 113, 163, 173, 276; Carthaginian, 103
 Arpino, 188
 Ascanius, 11
 Ascoli Satriano, 64
 Asia Minor, 168, 170-171, 211, 228, 308
 Athanasius, 343

INDEX

- Athens, 131, 132, 134, 150, 170-171, 226, 228, 237, 317
 Atticus, Titus Pomponius, 179, 182, 215, 235
 Attila, 363-365, 368
 Augurs, 22-23, 83-84
 Augustine, Saint, 363
 Augustus, 230-234, 235-237, 239, 241, 261, 264, 293, 297. *See also* Octavian; Octavius
 Augustus, Romulus, 367
 Aurelian, Domitius, 327-328, 333
 Aurelius, Marcus, 311, 313-318, 340
 Avari, 202
 Aventine Hill, 13, 72
 Avitus, 365
- BAAL-HAMAN, 102
 Bacchus, 85
 Balbinus, 325
 Balbus, 214, 215
 Balearic Islands, 104, 366
 Banking and finance, 176, 185, 291-293
 Banquets, 286-287
 Barnabas, Saint, 334
 Basiliscus, 366
 Baths, public, 90, 285-286
 Belgians, 199
 Benevento, 62, 64
 Bibulus, 195
 Birth-control, 138, 233, 273, 368, 369
 Bishops, 335, 342
 Blossius, 155
 Boccus, king of the Moors, 167, 168
 Bohemia, 317
 Boiano, 61
 Bologna, 15
 Boniface (governor of Africa), 363
 Boxing, 21
 Brennus, 56, 57
 Brindisi, 66, 171, 207, 208, 226, 234, 235
 Britain, 201-204, 247-248, 308, 321, 330, 332, 349, 352
 Britannicus, 251
 Bronzes, Etruscan, 23
 Brothels, 283
 Brutus, Decimus, 202
 Brutus, Lucius Junius, 41-42, 47
 Brutus, Marcus Junius, 210, 215, 216-219, 223-224, 237, 369
 Building, 289
 Bull-fights, 21, 296
 Burrus Afranius, 249, 250, 251, 254
- CADIVS GORGES, 61
 Cæpio, Servilius, 162
 Cæsar, Julius, 148, 162, 163, 166, 173, 176, 185, 187, 189, 190-219, 220-221, 224, 225, 296, 368, 369
 Cæsarion, 211, 212, 216, 226, 228
 Cæsonia, 245, 246
 Calendar, 88
 Calends, 88
 Caligula, 244-246, 247, 249, 294
 Calixtus, Pope, 336-337
 Callinico, 356
 Calpurnia, 196, 204, 212, 215, 217
 Camillus, Marcus Furius, 56, 57-58
 Campania, 59, 61
 Canne, 120, 121, 122, 123, 132, 145
 Canuleian Law, 66
 Cape Bon, 110
 Cape Colonne, 62, 63
 Caphus, 65
 Capitol, the, 17, 56-57, 90, 217-218
 Capitoline, Manlius, 56
 Cappadocia, 168, 352
 Capri, 243, 244, 260
 Capua, 24, 60, 62, 121, 122, 123, 125, 184
 Caractacus, 248
 Carinthia, 162
 Carneades, 150, 151
 Carrhæ, 203
 Cartagena, 123
 Carthage, 50, 68, 98-104, 105-143
 Cassini, 262
 Cassius, Avidius, 315, 317
 Cassius, Caius, 210, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 223-224
 Cassius, Dion, 245, 250, 279, 305
 Cassius, Spurius, 50
 Cassivellaunus, 202
 Castel Gandolfo, 16
 Castel Sant'Angelo, 310
 Castor and Pollux, 47, 86
 Catacombs, 274
 Catalaunian Fields, 364
 Catalina, Lucius Sergius, 186-188
 Catholics, 335, 354, 355
 Cato, Marcus, 190, 199-200, 201, 205, 206, 208, 210, 212, 213, 219
 Cato, Marcus Porcius ("the Censor"), 75, 134, 135, 136, 137-145, 144, 147, 151, 179, 181
 Cattle-breeding, 288
 Catullus, 152, 180, 181, 201
 Catulus, Lutatius, 111-112
 "Caudine forks," 61
 Celius, 180-181
 Celius, Marcus, 181, 212
 Celsus, 272, 334, 335, 336, 338

INDEX

Cenabi, 202
 Censors, 75-76, 80
 "Centuria" (army division), 29, 39, 40,
 43, 73, 74, 77, 78, 169
 Ceres, 70, 86
 Cethegus (praetor), 187
 Chaeceas, Cassius, 245
 Chariot races, 295
 Children, 67-73, 282-283
 Chiusi, 42, 45, 46, 48, 56, 120, 260
 Christ, 254, 263, 264-269, 271, 334, 335
 Christianity, Christians, 254-255, 267-
 274, 275, 280, 298, 323, 324, 328, 333-
 337, 338-344, 349-351, 354-355, 356,
 362-363, 367-368, 370
 Chrysogenes, 177
 Chrysostom, Dion, 300
 Cicero, 142, 147, 148, 151, 158, 176,
 177, 178, 182, 185, 186-189, 192, 195,
 200, 201, 204, 206, 207, 212, 218,
 222, 223
 Cilicia, 178
 Cimbrii, 162-164, 168
 Cincinnatus, 55, 81
 Cineas, 64, 81
 Cinna, Cornelius, 169-170, 171
 Cinna, Elvius, 182
 Circuses, 96, 294-298
 Cisalpine Gaul, 115, 118, 196, 216, 221
 Cities, provincial, 260-262
 Citizenship, 159, 165, 166, 173, 214
 Civil wars, 167, 169-173
 Classes, 39, 43, 49, 51-55, 58-59, 65-66,
 358
 Claudius, 245, 246-249, 253
 Claudius II, 327
 Claudius, Caius, 108
 Clavus, 201
 Clement of Rome, 335
 Cleopatra, 210-212, 214, 216, 224-225,
 226, 227-228
 "Cloaca Maxima" (sewage system), 37,
 44, 90
 Clodia, 180-181, 196
 Clodius, Publius, 181, 196, 200, 204,
 223
 Coinage, 20
 Collatinus, Lucius Tarquinius, 41, 42
 Colleges: of priests, 83; trade, 93
 Colonies, 60, 65, 66
 Columella, Junius, 287
 "Comitia centuriata" (legion in arms),
 29, 30, 42-43, 52, 53, 73-74, 77, 78,
 107
 "Comitia curiata" (electoral body), 28,
 29, 30, 35, 36, 39, 77

"Comitiae tributae," 77, 78-79, 166
 Commodus, 316, 317, 318-319
 Communications, 290
 Como, 261
 Constans, 345, 346
 Constantine, 331-333, 341-344
 Constantine II, 345, 346
 Constantinople, 343, 345, 352, 353, 359-
 360, 363, 366, 370
 Constantius, 345-350
 Constantius Chlorus, 329, 330, 331-332
 Consuls, 42-43, 75, 76-77, 79, 80, 173,
 174
 Corfinium, 166, 207
 Corinth, 134
 Coriolanus, 55
 Cornelia (wife of Caesar), 192
 Cornelia (mother of Tiberius), 152, 153,
 157, 158, 160
 Corporations, 329, 330
 Corsica, 50, 105, 113, 114, 249, 365,
 366
 Coruncanius, 83
 Cosenza, 362
 Cotta, Lucius, 217
 Crassus, Marcus Licinius, 179, 183, 184,
 185, 193, 194-195, 197, 199, 201, 203-
 204, 205
 Crates of Mallos, 150
 Cremona, 115, 261, 275
 Critolaus the Athenian, 150
 Croton, 121
 Ctesiphon, 351
 Cumae, 83, 173, 174
 "Curiae" (companies), 28, 29, 38, 39
 Curiatii, 30
 Curio, Caius Scribonius, 206, 208
 Currency, 92, 113, 233
 Curtius, Marcus, 84
 Cybele, 145
 Cynoscephalae, 132
 Cyprus, 200, 201, 226

Dacia, 301, 306, 327, 359
 Daia, Maximinus, 332
 Dalmatia, 360
 Dante, 22
De Agri Cultura (Cato), 142
 Death penalty, 43
 Decebalus, King of Dacia, 301
 Decemvirs, 58
 Decius, 325-326, 337, 340
 "Decuria" (army division), 29
 Delphic oracle, 83
 Demeter, 86
 Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, 336

INDEX

- Demosthenes, 130, 177
Diana, 85
Didius, 183
Dido, 98, 102
"Dies fasti," 83
Diocletian, 328-331, 332, 340-341, 370
Diogenes the Stoic, 150
Dionysus, 86, 145
Disease, 72
Divorce, 94-95, 138, 181, 233, 273
Dolabella, 212, 214
Domitian, 278-280, 288, 297, 298, 299, 302, 303
Domitius, 201
Donatus, Bishop of Carthage, 342
Donna, Julia, 321, 322
Drainage, 90, 291
Drama, 145-150, 293
Dress, 21, 23, 32, 95, 101, 284-285
Druids, 196, 202
Drusus, 227, 230, 231, 240, 242
Drusus, Marcus Livius, 165
Duels, 96
Durazzo, 207
EBURONI, 202
Eclagues (Virgil), 234
Education, 11, 23, 70-73, 282-283
Egypt, 132, 210-211, 224, 226, 228, 229, 309, 317, 326
Elba, 20
Elbe, river, 233
Engineering, 291
Enna, 155
Ennius, Quintus, 147
Epigrams (Martial), 298
Epirus, 133-134
Epistole (Horace), 238
"Equites" (knights), 51, 52-53, 78, 185
Eshmun, 102
Essene sect, 265
Etruria, 40, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 106, 155
Etruscans, 16, 18, 19-26, 28, 31, 34-42, 49, 61, 105, 166
Eugenius, Flavius, 357
Eunuch, The (Terence), 148
Eunus (slave leader), 155
Euphrates (philosopher), 310
Euricus, King of the Visigoths, 366
Eusebius, 333, 341, 343, 344, 347, 350
Eutropius, 360
FABIUS, QUINTUS MAXIMUS, 119, 120
Fabulina, 70
Family life, 28, 67-73
Farming—see Agriculture
"Fasces," 43
Faustina (wife of Antoninus), 312
Faustina (wife of Marcus Aurelius), 316
Feast days, 87-88
Ferrara, 261
Festivals, 88-89
Fiesole, 187, 361
Fimbria, 171
Fire, 69
Flaccus, Valerius, 139, 170-171
Flaminius, Titus Quintius, 132-133, 151, 153
Flaminius, Caius, 118-119
Fleet, 91-92; Carthaginian, 103
"Floralia," 88
Florence, 261
Food and drink, 32, 95, 286-287
Forum, 44, 73, 88, 169
Franks, 326, 348
Fronto, Cornelius, 314
Fruit-growing, 288
Fucinus, Lake, 247, 291
Fuel, 91
Fulvia, 223, 225-226, 229
Furnishings, 285
GABINIUS (consul), 196, 197
Galba, Servius Sulpicius, 257, 258, 275
Galen, 316
Galerius, 329, 330, 331-332
Gallienus, 326
Gallus, 326
Gallus (brother of Julian), 345, 347-348
Gaul, 197-203, 257, 308, 361, 364, 367
Gauls, 48, 56-57, 58, 114-115, 118, 119, 120, 133, 162-164, 369
"Gens" (family group), 28, 67-68
Genseric, King of the Vandals, 363, 365-366
Geometry, 72
Georgius, Bishop of Antioch, 351
Germanicus, 242, 243, 244
Germans, 198, 231, 233, 317, 318, 324, 328, 369
Germany, 15, 308, 313
Gladiators, 295-297, 298
Glaucia (prætor), 164, 165
Glycerius, 366, 367
Gnifo, Antony, 191
Gods and goddesses, 21-22, 27-28, 69-70, 82-89, 101-102, 144-145, 338, 339
Gordian family, 325
Goths, 326, 327, 354, 355, 358, 360-362
Gracchus, Caius, 152, 157, 158-160
Gracchus, Tiberius, 155-158

INDEX

- Gracchus, Tiberius Sempronius, 141, 152
 "Graffiti," 259, 262
 "Grammarians," 282
 Gratian, 353, 354, 355
 Greece, 128-134, 142-143, 144-150, 170-171, 224, 228, 256-257, 290, 359
 Greek language, 282
 Greeks, 48, 105-106, 108

 HADRIAN, 305-311, 313, 339
 Hamilcar, 109-110
 Hamilcar Barca, 111-112, 113, 115-116
 Hannibal, 96, 110, 115, 116-120, 121-122, 123, 124-127, 132, 133, 137, 368
 Hanno, 99, 108, 109
 Hasdrubal, 115, 116
 Hasdrubal (son of Hamilcar), 115, 117, 119, 122, 123, 124
Hevra (Terence), 148
 Helen of Troy, 17
 Helena, Saint, 331, 341, 343, 344
 Heliogabalus, 322-323
 Hell, 22
 Helvetians, 198-199
 Heraclea, 63
 Herculaneum, 24, 258
 Hermanric, King of the Goths, 354
 Hernici, 55, 61
 Herod the Great, 263, 264
 Herod Antipas, 266
 Herodotus, 261
 Hieron of Syracuse, 107, 108, 109, 114, 122
 Hippo, 363
 Hirtius (consul), 221, 222
 History, 71-72, 239-240
 Honorius, 358, 359, 361-363
 Horace, 235, 237-239
 Horatii, 30
 Horatius Cocles, 47
 Hortensian Law, 65
 Hortensius, 177, 179, 200
 Housing, 37, 259-260
 Hunic, 365, 366
 Huns, 354, 355, 363-365
 Hydraulics, 291

 Ides, 88
 Illyria, 113, 115, 133-134, 231
 Industry, 39-40, 91, 93, 288-289

 JAMES, SAINT, 267
 Janus, 69, 83
 Jerome, Saint, 273, 363

 Jerusalem, 263-265, 267-269, 277, 334-335, 343
 Jewellery, 285
 Jews, 263-269, 273, 275, 277, 282, 298, 299, 323, 324, 334, 337, 338, 339
 John the Baptist, 266-267
 Jove, 14, 85, 86, 144, 148, 245, 347
 Jovian, 352
 Juba, King of Numidia, 213
 Judaea, 263-269
 Judas Iscariot, 267
 Jugurtha, 161, 162, 167, 168
 Julia (daughter of Augustus), 226, 230, 231-232, 233, 241, 242
 Julia (granddaughter of Augustus), 233, 236
 Julian, 308, 345, 347, 348-351
 Julian, Didius, 320
 Juno, 85
 Juries, 157, 160, 165, 176, 185
 Justina, 353, 356
 Juvenal, 281, 283, 286, 297

 LABIENUS, TITUS, 206, 210, 212, 213
 Lælius, Caius, 148, 151, 153
 Lætus, 319
 Lampsacus, 133
 Landownership, 154, 156, 158, 159, 160-161, 165, 173, 195, 287-288
 Language, 71
 "Lares compitales," 89
 Larissa, 210
 Latin League, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, 55, 59, 60
 Latins, 15, 24, 25-26, 28, 31, 34, 35, 45, 46-47, 91, 105
 Latinus, King, 11
 Latium, 11-12, 13, 16, 25, 37, 46, 48, 159
 Lavinia (wife of Æneas), 11
 Law, 43, 58, 65-66, 82-83, 156, 160
 Law courts, 176, 185
 "Law of the Twelve Tables," 58
 Legions, 29, 73-74
 "Lemuria," 87
 Lentulus (consul), 206, 207
 Lentulus (prætor), 187
 Lentulus Batiates, 183
 Lepanto, 132
 Lepidus, Marcus Æmilius, 222, 224
 Leptis, 99, 100
 "Liberalia," 88
 "Liberti" (freed slaves), 11
 "Libertini" (sons of freed slaves), 39
 Liberus, 86
 Libraries, public, 236

INDEX

- Licinian Laws, 156
 Licinius, Flavius Valerianus, 332, 333
 Licinius Calvus, 182
 Lictors, 43, 79
 Liguri, 15, 113, 114
 Literature, 181-182, 234-240
 Livia (wife of Augustus), 226-227, 231,
 232, 233, 241, 242, 243
 Livius Andronicus, 71, 146
 Livy (Titus Livius), 34-35, 40, 51, 116,
 119, 127, 137, 239-240
 Locri, 121
 Lombardy, 202
 Lucan, 255-256
 Lucanians, 61, 62, 63, 121
 Lucca, 199, 201
 Lucian, 272
 Lucilius, Caius, 151, 153
 Lucius Tarquinius (Tarquinius Priscus),
 34, 36-38
 Lucretius, 181
 Lucullus, 176, 177-179, 185
 "Lucumo" (magistrate), 23
 Luke, Saint, 264, 266
 "Lupercalia," 88

 MACEDONIA, 129-130, 131-134, 223, 359
 Mæcenas, 233, 234, 235, 237, 238, 239
 Magistrates, 23, 56, 74, 75, 78, 79, 80,
 101, 102
 "Magistri," 282
 Magna Græcia, 105, 106
 Magna Mater, 145
 Magnentius, 346
 Magnesia, 127, 133
 Mago, 99, 104, 115
 Majorian, 365, 366
 Mamertines, 106-107, 108
 Mammea, 324
 "Manes," 69
 Mantua, 261
 Marcellus, Claudius, 122
 Marcellus, Marcus, 205, 206
 Mardonius, 350
 Marius, Caius, 161-167, 168, 169-170,
 193, 194, 212, 368
 Marius the Younger, 172
 Mark Antony, 188, 206, 209, 212, 214,
 218-219, 221-228
 Marriage, 68, 94, 181, 274, 281, 283
 Mars, 12, 14, 27, 85
 Marsala, 110
 Marsillics, 163
 Martial, 279, 283, 297-298
 Massinissa, King of Numidia, 125, 126,
 135, 136
 Mathematics, 72
 Mato, 112, 113
 Matthew, Saint, 264, 266, 267
 Maxentius, Aurelius Valerius, 332
 Maximianus, Valerius, 329, 330-331
 Maximus, Julius, 324, 325
 Maximus, 325
 Maximus, Magnus, 355, 356
 Maximus, Manlius, 163
 Mayence, 361
Meditations (M. Aurelius), 316, 317, 318
 Melkart, 102
 Memmius, Caius, 164
 Merchants, 39-40
 Mercury, 85, 144
 Mesa, Julia, 322-324
 Mesopotamia, 302, 352
 Messalina, 248-249
 Messina, 107, 108
 Metallurgy, 91
 Metaponto, 121
 Metella, Cecilia, 169, 170, 174
 Metellus, Lucius, 208
 Metellus Macedonicus, 153
 Metellus, Quintus, 161, 162
 Middle East, 224, 226
 Milan, 115, 261, 329, 331, 332, 333,
 352, 353, 356, 358, 359; Edict of, 342
 Miletus, 193
 Milo, Anniius, 200, 204, 212
 Minerva, 85
 Mining, 289
 Minucius, Quintus, 140
 Minucius, Rufus, 119
 Misenum, 178
 Mithridates the Great, 168, 170-171,
 177
 Mitrovizza, 329
 Modena, 222
 Money, 20, 23, 39, 92-93, 100, 291-293,
 329
 Montanus, 336
 Monte Albano, 16
 Monte Sacro, 54, 58, 59, 78
 Morality, 94-96, 101, 233, 273, 281, 283
 Mummius, 134
 Munda, 214
 Mus, Publius Decius, 60
 Musa, Antony, 232
 Mutius, Scaevola, 47, 153
 Mycipsa, 161

 NÆVIUS, CNÆUS, 146, 150
 Names, 67-68
 Naples, 61, 62
 Narbonne, 196, 198

INDEX

- Neolithic Age, 14-15
 Nepos, Julius, 366, 367
 Nepos, Metellus, 190
 Nero, 249, 250-258, 263, 271, 272, 275, 280, 285, 306, 338
 Nero (son of Germanicus), 243
 Nero, Claudius, 124
 Nero, Tiberius Claudius, 226, 227
 Nerva, Marcus Cocceius, 299-300, 302
 Newspaper, first, 197
 Nicca, 342-343
 Nicomedes, King of Bithynia, 192
 Nicomedia, 328, 331
 Nola, 24, 169, 233
 Nones, 88
 Numa Pompilius, 27, 28, 30, 88
 Numantia, 158, 161
 Numidia, 135, 161-162, 167
 Numitor, 12, 13
 "Nundinae," 88
- OCTAVIA (wife of Antony), 226, 229
 Octavia (wife of Nero), 252, 254
 Octavian, Caius Julius Caesar, 221-230,
See also Augustus; Octavius, Caius
 Octavius (tribune), 158-159
 Octavius, Caius, 219, 220-221. *See also*
 Augustus; Octavian
 Octavius, Cnæus, 169-170
 Odenathus, 326
Odes (Horace), 238
 Odoacer, 367
 Olybrius, Anicius, 366
On Duty (Panætius), 151
 Oppian Law, 137, 138
 Oppius, Caius, 214
 "Optimates" (conservatives), 169
 Oracles, 83-84
 Orange, 163
 Orders, religious, 87
 Orestes, 367
 Origen, 324, 336
 Ostheim, 199
 Ostia, 91, 145, 262, 290, 301
 Ostrogoths, 360-361
 Otho, 275
 Ovid, 236-237, 283
- PÆTUS, THRASEAS, 253
 Palatine Hill, 13, 16
 Palermo, 110
 Palestine, 223, 264-269, 277
 "Pallas" (mantle), 95
 Panætius, 151
 Pannonia, 231, 324, 356
 Pansa (consul), 221, 222
 Pantheon, 309-310
 Papacy, 335, 336-337, 370
 Paradise, 22
 "Parentalia," 88
 Parthians, 203, 216, 217
 Paterfamilias, 68, 69
 Patras, 171
 Patricians, 36, 43, 45, 51-53, 58, 66, 76, 77, 78, 80, 164-165, 172, 175-176, 185, 224
 Paul, Saint, 269-271, 334
 Paulus, Æmilius, 119-120, 133-134, 151
 Pavia, 367
 Peasants, 31, 36, 43-44, 90, 288-289, 329, 358
 Pergamum, 132, 133
 Perseus of Macedonia, 133-134, 151
 Persia, 226, 302, 306, 315, 325, 326, 330, 346, 349, 352
 Pertinax, 319-320, 369
 Perugia, 20, 226, 260
 Peter, Saint, 263, 271, 272, 335, 370
 Petronius, Caius, 87, 251
 Pharisees, 265
 Pharnaces, 212
 Pharsalus, 209
 Philip the Arab, 325
 Philip I of Macedonia, 129-130
 Philip V of Macedonia, 121, 125, 131-132, 133
 Philippi, 224, 237
 Philosophy, 150-151
 Phoenicians, 98-99. *See also* Carthage
 Piacenza, 115, 261
 Piceno, 207
 Pictor, Quintus Fabius, 71
 "Pietas," 68
 Piso (consul), 196, 197, 201
 Piso, Calpurnius, 255, 256
 Piso, Cnæus, 242
 Pistoia, 188
 Placidia, 363-364
 Plautus, Titus Maccius, 89, 144, 147-148, 150
 "Plebs," 35, 36, 37, 52, 53-55, 58-59, 65-66, 76, 78-79, 164
 "Plenum," 36
 Pliny the Elder, 258, 279, 285, 287, 288, 297
 Pliny the Younger, 300, 302, 304-305
 Plotina, 300, 305
 Plotinus, 335
 Plutarch, 11, 101, 130, 133, 163, 171, 175, 179, 184, 200
 Po Valley, 56, 114, 118, 360

INDEX

- Poetry, 71-72, 181-182, 234-238, 297-298
 Poliorcetes, Demetrius, 131
 Pollio, Vedius, 286
 Polo, 21
 Polybius, 101, 113, 114, 128-129, 131, 134, 144, 151, 153
 Pomona, 70
 Pompeii, 24, 188, 258-260, 262, 278
 Pompeius, Sextus, 215, 225, 227
 Pompey (Cnæus Pompeius), 172, 176, 180, 181, 183, 184-185, 190, 192, 194-195, 197, 199, 200, 201, 204-205, 206-210, 215, 263
 Pomponius, Marcus, 119
 Pontius Pilate, 268
 Poppea, 252, 254, 255, 284
 "Populares" (democrats), 169, 172, 175, 185, 190, 194-195
 "Populus," 51, 59
 Porsena, Lars, 42, 45, 46-47
 Porta Collina, 172
 Poseidonius, 177
 Postal system, 289-290
 "Potentes," 358
 Potinus, 210-211
 Pozzuoli, 188, 258, 260, 290
 Prætorian Guard, 249, 257, 275, 299, 319-320, 325, 332
 "Prætors" (officers), 29, 33, 66, 75
 Preneste, 172
 Priesthood, 58, 82-84
 Priscus, Elvidius, 253
 Probus, 328
 Procopius, 352, 353
 Propertius, 235
 Prostitution, 101
 Provincial cities, 260-262
 Ptolemy XII, 210-211
 Publicola (Publius Valerius), 42-43
 Publishing, 182, 235
 Punic Wars, 92, 95, 107-112, 117-127, 134-136
 Purification ceremonies, 84
 Pydna, 134
 Pyrrhus of Epirus, 63-64, 66, 81, 96, 107
 QUESTORS, 74-75
 RANK, indications of, 33, 40
 Ravenna, 360, 361, 363
 Recreation, 72, 73, 294-298
 Reggio, 65
 Regillus, Lake, 47, 86
 Regulus, Attilius, 110-111
 Religion, 21-22, 27-28, 69-70, 82-89, 144-145, 233, 324, 327-328, 338. *See also* Christianity
 Remus, 12-13, 14, 16
 Rest days, 87, 88
 Rhea Silvia, 12
 Rhine, river, 233
 Rhodes, 132, 134
 Ricimer, 365, 366
 Rieti, 276, 278
 Roads, 91, 289-290
 Romulus, 12-13, 14, 17-18, 24, 26, 27, 51, 83
 Roscius, 177, 293
 Rubicon, river, 205, 206-207
 Rufinus, 359-360
 Rumania (Dacia), 301
 SABINA, 40, 46, 47, 238
 Sabina, Vivian, 305-306, 309
 Sabines, 15, 17-18, 24, 25-26, 28, 31, 34, 35, 37, 45, 46, 61, 62, 105
 Sabinus, Poppeius, 243
 Sacrifice, 83, 84, 102
 Sadducees, 265
 Sagunto, 117
 Sallinator, Livius, 124
 Sallust, 182
 Salome, 266
 "Salons," 151, 152-153
 Salvius (tribune), 223
 Samnites, 24, 59-62, 121
 Sanitation, 32, 37, 90
 Sapor, King of Persia, 346, 349, 351
 Sardinia, 50, 105, 113, 114, 366
Satires (Horace), 238
 Saturn, 70, 85
 "Saturnalia," 88, 89
 Saturninus (tribune), 164-165
 Saturninus, Antoninus, 279
Satyricon (Petronius), 251
 Schools, 11, 23, 282-283
 Scipio, Lucius Cornelius, 140, 141, 152
 Scipio, Metellus, 213
 Scipio, Publius, 118, 120
 Scipio, Publius Æmilianus (Africanus Minor), 68, 134, 136, 140-141, 145, 151, 158
 Scipio, Publius Cornelius (Africanus Major), 118, 121, 123-127
 Scutari, 333
 Scythians, 326
 Sejanus, 243
 Semites, 99, 101
 Senate, 29, 30, 37-38, 43, 44, 49, 51, 52, 54, 58-59, 73, 76-77, 79-81, 95, 164-

INDEX

- 165, 169, 173, 195, 197, 205-208, 214,
221-222, 229-230, 324; Carthaginian,
102
"Senatusconsulta," 73
"Senatusconsultum ultimum," 80, 165
Seneca, 245, 249-251, 253-254, 255,
256, 283, 288, 298
Sentinum, 62
Sertorius, Quintus, 183
Servile Wars, 93, 155, 166-167
Servius Tullius, 38-40, 43, 52
Severus Alexander, 323-324
Severus, Caracalla, 321-322
Severus, Flavius Valerius, 332
Severus, Geta, 321-322
Severus, Libius, 366
Severus, Lucius Septimius, 320-321
Severus, Septimius, 340
Sewage, 37, 90
Sextius, 59
Shipping, 91-92, 290-291
"Shofetes" (Carthage magistrates), 101,
102
Sibyl (priestess), 83
Sicily, 50, 64, 107-109, 110-112, 114,
122, 155, 177, 208, 365, 366
Siculi, 15
Sidon, 99, 102
Sixtus II, Pope, 340
Slaves, 36, 91, 93, 96, 154-155, 166, 184,
288, 289
Soracte, 20
Sorrento, 260
Spain, 115-116, 117, 122, 123-124, 128,
183, 193, 194, 204, 208, 214, 220,
225, 308, 361, 366
Sparta, 134
Spartacus, 184
Spendius, 112, 113
Split, 331
Sport, 21, 294-298
Sporus, 255
Staius, Cecilius, 148, 279, 283, 297
Stephen, Saint, 270
Sterculus, 70
Stilicho, 359, 360, 361
"Stola," 95
Stone Age, 14
Suetonius, 148, 191, 213, 218, 245, 304,
306
Suevi, 361
Sulla, Lucius Cornelius, 162, 167-175,
177, 178, 179, 185, 192-193
Sulpicius Rufus, 169
Sundials, 88
Sura, Lentulus, 176
Sura, Licinius, 300
Syracuse, 109, 114, 122
Syria, 203, 223, 302, 315
TACRUS, 251, 254, 275, 277, 279, 280,
297, 302-304
Tacitus, Marcus Claudius, 328
Talamone, 114
Tanaquil, 21, 38
Tanit, 102
Taranto, 62-63, 64, 65, 66, 212
Tarpeia, 17
Tarquin family, 31, 33, 34, 36, 40-42,
43, 46
Tarquin the Proud, 26, 40-42, 45, 47,
48, 52
Tarquinia, 20, 22, 23, 24, 37, 45, 46,
260, 262
Tarquinius Priscus (Lucius Tarquinius),
30, 36, 51, 96
Tarsus, 224
Taxation, 78, 277, 291
Temples, 90
Terence, 148-149
Terentia (wife of Cicero), 177, 189
Tertullian, 272, 274, 334, 335-336, 339,
340, 368
Teutons, 162-164, 168
Thapsos, 213, 215
Theatres, 146-150, 293-294
Theodoric, King of the Visigoths, 364
Theodosius (general), 352-353
Theodosius, Flavius, 354, 355-358, 359
Theodosius II, 363
"Thermae" (public baths), 90
Thermus, Minucius, 192
Thessaly, 209, 356
Thrace, 223
Thurii, 63
Tiber, river, 13, 24, 25, 47, 332, 333
Tiberius, 227, 229, 230, 232, 234, 236,
240-244, 279, 292-293, 369
Ticino, river, 118, 120, 121, 123
Tigellinus, 254
Time, measurement of, 88
Tinia, 21-22
Titus, 277-278, 279, 294
Titus Tatius, 17-18, 27
Tivoli, 310
Toga, the, 21, 23, 32, 95, 284
Torquatus, Titus Manlius, 60
Touring, 290-291
Town-planning, 37, 89-90
Trade, 91-92, 93, 99-100, 128, 233, 330
Trajan, 252, 300-302, 305, 339
Transport, 290

INDEX

- Trasimene, Lake, 118
 Trebbia, river, 118
 Tribes, 28, 166
 Tribunes, 79, 80, 173, 185
 Triumphs, 97
 Troy, 17
 Tullus Hostilius, 28, 30
 Tunis, 98
 Turin, 261
 Tuscany, 16, 18, 113, 114, 260
 Tusculum, 178, 188
 Twelve Tables of the Decemvirs, 82-83, 150
 Tyre, 99, 102
 Tyrrhenian Sea, 19, 41

 UMBRIA, 166
 Umbrians, 15, 61-62
 Uniforms, 33
 Urban VII, Pope, 310
 Usury, 93, 176-177, 292
 Utica, 210, 213

 VALENS, 352, 353-354
 Valentinian I, 352-353, 355
 Valentinian II, 353, 354, 355, 356-357
 Valentinian III, 363, 365
 Valerian, 326
 Vandals, 327, 361, 363, 365, 366
 Varro, Terentius, 119-120, 182
 Varrus, 87
 Vascs, Etruscan, 23
 Veli, 20, 23, 48, 50, 55-56, 58
 Venice, 261
 Venus-Aphrodite, 11, 14

 Vercelli, 164
 Vercingetorix, 202-203
 Verona, 261, 301
 Verres, 177
 Verus, Lucius, 314, 315, 317
 Verus, Lucius (father of above), 310
 Vespasian, Titus Flavius, 248, 260, 275, 276-278, 283, 285, 291, 294
 Vesta, 69
 Vestal virgins, 87
 Vetrano, 346
 Via Latina, 91
 Vienna, 318
 Villanova, 15
 Vindex, Julius, 257
 Vipsania (wife of Tiberius), 232, 240
 Virgil, 234-235, 237
 Virginus, Lucius, 59
 Vitellius, Aulus, 275-276
 Volsci, 54, 55, 56, 58
 Volterra, 46, 260
 Vulso, Manlius, 140

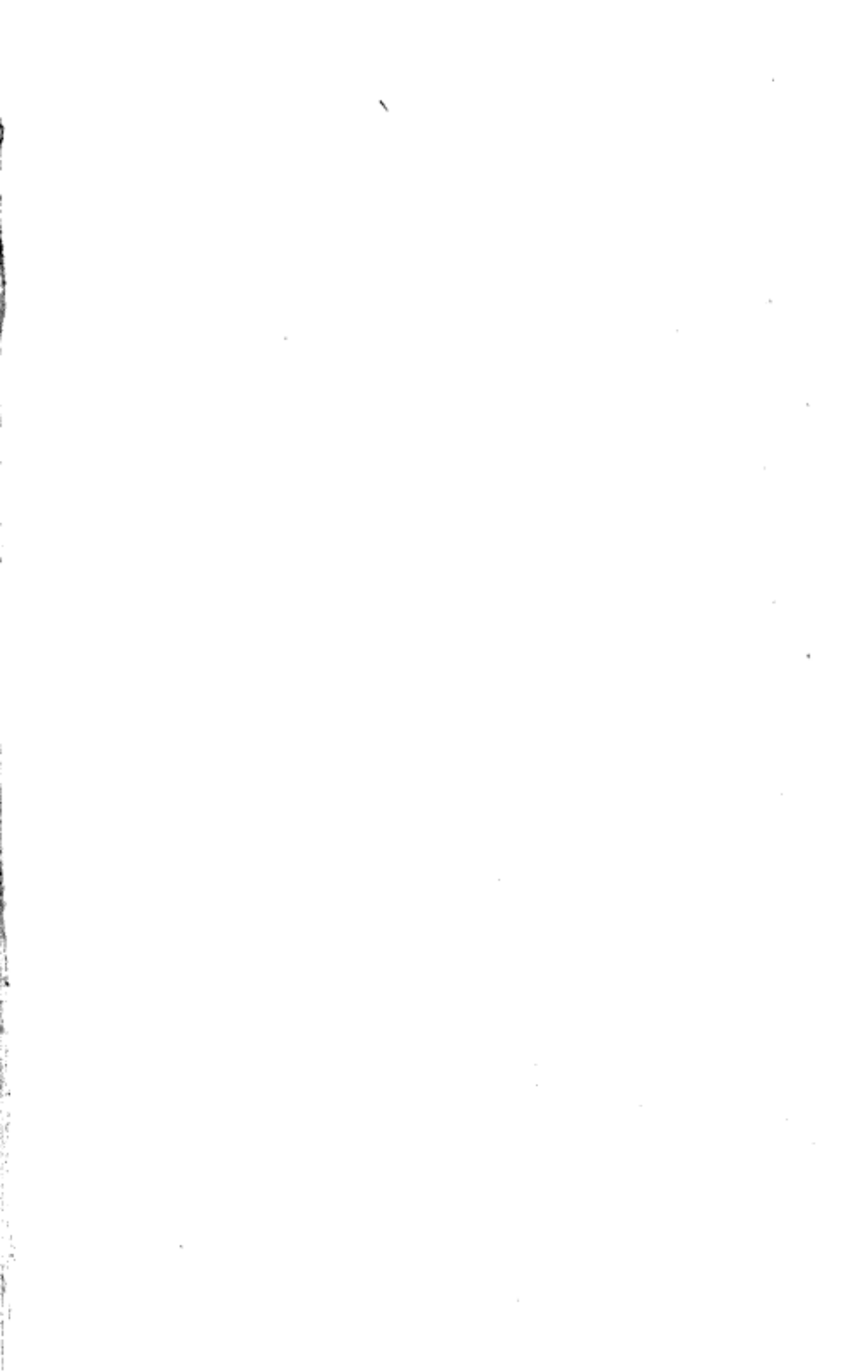
 WOMEN, 21, 68-69, 95, 101, 137-138, 180-181, 283-284
 Writing, 71

 XANTHIPPIUS, 110
 Xanthus, 224

 YUGOSLAVIA, 329

 ZAMA, 118, 125-126, 132, 133, 135
 Zela, 212
 Zeno, 367
 Zenobia, 326, 327





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