

TACITUS THE HISTORIES

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

W. HAMILTON FYFE

FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE

IN TWO VOLUMES

[VOLUME I](#)

[VOLUME II](#)

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1912

HENRY FROWDE
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

TO

D. H. F.

'The cause of undertaking a work of this kind was a good will in this scribbling age not to do nothing, and a disproportion in the powers of my mind, nothing of mine owne invention being able to passe the censure of mine owne judgement, much less, I presumed, the judgement of others....

'If thy stomacke be so tender as thou canst not disgest Tacitus in his owne stile, thou art beholding to one who gives thee the same food, but with a pleasant and easie taste.'

SIR HENRY SAVILE (A.D. 1591).

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SUMMARY OF CHIEF EVENTS

I. THE FIGHT FOR THE THRONE.

A.D. 68.

June

9. Death of Nero.

16. Galba, Governor of Nearer Spain, declared Emperor at Clunia.

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His government controlled by Laco, Vinus, and Icelus.

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3. The armies of Upper Germany (under Caecina) and of Lower Germany (under Valens) salute Vitellius, Governor of Lower Germany, as Emperor.

10. Galba adopts Piso Licinianus as his successor.

15. Otho declared Emperor in Rome and recognized by Praetorian Guard.

Murder of Galba, Vinus, and Piso.

Otho recognized by the Senate.

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Otho starts for the Po with Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Proculus.

Titianus left in charge of Rome.

Otho sends fleet to Narbonese Gaul, and orders Illyric Legions¹ to concentrate at Aquileia.

Spurinna repulses Caecina from Placentia.

Otho's main army joins Gallus at Bedriacum.

Titianus summoned to take nominal command.

April

6. Battle of Locus Castorum. Caecina defeated.

Valens joins Caecina at Cremona.

15. Battle of Bedriacum. Othonian defeat.

17. Otho commits suicide at Brixellum.

19. Vitellius recognized by the Senate.

May

Vitellius greeted by his own and Otho's generals at Lyons.

24. Vitellius visits the battle-field of Bedriacum.

June

Vitellius moves slowly towards Rome with a huge retinue.

July

1. Vespasian, Governor of Judaea, proclaimed Emperor at Alexandria.

3. At Caesarea.

15. At Antioch.

The Eastern princes and the Illyric Legions² declare for Vespasian. His chief supporters are Mucianus; Governor of Syria, Antonius Primus commanding Leg. VII Galbiana, and Cornelius Fuscus, Procurator of Pannonia.

Mucianus moves slowly westward with Leg. VI Ferrata and detachments from the other Eastern legions.

Vespasian holds Egypt, Rome's granary.

Titus takes command in Judaea.

Antonius Primus with Arrius Varus hurries forward into Italy.

August

Vitellius vegetates in Rome.

Caecina marches to meet the invasion. (Valens aegrotat.) His Legions are I, IV Macedonica, XV Primigenia, XVI, V Alaudae, XXII Primigenia, I Italica, XXI Rapax, and detachments from Britain.

September

Antonius surprises a Vitellian detachment at Forum Alieni.

At Padua the Pannonian legions arrive.

He fortifies Verona. The Moesian legions arrive.

Caecina holds Cremona with Legs. I Italica and XXI Rapax and cavalry.

He encamps with the rest of his force near Hostilia on the Tartaro.

Valens dawdles northward with three praetorian cohorts.

October

The fleet at Ravenna declares for Vespasian.

Caecina attempts treachery and is imprisoned by his army, which starts on a forced march to Cremona.

Antonius starts from Verona to intercept them.

27. Second Battle of Bedriacum. Legs. I Italica and XXI Rapax sally from Cremona and are driven back by Antonius.

The six legions from Hostilia reach Cremona.

The united Vitellian army makes a night sally from Cremona and is defeated.

28. Sack of Cremona.

Surrender of Vitellian army.

November Valens, having reached Ariminum, flies to Monaco, and is captured in the Stoechades Islands.

Spain, Gaul, and Britain declare for Vespasian.

Antonius advances via Ariminum to Fanum Fortunae.

Vitellius holds the Apennines at Mevania with fourteen praetorian cohorts, a new legion of marines, and cavalry.

Mutiny of the fleet at Misenum. Tarracina seized.

Vitellius returns to Rome with seven cohorts and part of the cavalry.

The remaining cohorts are moved back from Mevania to Narnia.

L. Vitellius with six cohorts and cavalry besieges Tarracina.

December Antonius crosses the Apennines and halts at Carsulae.

Varus wins a cavalry skirmish at Interamna.

Valens beheaded at Urbino: his head flung into camp at Narnia.

Surrender of Vitellians at Narnia.

Antonius marches as far as Ocrinum, sending Cerialis forward to Rome with 1,000 cavalry.

17. Vitellius, wishing to abdicate, is prevented by troops and mob.

18. They besiege Flavius Sabinus in the Capitol.

19. Capitol stormed. Temple of Jupiter burnt.

Sabinus caught and killed.

L. Vitellius takes Tarracina.

20. Cerialis defeated outside Rome.

Antonius makes a forced march along Via Flaminia.

21. Capture of Rome. Murder of Vitellius. Domitian installed as 'Caesar'.

A.D. 70.

January

L. Vitellius surrenders in Campania. Mucianus arrives in Rome as regent.

II. THE REBELLION ON THE RHINE

A.D. 69.

Autumn

Revolt of Civilis and Batavians, at first ostensibly in support of Vespasian.

Revolt supported by Canninefates, Frisii, Marsaci, Cugerni.

Civilis routs Gallic auxiliaries and captures the Rhine flotilla in 'The Island'.

Munius Lupercus advances from Vetera with remnant of Legs. V Alaudae and XV Primigenia, supported by Ubian, Treviran, and Batavian auxiliaries.

Civilis drives him back into Vetera.

The eight Batavian cohorts at Mainz march off to join Civilis, and defeat Leg. I Germanica at Bonn.

Bructeri and Tencteri join revolt.

Civilis blockades Vetera.

Vocula advances to relieve Vetera with detachments of Legs. IV Macedonica, XXII Primigenia, and I Germanica.

Vocula encamps at Gelduba. Flaccus makes head-quarters at Novaesium.

Civilis' assault on Vetera repulsed.

Vocula with difficulty repulses attack on Gelduba.

Relief of Vetera. Vocula then retires to Novaesium.

Civilis takes Gelduba and wins skirmish outside Novaesium.

Mutiny in Novaesium. Flaccus murdered.

Civilis renews blockade of Vetera.

Chatti, Mattiaci, and Usipi threaten Mainz.

Vocula relieves Mainz and winters there.

A.D. 70.

January (?)

Revolt of Gallic tribes, Ubii, Tungri, Treviri, Lingones, headed by Classicus, Tutor, and Sabinus.

Vocula advances to save Vetera, but is driven back to Novaesium by mutiny of Gallic auxiliaries, and there murdered.

His army swears allegiance to 'Empire of Gaul'.

Tutor takes Cologne and Mainz.

Vetera surrenders to Classicus. Garrison massacred.

The Baetasii, Nervii, and Tungri join revolt.

Spring

Mucianus and Domitian start from Rome with reinforcements.

Cerialis, with Legs. XXI Rapax and II Adjutrix, is to operate on Lower Rhine.

Annius Gallus, with Legs. VII Claudia, VIII Augusta, XI Claudia, is to operate on Upper Rhine.

The Sequani, still loyal, defeat Sabinus and Lingones.

The Remi, also loyal, summon a Gallic Council, which votes for peace, but the Treviri and Lingones hold out under Classicus, Tutor, and Valentinus.

The Roman mutineers return to their allegiance.

Summer

Sextilius Felix routs Tutor near Bingen. Cerialis defeats Valentinus and occupies Trier.

The Germans surprise the Romans in Trier, but Cerialis drives them out and storms their camp.

Massacre of Germans at Cologne. Cohort of Chauci and Frisii entrapped and burnt.

Leg. XIV Gemina arrives from Britain and receives submission of Nervii and Tungri.

Legs. I Adjutrix and VI Victrix arrive from Spain.

Autumn

Civilis defeats Cerialis near Vetera, but is routed on the next day and retires into The Island.

Hard fighting on the Waal.

Germans capture Roman flotilla.

Civilis retires northwards over the Rhine.

Cerialis occupies The Island.

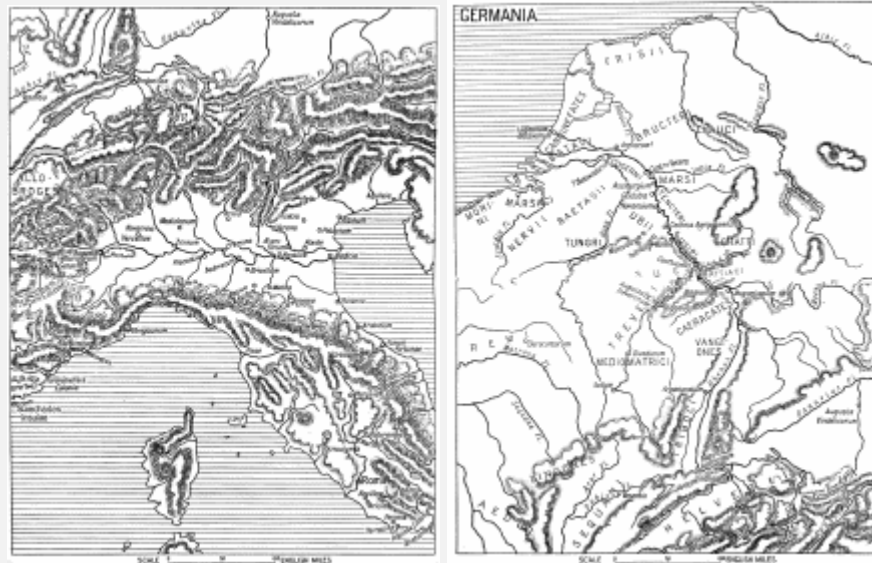
Civilis makes overtures of peace.

¹i.e. in Pannonia Legs. VII Galbiana and XIII Gemina; in Dalmatia XI Claudia and XIV Gemina; in Moesia III Gallica, VII Claudia, VIII Augusta.

²See note above.

Transcriber's note

Footnotes have been renumbered; all references to them use the new numbers. Spellings in the original are sometimes inconsistent. They have not been changed.



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INTRODUCTION

Tacitus held the consulship under Nerva in the year 97. At this point he closed his public career. He had reached the goal of a politician's ambition and had become known as one of the best speakers of his time, but he seems to have realized that under the Principate politics was a dull farce, and that oratory was of little value in a time of peace and strong government. The rest of his life was to be spent in writing history. In the year of his consulship or immediately after it, he published the *Agricola* and *Germania*, short monographs in which he practised the transition from the style of the speaker to that of the writer. In the preface to the *Agricola* he foreshadows the larger work on which he is engaged. 'I shall find it a pleasant task to put together, though in rough and unfinished style, a memorial of our former slavery and a record of our present happiness.' His intention was to write a history of the Principate from Augustus to Trajan. He began with his own times, and wrote in twelve or fourteen books a full account of the period from Nero's death in 68 A.D. to the death of Domitian in 96 A.D. These were published, probably in successive books, between 106 and 109 A.D. Only the first four and a half books survive to us. They deal with the years 69 and 70, and are known as *The Histories*. *The Annals*, which soon followed, dealt with the Julian dynasty after the death of Augustus. Of Augustus' constitution of the principate and of Rome's 'present happiness' under Trajan, Tacitus did not live to write. *The Histories*, as they survive to us, describe in a style that has made them immortal one of the most terrible and crucial moments of Roman history. The deadly struggle for the throne demonstrated finally the real nature of the Principate—based not on constitutional fictions but on armed force—and the supple inefficiency of the senatorial class. The revolt on the Rhine foreshadowed the debacle of the fifth century. Tacitus was peculiarly well qualified to write the history of this period. He had been the eye-witness of some of the most terrible scenes: he was acquainted with all the distinguished survivors: his political experience gave him a statesman's point of view, and his rhetorical training a style which mirrored both the terror of the times and his own emotion. More than any other Roman historian he desired to tell the truth and was not fatally biassed by prejudice. It is wrong to regard Tacitus as an 'embittered rhetorician', an 'enemy of the Empire', a 'détracteur de l'humanité'.¹ He was none of these. As a member of a noble, though not an ancient, family, and as one who had completed the republican *cursus honorum*, his sympathies were naturally senatorial. He regretted that the days were passed when oratory was a real power and the consuls were the twin towers of the world. But he never hoped to see such days again. He realized that monarchy was essential to peace, and that the price of freedom was violence and

disorder. He had no illusions about the senate. Fault and misfortune had reduced them to nerveless servility, a luxury of self-abasement. Their meekness would never inherit the earth. Tacitus pours scorn on the philosophic opponents of the Principate, who while refusing to serve the emperor and pretending to hope for the restoration of the republic, could contribute nothing more useful than an ostentatious suicide. His own career, and still more the career of his father-in-law Agricola, showed that even under bad emperors a man could be great without dishonour. Tacitus was no republican in any sense of the word, but rather a monarchist *malgré lui*. There was nothing for it but to pray for good emperors and put up with bad ones.

Those who decry Tacitus for prejudice against the Empire forget that he is describing emperors who were indubitably bad. We have lost his account of Vespasian's reign. His praise of Augustus and of Trajan was never written. The emperors whom he depicts for us were all either tyrannical or contemptible, or both: no floods of modern biography can wash them white. They seemed to him to have degraded Roman life and left no room for *virtus* in the world. The verdict of Rome had gone against them. So he devotes to their portraiture the venom which the fifteen years of Domitian's reign of terror had engendered in his heart. He was inevitably a pessimist; his ideals lay in the past; yet he clearly shows that he had some hope of the future. Without sharing Pliny's faith that the millennium had dawned, he admits that Nerva and Trajan have inaugurated 'happier times' and combined monarchy with some degree of personal freedom.

There are other reasons for the 'dark shadows' in Tacitus' work. History to a Roman was *opus oratorium*, a work of literary art. Truth is a great but not a sufficient merit. The historian must be not only *narrator* but *ornator rerum*. He must carefully select and arrange the incidents, compose them into an effective group, and by the power of language make them memorable and alive. In these books Tacitus has little but horrors to describe: his art makes them unforgettably horrible. The same art is ready to display the beauty of courage and self-sacrifice. But these were rarer phenomena than cowardice and greed. It was not Tacitus, but the age, which showed a preference for vice. Moreover, the historian's art was not to be used solely for its own sake. All ancient history was written with a moral object; the ethical interest predominates almost to the exclusion of all others. Tacitus is never merely literary. The *σεμνότης* which Pliny notes as the characteristic of his oratory, never lets him sparkle to no purpose. All his pictures have a moral object 'to rescue virtue from oblivion and restrain vice by the terror of posthumous infamy'.² His prime interest is character: and when he has conducted some skilful piece of moral diagnosis there attaches to his verdict some of the severity of a sermon. If you want to make men better you must uncover and scarify their sins.

Few Christian moralists deal much in eulogy, and Tacitus' diatribes are the more frequent and the more fierce because his was the morality not of Christ but of Rome. 'The Poor' are as dirt to him: he can stoop to immortalize some gleam of goodness in low life, but even then his main object is by scorn of contrast to galvanize the aristocracy into better ways. Only in them can true *virtus* grow. Their degradation seems the death

of goodness. Tacitus had little sympathy with the social revolution that was rapidly completing itself, not so much because those who rose from the masses lacked 'blood', but because they had not been trained in the right traditions. In the decay of Education he finds a prime cause of evil. And being a Roman—wherever he may have been born—he inevitably feels that the decay of Roman life must rot the world. His eyes are not really open to the Empire. He never seems to think that in the spacious provinces to which the old Roman virtues had taken flight, men were leading happy, useful lives, because the strong hand of the imperial government had come to save them from the inefficiency of aristocratic governors. This narrowness of view accounts for much of Tacitus' pessimism.

Recognition of the atmosphere in which Tacitus wrote and the objects at which his history aimed helps one to understand why it sometimes disappoints modern expectations. Particular scenes are seared on our memories: persons stand before us lit to the soul by a fierce light of psychological analysis: we learn to loath the characteristic vices of the time, and to understand the moral causes of Roman decadence. But somehow the dominance of the moral interest and the frequent interruption of the narrative by scenes of senatorial inefficiency serve to obscure the plain sequence of events. It is difficult after a first reading of the *Histories* to state clearly what happened in these two years. And this difficulty is vastly annoying to experts who wish to trace the course of the three campaigns. Those whose interest is not in Tacitus but in the military history of the period are recommended to study Mr. B.W. Henderson's *Civil War and Rebellion in the Roman Empire*, a delightful book which makes the dark places plain. But they are not recommended to share his contempt for Tacitus because his accounts of warfare are as bad as, for instance, Shakespeare's. Tacitus does not describe in detail the tactics and geography of a campaign, perhaps because he could not do so, certainly because he did not wish to. He regarded such details as dry bones, which no amount of literary skill could animate. His interest is in human character. Plans of campaign throw little light on that: so they did not interest him, or, if they did, he suppressed his interest because he knew that his public would otherwise behave as Dr. Johnson did when Fox talked to him of Catiline's conspiracy. 'He withdrew his attention and thought about Tom Thumb.'

There is no worse fault in criticism than to blame a work of art for lacking qualities to which it makes no pretension. Tacitus is not a 'bad military historian'. He is not a 'military' historian at all. Botticelli is not a botanist, nor is Shakespeare a geographer. It is this fault which leads critics to call Tacitus 'a stilted pleader at a decadent bar', and to complain that his narrative of the war with Civilis is 'made dull and unreal by speeches'—because they have not found in Tacitus what they had no right to look for. Tacitus inserts speeches for the same reason that he excludes tactical details. They add to the human interest of his work. They give scope to his great dramatic powers, to that passionate sympathy with character which finds expression in a style as nervous as

itself. They enable him to display motives, to appraise actions, to reveal moral forces. It is interest in human nature rather than pride of rhetoric which makes him love a good debate.

The supreme distinction of Tacitus is, of course, his style. That is lost in a translation. 'Hard' though his Latin is, it is not obscure. Careful attention can always detect his exact thought. Like Meredith he is 'hard' because he does so much with words. Neither writer leaves any doubt about his meaning. It is therefore a translator's first duty to be lucid, and not until that duty is done may he try by faint flushes of epigram to reflect something of the brilliance of ¹²Tacitus' Latin. Very faint indeed that reflection must always be: probably no audience could be found to listen to a translation of Tacitus, yet one feels that his Latin would challenge and hold the attention of any audience that was not stone-deaf. But it is because Tacitus is never a mere stylist that some of us continue in the failure to translate him. His historical deductions and his revelations of character have their value for every age. 'This form of history,' says Montaigne, 'is by much the most useful ... there are in it more precepts than stories: it is not a book to read, 'tis a book to study and learn: 'tis full of sententious opinions, right or wrong: 'tis a nursery of ethic and politic discourses, for the use and ornament of those who have any place in the government of the world.... His pen seems most proper for a troubled and sick state, as ours at present is; you would often say it is us he paints and pinches.' Sir Henry Savile, Warden of Merton and Provost of Eton, who translated the *Histories* into racy Elizabethan English at a time when the state was neither 'troubled' nor 'sick' is as convinced as Montaigne or the theorists of the French Revolution that Tacitus had lessons for his age. 'In Galba thou maiest learne, that a Good Prince gouerned by evill ministers is as dangerous as if he were evill himselfe. By Otho, that the fortune of a rash man is *Torrenti similis*, which rises at an instant, and falles in a moment. By Vitellius, that he that hath no vertue can neuer be happie: for by his own baseness he will loose all, which either fortune, or other mens labours ¹³have cast upon him. By Vespasian, that in civill tumults an advised patience, and opportunitie well taken are the onely weapons of advantage. In them all, and in the state of Rome under them thou maiest see the calamities that follow civill warres, where lawes lie asleepe, and all things are iudged by the sword. If thou mislike their warres be thankfull for thine owne peace; if thou dost abhor their tyrannies, love and reverence thine owne wise, iust and excellent Prince.' So whatever guise our age may assume, there are lessons to be drawn from Tacitus either directly or *per contra*, and his translators may be acquitted at a time when Latin scholarship is no longer an essential of political eminence.

¹²Napoleon's phrase.

¹³*Ann.* iii. 65.

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NOTE

The text followed is that of C.D. Fisher (*Oxford Classical Texts*). Departures from it are mentioned in the notes.

3i.e. in Pannonia Legs. VII Galbiana and XIII Gemina; in Dalmatia XI Claudia and XIV Gemina; in Moesia III Gallica, VII Claudia, VIII Augusta.

⁴See note above.

BOOK I

PREFACE

1[A.D. 69.] I propose to begin my narrative with the second consulship of Servius Galba, in which Titus Vinius was his colleague. Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the Battle of Actium, when the interests of peace were served by the centralization of all authority in the hands of one man, there followed a dearth of literary ability, and at the same time truth suffered

more and more, partly from ignorance of politics, which were no longer a citizen's concern, partly from the growing taste for flattery or from hatred of the ruling house. So between malice on one side and servility on the other the interests of posterity were neglected. But historians find that a tone of flattery soon incurs the stigma of servility and earns for them the contempt of their readers, whereas people readily open their ears to the criticisms of envy, since malice makes a show of independence. Of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, I have known nothing either to my advantage or my hurt. I cannot deny that I originally owed my position to Vespasian, or that I was advanced by Titus and still ¹⁸further promoted by Domitian;⁵ but professing, as I do, unbiassed honesty, I must speak of no man either with hatred or affection. I have reserved for my old age, if life is spared to me, the reigns of the sainted Nerva and of the Emperor Trajan, which afford a richer and withal a safer theme:⁶ for it is the rare fortune of these days that a man may think what he likes and say what he thinks.

2The story I now commence is rich in vicissitudes, grim with warfare, torn by civil strife, a tale of horror even during times of peace. It tells of four emperors slain by the sword, three several civil wars, an even larger number of foreign wars and some that were both at once: successes in the East, disaster in the West, disturbance in Illyricum, disaffection in the provinces of Gaul, the conquest of Britain and its immediate loss, the rising of the Sarmatian and Suebic tribes. It tells how Dacia had the privilege of exchanging blows with Rome, and how a pretender claiming to be Nero almost deluded the Parthians into declaring war. Now too Italy was smitten with new disasters, or disasters it had not witnessed for a long period of years. Towns along the rich coast of Campania were ¹⁹submerged or buried. The city was devastated by fires, ancient temples were destroyed, and the Capitol itself was fired by Roman hands. Sacred rites were grossly profaned, and there were scandals in high places.⁷ The sea swarmed with exiles and the island cliffs⁸ were red with blood. Worse horrors reigned in the city. To be rich or well-born was a crime: men were prosecuted for holding or for refusing office: merit of any kind meant certain ruin. Nor were the Informers more hated for their crimes than for their prizes: some carried off a priesthood or the consulship as their spoil, others won offices and influence in the imperial household: the hatred and fear they inspired worked universal havoc. Slaves were bribed against their masters, freedmen against their patrons, and, if a man had no enemies, he was ruined by his friends.

3However, the period was not so utterly barren as to yield no examples of heroism. There were mothers who followed their sons, and wives their husbands into exile: one saw here a kinsman's courage and there a son-in-law's devotion: slaves obstinately faithful even on the rack: distinguished men bravely facing the utmost straits and matching in their end the famous deaths of older times. Besides these manifold disasters to mankind there were portents in the sky and on the earth, thunderbolts and other ²⁰premonitions of good and of evil, some doubtful, some obvious. Indeed never has it been proved by such terrible disasters to Rome or by such clear evidence that

Providence is concerned not with our peace of mind but rather with vengeance for our sin.

⁴To Vespasian Tacitus probably owed his quaestorship and a seat in the senate; to Titus his tribunate of the people; to Domitian the praetorship and a 'fellowship' of one of the great priestly colleges, whose special function was the supervision of foreign cults. This last accounts for Tacitus' interest in strange religions.

⁵This project, also foreshadowed in *Agricola* iii, was never completed.

²Referring in particular to the scandals among the Vestal Virgins and to Domitian's relations with his niece Julia.

³i.e. the Aegean islands, such as Seriphus, Gyarus, Amorgus, where those in disfavour were banished and often murdered.

THE STATE OF THE EMPIRE

4Before I commence my task, it seems best to go back and consider the state of affairs in the city, the temper of the armies, the condition of the provinces, and to determine the elements of strength and weakness in the different quarters of the Roman world. By this means we may see not only the actual course of events, which is largely governed by chance, but also why and how they occurred.

The death of Nero, after the first outburst of joy with which it was greeted, soon aroused conflicting feelings not only among the senators, the people, and the soldiers in the city, but also among the generals and their troops abroad. It had divulged a secret of state: an emperor could be made elsewhere than at Rome. Still the senate was satisfied. They had immediately taken advantage of their liberty and were naturally emboldened against a prince who was new to the throne and, moreover, absent. The highest class of the knights⁹ seconded the senate's satisfaction. Respectable citizens, who were attached as clients or freedmen to the great families, and had seen their ²¹patrons condemned or exiled, now revived their hopes. The lowest classes, who had grown familiar with the pleasures of the theatre and the circus, the most degraded of the slaves, and Nero's favourites who had squandered their property and lived on his discreditable bounty, all showed signs of depression and an eager greed for news.

5The troops in the city¹⁰ had long been inured to the allegiance of the Caesars, and it was more by the pressure of intrigue than of their own inclination that they came to desert Nero. They soon realized that the donation promised in Galba's name was not to be paid to them, and that peace would not, like war, offer opportunity for great services and rich rewards. Since they also saw that the new emperor's favour had been forestalled by the army which proclaimed him, they were ripe for revolution and were further instigated by their rascally Praefect Nymphidius Sabinus, who was plotting to be emperor himself. His design was as a matter of fact detected and quashed, but, though the ringleader was removed, many of the troops still felt conscious of their treason and could be heard commenting on Galba's senility and avarice. His austerity—a quality once admired and set high in soldiers' estimation—only annoyed troops whose contempt for the old methods of discipline had been fostered by fourteen years of service ²²under Nero. They had come to love the emperors' vices as much as they once

reverenced their virtues in older days. Moreover Galba had let fall a remark, which augured well for Rome, though it spelt danger to himself. 'I do not buy my soldiers,' he said, 'I select them.' And indeed, as things then stood, his words sounded incongruous.

⁹Probably those who owned one million sesterces, the property qualification for admission to the senate.

¹⁰This includes 'The Guards' (*cohortes praetoriae*) and 'The City Garrison' (*cohortes urbanae*), and possibly also the *cohortes vigilum*, who were a sort of police corps and fire brigade.

GALBA'S POSITION

6Galba was old and ill. Of his two lieutenants Titus Vinius was the vilest of men and Cornelius Laco the laziest. Hated as he was for Vinius' crimes and despised for Laco's inefficiency, between them Galba soon came to ruin. His march from Spain was slow and stained with bloodshed. He executed Cingonius Varro, the consul-elect, and Petronius Turpilianus, an ex-consul, the former as an accomplice of Nymphidius, the latter as one of Nero's generals. They were both denied any opportunity of a hearing or defence—and might as well have been innocent. On his arrival at Rome the butchery of thousands of unarmed soldiers¹¹ gave an ill omen to his entry, and alarmed even the men who did the slaughter. The city was filled with strange troops. A legion had been brought from Spain,¹² and the regiment of marines enrolled by Nero still remained.¹¹ Moreover there were several detachments²³ from Germany, Britain, and Illyricum,¹³ which had been selected by Nero, dispatched to the Caspian Pass¹⁴ for the projected war against the Albanians, and subsequently recalled to aid in crushing the revolt of ¹⁵ These were all fine fuel for a revolution, and, although their favour centred on nobody in particular, there they were at the disposal of any one who had enterprise.

7It happened by chance that the news of the death of Clodius Macer and of Fonteius Capito arrived in Rome simultaneously. Macer,¹⁶ who was undoubtedly raising a disturbance in Africa, was put to death by the imperial agent Trebonius Garutianus, acting under Galba's orders: Capito¹⁷ had made a similar attempt in Germany and was killed by two officers, Cornelius Aquinus and Fabius Valens, without waiting for instructions. While Capito had a foul reputation for extortion and loose living, some people yet believed²⁴ that he had withheld his hand from treason. His officers, they supposed, had urged him to declare war, and, when they could not persuade him, had gone on to charge him falsely with their own offence,¹⁸ while Galba from weakness of character, or perhaps because he was afraid to inquire too far, approved what had happened for good or for ill, since it was past alteration. At any rate both executions were unpopular. Now that Galba was disliked, everything he did, whether right or wrong, made him more unpopular. His freedmen were all-powerful: money could do anything: the slaves were thirsting for an upheaval, and with so elderly an emperor were naturally expecting to see one soon. The evils of the new court were those of the old, and while equally oppressive were not so easily excused. Even Galba's age seemed

comic and despicable to a populace that was used to the young Nero and compared the emperors, as such people will, in point of looks and personal attraction.

¹¹i.e. the marines, whom Nero had formed into a reserve force (Legio I Adiutrix). They had met Galba at the Mulvian Bridge, probably with a petition for service in the Line.

¹²Legio VII Galbiana, sent later to Pannonia.

¹³Illyricum included all the Danube provinces.

¹⁴The Pass of Dariel over the centre of the Caucasus. The Albanians lay to the east of its southern end, on the south-west coast of the Caspian.

¹⁵Pro-praetor in the Lyons division of Gaul, had revolted against Nero early in the year 68 and offered his support to Galba, then governor of the Tarragona division of Spain. He was defeated by Verginius Rufus, commanding the forces in Upper Germany, and committed suicide. Verginius afterwards declared for Galba, though his troops wanted to make him emperor. Cp. chap. 8.

¹⁶Clodius Macer commanded Legio III Augusta and governed Numidia, which Tiberius at the end of his reign had detached from the pro-consulate of Africa.

¹⁷Governor of Lower Germany. See chap. 58 and iii. 62.

¹⁸Cp. chap. 58.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF FORCES

8Such then at Rome was the variety of feeling natural in so vast a population. To turn to the provinces abroad: Spain was under the command of Cluvius Rufus, a man of great eloquence, and more skilled in the arts of peace than of war.¹⁹ The Gallic provinces had not forgotten : moreover, they ²⁵were bound to Galba by his recent grant of Roman citizenship and his rebate of their tribute for the future. The tribes, however, which lay nearest to the armies stationed in Germany had not received these honours: some even had lost part of their territory and were equally aggrieved at the magnitude of their own injuries and of their neighbours' benefits. The troops in Germany were proud of their recent victory, indignant at their treatment and perplexed by a nervous consciousness that they had supported the wrong side: a very dangerous state for so strong a force to be in. They had been slow to desert Nero, and Verginius²⁰ did not immediately declare for Galba. Whether he really did not want the throne is doubtful: without question his soldiers made him the offer. The death of Fonteius Capito aroused the indignation even of those who had no right to complain. However, they still lacked a leader: Galba had sent for Verginius under a pretence of friendship, and, when he was not allowed to return and was even charged with treachery, the soldiers considered his case their own.

9The army of Upper Germany felt no respect for their commander, Hordeonius Flaccus.²¹ Weakened by age and an affection of the feet he was without resolution or authority, and could not have controlled the mildest troops. These fiery spirits were only the further inflamed when they felt such a weak hand on the reins. The legions of Lower Germany had been ²⁶for some time without a commander,²² until Aulus Vitellius appeared. He was the son of the Lucius Vitellius who had been censor and thrice consul,²³ and Galba thought this sufficient to impress the troops. The army in Britain showed no bad feeling. All through the disturbance of the civil wars no troops kept cleaner hands. This may have been because they were so far away and severed by the sea, or perhaps frequent engagements had taught them to keep their rancour for the

enemy. Quiet ruled in Illyricum also, although the legions, which had been summoned by Nero,²⁴ while lingering in Italy had made overtures to Verginius. But the armies lay far apart, always a sound assistance to the maintenance of military discipline, since the men could neither share vices nor join forces.

10The East was still untroubled. Licinius Mucianus held Syria with four legions.²⁵ He was a man who was always famous, whether in good fortune or in bad. As a youth he was ambitious and cultivated the friendship of the great. Later he found himself in straitened circumstances and a very ambiguous position, and, suspecting Claudius' displeasure, he withdrew into the wilds of Asia, where he came as near to being an exile as afterwards to being an emperor. He was ²⁷a strange mixture of good and bad, of luxury and industry, courtesy and arrogance. In leisure he was self-indulgent, but full of vigour on service. His outward behaviour was praiseworthy, though ill was spoken of his private life. However, with those who were under him or near him, and with his colleagues he gained great influence by various devices, and seems to have been the sort of man who would more readily make an emperor than be one.

The Jewish war was being conducted by Flavius Vespasianus—appointed by Nero—with three legions.²⁶ He had no ill-will against Galba, and nothing to hope from his fall. Indeed he had sent his son Titus to carry his compliments and offer allegiance, an incident we must reserve for its proper place.²⁷ It was only after Vespasian's rise that Roman society came to believe in the mysterious movings of Providence, and supposed that portents and oracles had predestined the throne for him and his family.

11Of Egypt and its garrison, ever since the days of the sainted Augustus, the knights of Rome have been uncrowned kings.²⁸ The province being difficult to reach, rich in crops, torn and tossed by fanaticism and sedition, ignorant of law, unused to bureaucratic government, it seemed wiser to keep it in the control ²⁸of the Household.²⁹ The governor at that date was Tiberius Alexander, himself a native of Egypt.³⁰ Africa and its legions, now that Clodius Macer had been executed,³¹ were ready to put up with any ruler after their experience of a petty master. The two Mauretanas, Raetia, Noricum, Thrace, and the other provinces governed by procurators had their sympathies determined by the neighbourhood of troops, and always caught their likes or dislikes from the strongest army. The ungarrisoned provinces, and chief amongst these Italy, were destined to be the prize of war, and lay at the mercy of any master. Such was the state of the Roman world when Servius Galba, consul for the second time, and Titus Vinius his colleague, inaugurated the year which was to be their last, and almost the last for the commonwealth of Rome.

¹⁹He wrote a history of his own time, which was one of Tacitus' chief authorities.

²⁰See note [17](#).

²¹Verginius' successor.

²²Since Capito's death, chap. [7](#).

²³He died in A.D. 54. In the censorship and in two of his consulships he had been Claudius' colleague.

²⁴For the war with .

²⁵See note [164](#). The fourth legion is III Gallica, afterwards moved into Moesia.

²⁶See note [163](#).

²⁷ii. [1](#).

²⁸Cp. *Ann.*, ii. 59. 'Amongst other secret principles of his imperial policy, Augustus had put Egypt in a position by itself, forbidding all senators and knights of the highest class to enter that country without his permission. For Egypt holds the key, as it were, both of sea and land' (tr. Ramsay). Cp. iii. [8](#).

²⁹i.e. to govern it by the emperor's private agents. The province was regarded as part of the emperor's estate (*patrimonium*). This post was the highest in the imperial service.

³⁰A member of a Jewish family settled in Alexandria and thus entitled to Roman citizenship. He was a nephew of the historian Philo; had been Procurator of Judaea and chief of Corbulo's staff in Armenia.

³¹See chap. [7](#).

THE GERMAN REVOLT AND THE ADOPTION OF PISO

12A few days after the first of January a dispatch arrived from Belgica, in which Pompeius Propinquus,³² the imperial agent, announced that the legions of ²⁹Upper Germany had broken their oath of allegiance and were clamouring for a new emperor, but that by way of tempering their treason they referred the final choice to the Senate and People of Rome. Galba had already been deliberating and seeking advice as to the adoption of a successor, and this occurrence hastened his plans. During all these months this question formed the current subject of gossip throughout the country; Galba was far spent in years and the general propensity for such a topic knew no check. Few people showed sound judgement or any spirit of patriotism. Many were influenced by foolish hopes and spread self-interested rumours pointing to some friend or patron, thereby also gratifying their hatred for Titus Vinius,³³ whose unpopularity waxed daily with his power. Galba's affability only served to strengthen the gaping ambition of his newly powerful friends, for his weakness and credulity halved the risk and doubled the reward of treason.

13The real power of the throne was divided between the consul, Titus Vinius, and Cornelius Laco, the prefect of the Guards; and an influence as great was enjoyed by Icelus, one of Galba's freedmen, who had been given the gold ring³⁴ and was now greeted by the name of Marcianus. These three ordinarily disagreed, and followed each his own interest in smaller ³⁰matters: on the question of the succession they fell into two camps. Vinius was for Marcus Otho. Laco and Icelus were agreed not so much on any one as on any other. Galba was aware of the friendship between Otho and Vinius. Otho was a bachelor and Vinius had an unmarried daughter: so gossip, never reticent, pointed to them as father and son-in-law. Galba, one may suppose, felt some concern for his country, too. Why take the throne from Nero, if it was to be left to Otho? Otho had led a careless boyhood and a dissolute youth, and endeared himself to Nero by aping his vices. Thus it was to Otho, as being already in the secret, that Nero entrusted his favourite mistress, Poppaea Sabina,³⁵ until he could get rid of Octavia. Later he grew jealous and removed Otho to the province of Lusitania under cover of a governorship. Otho had been popular in his administration of the province, and was one of the first to join Galba's party. Being a man of action and one of the most distinguished of Galba's officers in the war, when once he had conceived the hope of succeeding him, he eagerly

indulged it. Most of the soldiers were on his side and the Court supported him as Nero's double.

14After receiving the news of the German revolt, although Galba knew nothing for certain of Vitellius' ³¹plans, he was fearful to what lengths the outbreak of the troops might go; so, being unable to trust the troops in the city,³⁶ he had recourse to what seemed his sole remedy and held an Imperial Election. Besides Vinius and Laco he summoned Marius Celsus, consul-elect and the City-Prefect Ducenius Geminus.³⁷ After prefacing a few words about his own advanced age he ordered Piso Licinianus³⁸ to be sent for, either on his own initiative, or, as some believed, at the instance of Laco. Laco had met Piso at Rubellius Plautus' house and they had formed a friendship, but he cunningly pretended that he was supporting a stranger, and Piso's good reputation gave colour to this policy. Piso was a noble on both sides, being the son of Marcus Crassus and Scribonia. There was an old-world austerity in his face and bearing, and just critics spoke of his strict morality: people who took a less favourable view thought him soured. But while those who disliked this side of his character carped at it, it was a recommendation in the eyes of the emperor who intended to adopt him.

15Galba is said to have taken Piso's hand and addressed him as follows: 'Were I a private citizen, and were I to adopt you in the presence of the Priests ³²by the usual formality of a curial statute,³⁹ it would be an honour for me to introduce into my family a descendant of Cnaeus Pompeius and of Marcus Crassus, and for you it would be a distinction to add to your noble ancestry the glories of the Sulpician and Lutatian houses.⁴⁰ As it is, I have been called by the consent of gods and men to be an emperor. Your distinguished qualities and your patriotism have persuaded me to offer to you peacefully and quietly the throne for which our ancestors fought on the field of battle,⁴¹ and which I too won by war. In so doing I am following the precedent set by the sainted Augustus, who raised to the rank next himself first his nephew Marcellus, then his son-in-law Agrippa, then his daughter's sons,⁴² and finally his stepson Tiberius Nero. However, while Augustus looked for a successor in his own family, I have searched throughout the country. Not that I lack either kinsmen or supporters, but it was by no favour of birth that I myself came to the throne, and, to prove my policy in this matter, consider how I have passed over not only my own relatives but yours. ³³You have an elder brother,⁴³ as noble as yourself. He would have been worthy of this position, but you are worthier. You are old enough to have outlived youthful passions. Your life has been such that you have nothing in your past to excuse. So far you have only experienced misfortune. Prosperity probes the heart with a keener touch; misery only calls for patience, but there is corruption in success. Honesty, candour, and affection are the best of human qualities, and doubtless you yourself have enough character to retain them. But the complaisance of others will weaken your character. Flattery and servile compliments will break down its defences and self-interest too, the bane of all sincerity. What though you and I can talk plainly with each other to-day? Others will address themselves not to us but to our fortunes. To persuade an emperor

what he ought to do is a laborious task: any one can flatter him without a spark of sincerity.

16'If the vast bulk of this empire could stand and keep its balance without a guiding hand, the Republic might well have dated its birth from me. As it is, things have long ago come to such a pass that neither I in my old age can give the Roman people any better gift than a good successor, nor you in your prime anything better than a good emperor. Under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, Rome was the heirloom of a single family. There is a kind of liberty in the free choice we have begun to exercise. Now that the ³⁴Julian and Claudian houses are extinct, by the plan of adoption the best man will always be discovered. Royal birth is the gift of fortune, and is but valued as such. In adoption we can use a free judgement, and if we wish to choose well, the voice of the country points the way. Think of Nero, swollen with the pride of his long line of royal ancestry. It was not with a powerless province at his back, nor I with a single legion that freed Rome's shoulders of that burden: it was his own cruelty and profligacy. And that was before there was any precedent for the conviction of an emperor.

'We have been called to the throne by the swords of those who thought us worthy. Our high state will not escape the eye of envy. You may be sure of that. But there is no reason for you to feel alarm because in this world-wide upheaval a couple of legions have not yet settled down. I myself did not succeed to a safe and peaceful throne, and, when once the news of your adoption is spread, I shall cease to be charged with my advanced age, which is now the only fault they find in me. The rascals will always miss Nero: you and I have got to see that good citizens do not miss him too.

'A longer sermon would ill befit the time and I have fulfilled my purpose, if I have done right in choosing you. The soundest and easiest criterion of right and wrong policy is to consider what you would have approved or condemned in another emperor. For Rome is not like the nations which are ruled by kings, ³⁵where one house is supreme and the rest are slaves. Your future subjects are men who cannot endure the extremes either of bondage or of freedom.'

Galba spoke these words and more to the same effect in the tone of one creating an emperor: the rest addressed Piso as though he were emperor already. 17He is said to have betrayed no sign of amazement or elation either before those who were then present, or later when everybody's eyes centred upon him. His language to his emperor and adoptive father was deeply respectful and he spoke modestly of himself. He made no change in his expression or bearing, showing himself more able than anxious to rule. A discussion then took place whether the adoption should be announced before the people or in the senate, or in the guards' camp. They decided in favour of the camp, on the ground that it would be a compliment to the troops, whose goodwill was hard to win by flattery or bribes, but was by no means to be despised, if it could be won by good means. Meanwhile the curiosity of the populace, impatient of any important secret, had

brought together crowds all round the Palace, and when once the rumour began to leak out an attempt at suppression only resulted in spreading it.

18The tenth of January was a dreary wet day, and an extraordinary storm of thunder and lightning showed the displeasure of Providence. Such phenomena were regarded in old days as a sign for the suspension of public business, but they did not deter Galba from proceeding to the camp. Either he disregarded such ³⁶things as the result of pure chance or else he felt that the blows of fate may be foretold but not forestalled. He addressed a crowded assembly of the soldiers with true imperial brevity, stating simply that in adopting Piso he was following the example of the sainted Augustus, and the old military custom whereby each man chose another.⁴⁴ He was afraid that by suppressing the news of the German rebellion he might only seem to exaggerate the danger, so he voluntarily declared that the Fourth and Twenty-second legions had been led by a few traitors into seditious murmurings but no further, and would soon return to their allegiance. He made no attempt to enhance his words either by eloquence or largess. However, the tribunes and centurions and those of the soldiers who stood nearest to him gave well-sounding answers. The rest were sorry and silent, for the war seemed to have lost them the largess that had always been usual even in peace. Everybody agrees that they could have been won over had the parsimonious old emperor made the least display of generosity. He was ruined by his strict old-fashioned inflexibility, which seems too rigorous for these degenerate days.

19From the camp they proceeded to the senate, and Galba's speech to its members was no fuller or finer than to the soldiers. Piso spoke graciously, and there was no lack of support in the senate. Many wished him well. Those who did not were the more effusive. ³⁷The majority were indifferent, but displayed a ready affability, intent on their private speculations without thought of the country's good. No other public action is reported of Piso during the four days which intervened between his adoption and assassination.

³²i.e. the emperor's finance agent in the province of Belgica.

³³Cp. chap. 6.

³⁴A gold signet-ring was the sign of a free-born Roman knight. Its grant to freedmen was an innovation of which Tacitus disapproved.

³⁵Tacitus here follows the story told by Suetonius in his life of Otho. In the *Annals*, xiii. 45, 46, Tacitus gives in detail a more probable version. It is more likely that Poppaea used Otho as a stepping-stone to Nero's favour than that Otho, as Suetonius quotes, 'committed adultery with his own wife.'

³⁶See chap. 5, note 10.

³⁷One of the three Commissioners of Public Revenue appointed by Nero in A.D. 62 (*Ann.*, xv. 18).

³⁸Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi Licinianus was the son of M. Licinius Crassus Frugi, and adopted son of L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi. His mother, Scribonia, was a descendant of Pompey.

³⁹Adoption from one family into another needed in old days the sanction of the *Comitia Curiata*. When that assembly became obsolete, the priests summoned a formal meeting of thirty lictors, and their sanction of an act of adoption was still called *lex curiata*. Galba was now *Pontifex maximus*.

⁴⁰Galba belonged to the *Gens Sulpicia*, and was connected through his mother, Mummia, with Q. Lutatius Catulus, who had led the senatorial party in the first half of the last century.

⁴¹i.e. Galba's great-grandfather had fought for Caesar against Piso's ancestor, Pompey.

⁴²The children of Julia and Agrippa.

⁴³Crassus Scribonianus, cp. chap. 47, and iv. 39.

⁴⁴i.e. co-optation, employed in former days to raise a special contingent for emergencies.

GALBA'S MEASURES OF PRECAUTION

Reports of the German rebellion grew daily more insistent and the public was always ready to believe any news, provided it was bad. Accordingly the senate decided that a commission must be sent to the army in Germany. It was discussed in private whether Piso should go himself to add dignity to the commission, since he could carry the authority of the emperor, while the others represented the senate. It was also proposed to send Laco, the prefect of the Guards, but he objected. The senate had allowed Galba to nominate the commissioners and he showed the most miserable indecision, now nominating members, now excusing them, now making exchanges, yielding always to pressure from people who wanted to go or to stay at home according as they were determined by their hopes or their fears. ²⁰The next question was one of finance. After investigating all possible sources it seemed most reasonable to recover the revenue from those quarters where the cause of the deficit lay. Nero had squandered in lavish presents two thousand two hundred million sesterces.⁴⁵ Galba gave instructions that these monies should be recovered from ³⁸the individual recipients, leaving each a tithe of their original gift. However, in each case there was scarcely a tenth part left, for these worthless spendthrifts had run through Nero's money as freely as they had squandered their own: they had no real property or capital left, nothing but the apparatus of their luxury. Thirty of the knights were entrusted with the duty of recovering the money. This commission, for which there was no precedent, proved vastly unpopular owing to the scope of its authority, and the large number of the victims. Every quarter seemed beset with sales and brokers and lawsuits. And yet lively satisfaction was caused by the discovery that the beneficiaries of Nero's bounty were as poor as the victims of his greed.

At this time several officers were cashiered, Antonius Taurus and Antonius Naso of the Guards, Aemilius Pacensis of the City Garrison, and Julius Fronto of the Police.⁴⁶ However, this proved no remedy. The others only began to feel alarmed, thinking that Galba's craft and timidity had sacrificed a few, while his suspicions rested on them all.

⁴⁵About twenty-three million sterling of our money.

⁴⁶i.e. of the cohorts which formed the police and fire-brigade of the city. See chap. [5](#), note [10](#).

THE RISE OF OTHO

²¹Meanwhile Otho had nothing to hope from a peaceful settlement: all his plans demanded a disturbance. Many motives spurred him on: his extravagance would have ruined a prince, and his poverty have perplexed a private person: he was angry with Galba and jealous ³⁹of Piso. He also alleged fears for his safety, by way of whetting his

ambition. 'I proved a nuisance to Nero,' he would say, 'and can scarcely expect the compliment of a second exile to Lusitania.⁴⁷ Besides, monarchs always hate and suspect the man who is mentioned as "next to the throne". This was what did me harm with the old emperor, and it will weigh still more with the youthful Piso, who is naturally savage and has been exasperated by a long period of exile. It would be easy to kill me. I must do and dare while Galba's authority is on the wane and Piso's not yet established. These times of change suit big enterprises; inaction is more deadly than daring; there is no call for delay. Death is the natural end for all alike, and the only difference is between fame and oblivion afterwards. Seeing that the same end awaits the innocent and the guilty, a man of spirit should at least deserve his fate.'

22Otho's character was by no means so effeminate as his person. His intimate freedmen and slaves, who were allowed a licence unusual in private households, dangled before him the baits for which he was greedy: the luxuries of Nero's Court, the marriages he could make, the adulteries he could commit, and all the other imperial pleasures. They were his, they pointed out, if he would bestir himself; it was shameful to lie quiet and leave them to others. He was also incited by the astrologers, who declared that their study of the stars pointed to great changes and a year ⁴⁰of glory for Otho. Creatures of this class always deceive the ambitious, though those in power distrust them. Probably we shall go on for ever proscribing them and keeping them by us.⁴⁸ Poppaea⁴⁹ had always had her boudoir full of these astrologers, the worst kind of outfit for a royal ménage. One of them, called Ptolemy, had gone with Otho to Spain⁵⁰ and foretold that he would outlive Nero. This came true and Otho believed in him. He now based his vague conjectures on the computations of Galba's age and Otho's youth, and persuaded him that he would ascend the throne. But, though the man had no real skill, Otho accepted the prophecy as if it was the finger of fate. Human nature always likes to believe what it cannot understand.

23Nor was Ptolemy himself slow to incite his master to crime, to which it is only a short step from such ambitions. But whether his criminal designs were deliberate or suddenly conceived, it is impossible to say. He had long been courting the goodwill of the soldiers either in the hope of being adopted by Galba or to prepare the way for treason. On the road from Spain, while the men were marching or on outpost duty, he would address the veterans by name, reminding them how he and they had served together under Nero, and calling them his comrades. He renewed acquaintance ⁴¹with some, asked after others and helped them with money or influence, frequently letting fall complaints and ambiguous remarks about Galba, using all the arts which work upon uneducated minds. The soldiers grumbled bitterly at the exertions of the march, the shortage of provisions, and the strict discipline. What they were used to was a journey to the Campanian Lakes or Greek seaports on board ship;⁵¹ they found it hard to struggle over the Pyrenees and Alps, and march immense distances under arms.

24While the soldiers were thus already fired with discontent, Maevius Pudens, one of Tigellinus'⁵² intimates, added fuel to their feelings by luring on all who were naturally

unstable or in need of money, or rashly eager for a change. Eventually, whenever Galba dined with him, Otho went the length of presenting a hundred sesterces to each of the soldiers on guard, on the pretext that this was instead of entertaining them.³³ This system of public largess Otho extended by making presents in confidence to individuals, and such spirit did he show in bribery that when a member of the Body Guard, Cocceius Proculus, brought an action to ⁴²claim part of his neighbour's farm, Otho bought the whole property out of his own pocket and gave it to him. He was enabled to do this by the inefficiency of the Prefect Laco, who was no less blind to notorious than to secret scandals.

25Otho then put Onomastus, one of his freedmen, in charge of the projected crime, and Onomastus took into his confidence Barbius Proculus, an aide-de-camp, and a subaltern named Veturius, both in the Body Guard.³⁴ Having assured himself by many interviews that they were both bold and cunning, Otho proceeded to load them with bribes and promises, providing them with funds to enable them to test the feelings of the others. And so a couple of common soldiers took it upon them to transfer the Roman Empire: and they did it. A very few were admitted as accomplices. These, by various devices, worked on the indecision of the others. The non-commissioned officers who had been promoted by Nymphidius felt themselves under suspicion; the private soldiers were indignant and in despair at the constant postponement of Galba's largess; some few were fired by the recollection of Nero's régime and longed for the days of licence; all in common shared the fear of being drafted out of the Praetorian Guards.

26The infection of treason soon spread to the legions ⁴³and auxiliaries, whose excitement had been aroused as soon as they heard that the armies of Germany were wavering in their allegiance. So, as the disloyal were ready for treason and the loyal shut their eyes, they at first determined to acclaim Otho as he was returning from dinner on the night of the fourteenth. However, they hesitated: the darkness spelt uncertainty, the troops were scattered all over the town, and unanimity could scarcely be expected from drunken men. They were not deterred by any affection for their country's honour, which they were deliberately preparing to stain with its emperor's blood, but they were afraid that, as Otho was unknown to the majority, some one else might by mistake be offered to the Pannonian or German legions and proclaimed emperor. Some evidence of the brewing plot leaked out, but it was suppressed by the conspirators. Rumours even reached Galba's ears, but Laco made light of them, being totally ignorant of soldiers' characters, hostile to any suggestion, however wise, that was not his own, and extremely obstinate with men who knew more than he did.

27On January 15, as Galba was sacrificing in front of the temple of Apollo, the priest Umbricius declared the omens unfavourable: treason was impending, and an enemy within the walls. Otho, who was standing beside Galba, overheard and construed the omen as being from his own point of view a good one, favourable to his plans. In a few moments his freedman, Onomastus, announced that the architect and contractors were waiting to see him. This had been agreed ⁴⁴upon as the signal that the troops were

assembling and the conspiracy was ripe. On being asked where he was going, Otho pretended that he was buying an old property, but suspected its condition and so had to inspect it first. Thus, leaning on his freedman's shoulder, he passed through Tiberius' house into the Velabrum and thence to the Golden Milestone at the foot of the Temple of Saturn.⁵⁵ There thirty-three soldiers of the Body Guard saluted him as emperor. When he showed alarm at the smallness of their number they put him hastily into a litter, and, drawing their swords, hurried him away. About the same number of soldiers joined them on the way, some accomplices, others merely curious. Some marched along shouting and flourishing swords; others kept silent, intending to take their cue from subsequent events.

28Julius Martialis was the tribune on duty in the camp. He was so overcome by the magnitude of this unexpected crime and so afraid that the treason was widespread in the camp, and that he might be killed if he offered any opposition, that he led most people to suppose he was in the plot. So, too, the other tribunes and centurions all preferred present safety to a risky loyalty. In fact the general attitude was this: few dared to undertake so foul a crime, many wished to see it done, and everybody was ready to condone it.

⁴⁷Cp. chap. 13.

⁴⁸Decrees excluding astrologers from Italy had been passed in B.C. 33, A.D. 16, and again in A.D. 52. Vitellius passed another. See ii. 62.

⁴⁹Nero's wife. Cp. chap. 13.

⁵⁰i.e. to Lusitania. See chap. 13.

⁵¹They were 'Guards' who had escorted Nero on his singing tours through Greece. Perhaps some of them came to meet Galba on his way from Spain. Otherwise they could not have shared the toils of this march.

⁵²See chap. 72.

⁵³The public dinner given in older days by patrons to their clients had long ago been commuted for a 'tip' (sportula). Pudens, instead of providing dinner for Galba's guard, sought their favour by giving them about 17s. apiece.

⁵⁴The English terms do not of course represent the exact position of these soldiers. The former was one of the emperor's personal body-guard (speculatores), who received the watchword (tessera) and passed it round: the latter was one to whom a centurion had delegated some part of his work.

⁵⁵Plutarch explains this. 'He passed through Tiberius' house, as it is called, and walked down to the Forum, where stands the golden pillar to which all the high-roads of Italy lead.' The Velabrum lies between the Forum, the Tiber, and the Aventine.

THE FALL OF GALBA

29Meanwhile Galba in total ignorance and intent upon his sacrifices continued to importune the gods of an empire that had already ceased to be his. First there came a rumour that some one or other of the senators was being hurried to the camp, then that it was Otho. Immediately people who had met Otho came flocking in from all quarters of Rome; some in their terror exaggerated the truth, some minimized it, remembering even then to flatter. After discussion it was decided that the temper of the cohort on guard in the palace should be tested, but not by Galba himself. His authority was held

in reserve for more heroic remedies. The troops were summoned. Piso, standing out on the steps of the palace, addressed them as follows:

'Fellow soldiers, it is now five days since I was made a Caesar. I knew nothing of the future nor whether the name was more to be desired or feared. It now lies with you to decide whether or no my adoption is to prove a calamity for my house and for my country. In saying this, I do not dread disaster on my own account. I have known misfortune, and I am now discovering to the full that prosperity is just as dangerous. But for the sake of my adoptive father, of the senate, and of the whole empire, I deplore the thought that we may have to-day either to die or—what for good men is as wretched—to kill. In the recent revolution our comfort was that Rome was spared the sight of blood, and the transfer was effected ⁴⁶without disturbance. We thought that my adoption would be a safeguard against an outbreak of civil war even after Galba's death. ³⁰I will make no claims to rank or respectability. To compare myself with Otho, I need not recite my virtues. His vices are all he has to be proud of. They ruined the empire, even when he was only playing the part of an emperor's friend. Why should he deserve to be emperor? For his swaggering demeanour? For his effeminate costume? Extravagance imposes on some people. They take it for liberality. They are wrong. He will know how to squander money, but not how to give it away. His mind is full of lechery and debauchery and intrigues with women. These are in his eyes the prerogatives of the throne. And the pleasure of his vices would be all his, the blushes of shame would be ours. No man has ever ruled well who won the throne by bad means. The whole Roman world agreed to give Galba the title of Caesar. Galba with your approval gave that title to me. Even if the "country", the "senate", the "people", are empty terms, it is to your interest, my fellow soldiers, to see that it is not the rascals who create an emperor. From time to time one hears of the legionaries being in mutiny against their generals. But your good faith and your good name have stood to this day unimpaired. It was not you who deserted Nero: he deserted you. Are you going to allow less than thirty deserters and renegades to bestow the crown? Why! no one would tolerate their choosing ⁴⁷so much as a centurion or a tribune for themselves. Are you going to allow this precedent, and by your acquiescence make their crime your own? You will soon see this lawless spirit spreading to the troops abroad, and in time the treason will recoil on us and the war on you. Besides, innocence wins you as much as the murder of your emperor: you will get from us as large a bounty for your loyalty as you would from others for your crime.'

³¹The members of the Body Guard dispersed. The rest of the cohort paid some heed to his speech. Aimlessly, as happens in moments of confusion, they seized their standards, without as yet any fixed plan, and not, as was afterwards believed, to cloak their treachery. Marius Celsus had been dispatched to the picked detachments of the Illyrian army, which were quartered in the Vipsanian arcade,⁵⁶ while instructions had been given to two senior centurions,⁵⁷ Amullius Serenus and Domitius Sabinus, to summon the German troops from the Hall of Liberty. They distrusted the legion of marines, who had

been alienated by Galba's ⁴⁸butchery of their comrades on his entry into Rome.⁵⁸ Three officers of the guards, Cetrius Severus, Subrius Dexter, and Pompeius Longinus, also hurried to the camp in the hope that the mutiny was still in its early stages and might be averted by good advice before it came to a head. The soldiers attacked Subrius and Cetrius with threats and forcibly seizing Longinus disarmed him, because he had not come in virtue of his military rank, but simply as one of Galba's private friends; and for his loyalty to his master the rebels disliked him all the more. The marines without any hesitation joined the guards. The Illyrian draft⁵⁹ drove Celsus away at the point of their javelins. The German detachments⁵⁹ wavered for some time. They were still in poor condition physically, and inclined to be passive. Nero had dispatched them as an advance-guard to Alexandria;⁶⁰ the long voyage back again had damaged their health, and Galba had spared no expense in looking after them.

32The whole populace of Rome was now crowding into the palace together with a good sprinkling of slaves. With discordant shouts they demanded the death of Otho and the doom of the conspirators. They might have been in the circus or the theatre, clamouring for entertainment. There was neither sense nor sincerity in their behaviour. They were quite ready on the same day to clamour for the opposite with equal zeal. ⁴⁹But it is an established custom to flatter any emperor with unbridled cheering and meaningless enthusiasm. Meanwhile Galba was torn between two opinions. Titus Vinius maintained that they ought to remain within the palace, employ the slaves to offer resistance and block up all the doors, instead of going out to face the angry troops. 'This will give time,' he urged, 'for the disloyal to repent and the loyal to unite their forces. Crimes demand haste, good counsels profit by delay. Besides, if need be, we shall have the same chance of leaving the palace later: if we leave and repent of it, it will not be in our power to return.'

33All the others voted for immediate action before the conspiracy gathered strength and numbers. 'Otho,' they argued, 'will soon lose heart. He crept away by stealth and was introduced in a litter to a parcel of strangers, and now because we dally and waste time he has leisure to rehearse his part of emperor. What is the good of waiting until Otho sets his camp in order and approaches the Capitol, while Galba peeps out of a window? Are this famous general and his gallant friends to shut the doors and not to stir a foot over the threshold, as if they were anxious to endure a siege? Much help may we hope from slaves, when once the unwieldy crowd loses its unity and their first indignation, which counts for so much, begins to cool. No, cowardice is too risky. Or if we must fall, let us meet the danger half-way, and cover Otho with disgrace, ourselves with honour.'

⁵⁰When Vinius resisted this proposal, Laco, prompted by Icelus, assailed him with threats, persisting in his private quarrel to the ruin of his country. 34Galba without further delay supported those whose plan would look best. However, Piso was first dispatched to the camp. The young man had a great name, his popularity was still fresh, and moreover, he disliked Titus Vinius, or, if he did not, Vinius' enemies hoped he did:

it is so easy to believe in hatred. Scarcely had Piso departed, when there arrived a rumour that Otho had been killed in the camp. At first it was vague and uncertain, but eventually, as so often happens with daring lies, people began to assert that they had been present and seen the deed. Some were glad and some indifferent, so the news gained easy credence. Many, however, thought that the report had been concocted and disseminated by friends of Otho, who now mingled in the crowd and tried to lure Galba out by spreading this agreeable falsehood. ³⁵At this point not only the populace and the inexperienced mob but many of the knights and senators as well broke out into applause and unbridled enthusiasm. With their fear they had lost their caution. Breaking open the palace gates they rushed in and presented themselves before Galba, complaining that they had been forestalled in the task of revenge. All the cowards who, as events proved, could show no pluck in action, indulged in excessive heroics and lip-courage. Nobody knew, everybody talked. At last, for lack of the truth, Galba yielded to the consensus of error. When he had put on his ⁵¹breastplate he was lifted into a chair, for he was too old and infirm to stand against the crowds that kept flocking in. In the palace he was met by Julius Atticus, of the Body Guard, who displayed a dripping sword and shouted out that he had killed Otho. 'Comrade,' said Galba, 'who bade you?' Galba had a remarkable power of curbing soldiers' presumption, for he was not afraid of threats nor moved by flattery.

³⁶Meanwhile in Otho's camp there was no longer any doubt of the soldiers' unanimity. Such was their enthusiasm that they were not content with carrying Otho shoulder-high in procession; they placed him among the standards on the platform, where shortly before a gilt statue of Galba had stood, and made a ring round him with their colours.⁶¹ Tribunes and centurions were allowed no approach: the common soldiers even called out, 'Beware of the officers.' The whole camp resounded with confused shouts of mutual encouragement. It was quite unlike the wavering and spiritless flattery of a civil mob. As new adherents streamed in, directly a soldier caught sight of one of them, he grasped him by the hand, flung his arms round him, kept him at his side, and dictated the oath of allegiance. Some commended their general to his soldiers, and some the soldiers to their general. Otho, for his part, was not slow to greet the crowd with outstretched hand and throw kisses to them. In every way he played the slave to gain a throne. When ⁵²the whole legion of the marines had sworn allegiance, he gained confidence in his strength, and, considering that those whom he had incited individually needed a few words of general encouragement, he stood out on the rampart and began as follows:—³⁷'In what guise I come forward to address you, Fellow Soldiers, I cannot tell. Dubbed emperor by you, I dare not call myself a private citizen: yet "emperor" I cannot say with another on the throne. And what am I to call you? That too will remain in doubt until it is decided whether you have here in your camp an enemy or an emperor of Rome. You hear how they clamour at once for my death and your punishment. So clear is it that we must fall or stand together. Doubtless Galba—such is his clemency—has already promised our destruction. Is he not the man who

without the least excuse butchered thousands of utterly innocent soldiers?⁶² I shudder whenever I recall his ghastly entry into the city, when before the face of Rome he ordered the decimation of the troops whom at their humble petition he had taken under his protection. That is Galba's only "victory". These were the auspices under which he made his entry; and what glory has he brought to the throne he occupies, save the murder of Obultronius Sabinus and Cornelius Marcellus in Spain, of Betuus Cilo in Gaul, of Fonteius Capito in Germany, of Clodius Macer in Africa, of Cingonius on his march to Rome, of Turpilianus in the city, and of Nymphidius in the camp? What ⁵³province is there in the empire that has not been polluted with massacre? He calls it "salutary correction". For his "remedies" are what other people call crimes: his cruelty is disguised as "austerity", his avarice as "economy", while by "discipline" he means punishing and insulting you. It is but seven months since Nero's death, and already Icelus alone has embezzled more than all the depredations of Polyclitus and Vatinius and Aegialus⁶³ put together. Why, Vinus would have been less greedy and lawless had he been emperor himself. As it is, he treats us as his own subjects and despises us as Galba's. His own fortune alone could provide the largess which they daily cast in your teeth but never pay into your pocket.

38'Nor in Galba's successor either is there any hope for you. Galba has seen to that. He has recalled from exile the man whose avarice and sour temper he judged most like his own. You witnessed for yourselves, my comrades, the extraordinary storm which signified Heaven's abhorrence at that ill-starred adoption. The Senate and People of Rome feel the same. They are counting on your courage. You alone can give strength to the right policy: it is powerless without you, however good it be. It is ⁵⁴not to war and danger that I call you. All the troops are with us. That single plain-clothes cohort⁶⁴ is no longer a defence to Galba, but a hindrance. When once they have caught sight of you, when once they come to take their orders from me, the only quarrel between you will be who can do most to put me in their debt. There is no room for delay in plans which cannot be commended until they are put into action.'

Otho then gave orders to open the arsenal. The soldiers immediately seized their arms in such haste that all the ordinary distinctions of the service were neglected: neither Guards nor Legionaries carried their own arms;⁶⁵ in the confusion they took the helmets and shields of the auxiliaries. There were no tribunes or centurions to encourage them: each man followed his own lead, and the rascals found their chief incentive in the consternation of the loyal. 39As the riot increased, Piso, alarmed by the din of their shouts, which could be heard even in the city, had overtaken Galba, who had meanwhile left the palace and was approaching the Forum. Marius Celsus had also brought back no good news. Some were for returning to the palace, others for seeking the shelter of the Capitol, many for seizing the Rostra. The majority merely disagreed with other people's proposals, and, as so often happens ⁵⁵in these disasters, the best course always seemed the one for which it was now too late. It is said that Laco, without Galba's knowledge, proposed the assassination of Titus Vinus, either with the idea that his

execution would be a sop to the soldiers, or because he believed him Otho's accomplice, or, as a last alternative, hatred may have been his motive. However, the time and the place both bred scruples; when killing once begins it is difficult to set a limit: besides, their plans were upset by the arrival of terrified messengers, by the continual desertion of their supporters, and by a general waning of enthusiasm even among those who at first had been the keenest to display their loyalty and courage.

40Galba was driven hither and thither by the tide of the surging mob. The temples and public buildings⁶⁶ were crowded with spectators, who viewed a sorry scene. No shouts came from the crowd: astonishment was on their faces, and their ears open to every sound. There was neither uproar nor quiet, but the silence of strong emotion and alarm. However, a report reached Otho that the populace was arming. He bade his men fly headlong to forestall the danger. Off went the Roman soldiers as if they were going to drag Vologaesius or Pacorus from the ancestral throne of the Arsacids⁶⁷—and not to butcher their own emperor, ^{56a} a helpless old man. Armed to the teeth, they broke at a full gallop into the Forum, scattering the populace and trampling senators under foot. Neither the sight of the Capitol nor the sanctity of the temples towering above them, nor the thought of Roman emperors past and to come, could avail to deter them from committing that crime which the next successor always avenges.

41Seeing the armed ranks now close at hand, the standard-bearer of the cohort on guard over Galba⁶⁸—tradition says his name was Atilius Vergilio—tore off the medallion of Galba⁶⁹ and flung it to the ground. This signal clearly showed that all the troops were for Otho: the people fled from the deserted Forum and swords were drawn against any who lingered. Near 'Lake Curtius'⁷⁰ Galba was precipitated from his chair by the panic-stricken haste of the bearers and flung to the ground. The accounts of his last words vary according as they are prompted by hatred or admiration. Some say that he whined and asked what harm he had deserved, begging for a few days' respite to pay the troops their largess. The majority say that he offered his neck to the blow and bade them, 'Come, strike, if it serves the country's need.' Whatever he said mattered little to his assassins. As to the actual ⁵⁷murderer there is a difference of opinion. Some say it was Terentius, a reservist,⁷¹ others that his name was Laecanius. The most common account is that a soldier of the Fifteenth legion, by name Camurius, pierced his throat with a sword-thrust. The others foully mangled his arms and legs (his breast was covered) and with bestial savagery continued to stab the headless corpse. 42Then they made for Titus Vinius. Here, too, there is a doubt whether the fear of imminent death strangled his voice, or whether he called out that they had no mandate from Otho to kill him. He may have invented this in his terror, or it may have been a confession of his complicity in the plot. His whole life and reputation give reason to suppose that he was an accomplice in the crime of which he was the cause. He was brought to the ground in front of the temple of Julius by a blow on the knee, and afterwards a common soldier named Julius Carus ran him through with a sword.

43However, Rome found one hero that day. This was Sempronius Densus, a centurion of the Guards, who had been told off by Galba to protect Piso. Drawing his dagger he faced the armed assassins, flinging their treason in their teeth, and by his shouts and gestures turned their attention upon himself, thus enabling ⁵⁸Piso to escape despite his wounds. Piso, reaching the temple of Vesta, was mercifully sheltered by the verger, who hid him in his lodging. There, no reverence for this sanctuary but merely his concealment postponed his immediate death. Eventually, Otho, who was burning to have him killed,⁷² dispatched as special agents, Sulpicius Florus of the British cohorts, a man whom Galba had recently enfranchised, and Statius Murcus of the Body Guard. They dragged Piso forth and butchered him on the threshold of the temple.

⁵⁶These troops, having no head-quarters in Rome, were put up in a piazza built by M. Vipsanius Agrippa, and decorated with paintings of Neptune and of the Argonauts. Cp. ii. [93](#), where troops are quartered in collonades or temples.

⁵⁷The term *primipilaris* denotes one who had been the centurion commanding the first maniple (*pilani*) of the first cohort of a legion. He was an officer of great importance, highly paid, and often admitted to the general's council. Otho's expedition to Narbonese Gaul (chap. [87](#)) was commanded by two such 'senior centurions'.

⁵⁸See chap. [6](#), note [11](#).

⁵⁹See chap. [6](#).

⁶⁰Nero was meditating an Ethiopian campaign when the revolt of broke out. Cp. chap. [6](#).

⁶¹Probably the colours of the different maniples as distinct from the standards of the cohorts.

⁶²Cp. chap. [6](#).

⁶³Freedmen who had curried favour with Nero. Polyclitus was sent to inquire into Suetonius Paulinus' administration of Britain after the revolt of Boadicea in A.D. 61. Vatinius was a deformed cobbler from Beneventum who became a sort of court buffoon, and acquired great wealth and bad influence.

⁶⁴The cohort on guard seem to have been in mufti, without helmets and shields or their military cloaks, but armed with swords and javelins.

⁶⁵The legionaries armed themselves with lances (*hastae*), and the auxiliaries with javelins (*pila*).

⁶⁶The word *basilica* refers to the buildings round the Forum, used for legal, financial, and commercial purposes. Most of them had cloisters.

⁶⁷The Parthian royal family: Vologaesius was king of Parthia, and his brother Pacorus viceroy of Media Atropatene.

⁶⁸Cp. chap. [29](#).

⁶⁹Attached to the pole of the standard.

⁷⁰An enclosed pond in the middle of the Forum, supposed to be the spot where Curtius leapt on horseback into the chasm, or by others the spot where a Sabine chieftain was engulfed in the days of Romulus.

⁷¹The word here used usually means a veteran re-enlisted in a special corps after his term had expired. It was also applied at this time in a special sense to a corps of young knights, who, without losing their status, acted as Galba's special body-guard in the imperial palace. One of these may have been the murderer.

OTHO ON THE THRONE

44None of his murders pleased Otho so much as this. On Piso's head, as on no other, they say, he gazed with insatiable eyes. This was possibly the first moment at which he felt relieved of all anxiety, and free to indulge his glee; or perhaps, in the case of Galba and of Vinus, the recollection of his treason to the one and of his former friendship with the other troubled even his unfeeling heart with gloomy thoughts, whereas, Piso being an enemy and a rival, he considered it a pious duty to gloat over his murder. Their heads were fixed on poles and carried along with the standards of the cohorts side by

side with the eagle of the legion.⁷³ Those who had done the deed and those who had witnessed it vied with each other in displaying their bloody hands, all boasting of their share—some falsely, ⁵⁹some truly—as if it were a fine and memorable exploit. Vitellius subsequently discovered more than 120 petitions demanding rewards for distinguished services rendered on that day. He gave orders to search out all the petitioners and put them to death. This was from no respect for Galba: he merely followed the traditional custom by which princes secure their present safety and posthumous vengeance.

45The senate and people seemed different men. There was a general rush for the camp, every one shouldering his neighbour and trying to overtake those in front. They heaped insults on Galba, praised the prudence of the troops, and covered Otho's hand with kisses, their extravagance varying inversely with their sincerity. Otho rebuffed no one, and succeeded by his words and looks in moderating the menace of the soldiers' greed for vengeance. They loudly demanded the execution of Marius Celsus, the consul-elect, who had remained Galba's faithful friend to the last. They were as much offended at his efficiency and honesty as if these had been criminal qualities. What they wanted was obviously to find a first excuse for plunder and murder and the destruction of all decent citizens. But Otho had as yet no influence to prevent crimes: he could only order them. So he simulated anger, giving instructions for Celsus' arrest, and by promising that he should meet with a worse penalty, thus rescued him from immediate death.

46The will of the soldiers was now henceforward supreme. The Praetorian Guards chose their own ⁶⁰prefects, Plotius Firmus, a man who had risen from the ranks to the post of Chief of Police,⁷⁴ and joined Otho's side before Galba's fall, and Licinius Proculus, an intimate friend of Otho, and therefore suspected of furthering his plans. They made Flavius Sabinus⁷⁵ prefect of the city, therein following Nero's choice, under whom Sabinus had held that post; besides, most of them had an eye to the fact that he was Vespasian's brother. An urgent demand arose that the customary fees to centurions for granting furlough should be abolished, for they constituted a sort of annual tax upon the common soldier. The result had been that a quarter of each company could go off on leave or lounge idly about the barracks, so long as they paid the centurion his fee, nor was there any one to control either the amount of this impost or the means by which the soldiers raised the money: highway robbery or menial service was the usual resort whereby they purchased leisure. Then, again, a soldier who had money was savagely burdened with work until he should buy exemption. Thus he soon became impoverished and enervated by idleness, and returned to his company no longer a man of means and energy but penniless and lazy. So the process went on. One after another they became deteriorated by poverty and lax discipline, rushing blindly into quarrels and ⁶¹mutiny, and, as a last resource, into civil war. Otho was afraid of alienating the centurions by his concessions to the rank and file, and promised to pay the annual furlough-fees out of his private purse. This was indubitably a sound reform, which good emperors have since established as a regular custom in the army. The prefect Laco he pretended to banish to an island, but on his arrival he was stabbed by a reservist⁷⁶ whom Otho had

previously dispatched for that purpose. Marcianus Icelus, as being one of his own freedmen,⁷⁷ he sentenced to public execution.

47Thus the day was spent in crimes, and worst of all was the joy they caused. The senate was summoned by the urban praetor.⁷⁸ The other magistrates all vied in flattery. The senators arrived post-haste. They decreed to Otho the powers of the tribunate, the title of Augustus, and all the imperial prerogatives. Their unanimous object was to blot out all recollection of former insults; but, as these had been hurled equally from all sides, they did not, as far as any one could see, stick in his memory. Whether he had forgotten them or only postponed punishment, his reign was too short to show. He was then carried through the still reeking Forum among the piles of dead bodies to the Capitol, and thence to the palace. He granted permission to burn and bury the bodies of his victims. ⁶²Piso's wife Verania and his brother Scribonianus laid out his body, and this was done for Vinus by his daughter Crispina. They had to search for the heads and buy them back from the murderers, who had preserved them for sale.

⁷²According to Plutarch, when they brought Otho Galba's head, he said, 'That's nothing: show me Piso's.'

⁷³i.e. the legion of marines—Prima Adiutrix. Cp. chap. 6, &c.

⁷⁴i.e. in command of the *cohortes vigilum*. Cp. chap. 5, note 10.

⁷⁵Vespasian's elder brother. He continued to hold the office under Vitellius (ii. 63).

⁷⁶See chap. 42, note 71.

⁷⁷As a *libertus Caesaris* he passed into Otho's hands with the rest of the palace furniture.

⁷⁸The consuls Galba and Vinus (chap. 1), were both dead.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

48Piso was in his thirty-first year. His reputation was better than his fortune. His brothers had been executed, Magnus by Claudius, Crassus by Nero.⁷⁹ He himself after being long in exile was a Caesar for four days. Hastily adopted in preference to his elder brother,⁸⁰ the only advantage he reaped was to be killed first.

Titus Vinus in his fifty-seven years had displayed strange contrasts of character. His father belonged to a family of praetorian rank; his mother's father was one of the proscribed.⁸¹ A scandal marked his first military service under the general Calvisius Sabinus.⁸² The general's wife suffered from a suspicious desire to inspect the arrangements of the camp, which she entered by night disguised in soldier's uniform. There she brazenly interfered with the guard and the soldiers on duty, and eventually had the effrontery ⁶³to commit adultery in the general's own quarters. The man convicted of implication in this scandal was Titus Vinus. He was therefore put in irons by order of Caligula.⁸³ However, the fortunes of the time soon changed and he was set at liberty. After mounting the ladder of office without check, he was as an ex-praetor given the command of a legion, and proved successful. But soon again he soiled his reputation, and laid himself under the charge of having been mean enough to steal a gold cup from Claudius' dinner-table. Claudius gave orders that on the next day Vinus alone of all his guests should be served on earthenware. However, as pro-consul, Vinus' government of Narbonese Gaul was strict and honest. Subsequently his friendship with

Galba brought him into danger. He was bold, cunning, and efficient, with great power for good or for evil, according to his mood. Vinius' will was annulled because of his great wealth. Piso was poor, so his last wishes were respected.

49Galba's body lay long neglected, and under cover of darkness was subjected to various insults. Eventually his steward Argius, one of his former slaves, gave it a humble burial in his private garden. His head, which the camp-followers and servants had mangled and carried on a pole, was found next day in front of the tomb of Patrobius (one of Nero's freedmen whom Galba had executed) and buried with the body which had already been cremated. Such was the end of ⁶⁴Servius Galba, who for seventy-three years had enjoyed prosperity under five different emperors, happier in their reign than his own. He came of an old and noble family and possessed great wealth. His own character was mediocre, rather free from vices than rich in virtues. Though not indifferent to fame, he did not court it by advertisement. Not greedy of other people's money, he was careful of his own, and a miser with public funds. His attitude towards friends and freedmen, if they were honest, was one of kindly complaisance; when they were not, he was culpably blind. But his distinguished origin and the peculiar perils of the time disguised his apathy, which passed as prudence.⁸⁴ In the flower of his youth he served with distinction in Germany. As pro-consul he governed Africa wisely, and in later years showed the same equity in Nearer Spain.⁸⁵ When he was a commoner he seemed too big for his station, and had he never been emperor, no one would have doubted his ability to reign.

⁷⁹Cn. Pompeius Magnus was Claudius' son-in-law, and executed by him 'on a vague charge'. M. Licinius Crassus Frugi was accused of treason to Nero by Aquilius Regulus, an informer, whom one of Pliny's friends calls 'the vilest of bipeds'. Regulus' brother was Vipstanus Messala. Cp. iv. [42](#).

⁸⁰Scribonianus. Cp. chap. [15](#).

⁸¹Under the second triumvirate.

⁸²He was governor of Pannonia under Caligula.

⁸³Sabinus and his wife were prosecuted, and both committed suicide.

⁸⁴Under Nero, says Tacitus in his Life of Agricola, 'the wisest man was he who did least.'

⁸⁵He had governed the upper province of Germany under Caligula; Africa under Claudius; the Tarragona division of Spain under Nero. In Germany he defeated the Chatti A.D. 41.

THE RISE OF VITELLIUS

50The city was in a panic. The alarm aroused by the recent atrocious crime and by Otho's well-known proclivities was further increased by the fresh news ⁶⁵about Vitellius.⁸⁶ This news had been suppressed before Galba's murder, and it was believed that only the army of Upper Germany had revolted. Now when they saw that the two men in the world who were most notorious for immorality, indolence, and extravagance had been, as it were, appointed by Providence to ruin the empire, not only the senators and knights who had some stake and interest in the country, but the masses as well, openly deplored their fate. Their talk was no longer of the horrors of the recent bloody peace: they reverted to the records of the civil wars, the taking and retaking of Rome by her own troops, the devastation of Italy, the pillage of the provinces, the battles

of Pharsalia, Philippi, Perusia, and Mutina,⁸⁷ those bywords of national disaster. 'The world was turned upside down,' they mused, 'even when good men fought for the throne: yet the Roman Empire survived the victories of Julius Caesar and of Augustus, as the Republic would have survived had Pompey and Brutus been victorious. But now—are we to go and pray for Otho or for Vitellius? To pray for either would be impious. It would be wicked to offer vows for the success of either in a war of which we can only be sure that the winner will prove the worse.' Some cherished hopes of Vespasian and the armies of the ⁶⁶East: he was preferable to either of the others; still they shuddered at the thought of a fresh war and fresh bloodshed. Besides, Vespasian's reputation was doubtful. He was the first emperor who ever changed for the better.

51I must now explain the origin and causes of the rising of Vitellius. After the slaughter of Julius ⁸⁸ and his whole force, the troops were in high spirits at the fame and booty they had acquired. Without toil or danger they had won a most profitable victory. So they were all for marching against the enemy: plunder seemed better than pay. They had endured a long and unprofitable service, rendered the more irksome by the country and climate and by the strict discipline observed. But discipline, however stern in time of peace, is always relaxed in civil wars, when temptation stands on either hand and treachery goes unpunished. Men, armour, and horses they had in abundance for use and for show. But, whereas before the war the soldiers only knew the men of their own company or troop, and the provincial frontier⁸⁹ separated the armies, now, having once joined forces against , they had gained a knowledge of their own strength and the state of the province, and were looking for more fighting and fresh quarrels, calling the Gauls no longer allies, as before, but 'our enemies' or 'the vanquished'. They had also the support of the Gallic tribes on the banks of the Rhine, who had ⁶⁷espoused their cause and were now the most eager to rouse them against 'the Galbians'⁹⁰ as they now called them, despising the name of . So, cherishing hostility against the Sequani and Aedui,⁹¹ and against all the other communities in proportion to their wealth, they drank in dreams of sacking towns and pillaging fields and looting houses, inspired partly by the peculiar failings of the strong, greed and vanity, and partly also by a feeling of irritation at the insolence of the Gauls, who boasted, to the chagrin of the army, that Galba had remitted a quarter of their tribute and given the franchise and grants of land to their community.⁹² Further fuel was added by a rumour, cunningly circulated and rashly credited, that there was a project on foot to decimate the legions and discharge all the most enterprising centurions. From every side came alarming news and sinister reports from the city. The colony of Lugdunum⁹³ was up in arms, and its stubborn attachment to Nero made it a hotbed of rumour. But in the camp itself the passions and fears of the soldiers, and, when once they had realized their strength, their feeling of security, furnished the richest material for lies and won them easy credence.

52In the preceding year,⁹⁴ shortly after the beginning of December, Aulus Vitellius had entered the province ⁶⁸of Lower Germany and held a careful inspection of the winter quarters of the legions. He restored many to their rank, remitted degrading penalties,

and relieved those who had suffered disgrace, acting mainly from ambitious motives, but partly also upon sound judgement. Amongst other things he showed impartiality in remedying the injustices due to the mean and dishonest way in which Fonteius Capito had issued promotions and reductions. The soldiers did not judge Vitellius' actions as those of a mere ex-consul: they took him for something more, and, while serious critics found him undignified,⁹⁵ his supporters spoke of his affability and beneficence, because he showed neither moderation nor judgement in making presents out of his own money and squandering other people's. Besides, they were so greedy for power that they took even his vices for virtues. In both armies there were plenty of quiet, law-abiding men as well as many who were unprincipled and disorderly. But for sheer reckless cupidity none could match two of the legionary legates, Alienus Caecina and Fabius Valens.⁹⁶ Valens was hostile to Galba, because, after unmasking Verginius's hesitation⁹⁷ and thwarting Capito's designs, he considered that he had been treated with ingratitude: so he incited ⁶⁹Vitellius by pointing out to him the enthusiasm of the troops. 'You,' he would say to him, 'are famous everywhere, and you need find no obstacle in Hordeonius Flaccus.⁹⁸ Britain will join and the German auxiliaries will flock to your standard. Galba cannot trust the provinces; the poor old man holds the empire on sufferance; the transfer can be soon effected, if only you will clap on full sail and meet your good fortune half-way. Verginius was quite right to hesitate. He came of a family of knights, and his father was a nobody. He would have failed, had he accepted the empire: his refusal saved him. Your father was thrice consul, and he was censor with an emperor for his colleague.⁹⁹ That gives you imperial dignity to start with, and makes it unsafe for you to remain a private citizen.'

These promptings stirred Vitellius' sluggish nature to form desires, but hardly hopes.

53Caecina, on the other hand, in Upper Germany, was a handsome youth, whose big build, imperious spirit, clever tongue, and upright carriage had completely won the hearts of the soldiers. While quaestor in Baetica¹⁰⁰ he had promptly joined Galba's party, and in spite of his youth had been given command of a legion. Later he was convicted of misappropriating public funds, and, on Galba's orders, prosecuted for ⁷⁰peculation. Highly indignant, Caecina determined to embroil the world and bury his own disgrace in the ruins of his country. Nor were the seeds of dissension lacking in the army. The entire force had taken part in the war against , nor was it until after Nero's death that they joined Galba's side, and even then they had been forestalled in swearing allegiance by the detachments of Lower Germany. Then again the Treviri and Lingones¹⁰¹ and the other communities which Galba had punished by issuing harsh edicts and confiscating part of their territory, were in close communication with the winter quarters of the legions. They began to talk treason: the soldiers degenerated in civilian society: it only wanted some one to avail himself of the offer they had made to Verginius.

54Following an ancient custom, the tribe of the Lingones had made a present of a pair of silver hands¹⁰² to the legions as a symbol of hospitality. Assuming an appearance of

squalid misery, their envoys made the round of the officers' quarters and the soldiers' tents complaining of their own wrongs and of the rewards lavished on neighbouring tribes. Finding the soldiers ready to listen, they made inflammatory allusions to the army itself, its dangers and humiliation. Mutiny was almost ripe, when Hordeonius Flaccus ordered the envoys to withdraw, and, in order to secure the secrecy of their departure, gave instructions to them to leave the camp ⁷¹by night. This gave rise to an alarming rumour. Many declared that the envoys had been killed, and that, if they did not look out for themselves, the leading spirits among the soldiers, who had complained of the present state of things, would be murdered in the dark, while their comrades knew nothing about it. So the legions formed a secret compact. The auxiliaries were also taken into the plot, although at first they had been distrusted, because their infantry and cavalry had been posted in camp all round the legion's quarters as though an attack on them were meditated. However, they soon showed themselves the keener conspirators. Disloyalty is a better bond for war than it ever proves in peace.

⁵⁵In Lower Germany, however, the legions on the first of January swore the usual oath of allegiance to Galba, though with much hesitation. Few voices were heard even in the front ranks; the rest were silent, each waiting for his neighbour to take some bold step. Human nature is always ready to follow where it hates to lead. However, the feelings of the legions varied. The First and Fifth ¹⁰³ were already mutinous enough to throw a few stones at Galba's statue. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth ¹⁰⁴ dared not venture beyond muttered threats, but they were watching to see the outbreak begin. In Upper Germany, on the other hand, on the very same day, the Fourth and the Twenty-second legions, who were quartered together, ¹⁰⁵ smashed their ⁷²statues of Galba to atoms. The Fourth took the lead, the Twenty-second at first holding back, but eventually making common cause with them. They did not want it to be thought that they were shaking off their allegiance to the empire, so in taking the oath they invoked the long obsolete names of the Senate and People of Rome. None of the officers made any movement for Galba, and indeed some of them, as happens in such outbreaks, headed the rebellion. However, nobody made any kind of set speech or mounted the platform, for there was no one as yet with whom to curry favour.

⁵⁶The ex-consul Hordeonius Flaccus stood by and watched their treachery. He had not the courage to check the storm or even to rally the waverers and encourage the faithful. Sluggish and cowardly, it was mere indolence that kept him loyal. Four centurions of the Twenty-second legion, Nonius Receptus, Donatius Valens, Romilius Marcellus, and Calpurnius Repentinus, who tried to protect Galba's statues, were swept away by the rush of the soldiers and put under arrest. No one retained any respect for their former oath of allegiance, or even remembered it; and, as happens in mutinies, they were all on the side of the majority.

On the night of the first of January a standard-bearer of the Fourth legion came to Cologne, ¹⁰⁶ and brought the news to Vitellius at his dinner that the ⁷³Fourth and Twenty-second legions had broken down Galba's statues and sworn allegiance to the

Senate and People of Rome. As this oath was meaningless, it seemed best to seize the critical moment and offer them an emperor. Vitellius dispatched messengers to inform his own troops and generals that the army of the Upper Province had revolted from Galba; so they must either make war on the rebels immediately, or, if they preferred peace and unity, make an emperor for themselves; and there was less danger, he reminded them, in choosing an emperor than in looking for one.

57The quarters of the First legion were nearest at hand, and Fabius Valens was the most enterprising of the generals. On the following day he entered Cologne with the cavalry of his legion and auxiliaries, and saluted Vitellius as emperor. The other legions of the province followed suit, vying with each other in enthusiasm; and the army of the Upper Province, dropping the fine-sounding titles of the Senate and People of Rome, joined Vitellius on the third of January, which clearly showed that on the two previous days they were not really at the disposal of a republican government. The inhabitants of Cologne and the Treviri and Lingones, rivalling the zeal of the troops, made offers of assistance, or of horses or arms or money, each according to the measure of their strength, wealth,⁷⁴ or enterprise. And these offers came not only from the civil and military authorities, men who had plenty of money to spare and much to hope from victory, but whole companies or individual soldiers handed over their savings, or, instead of money, their belts, or the silver ornaments¹⁰⁷ on their uniforms, some carried away by a wave of enthusiasm, some acting from motives of self-interest.

58Vitellius accordingly commended the zeal of the troops. He distributed among Roman knights the court-offices which had been usually held by freedmen,¹⁰⁸ paid the centurions their furlough-fees out of the imperial purse,¹⁰⁹ and for the most part conceded the soldiers' savage demands for one execution after another, though he occasionally cheated them by pretending to imprison their victims. Thus Pompeius Propinquus,¹¹⁰ the imperial agent in Belgica, was promptly executed, while Julius Burdo, who commanded the fleet on the Rhine, was adroitly rescued. The indignation of the army had broken out against him, because he was supposed to have intrigued against Fonteius Capito, and to have accused him falsely.¹¹¹ Capito's memory was dear to the army, and when ⁷⁵violence reigns murder may show its face, but pardon must be stealthy. So Burdo was kept in confinement and only released after victory had allayed the soldiers' rancour. Meanwhile a centurion, named Crispinus, was offered as a scape-goat. He had actually stained his hands with Capito's blood, so his guilt seemed more obvious to those who clamoured for his punishment, and Vitellius felt he was a cheaper sacrifice.

59Julius Civilis¹¹² was the next to be rescued from danger. He was all-powerful among the Batavi,¹¹³ and Vitellius did not want to alienate so spirited a people by punishing him. Besides, eight cohorts of Batavian troops were stationed among the Lingones. They had been an auxiliary force attached to the Fourteenth, and in the general disturbance had deserted the legion. Their decision for one side or the other would be of the first importance. Nonius, Donatius, Romilius, and Calpurnius, the centurions

mentioned above,¹¹⁴ were executed by order of Vitellius. They had been convicted of loyalty, a heinous offence among deserters. His party soon gained the accession of Valerius Asiaticus, governor of Belgica, who subsequently married Vitellius' daughter, and of Junius Blaesus,¹¹⁵ governor of the Lyons division of Gaul, who ⁷⁶brought with him the Italian legion¹¹⁶ and a regiment of cavalry known as 'Taurus' Horse',¹¹⁷ which had been quartered at Lugdunum. The forces in Raetia lost no time in joining his standard, and even the troops in Britain showed no hesitation. ⁶⁰Trebellius Maximus, the governor of Britain, had earned by his meanness and cupidity the contempt and hatred of the army,¹¹⁸ which was further inflamed by the action of his old enemy Roscius Coelius, who commanded the Twentieth legion, and they now seized the opportunity of the civil war to break out into a fierce quarrel. Trebellius blamed Coelius for the mutinous temper and insubordination of the army: Coelius complained that Trebellius had robbed his men and impaired their efficiency. Meanwhile their unseemly quarrel ruined the discipline of the forces, whose insubordination soon came to a head. The auxiliary horse and foot joined in the attacks on the governor, and rallied round Coelius. Trebellius, thus hunted out and abandoned, took refuge with Vitellius. The province remained quiet, despite the removal of the ex-consul. The government was carried on by the commanding officers of the legions, who were equal in authority, though Coelius' audacity gave him an advantage over the rest.

⁶¹Thus reinforced by the army from Britain,¹¹⁹ Vitellius, ⁷⁷who now had an immense force and vast resources at his disposal, decided on an invasion by two routes under two separate generals. Fabius Valens was to lure the Gauls to his standard, or, if they refused, to devastate their country, and then invade Italy by way of the Cottian Alps.¹²⁰ Caecina was to follow the shorter route and descend into Italy over the Pennine Pass.¹²¹ Valens' column comprised the Fifth legion with its 'eagle',¹²² and some picked detachments from the army of Lower Germany, together with auxiliary horse and foot, amounting in all to 40,000 men. Caecina's troops from Upper Germany numbered 30,000, their main strength consisting in the Twenty-first legion.¹²³ Both columns were reinforced by German auxiliaries, whom Vitellius also recruited to fill up his own army, intending to follow with the main force of the attack.

⁶²Strange was the contrast between Vitellius and his army. The soldiers were all eagerness, clamouring for battle at once, while Gaul was still frightened and Spain still undecided. Winter was no obstacle to them; peace and delay were for cowards: they must invade Italy and seize Rome: haste was the safest course in civil war, where action is better than deliberation. Vitellius was dully apathetic, anticipating ⁷⁸his high station by indulging in idle luxury and lavish entertainments. At midday he would be drunk and drowsy with over-eating. However, such was the zeal of the soldiers that they even did the general's duties, and behaved exactly as if he had been present to encourage the alert and threaten the laggards. They promptly fell in and began to clamour for the signal to start. The title of Germanicus was then and there conferred on Vitellius: Caesar he would never be called, even after his victory.

⁸⁶Cp. chap. [14](#).

⁸⁷At Pharsalia Caesar defeated Pompey, 48 B.C.; at Mutina the consul Hirtius defeated Antony, 43 B.C.; at Philippi Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, 42 B.C.; at Perusia Octavian defeated Antony's brother Lucius, 40 B.C.

⁸⁸See note [15](#).

⁸⁹Between the provinces of Upper and Lower Germany.

⁹⁰In the Gallic tongue this signified 'pot-belly'.

⁹¹The Sequani had their capital at Vesontio (Besançon), the Aedui at Augustodunum (Autun).

⁹²Cp. chap. [8](#). The land was that taken from the Treviri (chap. [53](#)).

⁹³Lyons.

⁹⁴A.D. 68.

⁹⁵According to Suetonius he used to kiss the soldiers he met in the road; make friends with ostlers and travellers at wayside inns; and go about in the morning asking everybody 'Have you had breakfast yet?' demonstrating by his hiccoughs that he had done so himself.

⁹⁶Cp. chap. [7](#). Caecina was in Upper Germany, Valens in Lower.

⁹⁷Cp. chap. [8](#).

⁹⁸He commanded the army of the Upper Province (chap. [9](#)).

⁹⁹He was Claudius' colleague twice in the consulship, and once in the censorship.

¹⁰⁰Andalusia and Granada.

¹⁰¹The Treviri have given their name to Trier (Trèves), the Lingones to Langres.

¹⁰²i.e. two right hands locked in friendship.

¹⁰³At Bonn and at Vetera.

¹⁰⁴At Vetera and at Neuss.

¹⁰⁵At Mainz.

¹⁰⁶The Ubii had been allowed by Agrippa to move their chief town from the right to the left bank of the Rhine. Ten or twelve years later (A.D. 50) a colony of Roman veterans was planted there and called *Colonia Claudia Augusta Agrippinensium*, because Agrippina, the mother of Nero, had been born there.

¹⁰⁷These were thin bosses of silver, gold, or bronze, chased in relief, and worn as medals are.

¹⁰⁸This important innovation was established as the rule by Hadrian. These officials—nominally the private servants of the emperor, and hitherto imperial freedmen—formed an important branch of the civil service. (Cp. note [165](#).)

¹⁰⁹Cp. chap. [46](#).

¹¹⁰Cp. chap. [12](#).

¹¹¹Cp. chap. [7](#).

¹¹²The leader of the great revolt on the Rhine, described in Book [IV](#).

¹¹³The ancestors of the Dutch who lived on the island formed by the Lek and the Waal between Arnhem and Rotterdam; its eastern part is still called Betuwe.

¹¹⁴Chap. [56](#).

¹¹⁵His supposed murder by Vitellius is described, iii. [38](#) [39](#)

¹¹⁶Legio Prima Italica, formed by Nero.

¹¹⁷Called after Statilius Taurus, who first enlisted it. He was Pro-consul of Africa under Nero. Cp. note [146](#).

¹¹⁸Their mutiny in A.D. 69 is described by Tacitus, *Agr.* 16.

¹¹⁹i.e. by detachments from it.

¹²⁰Mt. Cenis.

¹²¹Great St. Bernard.

¹²²i.e. he had the main body of the Legion V, known as 'The Larks', and only detachments from the other legions.

¹²³Known as 'Rapax', and stationed at Windisch (Vindonissa), east of the point where the Rhine turns to flow north.

THE MARCH OF VALENS' COLUMN

On the very day of departure a happy omen greeted Fabius Valens and the army under his command. As the column advanced, an eagle flew steadily ahead and seemed to

lead the way. Loudly though the soldiers cheered, hour after hour the bird flew undismayed, and was taken for a sure omen of success.

63They passed peaceably through the country of the Treviri, who were allies. At Divodurum,¹²⁴ the chief town of the Mediomatrici, although they were welcomed with all courtesy, the troops fell into a sudden panic. Hastily seizing their arms, they began to massacre the innocent citizens. Their object was not plunder. They were seized by a mad frenzy, which was the harder to allay as its cause was a mystery. Eventually the general's entreaties prevailed, and they refrained from destroying the town. However, nearly 794,000 men had already been killed. This spread such alarm throughout Gaul, that, as the army approached, whole towns flocked out with their magistrates at their head and prayers for mercy in their mouths. Women and boys prostrated themselves along the roads, and they resorted to every possible means by which an enemy's anger may be appeased,¹²⁵ petitioning for peace, though war there was none.

64It was in the country of the Leuci¹²⁶ that Valens heard the news of Galba's murder and Otho's elevation. The soldiers showed no emotion, neither joy nor fear: their thoughts were all for war. The Gauls' doubts were now decided. They hated Otho and Vitellius equally, but Vitellius they also feared. They next reached the Lingones, faithful adherents of their party. There the courtesy of the citizens was only equalled by the good behaviour of the troops. But this did not last for long, thanks to the disorderly conduct of the Batavian auxiliaries, who, as narrated above,¹²⁷ had detached themselves from the Fourteenth legion and been drafted into Valens' column. A quarrel between some Batavians and legionaries led to blows: the other soldiers quickly took sides, and a fierce battle would have ensued, had not Valens punished a few of the Batavians to remind them of the discipline they seemed to have forgotten.

80

Coming to the Aedui,¹²⁸ they in vain sought an excuse for fighting. For when the natives were ordered to contribute money and arms, they brought a gratuitous present of provisions as well. Lugdunum did gladly what the Aedui had done from fear. But the town was deprived of the Italian legion and Taurus' Horse.¹²⁹ Valens decided to leave the Eighteenth cohort¹³⁰ there in its old winter quarters as a garrison. Manlius Valens, who was in command of the Italian legion, never received any distinction from Vitellius, although he deserved well of the party, the reason being that Fabius slandered him behind his back, while to avert his suspicions he praised him to his face.

65The recent war¹³¹ had served to inflame the long-standing quarrel between Lugdunum and Vienne.¹³² Much damage was done on both sides, and the frequency and animosity of their conflicts proved that they were not merely fighting for Nero and Galba. Galba had made his displeasure an excuse for confiscating to the Treasury the revenues of Lugdunum, while on Vienne he had conferred various distinctions. The result was a bitter rivalry between the towns, and the Rhone between them only formed a bond

of ⁸¹hatred. Consequently the inhabitants of Lugdunum began to work on the feelings of individual Roman soldiers, and to urge them to crush Vienne. They reminded them how the Viennese had laid siege to Lugdunum, a Roman colony, had assisted the efforts of , and had lately raised troops to defend Galba. Having supplied a pretext for bad feeling, they went on to point out the rich opportunity for plunder. Not content with private persuasion, they presented a formal petition that the army would march to avenge them, and destroy the head-quarters of the Gallic war. Vienne, they urged, was thoroughly un-Roman and hostile, while Lugdunum was a Roman colony,¹³³ contributing men to the army and sharing in its victories and reverses. They besought them in the event of adverse fortune not to leave their city to the fury of its enemies.

66By these arguments and others of the same nature they brought matters to such a pass, that even the generals and party leaders despaired of cooling the army's indignation. However, the Viennese realized their danger. Arrayed in veils and fillets,¹³⁴ they met the approaching column and, seizing their hands and knees and the soles of their feet in supplication, succeeded in appeasing the troops. Valens made each ⁸²of the soldiers a present of three hundred sesterces.¹³⁵ They were thus persuaded to respect the antiquity and high standing of the colony, and to listen with patience to their general's speech, in which he commended to them the lives and property of the Viennese. However, the town was disarmed, and private individuals had to assist the army with various kinds of provisions. There was, however, a persistent rumour that Valens himself had been bought with a heavy bribe. He had long been in mean circumstances and ill concealed his sudden accession of wealth. Prolonged poverty had whetted his inordinate desires, and the needy youth grew into an extravagant old man.

He next led the army by slow stages through the country of the Allobroges and Vocontii,¹³⁶ bribes to the general determining the length of each day's march and the choice of a camp. For Valens struck disgraceful bargains with the landowners and municipal authorities, often applying violent threats, as, for instance, at Lucus,¹³⁷ a township of the Vocontii, which he threatened to burn, until he was appeased with money. Where it was impossible to get money, he was mollified by appeals to his lust. And so it went on until the Alps were reached.

¹²⁴Metz.

¹²⁵They would wear veils and fillets, as suppliants. Cp. chap. 66 and iii. 31.

¹²⁶Living round Toul between the Marne and the Moselle.

¹²⁷Chap. 59.

¹²⁸Cp. chap. 51.

¹²⁹Cp. chap. 59.

¹³⁰This was probably one of the *cohortes civium Romanorum*, volunteer corps raised in Italy on lighter terms of service than prevailed in the legions.

¹³¹With .

¹³²The chief town of the Allobroges, and the capital of Narbonese Gaul.

¹³³So was Vienne; but the status had been conferred on the Gauls of this town as lately as Caligula's reign, whereas Lugdunum had been colonized in B.C. 43 by Roman citizens expelled from Vienne.

¹³⁴Cf. iii. 31.

¹³⁵Nearly fifty shillings.

¹³⁶Part of Dauphiné and Provence, with a capital town at Vaison.

¹³⁷Luc-en-Diois.

THE MARCH OF CAECINA'S COLUMN

67There was even more looting and bloodshed on Caecina's march. The Helvetii, a Gallic tribe¹³⁸ once famous as fighting men and still distinguished by the memory of their past, having heard nothing of Galba's murder, refused to acknowledge the authority of Vitellius. This exasperated Caecina's headstrong nature. Hostilities broke out owing to the greed and impatience of the Twenty-first legion, who had seized a sum of money which was being sent to pay the garrison of a fort in which the Helvetii used to keep native troops at their own expense.¹³⁹ The Helvetii, highly indignant at this, intercepted a dispatch from the German army to the Pannonian legions, and kept a centurion and some men in custody. Greedy for battle, Caecina hastened to take immediate vengeance without giving them time for second thoughts. Promptly breaking up his camp, he proceeded to harry the country, and sacked a charming and much-frequented watering-place,¹⁴⁰ which had grown during the long peace into the size and importance of a town. Instructions were sent to the Raetian auxiliaries to attack the Helvetii in the rear, while their attention was occupied with the legion.

84

68Full of spirit beforehand, the Helvetii were terrified in the face of danger. At the first alarm they had chosen Claudius Severus general, but they knew nothing of fighting or discipline and were incapable of combined action. An engagement with the Roman veterans would be disastrous; and the walls, dilapidated by time, could not stand a siege. They found themselves between Caecina and his powerful army on the one side, and on the other the Raetian auxiliaries, both horse and foot, and the whole fighting force of Raetia as well, trained soldiers well used to fighting.¹⁴¹ Their country was given over to plunder and massacre. Flinging away their arms, they wandered miserably between two fires. Wounded and scattered, most of them took refuge on the Bötzenberg.¹⁴² But some Thracian auxiliaries were promptly sent to dislodge them. The German army, aided by the Raetians, pursued them through the woods, and cut them to pieces in their hiding-places. Many thousands were killed and many sold as slaves. Having completed the work of destruction, the army advanced in hostile array against Aventicum,¹⁴³ their capital town, and were met by envoys offering surrender. The offer was accepted. Caecina executed Julius Alpinus, one of their chief men, as the prime instigator of the revolt. The rest he left to experience the clemency or cruelty of Vitellius.

69

It is hard to say whether these envoys found Vitellius or the army the more implacable. The soldiers⁸⁵ clamoured for the destruction of the town,¹⁴⁴ and shook their fists and weapons in the envoys' faces: even Vitellius indulged in threatening language.

Ultimately, however, Claudius Cossus, one of the envoys, a noted speaker who greatly enhanced the effect of his eloquence by concealing his skill under a well-timed affectation of nervousness, succeeded in softening the hearts of the soldiers. A mob is always liable to sudden changes of feeling, and the men were as sensible to pity as they had been extravagant in their brutality. Thus with streams of tears and importunate prayers for a better answer the envoys procured a free pardon for Aventicum.¹⁴⁵

70Caecina halted for a few days in Helvetian territory until he could get news of Vitellius' decision. Meantime, while carrying on his preparations for crossing the Alps, he received from Italy the joyful news that 'Silius' Horse',¹⁴⁶ stationed at Padua, had come over to Vitellius. The members of this troop had served under Vitellius when pro-consul in Africa. They had subsequently been detached under orders from Nero to precede him to Egypt, and had then been recalled, owing to the outbreak of the war with . They were now in Italy. Their officers, who knew nothing ⁸⁶of Otho and were attached to Vitellius, extolled the strength of the approaching column and the fame of the German army. So the troop went over to Vitellius, bringing their new emperor a gift of the four strongest towns of the Transpadane district, Milan, Novara, Eporedia,¹⁴⁷ and Vercelli. Of this they informed Caecina themselves. But one troop of horse could not garrison the whole of the widest part of Italy. Caecina accordingly hurried forward the Gallic, Lusitanian, and British auxiliaries, and some German detachments, together with 'Petra's Horse',¹⁴⁸ while he himself hesitated whether he should not cross the Raetian Alps¹⁴⁹ into Noricum and attack the governor, Petronius Urbicus, who, having raised a force of irregulars and broken down the bridges, was supposed to be a faithful adherent of Otho. However, he was afraid of losing the auxiliaries whom he had sent on ahead, and at the same time he considered that there was more glory in holding Italy, and that, wherever the theatre of the war might be, Noricum was sure to be among the spoils of victory. So he chose the Pennine route¹⁵⁰ and led his legionaries and the heavy marching column across the Alps, although they were still deep in snow.¹⁵¹

¹³⁸In Western Switzerland. Caesar had finally subdued them in 58 B.C.

¹³⁹This had happened before Caecina's arrival. Vindonissa, their head-quarters (chap. 61, note 123), was on the borders of the Helvetii.

¹⁴⁰*Aquae Helvetiorum* or *Vicus Aquensis*, about 16 miles NW. of Zurich.

¹⁴¹Volunteers, not conscripts.

¹⁴²Mount Vocetius.

¹⁴³Avenches.

¹⁴⁴Avenches.

¹⁴⁵Vespasian made it a Latin colony.

¹⁴⁶Probably raised by C. Silius, who was Governor of Upper Germany under Tiberius. Troops of auxiliary horse were usually named either after the governor of the province who first organized the troop or after the country where it had first been stationed, or where it had won fame.

¹⁴⁷Ivrea.

¹⁴⁸Petra occurs as the name of two Roman knights in *Ann.* xi. 4. One of these or a relative was probably the original leader of the troop.

¹⁴⁹The Arlberg.

¹⁵⁰Great St. Bernard.

¹⁵¹Early in March.

OTHO'S GOVERNMENT AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF FORCES

71Meanwhile, contrary to all expectation, Otho was no prey to idle luxury. He postponed his pleasures and disguised his extravagance, suiting all his behaviour to the dignity of his position. But people knew they had not seen the last of his vices, and his virtuous hypocrisy only increased their alarm. He gave orders to summon Marius Celsus to the Capitol. This was the consul-elect whom he had rescued from the savage clutches of the soldiers by pretending to put him in prison.¹⁵² Otho now wanted to earn a name for clemency by pardoning a well-known man, who had fought against his party. Celsus was firm. Pleading guilty to the charge of fidelity to Galba, he went on to show that he had set an example which was all to Otho's advantage. Otho treated him as if there was nothing to pardon. Calling on heaven to witness their reconciliation, he then and there admitted him to the circle of his intimate friends, and subsequently gave him an appointment as one of his generals. Celsus remained faithful to Otho too, doomed apparently to the losing side. His acquittal, which delighted the upper classes and was popular with the mass of the people, even earned the approval of the soldiers, who now admired the qualities which had previously aroused their indignation.

72Equal rejoicing, though for different reasons,⁸⁸ followed the long-looked-for downfall of Ofonius Tigellinus. Born of obscure parentage, he had grown from an immoral youth into a vicious old man. He rose to the command first of the Police,¹⁵³ and then of the Praetorian Guards, finding that vice was a short cut to such rewards of virtue. In these and other high offices he developed the vices of maturity, first cruelty, then greed. He corrupted Nero and introduced him to every kind of depravity; then ventured on some villainies behind his back, and finally deserted and betrayed him. Thus in his case, as in no other, those who hated Nero and those who wished him back agreed, though from different motives, in calling loudly for his execution. During Galba's reign he had been protected by the influence of Titus Vinius, on the plea that he had saved his daughter. Saved her he had, not from any feelings of pity (he had killed too many for that), but to secure a refuge for the future. For all such rascals, distrusting the present and fearing a change of fortune, always prepare for themselves a shelter against public indignation by obtaining the favour of private persons. So they rely to escape punishment not on their innocence but on a system of mutual insurance. People were all the more incensed against Tigellinus, since the recent feeling against Vinius was added to their old hatred for him. From all quarters of Rome they flocked to the palace and the squares; and above all, in the circus and the theatre, where the mob enjoys complete licence, they⁸⁹ assembled in crowds and broke out into riotous uproar. Eventually Tigellinus at Sinuessa Spa¹⁵⁴ received the news that his last hour was inevitably come. There after a cowardly delay in the foul embraces of his prostitutes he cut his throat with a razor, and blackened the infamy of his life by a hesitating and shameful death.

73About the same time there arose a demand for the punishment of Calvia Crispinilla. But she was saved by various prevarications, and Otho's connivance cost him some

discredit. This woman had tutored Nero in vice, and afterwards crossed to Africa to incite Clodius Macer¹⁵⁵ to civil war. While there she openly schemed to start a famine in Rome. However, she secured herself by marrying an ex-consul, and lived to enjoy a wide popularity in Rome. She escaped harm under Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and eventually wielded a great influence due to her being both rich and childless, considerations of the first importance in any state of society.

74During this time Otho wrote constantly to Vitellius, holding out various effeminate inducements, making him offers of money or an influential position, or any retreat he liked to select for a life of luxury.¹⁵⁶ Vitellius made similar offers. At first both wrote in the mildest tone, though the affectation on either side was stupid⁹⁰ and inappropriate. But they soon struck a quarrelsome note, and reproached each other with immorality and crime, both with a good deal of truth. Otho recalled the commission which Galba had sent out to Germany,¹⁵⁷ and, using the pretext of senatorial authority, sent fresh commissioners to both the armies in Germany, and also to the Italian legion, and the troops quartered at Lugdunum. However, the commissioners remained with Vitellius with a readiness which showed they were under no compulsion; and the guards who had been attached to them, ostensibly as a mark of honour, were sent back at once before they had time to mix with the legionary soldiers. Further than this, Fabius Valens sent letters in the name of the German army to the Guards and the City Garrison, extolling the strength of his own side and offering to join forces. He even went so far as to reproach them with having transferred to Otho the title which had long before¹⁵⁸ been conferred on Vitellius. 75Thus they were assailed with threats as well as promises, and told that they were not strong enough to fight, and had nothing to lose by making peace. But, in spite of all, the fidelity of the Guards remained unchanged. However, Otho dispatched assassins to Germany, Vitellius to Rome. Neither met with success. Vitellius' assassins were lost⁹¹ in the crowds of Rome, where nobody knows anybody, and thus escaped detection: Otho's were betrayed by their strange faces, since the troops all knew each other by sight. Vitellius then composed a letter to Otho's brother Titianus,¹⁵⁹ threatening that his life and his son's should answer for the safety of Vitellius' mother and children. As it happened neither household suffered. Fear was perhaps the reason in Otho's time, but Vitellius, after his victory, could certainly claim credit for clemency.

The first news which gave Otho any degree of confidence 76was the announcement from Illyricum that the legions of Dalmatia and Pannonia and Moesia¹⁶⁰ had sworn allegiance to him. Similar news arrived from Spain, and Cluvius Rufus¹⁶¹ was commended in a special decree, but it was found out immediately afterwards that Spain had gone over to Vitellius. Even Aquitania soon fell away, although Julius Cordus had sworn in the province for Otho. Loyalty and affection seemed dead: men changed from one side to the other under the stress of fear or compulsion. It was fear which gave Vitellius the Province of Narbonese Gaul,¹⁶² for it is easy to go over when the big battalions are so near. The distant provinces and the troops across the sea all remained

at Otho's disposal, but not from any enthusiasm for ⁹²his cause; what weighed with them was the name of Rome and the title of the senate. Besides, Otho had got the first hearing. Vespasian swore in the Jewish army¹⁶³ for Otho, and Mucianus the legions in Syria;¹⁶⁴ Egypt too and all the provinces towards the East were held for him. He also received the submission of Africa, where Carthage had taken the lead, without waiting for the sanction of the governor, Vipstanus Apronianus. Crescens, one of Nero's freedmen—in evil days these creatures play a part in politics¹⁶⁵—had given the common people of the town a gala dinner in honour of the new emperor, with the result that the inhabitants hurried into various excesses. The other African communities followed the example of Carthage.

77The provinces and their armies being thus divided, Vitellius could only win the throne by fighting. Otho meanwhile was carrying on the government as if the time were one of profound peace. Sometimes he consulted the country's dignity, though more often the exigencies of the moment forced him into unseemly haste. He held the consulship himself with his brother Titianus as colleague until the first of March. For the next two months he appointed Verginius, as a sort of sop to the army in Germany.¹⁶⁶ As colleague he gave ⁹³him Pompeius Vopiscus, ostensibly because he was an old friend of his own, but it was generally understood as a compliment to Vienne.¹⁶⁷ For the rest of the year the appointments which Nero or Galba had made were allowed to stand. The brothers Caelius and Flavius Sabinus¹⁶⁸ were consuls for June and July, Arrius Antoninus¹⁶⁹ and Marius Celsus for August and September; even Vitellius after his victory did not cancel their appointment. To the pontifical and augural colleges Otho either nominated old ex-magistrates, as the final crown of their career, or else, when young aristocrats returned from exile, he instated them by way of recompense in the pontifical posts which their fathers or grandfathers had held. He restored Cadius Rufus, Pedius Blaesus, and *Saevinus Proculus*¹⁷⁰ to their seats in the senate. They had been convicted during Claudius' and Nero's reigns of extortion in the provinces. In pardoning them the name of their offence was changed, and their greed appeared as 'treason'. For so unpopular was the law of treason that it sapped the force of better statutes.¹⁷¹

78Otho next tried to win over the municipalities and provincial towns by similar bribes. At the colonies ⁹⁴of Hispalis and Emerita¹⁷² he enrolled new families of settlers, granted the franchise to the whole community of the Lingones,¹⁷³ and made over certain Moorish towns as a gift to the province of Baetica. Cappadocia and Africa were also granted new privileges, as showy as they were short-lived. All these grants are excused by the exigencies of the moment and the impending crisis, but he even found time to remember his old amours and passed a measure through the senate restoring Poppaea's statues.¹⁷⁴ He is believed also to have thought of celebrating Nero's memory as a means of attracting public sympathy. Some persons actually erected statues of Nero, and there were times when the populace and the soldiers, by way of enhancing his fame and dignity, saluted him as Nero Otho. However, he refused to commit himself. He was ashamed to accept the title, yet afraid to forbid its use.

79While the whole of Rome was intent upon the civil war, foreign affairs were neglected. Consequently a Sarmatian tribe called the Rhoxolani,¹⁷⁵ who had cut up two cohorts of auxiliaries in the previous winter, ⁹⁵now formed the still more daring scheme of invading Moesia. Inspired by success, they assembled nearly 9,000 mounted men, all more intent on plunder than on fighting. While they were riding about aimlessly without any suspicion of danger, they were suddenly attacked by the Third legion¹⁷⁶ and its native auxiliaries. On the Roman side everything was ready for a battle: the Sarmatians were scattered over the country; some in their greed for plunder were heavily laden, and their horses could scarcely move on the slippery roads. They were caught in a trap and cut to pieces. It is quite extraordinary how all a Sarmatian's courage is, so to speak, outside himself. Fighting on foot, no one is more cowardly; but their cavalry charge would break almost any troops. On this occasion it was raining and the ground was greasy with thaw; their pikes and their long swords, needing both hands to wield, were useless; their horses slipped and they were encumbered by the heavy coat of mail which all their chiefs and nobles wear. Being made of iron plates and a very hard kind of leather, it is impenetrable to blows, but most inconvenient for any one who is knocked down by a charge of the enemy and tries to get up. Besides, they sank into the deep, soft snow. The Roman soldiers in their neat leather jerkins, armed with javelin and lance, and using, if need be, their light swords, sprang on the unarmed Sarmatians (they never carry shields) and stabbed them at close quarters. A few, surviving the battle, hid ⁹⁶themselves in the marshes, and there perished miserably from the severity of the winter and their wounds. When the news of this reached Rome, Marcus Aponius, the governor of Moesia, was granted a triumphal statue,¹⁷⁷ while the commanding officers of the legions, Fulvius Aurelius, Tettius Julianus, and Numisius Lupus, received the insignia of consular rank. Otho was delighted and took all the credit to himself, as if he had been the successful general, and had himself employed his officers and armies to enlarge the empire.

80In the meantime a riot broke out in an unexpected quarter, and, though trivial at first, nearly ended in the destruction of Rome. Otho had given orders that the Seventeenth cohort¹⁷⁸ should be summoned from the colony of Ostia to the city, and Varius Crispinus, a tribune of the guards, was instructed to provide them with arms. Anxious to carry out his instructions undisturbed while the camp was quiet, he arranged that the arsenal was to be opened and the cohort's wagons loaded after nightfall. The hour aroused suspicion; the motive was questioned; his choice of a quiet moment resulted in an uproar. The mere sight of swords made the drunken soldiers long to use them. They began to murmur and accuse their officers of treachery, suggesting that the senators' slaves were going to be armed against Otho. Some of ⁹⁷them were too fuddled to know what they were saying: the rascals saw a chance of plunder: the mass of them, as usual, were simply eager for a change: and such as were loyal could not carry out their orders in the darkness. When Crispinus tried to check them, the mutineers killed

him together with the most determined of the centurions, seized their armour, bared their swords, and mounting the horses, made off at full speed for Rome and the palace. 81It so happened that a large party of Roman senators and their wives was dining with Otho. In their alarm they wondered whether the soldiers' outbreak was unpremeditated or a ruse of the emperor's: would it be safer to fly in all directions or to stay and be arrested? At one moment they would make a show of firmness, at the next their terror betrayed them. All the time they were watching Otho's face, and, as happens when people suspect each other, he was just as afraid himself as they were of him. But feeling no less alarm for the senators than for himself, he promptly dispatched the prefects of the Guards to appease the anger of the troops, and told all his guests to leave immediately. Then on all sides Roman officials could be seen to throw away their insignia, avoid their suite, and slink off unattended. Old gentlemen and their wives roamed the dark streets in all directions. Few went home, most of them fled to friends, or sought an obscure refuge with the humblest of their clients.

82The soldiers' onrush could not be stopped at the gates of the palace. They demanded to see Otho and 98invaded the banquet-hall. Julius Martialis, a tribune of the Guards, and Vitellius Saturninus, the camp-prefect¹⁷⁹ of the legion, were wounded while endeavouring to bar their progress. On every side they brandished swords and hurled threats, now against their officers, now against the whole senate; and since they could not select any one victim for their wrath, in a blind frenzy of panic they clamoured for a free hand against all the senators. At last Otho, sacrificing his dignity, stood up on a couch and with great difficulty restrained them by means of prayers and tears. They returned to their camp unwillingly, and with a guilty conscience.

The next day Rome was like a captured city. The houses were all shut, the streets almost deserted, and everybody looked depressed. The soldiers, too, hung their heads, though they were more sulky than sorry for what they had done. Their prefects, Licinius Proculus and Plotius Firmus, harangued them by companies, the one mildly, the other harshly, for they were men of different natures. They concluded by announcing that the men were to receive five thousand 99sesterces¹⁸⁰ apiece. After that Otho ventured to enter the camp. The tribunes and centurions each flinging away the insignia of his rank,¹⁸¹ crowded round him begging for a safe discharge. Stung by the disgrace of this, the troops soon quieted down, and even went the length of demanding that the ringleaders should be punished. 83In the general disturbance Otho's position was difficult. The soldiers were by no means unanimous. The better sort wanted him to put a stop to the prevalent insubordination, but the great bulk of them liked faction-fighting and emperors who had to court their favour, and with the prospect of rioting and plunder were ready enough for civil war. He realized, also, that one who wins a throne by violence cannot keep it by suddenly trying to enforce the rigid discipline of earlier days. However, the danger of the crisis both for the city and the senate seriously alarmed him, so he finally delivered himself as follows:—

'Fellow soldiers, I have not come to fan the fire of your affection for me, or to instil courage into your hearts: in both those qualities you are more than rich. No, I have come to ask you to moderate your courage and to set some bounds to your affection. These recent disturbances did not originate in those passions of greed or violence, which so often cause ¹⁰⁰dissension in an army; nor was it that you feared some danger and tried to shirk it. The sole cause was your excessive loyalty, which you displayed with more ardour than judgement. For with the best of motives, indiscretion often lands men in disaster. We are preparing for war. Do you imagine that we could publish all our dispatches, and discuss our plans in the presence of the whole army, when we have to devise a systematic campaign and keep up with the rapid changes of the situation? There are things a soldier ought to know, but there is much of which he must be ignorant. It is necessary for the maintenance of strict discipline and of the general's authority that even his tribunes and centurions should often obey blindly. If every one is going to inquire into his motives, discipline is done for, and his authority falls to the ground. Suppose in actual warfare you are called to arms at dead of night: shall a few drunken blackguards—for I cannot believe that many lost their heads in the recent panic—go and stain their hands with their officers' blood, and then break into the general's tent?

84'Now I know you did it to protect me, but the riot and the darkness and the general confusion might easily have provided an opportunity to kill me. Suppose Vitellius and his satellites had their choice of the state of mind they would pray to find us in; what more could they desire than mutiny and dissension, the men insubordinate to the centurions, and the centurions to their superior officers, and the whole force, horse and foot alike, rushing in headlong confusion to ¹⁰¹their ruin? Good soldiering, my comrades, consists in obedience, not in scrutinizing the general's orders; and the army which is most orderly in peace is most courageous on the field of battle. Yours are the swords and the courage; you must leave it to me to plan the campaign, and to direct your valour. The culprits were but few, and only two are to be punished; the rest of you must blot out all memory of that discreditable night. No army must ever hear again such words spoken against the senate. It is the brain of the empire and the glory of all the provinces. Why, in Heaven's name, the very Germans themselves, whom Vitellius is stirring up with all his might against us, would not dare to call its members into question! Shall it be said that Italy's own sons, the real soldiery of Rome, are clamouring to murder and massacre the very senators whose lustre it is that throws into the shade the obscure and vulgar adherents of Vitellius? Vitellius has seized a few provinces and raised a sort of shadow of an army; but the senate is on our side. Therefore, Rome is for us; they are against her. Do you imagine that the stability of this beautiful city consists in houses and edifices built of stone upon stone? Nay, they are dumb inanimate things that may fall to pieces and be rebuilt at pleasure. The eternity of our empire, the peace of the world, your welfare and mine, all depend upon the safety of the senate. Instituted with solemn ceremony by the father and founder of Rome, the senate has come down in undying continuity from the kings to the emperors; and as we have received ¹⁰²it from

our ancestors, so let us hand it on to our posterity. From your ranks come the senators, and from the senate come the emperors of Rome.'

85This speech, as being well calculated to provide a reprimand and a sedative for the soldiers, and Otho's moderation—for he only ordered the punishment of two men—were well received. He had calmed for a moment the troops he could not control. Yet peace and quiet were not restored in Rome. One could still detect the clash of arms and the lurid face of war. Refraining from organized riot, the soldiers now dispersed to private houses and lived in disguise, giving vent to their bad feeling by maligning all whom nobility of birth or wealth or any other distinction made a mark for scandal. Many, besides, believed that some of Vitellius' soldiers had come to Rome to study the state of party feeling. Everywhere suspicion was rife, and terror invaded even the privacy of the home. But far greater was the alarm displayed in public places. With every fresh piece of news that rumour brought, men's feelings and the expression on their faces changed. They were afraid to be found lacking in confidence when things looked doubtful, or in joy when they went well for Otho. Above all, when the senate was summoned to the House, they found it extraordinarily hard always to strike the right note. Silence would argue arrogance; plain speaking would arouse suspicion; yet flattery would be detected by Otho, who had so lately been a private citizen, practising the art himself. So they had to ¹⁰³turn and twist their sentences. Vitellius they called enemy and traitor, the more prudent confining themselves to such vague generalities. A few ventured to fling the truth at him, but they always chose a moment of uproar when a great many people were all shouting at once, or else they talked so loud and fast as to drown their own words.

86Another cause of alarm was the various portents vouched for by many witnesses. In the Capitoline Square, it was said, the figure of Victory had let the reins of her chariot slip from her hands: a ghost of superhuman size had suddenly burst out of the chapel of Juno:¹⁸² a statue of the sainted Julius on the island in the Tiber had, on a fine, still day, turned round from the west and faced the east: an ox had spoken in Etruria: animals had given birth to strange monsters. Many were the stories of these occurrences, which in primitive ages are observed even in time of peace, though now we only hear of them in time of panic. But the greatest damage at the moment, and the greatest alarm for the future, was caused by a sudden rising of the Tiber. Immensely swollen, it carried away the bridge on piles,¹⁸³ and, its current being stemmed by the heavy ruins, it flooded not only the flat, low-lying portions of the city, but also districts ¹⁰⁴that seemed safe from inundation. Many people were swept away in the streets, still more were overtaken by the flood in shops or in their beds at home. The result was a famine, since food was scarce,¹⁸⁴ and the poor were deprived of their means of livelihood. Blocks of flats, the foundations of which had rotted in the standing water, collapsed when the river sank. No sooner had the panic caused by the flood subsided than it was found that, whereas Otho was preparing an expedition, its route over the Martian Plain and up the

Flaminian Road was blocked. Though probably caused by chance, or the course of Nature, this mishap was turned into a miraculous omen of impending disaster.

¹⁵²Chap. [45](#).

¹⁵³Cp. note [46](#).

¹⁵⁴A much-frequented watering-place on the borders of Latium and Campania. The hot baths were considered good for hysteria.

¹⁵⁵Cp. chap. [7](#).

¹⁵⁶Dio and Suetonius both say that Otho offered to share the empire with Vitellius, and the latter adds that he proposed for the hand of Vitellius' daughter. Tacitus here follows Plutarch.

¹⁵⁷Chap. [19](#).

¹⁵⁸As a matter of fact, only twelve days before. It was on the 2nd or 3rd of January that the troops of Lower and Upper Germany proclaimed Vitellius. Galba fell to Otho on January 15.

¹⁵⁹L. Salvius Otho Titianus, Otho's elder brother.

¹⁶⁰There were two legions in Dalmatia, two in Pannonia, three in Moesia, and two in Spain (see Summary, note [3](#)).

¹⁶¹Cp. chap. [8](#).

¹⁶²This included Savoy, Dauphiné, part of Provence or Languedoc.

¹⁶³Legs. V Macedonica, X Fretensis, XV Apollinaris.

¹⁶⁴IV Scythica, VI Ferrata, XII Fulminata, and III Gallica.

¹⁶⁵Since Claudius the great imperial bureaux, the posts of private secretary, patronage-secretary, financial secretary, &c., had all been held by freedmen. Cp. chap. [58](#).

¹⁶⁶Otho and Titianus would naturally have held it for four months.

¹⁶⁷Vopiscus presumably came from Vienne, which had espoused the cause first of , then of Galba. Cp. chap. [65](#).

¹⁶⁸Not to be confused with Vespasian's brother.

¹⁶⁹Grandfather of the Emperor Antoninus Pius.

¹⁷⁰Name uncertain in MS.

¹⁷¹i.e. to be accused of 'treason' was in these days to win public sympathy, even though the defendant were guilty of offences under other more useful statutes.

¹⁷²Seville and Merida.

¹⁷³As the rest of this sentence refers to Spain and Portugal it has been proposed to read for *Lingones Lusones*, a Celtiberian tribe round the sources of the Tagus. The Lingones were devoted to the cause of Vitellius. (See chap. [53](#), &c.)

¹⁷⁴They had been thrown down by the populace, when Nero, after divorcing Antonia, was shamed—or frightened—into taking her back. (Cp. chap. [13](#).)

¹⁷⁵They lived between the Dnieper and the Don, to the north of the Sea of Azov.

¹⁷⁶Gallica.

¹⁷⁷This would depict him in full triumphal garb. But only the emperor could actually hold a triumph, since it was under his auspices that his generals fought.

¹⁷⁸*Cohors civium Romanorum*. See note [130](#).

¹⁷⁹The meaning of the title *praefectus legionis* is doubtful. It seems most likely to mean the same as *praefectus castrorum*, an officer who superintended the camp and sometimes acted as second-in-command (cp. ii. [89](#)). The post was one to which senior centurions could rise. At this period they were not attached to a legion, but to a camp, where more than one legion might be quartered. That makes the phrase here used curious. The legion is that of the marines now stationed in Rome (cp. chaps. [6](#) and [9](#)). They appear to have joined the mutinous Seventeenth cohort when they reached the city.

¹⁸⁰About £40.

¹⁸¹The insignia of a tribunus were a tunic with a broad or narrow stripe (accordingly as they were of senatorial or equestrian rank), and a gold ring. A centurion carried a staff made of a vine-branch, for disciplinary purposes.

¹⁸²One of the three chapels in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline.

¹⁸³The pons Sublicius which led from the Velabrum to Janiculum. It was the bridge which Horatius Cocles defended, and a certain sanctity attached to it.

¹⁸⁴Plutarch mentions that the quarter which suffered most was that which contained the retail provision-shops.

OTHO'S PLANS

87Otho had held a purification of the city¹⁸⁵ and meditated his plans for the war. Recognizing that the Pennine and Cottian Alps and all the other passes into Gaul were held by Vitellius, he decided to invade Narbonese Gaul by sea. His fleet was now a strong and reliable arm, devoted to his cause. For he had formed the full strength of a legion out of the survivors of the Mulvian Bridge massacre,¹⁸⁶ whom Galba's cruelty had¹⁰⁵kept in prison, and to all the marines he had held out hopes of honourable service.¹⁸⁷ To the fleet he attached the cohorts of the City Garrison and a large force of Guards. These were the flower of the army and its chief strength, well able to advise their own generals and to take good care of them. The command of the expedition was entrusted to Antonius Novellus and Suedius Clemens, both senior centurions,¹⁸⁸ and to Aemilius Pacensis, to whom Otho had restored his commission,¹⁸⁹ of which Galba had deprived him. In charge of the fleet he still retained the freedman Moschus¹⁹⁰ to keep an eye on his betters. In command of the cavalry and infantry he placed Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Annius Gallus, but the man in whom he put most faith was the Prefect of the Guards, Licinius Proculus. This officer had shown himself efficient in garrison service, but was without any experience of warfare. He maligned the characteristic virtues of his colleagues, Paulinus' power of influence, Celsus' energy, Gallus' ripe judgement, and being a knave and no fool, he easily got the better of men who were both honest and loyal.

88It was about this time that Cornelius Dolabella¹⁹¹ was banished to the colony of Aquinum,¹⁹² though not¹⁰⁶kept in close or dishonourable confinement. There was no charge against him: the stigma upon him was his ancient name and kinship¹⁹³ to Galba. Otho issued orders that several of the magistrates and a large number of ex-consuls were to join the expedition, not to take part in the campaign or to assist in any way, but simply as a friendly escort. Among these was Lucius Vitellius, whom he treated neither as an emperor's brother nor as the brother of an enemy, but just like anybody else. Much anxiety was aroused for the safety of the city, where all classes feared danger. The leading members of the senate were old and infirm, and enervated by a long period of peace: the aristocracy were inefficient and had forgotten how to fight: the knights knew nothing of military service. The more they all tried to conceal their alarm, the more obvious it became. Some of them, on the other hand, went in for senseless display, and purchased beautiful armour and fine horses: others procured as provisions of war elaborate dinner-services or some other contrivance to stimulate a jaded taste. Prudent men were concerned for the country's peace: the frivolous, without a thought for the future, were inflated by empty hopes: a good many, whose loss of credit made peace unwelcome, were delighted at the general unrest, feeling safer among uncertainties. 89Though the cares of state were too vast to arouse any interest in the masses, yet as the price of food rose, and the whole revenue was devoted to military purposes, the common¹⁰⁷people gradually began to realize the evils of war. During the revolt of they had not suffered so much. Being carried on in the provinces between the

legionaries and the natives of Gaul it was to all intents a foreign war, and the city had not been affected. For from the time when the sainted Augustus organized the rule of the Caesars the wars of the Roman people had been fought in distant countries: all the anxiety and all the glory fell to the emperor alone. Under Tiberius and Caligula the country only suffered from the evils of peace.¹⁹⁴ Scribonianus' rising against Claudius was no sooner heard of than crushed.¹⁹⁵ Nero had been dethroned more by rumours and dispatches than by force of arms. But now not only the legions and the fleet, but, as had seldom happened before, the Guards and the City Garrison were called out for the campaign. Behind them were the East and the West and all the forces of the empire, material for a long war under any other generals. An attempt was made to delay Otho's departure by pointing out the impiety of his not having replaced the sacred shields in the temple of Mars.¹⁹⁶ But delay had ruined Nero: Otho would have none of it. And the knowledge that Caecina ¹⁰⁸had already crossed the Alps¹⁹⁷ acted as a further stimulus. 90Accordingly, on the fourteenth of March he commended the government of the country to the senate, and granted to the restored exiles all the rest of the property confiscated by Nero which had not yet been sold for the imperial treasury.¹⁹⁸ The gift was a just one, and made a very good impression, but as a matter of fact it was nullified by the haste with which the work of collecting the money had been conducted.¹⁹⁹ He then summoned a public meeting, and, after extolling the majesty of Rome and praising the wholehearted adherence of the senate and people to his cause, he used very moderate language against the Vitellian party, criticizing the legions more for folly than treason, and making no mention of Vitellius himself. This may have been due to his own moderation, or it may be that the writer of the speech felt some qualms for his own safety, and therefore refrained from insulting Vitellius. For it was generally believed that as in strategy he took the advice of Suetonius Paulinus and Marius Celsus, so too in political matters he employed the talents of Galerius Trachalus.²⁰⁰ Some ¹⁰⁹people even thought they could recognize Trachalus' style of oratory, fluent and sonorous, well adapted to tickle the ears of the crowd: and as he was a popular pleader his style was well known. The crowd's loud shouts of applause were in the best style of flattery, excessive and insincere. Men vied with each other in their enthusiasm and prayers for his success, much as though they were sending off the dictator Caesar or the emperor Augustus. Their motive was neither fear nor affection, but a sheer passion for servility. One can see the same in households of slaves, where each obeys his own interest and the common welfare counts for nothing. On his departure Otho entrusted the peace of the city and the interests of the empire to his brother Salvius Titianus.

¹⁸⁵He would lead the victim, before sacrificing it, round the ancient boundary of the city, and thus avert the disasters threatened by the alarming omens detailed in the last chapter.

¹⁸⁶Cp. chaps. [6](#) and [37](#).

¹⁸⁷i.e. of becoming eventually a legion or praetorian cohort.

¹⁸⁸Cp. note [57](#).

¹⁸⁹The command of a cohort in the City Garrison.

¹⁹⁰He had held this post under Nero and Galba. His functions were those of steward and spy combined.

¹⁹¹He had been a rival candidate for adoption by Galba. Vitellius had him killed (ii. [63](#)).

¹⁹²Aquino.

¹⁹³It is not known what this was.

¹⁹⁴Mainly connected with the elaborate system of espionage.

¹⁹⁵Furius Camillus Scribonianus, governor of Dalmatia, rebelled against Claudius, A.D. 42, and was crushed within five days.

¹⁹⁶They would be taken out on the 1st of March to be used in the sacred dances of the Salii (the 'Dancing Priests'). Their festival lasted the whole month, and Otho started on the 14th.

¹⁹⁷See chap. [70](#).

¹⁹⁸Cp. chap. [20](#).

¹⁹⁹Nero had put the confiscated property of political exiles up to auction. His treasury officials had been so prompt in selling it all off and getting the money in, that there was very little left for Otho to restore, since he could only give back those lots which had not been paid for.

²⁰⁰Cp. ii. [60](#). Quintilian alludes several times to the extreme beauty of his voice and his commanding delivery—better, he thinks, than that of any tragedian he had ever seen. To read, his speeches were less effective.

BOOK II

VESPASIAN AND THE EAST

1Meanwhile, on the other side of Europe, Fortune was already sowing the seeds of a dynasty, the varying fortunes of which were destined to bring at one time happiness to the country and success to its rulers, at another misery to the country and to the rulers destruction.²⁰¹ Before Galba's fall Titus Vespasianus had been dispatched by his father from Judaea to Rome.²⁰² The ostensible reason of his journey was to show respect to the new emperor, and to solicit some post for which his years now fitted him.²⁰³ However, the popular passion for invention suggested that he had been summoned to be adopted. This rumour was based on the fact that Galba was old and childless: the public never wearies of appointing successors until the choice is made. The character of Titus gave still more colour to it. He seemed capable of filling any position. His appearance lacked neither charm nor dignity. Vespasian's successes also and the utterances of certain oracles further endorsed the rumour, to say nothing of the chance occurrences which pass for omens where the wish is father to the thought. It ¹¹¹was at Corinth in Achaia that Titus received the news of Galba's murder, and was assured by people in the town that Vitellius had declared war. In great perplexity he summoned a few of his friends and discussed all the possibilities of the situation. If he continued his journey to Rome he would earn no gratitude for compliments addressed to another sovereign,²⁰⁴ and would be held as a hostage either for Vitellius or for Otho: on the other hand, if he returned to Judaea he would inevitably offend the victor. However, the struggle was still undecided, and the father's adherence to the successful party would excuse the conduct of the son. Or if Vespasian himself assumed sovereignty, they would have to plan war and forget all about giving offence.

2Such considerations held him balanced between hope and fear; but ultimately hope prevailed. Some people believed that his longing to get back to Queen Berenice²⁰⁵ fired him to return. True, the young man's fancy was attracted by Berenice, but he did not

allow this to interfere with business. Still his youth was a time of gay self-indulgence, and he showed more restraint in his own reign than in his father's. Accordingly he sailed along the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor, ¹¹²and, skirting the seas which lay upon his left, reached the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus, whence he made a bolder crossing to Syria.²⁰⁶ On his way he conceived a desire to visit the temple of Venus at Paphos,²⁰⁷ which is famous among all the inhabitants and visitors. It may not be tedious to give here a short account of the origin of this worship, the ritual of the cult, and the shape—unparalleled elsewhere—in which the goddess is depicted.

3According to an old tradition the temple was founded by King Aerias, and some people maintain that the goddess bears the same name. A more modern version states that the temple was consecrated by Cinyras,²⁰⁸ on the spot where the goddess landed when the sea gave her birth. The method of divination,²⁰⁹ however, according to this account, was imported from elsewhere by the Cilician Tamiras, and an arrangement was made that the descendants of both families should preside over the rites. Later, however, it seemed wrong that the royal line should have no prerogative, so the descendants of the foreigner²¹⁰ resigned the practice of the art which they had themselves introduced, and now the priest whom you consult is always of the line of Cinyras. They accept any victim that is offered, but males are preferred. They put most faith ¹¹³in kids' entrails. Blood must not be poured on the altar, at which they offer only prayers and fire untainted by smoke. Although the altars stand in the open air they are never wetted by rain. The goddess is not represented in human form; the idol is a sort of circular pyramid,²¹¹ rising from a broad base to a small round top, like a turning-post. The reason of this is unknown.

4Titus inspected the temple treasures and the offerings made by various kings, and other curiosities which the Greek passion for archaeology attributes to a dim antiquity. He then consulted the oracle first about his voyage. Learning that the sea was calm, and that no obstacles stood in his way, he sacrificed a large number of victims, and put covert questions about his own fortunes. The priest, whose name was Sostratus, seeing that the entrails were uniformly favourable, and that the goddess assented to Titus' ambitious schemes, returned at the moment a brief and ordinary reply, but afterwards sought a private interview and revealed the future to him. So Titus returned to his father with heightened hopes, and amid the general anxiety of the provinces and their armies his arrival spread boundless confidence of success.

Vespasian had already broken the back of the Jewish war.²¹² Only the siege of Jerusalem remained. That this proved a difficult and laborious task was due rather to the high situation of the town and the ¹¹⁴stubborn superstition of its inhabitants than to any adequate provision enabling them to endure the hardships of the siege. Vespasian had, as we have already stated,²¹³ three legions well tried in war. Four others were under Mucianus' command.²¹³ Although these had never seen war, yet their envy of the neighbouring army's fame had banished sloth. Indeed, as the former were hardened by work and danger, so the latter owed their ardour to their unbroken inaction, and their

shame at having no share in the war.²¹⁴ Both generals had, besides auxiliary infantry and cavalry, foreign fleets²¹⁵ and allied princes,²¹⁶ and a fame that rested on widely differing claims. 5Vespasian was an indefatigable campaigner. He headed the column, chose the camping-ground, never ceasing by night or day to use strategy, and, if need be, the sword to thwart the enemy. He eat what he could get, and dressed almost like a common soldier. Indeed, save for his avarice, he matched the generals of old days. Mucianus, on the other hand, was distinguished by his wealth and luxury, and his general superiority to the standards of a private person. He was the better speaker, and a skilful administrator and statesman. Their combined qualities would have made a fine ¹¹⁵emperor, if one could have blended their virtues and omitted their vices. Governing as they did the neighbouring provinces of Judaea and Syria, jealousy at first led to quarrels. However, on the death of Nero, they forgot their dislike and joined hands. It was their friends who first brought them together, and subsequently Titus became the chief bond of union and for the common good suppressed their ignoble jealousy. Both by nature and training he had charm to fascinate even such a man as Mucianus. The tribunes and centurions and the common soldiers were attracted, each according to his character, either by Titus' meritorious industry or by his gay indulgence in pleasure.

6Before the arrival of Titus both armies had sworn allegiance to Otho. News travels fast in such cases, but civil war is a slow and serious undertaking, and the East, after its long repose, was now for the first time beginning to arm for it. In earlier times all the fiercest civil wars broke out in Italy or Cisalpine Gaul among the forces of the West. Pompey, Cassius, Brutus, and Antony all courted disaster by carrying the war oversea. Syria and Judaea often heard of Caesars, but seldom saw one. There were no mutinies among the soldiers. They merely made demonstrations against Parthia with varying success. Even in the last civil war²¹⁷ the peace of these provinces had been untroubled by the general confusion. Later they were loyal to Galba. But when they heard that Otho and Vitellius were engaged in a wicked contest for the possession ¹¹⁶of the Roman world, the troops began to chafe at the thought that the prizes of empire should fall to others, while their own lot was mere compulsory submission. They began to take stock of their strength. Syria and Judaea had seven legions on the spot with a vast force of auxiliaries. Next came Egypt with two legions:²¹⁸ beyond lay Cappadocia and Pontus, and all the forts along the Armenian frontier. Asia and the remaining provinces were rich and thickly populated. As for the islands, their girdle of sea was safe from the enemy and aided the prosecution of the war.

7The generals were well aware of the soldiers' feelings, but decided to await the issue between Vitellius and Otho. 'In civil war,' they reckoned, 'there are no sure ties to unite victor and vanquished. It matters little which survives: even good generals are corrupted by success: as for Otho and Vitellius, their troops are quarrelsome, lazy, and luxurious, and they are both the victims of their own vices. One will fall on the field and the other succumb to his success.' So Vespasian and Mucianus postponed their attack for the

present. They were themselves recent converts to the project of war, which the others²¹⁹ had long fostered from various motives. The better sort were animated by patriotism, many by mere love of plunder, some by the uncertainty of their own fortunes. Thus, though their motives differed, all, good and bad alike, agreed in their eager desire for war.

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8

About this time Achaia and Asia were thrown into a groundless panic by a rumour that 'Nero was at hand'. The accounts of his death being many and various, people were all the more inclined to allege and to believe that he was still alive. We shall mention in the course of this work the attempts and the fate of the other pretenders.²²⁰ This time it was a slave from Pontus, or, according to other traditions, a freedman from Italy. His skill as a singer and harpist, combined with his facial resemblance to Nero, gave him some credentials for imposture. He bribed some penniless and vagabond deserters by dazzling promises to join him, and they all set out to sea. A storm drove them on to the island of Cythnus,²²¹ where he found some troops homeward bound on leave from the East. Some of these he enrolled, killing all who resisted, and then proceeded to plunder the local merchants and arm all the sturdiest of the slaves. Finding a centurion named Sisenna carrying home a pair of silver hands²²² as a token of alliance from the army in Syria to the Household Guards, he tried by various devices to seduce him, until Sisenna took fright and escaped secretly from the island in fear of violence. Thus the panic spread. The great name of Nero attracted many who pined for revolution and hated the existing state of things. The rumours¹¹⁸ waxed daily, until a chance dispelled them. Galba had entrusted the government of Galatia and Pamphylia²²³ to Calpurnius Asprenas, who had been granted an escort of two triremes from the fleet at Misenum. It so happened that with these he touched at Cythnus. The rebels lost no time in appealing to the ship's captains in the name of Nero. The pretender, assuming an air of melancholy, appealed to 'the loyalty of his former soldiers', and begged them to establish him in Syria or Egypt. The captains either from sympathy or guile alleged that they must talk to their men, and would come back when they had prepared all their minds. However, they faithfully made a full report to Asprenas, on whose instructions they boarded the ship and killed the impostor, whoever he was. The man's eyes and hair and ferocious look were so remarkable that the body was carried into Asia and thence to Rome.

²⁰¹The Flavian dynasty. Vespasian and Titus brought the happiness, Domitian the misery.

²⁰²Cp. i. 10.

²⁰³He was 30.

²⁰⁴i.e. to Galba.

²⁰⁵She was the granddaughter of Herod the Great, and lived with her brother, Herod Agrippa (cp. chap. 81), ruler of Peraea. They heard St. Paul at Caesarea. She had married first her uncle, Herod Agrippa, prince of Chalcis; then Polemo II, king of Pontus, whom she left. She was known to have visited Titus in Rome, and he was said to have promised her marriage.

²⁰⁶i.e. across the open sea.

²⁰⁷In Cyprus.

²⁰⁸Another mythical king of Cyprus. Hesychius calls him a son of Apollo, and Ovid makes him the father of Adonis.

²⁰⁹From the flight and cries of birds.

²¹⁰i.e. the Tamiradae.

²¹¹i.e. a conical stone.

²¹²Cp. v. [10](#).

²¹³See i. [10](#) and [76](#).

²¹⁴Reading *inexpert bellii rubor* (Andresen).

²¹⁵Of Pontus, Syria, and Egypt.

²¹⁶Antiochus of Commagene (between Syria and Cappadocia), Agrippa of Peraea (east of Jordan), and Sohaemus of Sophene (on the Upper Euphrates, round the sources of the Tigris). See chap. [81](#).

²¹⁷Which dethroned Nero.

²¹⁸III Cyrenaica, XXII Deiotariana.

²¹⁹Titus and their officers and friends.

²²⁰These accounts are lost. There was one such attempt under Domitian and another under Titus. The Christians expected him to re-appear as Antichrist.

²²¹Thermia.

²²²See i. [54](#).

²²³These with Lycia at this date formed a single imperial province.

THE TRIAL OF ANNIUS FAUSTUS

10 In a country so divided and tossed by frequent change of rulers between liberty and licence even small events caused serious disturbance. It happened that Vibius Crispus,²²⁴ a man whose wealth, influence, and ability had won him a reputation that was great rather than good, had impeached before the senate a man of equestrian rank, called Annius Faustus, who ¹¹⁹had been a professional informer under Nero. The senate had recently in Galba's principate passed a resolution authorizing the prosecution of informers. This resolution had been variously applied from time to time, and interpreted rigorously or leniently according as the defendant was helpless or influential. But it still retained some terrors. Crispus, moreover, had exerted all his powers to secure the conviction of the man who had informed against his brother.²²⁵ He had, in fact, induced a large proportion of the senate to demand that Faustus should be sent to execution undefended and unheard. However, with others, the defendant gained a great advantage from his prosecutor's undue influence. 'We must give him time,' they argued, 'the charges must be published: however hateful the criminal his case must be properly heard.' At first this advice prevailed. The trial was postponed for a few days. At length came the conviction of Faustus, which aroused in the country less satisfaction than his vile character warranted. People recalled the fact that Crispus himself had turned informer with pecuniary profit. It was not the penalty but the prosecutor that was unpopular.

²²⁴A close friend of Vespasian, who was supposed to ply the trade of informer (cp. iv. [41](#) and [43](#)).

²²⁵Vibius Secundus, banished for extortion in Mauretania.

OTHO'S MEASURES OF DEFENCE

11Meanwhile the war opened successfully for Otho. At his order the armies of Dalmatia and Pannonia started from their base. They comprised four legions,²²⁶ each of which had sent forward detachments two thousand strong. The rest followed at a short interval: the Seventh legion raised by Galba,²²⁷ the Eleventh and Thirteenth, both composed of veteran troops, and the Fourteenth, which had won great distinction by crushing the rebellion in Britain.²²⁸ Nero had further increased their glory by choosing them for special service,²²⁹ which accounts for their lasting loyalty to Nero and their keen support of Otho. But the stronger their numbers the greater their self-confidence and the slower their march. The cavalry and auxiliaries preceded the main body of the legions. From Rome itself came no mean force, five regiments of Guards with some detachments of cavalry and the First legion.²³⁰ To these were added an irregular force of 2,000 gladiators,²³¹ a shameful assistance of which during the civil wars even strict generals availed themselves. Annius Gallus was placed in command of these forces with Vestricius Spurinna,²³² and they were sent forward to hold the line of the Po. Their first plans had failed,¹²¹ Caecina, whom Otho had hoped to hold within the Gallic provinces, having already crossed the Alps.²³³ Under Otho's personal command marched picked detachments of his Body Guard and the rest of the Household troops, together with reservists of the Guard and a large force of marines.²³⁴ He let no luxury either delay or disgrace his march. In an iron breast-plate he marched on foot at the head of his troops, looking rough and dishevelled, quite unlike his reputation.

Fortune smiled on his first efforts. 12By sea his fleet held most of the Italian coast right up to the foot of the Maritime Alps. To secure these mountains and attack the province of Narbonese Gaul he had placed in command Suedius Clemens, Antonius Novellus, and Aemilius Pacensis.²³⁵ Pacensis, however, was made a prisoner by his mutinous troops: Novellus had no authority: Clemens' command rested on popularity, and he was as greedy of battle as he was criminally blind to insubordination. No one could have imagined they were in Italy, on the soil of their native land. As though on foreign shores and among an enemy's towns, they burnt, ravaged, plundered, with results all the more horrible since no precautions had been taken against danger. The fields were full, the houses open. The inhabitants came to meet them with their wives and children, and were lured by the security¹²² of peace into all the horrors of war. The Governor of the Maritime Alps²³⁶ at that time was Marius Maturus. He summoned the inhabitants, whose fighting strength was ample, and proposed to resist at the frontier the Othonians' invasion of the province. But at the first engagement the mountaineers were cut down and dispersed. They had assembled in random haste; they knew nothing of military service or discipline, nothing of the glory of victory or the disgrace of flight.

13Enraged by this engagement, Otho's troops visited their indignation on the town of Albintimilium.²³⁷ The battle had brought them no booty, for the peasants were poor and their armour worthless, and being swift of foot, with a good knowledge of the country, they had escaped capture. However, the soldiers sated their greed at the

expense of the innocent town. A Ligurian woman afforded a fine example of courage which made their conduct the more odious. She had concealed her son, and when the soldiers, who believed that she had hidden some money as well, demanded from her under torture where she was keeping him concealed, she pointed to her belly and replied, 'He is in hiding.' No subsequent tortures nor even death itself could bring her to change that brave and noble answer.

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14Panic-stricken couriers brought to Fabius Valens the news that Otho's fleet was threatening the province of Narbonese Gaul, which had sworn allegiance to Vitellius. Representatives from the Roman colonies also arrived beseeching his aid. He dispatched two cohorts of the Tungri²³⁸ and four troops of horse, together with the entire cavalry regiment of the Treviri.²³⁹ This force was put under the command of Julius Classicus,²⁴⁰ and part of it was detained in the colony of Forum Julii,²⁴¹ since if the whole force marched inland and the sea-board were left unprotected Otho's fleet would swoop down at once. Twelve troops of cavalry and a picked body of auxiliaries marched against the enemy: these were reinforced by a Ligurian cohort which had long garrisoned this district, and a draft of five hundred Pannonian recruits who had not yet joined their legion.²⁴² The engagement began promptly. Their line was so arranged that some of the marines, reinforced by the peasants, held the rising ground by the sea, while the Guards filled the level space between the hills and the shore. The fleet, acting in conjunction with the land force, was ready to play its part in the battle, and extended a threatening front facing the coast. The Vitellians, weaker in infantry, put their¹²⁴ trust in their horse. The mountaineers²⁴³ were posted on the neighbouring heights, and the auxiliaries massed in close order behind the cavalry. The Treviran cavalry rashly charged the enemy, and meeting Otho's guards in front were simultaneously assailed in the flank by the peasants, flinging stones. This they could do well enough; and, drafted among the regulars, they all, bold and timid alike, showed the same courage in the hour of victory. Panic struck the defeated Vitellians when the fleet began to harass their rear. They were now surrounded, and would have been entirely destroyed had not darkness arrested the victors and sheltered their flight. 15But though beaten the Vitellians were not cowed. Calling up reinforcements, they suddenly attacked while the unsuspecting enemy were taking their ease after the victory. They killed the pickets, broke into the camp and terrified the sailors. In time the panic subsided. The Othonians seized a hill, defended their position, and eventually assumed the offensive. The slaughter was frightful. The officers commanding the Tungri, after a long defence of their position, fell beneath a shower of weapons. The victory also cost the Othonians heavy loss, for the enemy's cavalry rallied and cut off all who rashly ventured too far in pursuit. So they agreed to a sort of armistice. As a safeguard against sudden raids either by the fleet on the one side or the cavalry on the other, the Vitellians retired to Antipolis,²⁴⁴ a¹²⁵ town of the Narbonese province, and the Othonians to Albingaunum²⁴⁵ in the interior of Liguria.

16The fame of this naval victory kept Corsica and Sardinia and the adjacent islands faithful to Otho's cause. However, Decumus Pacarius, the procurator,²⁴⁶ nearly ruined Corsica by an act of indiscretion, which in a war of such dimensions could not possibly have affected the issue, and only ended in his own destruction. He hated Otho and determined to aid Vitellius with all the forces of Corsica; a useless assistance, even if it had been forthcoming. He summoned the chief men of the island and disclosed his project. Claudius Pyrrhicus, who commanded the Liburnian cruisers²⁴⁷ stationed there, and a Roman knight named ¹²⁶Quintius Certus ventured to oppose him. He ordered their execution. This overawed the others who were present. So they swore allegiance to Vitellius, as did also the general mass of ignorant people, who blindly shared a fear they did not feel. However, when Pacarius began to enlist them and to harass his undisciplined men with military duties, their loathing for the unwonted labour set them thinking of their weakness. 'They lived in an island: Vitellius' legions were in Germany, a long way off: Otho's fleet had already sacked and plundered districts that had even horse and foot to protect them.' The revulsion was sudden, but did not issue in overt resistance. They chose a suitable moment for their treachery. Waiting till Pacarius' visitors²⁴⁸ were gone, they murdered him, stripped and helpless, in his bath, and killed his comrades too. The heads they bore themselves to Otho, like enemies' scalps. Neither did Otho reward nor Vitellius punish them. In the general confusion their deed was overshadowed by more heinous crimes.

17We have already described²⁴⁹ how 'Silius' Horse' had admitted the war into the heart of Italy. No one there either supported Otho or preferred Vitellius. But prolonged peace had broken their spirits to utter servility. They were an easy prey to the first comer and cared little who was the better man. All the fields and cities between the Alps and the Po, the most fertile district in Italy, were held by the Vitellian forces, the cohorts sent forward by Caecina²⁴⁹ ¹²⁷having already arrived. One of the Pannonian cohorts had been captured at Cremona: a hundred cavalry and a thousand marines had been cut off between Placentia and Ticinum.²⁵⁰ After this success the river and its steep banks were no barrier to the Vitellian troops: indeed the Batavians and other Germans found the Po a positive temptation. Crossing suddenly opposite Placentia, they captured a handful of scouts and created such a panic that the others in terror spread the false report that Caecina's whole army was upon them.

18Spurinna, who was holding Placentia, had made up his mind that Caecina had not yet arrived, and that, if he should, his troops must be kept within their lines: he could not pit three cohorts of guards with one detachment a thousand strong,²⁵¹ and a few cavalry, against Caecina's veteran army. But his men were unruly and ignorant of war.²⁵² Seizing the standards and colours²⁵³ they broke out, threatening to kill the general who tried to check them and paying no heed to their superior officers. They even clamoured that Otho was being betrayed, and Caecina had been summoned.²⁵⁴ Spurinna yielded unwillingly to their folly, at first under compulsion, later with a show of ¹²⁸sympathy. He was anxious to gain weight for his advice, should the mutiny cool.

19At nightfall, with the Po in sight, Spurrinna decided to entrench his camp.²⁵⁵ The unaccustomed hard work soon blunted the enthusiasm of his town-bred troops. The older men began to curse their credulity, and to point out the fearful danger to their small force of being surrounded by Caecina's army in the open country. Soon a more sober spirit pervaded the camp. The tribunes and centurions mingled with the men, and every one talked with admiration of Spurrinna's foresight in selecting a powerful and wealthy colony as a strong base for their operations. Finally Spurrinna himself rather explained his plans than reproached their faults, and, leaving patrols behind, succeeded eventually in leading the rest of the men back to Placentia in a quieter and more submissive frame of mind. There the walls were repaired, outworks built, and the turrets increased in height and number, while Spurrinna provided not only for arms and ammunition but also for obedience and discipline. This was all his party lacked, for their courage was unimpeachable.

20Caecina, on the other hand, seemed to have left ¹²⁹his cruelty and profligacy on the other side of the Alps. He marched through Italy with a well-disciplined force. The people in the country-towns and colonies took offence at his costume as showing arrogance. While they wore the plain toga, Caecina addressed them attired in a parti-coloured plaid and trousers.²⁵⁶ Moreover, his wife Salonina rode on a fine horse with purple trappings, and though this did no one any harm, they grumbled and seemed hurt. It is an ineradicable human trait to turn critical eyes on new-found fortune, and to insist upon moderation most of all in those who used to be our equals. Crossing the Po, Caecina tried to undermine the loyalty of the Othonians by negotiations and promises. They retaliated with the same weapons, and when they had finished bandying empty and fine-sounding phrases about Peace and Union, Caecina devoted all his attention and plans to an assault on Placentia in terrific force. He knew that his future reputation rested on the issue of his first engagements.²⁵⁷

21But the first day's work savoured more of impatience than of a veteran army's methods. The men ventured under the walls without cover or precaution, drunk and overfed. Meanwhile the amphitheatre, a fine ¹³⁰building outside the walls, was burnt down. It was set on fire either by the attacking force hurling torches and heated shot and fire-brands, or by the besieged in returning their fire. The common people of the town harboured a suspicion that fuel for the fire had been surreptitiously introduced from one of the neighbouring colonies, and that the motive was jealousy, since no building in Italy could hold so many people. However it happened, they thought little of it, while worse disasters threatened: safety assured, they bewailed it as the worst calamity they could have suffered. To return, however, to Caecina: he was repulsed with heavy losses, and the night was spent in preparations. The Vitellians provided mantlets, fascines, and penthouses,²⁵⁸ to protect the assailants while undermining the walls: the Othonians procured stakes and huge masses of stone or lead or brass, to break through the enemy's formation and crush them to pieces. Both parties were actuated by feelings of pride and ambition. Various encouragements were used, one side praising

the strength of the legions and the German army, the other the reputation of the Guards and the City Garrison. The Vitellians decried their enemy as lazy effeminates demoralized by the circus and the theatre: to which they replied that the Vitellians were a pack of foreigners and barbarians. ¹³¹Meanwhile, Otho and Vitellius were held up to praise or blame, insult providing the more fruitful stimulus.

22Hardly had day dawned before the walls of Placentia bristled with defenders, and the fields glittered with the soldiers' armour. The Vitellian legions²⁵⁹ advancing in close order with their auxiliaries in scattered bands assailed the higher portions of the walls with stones and arrows: where the walls were in disrepair or crumbling from age they came close up to them. The Othonians above, poising and aiming their weapons with surer effect, rained them down on the Germans, who came rashly charging under the walls with the wild songs and scanty dress of their country, brandishing their shields over their heads. Meanwhile, the legionaries under cover of their mantlets and fascines set to work to undermine the walls, build up a mound, and assail the gates, while Otho's Guards rolled on to them with terrific crashes huge millstones, which they had arranged for this purpose along the walls. Of those beneath, some were crushed by the stones; others, wounded by darts, were left mangled and bleeding to death. Panic redoubled the slaughter, and the rain of missiles came all the fiercer from the walls. At last they sacrificed the honour of their party and beat a retreat. Caecina, ashamed of his rash attempt at assault, was afraid of looking ridiculous and useless if he sat still in the same camp. So he crossed the Po ¹³²and made for Cremona. As he was retiring, Turullius Cerialis with a large force of marines, and Julius Briganticus²⁶⁰ with a few cavalry, came over to his side. The latter, a Batavian born, had held a cavalry command: the former was a senior centurion, who was known to Caecina, as he had served in that capacity in Germany.

23Spurinna, learning the enemy's route, informed Annius Gallus²⁶¹ by letter of all that had happened, the defence of Placentia and Caecina's plans. Gallus was leading the First legion to the relief of Placentia, for he doubted the ability of the weak force of Guards to resist a long siege and the full strength of the German army. Hearing that Caecina was defeated and making for Cremona, he halted at Bedriacum, though he found it hard to restrain the ardour of his troops, whose zeal for battle nearly broke into mutiny. The village of Bedriacum lies between Verona and Cremona,²⁶² and two Roman disasters have now given it a sinister notoriety.

In the same week Martius Macer²⁶³ gained a victory in the neighbourhood of Cremona. With great enterprise he had transported his gladiators across the Po, and suddenly flung them on to the opposite bank. There ¹³³they routed the Vitellian auxiliaries and killed all who offered resistance, the rest taking flight to Cremona. But Macer checked their victorious ardour, for fear that the enemy might be reinforced and reverse the fortune of the battle. This aroused suspicion among the Othonians, who put a bad construction on all that their generals did. All the least courageous and most impudent of the troops vied incessantly with each other in bringing various charges against Annius Gallus,

Suetonius Paulinus, and Marius Celsus, for the two latter had also been placed in command by Otho.²⁶⁴ The most energetic in promoting mutiny and dissension were Galba's murderers, who, maddened by their feelings of fear and of guilt, created endless disorder, sometimes talking open sedition, sometimes sending anonymous letters to Otho. As he always believed men of the meaner sort and distrusted patriots, he now wavered nervously, being always irresolute in success and firmer in the face of danger. He therefore sent for his brother Titianus²⁶⁵ and gave him the chief command.

24Meanwhile success attended the generalship of Paulinus and Celsus.²⁶⁶ Caecina was tortured by his constant failure and the waning reputation of his ¹³⁴army. Repulsed from Placentia, he had lately seen his auxiliaries defeated, and his patrols constantly worsted in skirmishes more frequent than memorable. Now that Fabius Valens was close at hand, he determined not to let all the glory of the war fall to him, and hastened with more zeal than prudence to retrieve his reputation. About twelve miles²⁶⁷ distant from Cremona, at a place called *Twin Brethren*,²⁶⁸ he carefully concealed the bravest of his auxiliaries in a wood overlooking the road. The cavalry were ordered to ride forward down the road and provoke an engagement. They were then to feign flight and lure the pursuers on in hot haste until they fell into the ambush. This plan was betrayed to Otho's generals. Paulinus took charge of the infantry, Celsus of the horse. A detachment of the Thirteenth legion,²⁶⁹ four auxiliary cohorts of foot, and five hundred cavalry were stationed on the left flank. Three cohorts of the Guards in column occupied the raised high-road.²⁷⁰ On the right flank marched the First legion, two auxiliary cohorts of foot, and five hundred cavalry. Besides these they moved out a thousand cavalry—Guards and auxiliaries—as a reserve to crown their success, or assist them in difficulties.

25Before they came to close quarters, the Vitellians began to retire. Celsus, forewarned of the ruse, ¹³⁵halted his men. Whereupon the Vitellians impatiently rose from their ambush and, while Celsus slowly retired, followed him further and further until they plunged headlong into an ambush themselves. The auxiliaries were on their flanks; the legions faced them in front; and the cavalry by a sudden manoeuvre had closed in on their rear. However, Suetonius Paulinus did not immediately give the signal for his infantry to charge. He was by nature dilatory, and preferred cautiously reasoned measures to accidental success. He kept on issuing orders about filling up the ditches, clearing the fields and extending the line, convinced that it was soon enough to play for victory when he had taken every precaution against defeat. This delay gave the Vitellians time to take refuge in the vineyards, where the interlaced vine-stems made it hard to follow. Adjoining these was a little wood, from under cover of which they ventured another sally and killed the foremost of the Guards' cavalry. There Prince Epiphanes²⁷¹ was wounded, while making vigorous efforts to rally Otho's forces. 26At this point Otho's infantry charged, crushed the opposing line, and even routed the troops who were hurrying up in support. For Caecina had brought up his reinforcements not all at once but in separate detachments. These, arriving in scattered units, and never in sufficient force, only added to the confusion, since the panic of the rout infected them

as well. ¹³⁶Mutiny, too, broke out in the camp, because the troops were not all taken into battle. Julius Gratus, the camp-prefect, was put in irons on a charge of plotting with his brother, who was fighting on Otho's side. It was known that the Othonians had arrested the brother, Julius Fronto, on the same charge. For the rest, such was the universal panic among pursuers and pursued, on the field and in the camp, that it was commonly said on both sides that, if Suetonius Paulinus had not sounded the retreat, Caecina's whole army might have been destroyed. Paulinus maintained that he avoided any excessive strain of work or marching, for fear of exposing his exhausted troops to a counter-attack from the Vitellians in the camp, who were still fresh for battle: besides, he had no reserves to fall back on in case of defeat. A few approved of the general's strategy, but the common opinion was adverse.²⁷²

²²⁶See note [3](#).

²²⁷The legion brought from Spain, mentioned in [i. 6](#).

²²⁸The revolt of Boadicea crushed by Suetonius Paulinus; described by Tacitus in his life of Agricola and in Book XIV of the *Annals*.

²²⁹i.e. for his projected war against the Albanians (cp. [i. 6](#)). Probably they stopped in Dalmatia on hearing of Nero's fall.

²³⁰The quondam marines (cp. [i. 6](#), [9](#), &c.).

²³¹They were commanded by Martius Macer (see chaps. [23](#), [35](#), &c.).

²³²The defender of Placentia. He earned further laurels under Trajan in Germany. He was a friend of Tacitus and the younger Pliny, and is suspected of writing some bad verse.

²³³Early in March (cp. [i. 70](#)).

²³⁴Not regularly formed into a legion: those to whom 'he held out hopes of honourable service' (cp. [i. 87](#)).

²³⁵Cp. [i. 87](#).

²³⁶The mountainous district north of the Italian frontier on the Var.

²³⁷Ventimiglia, the modern frontier town between France and Italy on the Riviera.

²³⁸A Gallic tribe living round Tongres and Spa.

²³⁹Living round Trier.

²⁴⁰Afterwards one of the leaders in the rebellion on the Rhine (cp. [iv. 55](#)).

²⁴¹Fréjus.

²⁴²i.e. either the VII Galbian or XIII Gemina, both of which were on Otho's side.

²⁴³i.e. the Ligurian cohort, mentioned above.

²⁴⁴Antibes.

²⁴⁵Albenga.

²⁴⁶Sardinia and Corsica were an imperial province A.D. 6-67. Then Nero gave it back to the senate to compensate for his declaration of the independence of Achaia. Vespasian once more transferred it to imperial government. If *procurator* is correct here, Pacarius must have been a subordinate imperial functionary in a senatorial province. As the province changed hands so often and was so soon after this placed under imperial control, it is possible that Tacitus made a mistake and that Pacarius was an ex-praetor. Those who feel that Tacitus is unlikely to have made this error, and that Pacarius can hardly have been anything but governor, adopt the suggestion that Corsica did not share the fate of Sardinia in A.D. 67, but remained under the control of an imperial procurator. There is no clear evidence of this, but under Diocletian Corsica was certainly separate.

²⁴⁷These cruisers were of a peculiarly light build, called after the Liburni, an Illyrian tribe, who fought for Octavian in the battle of Actium. He introduced similar craft into the Roman navy. They were very fast, and worked with a triangular, instead of the usual square sail.

²⁴⁸i.e. his Corsican and Roman clients.

²⁴⁹[i. 70](#).

²⁵⁰Piacenza and Pavia.

²⁵¹i.e. one of the two detachments sent forward by the armies of Dalmatia and Pannonia (cp. chap. [11](#)).

²⁵²Otho's Praetorian Guards were the weakest point in his army.

²⁵³Cp. [i. 36](#) note [61](#).

²⁵⁴i.e. that Spurrinna was in league with Caecina, and meant to hand them over to him.

²⁵⁵He was making 'a reconnaissance in force westwards along the river bank to discover, if he could, the strength and intentions of the enemy' (B.W. Henderson, *Civil War, &c.*). But Mr. E.G. Hardy points out that, as he had only 4,000 men and Caecina's 30,000 were in the immediate neighbourhood, this would have been foolish. It seems better to believe Tacitus' suggestion that his insubordinate troops forced Spurrinna to march out.

²⁵⁶Considered Gallic and effeminate.

²⁵⁷Mr. Henderson (*Civil War, &c.*) argues that it was imperative for Caecina to take the fortress at Placentia, since it threatened his sole line of communication with Valens' column. Tacitus, as usual, gives a practical rather than a strategic motive. His interests are purely human.

²⁵⁸Familiar devices for sheltering troops against missiles from a town wall. They were generally made of hurdles covered with raw hides. The *vinea* was a shelter on poles, so named from its resemblance to a pergola of vines.

²⁵⁹In i. [61](#) only legion XXI is mentioned. But Caecina may have formed the detachments into another legion.

²⁶⁰Civilis' nephew and bitter enemy. See iv. [70](#), v. [21](#).

²⁶¹Spurrinna's colleague in the command of the advanced guard from Rome. He was now probably at Mantua.

²⁶²At the meeting of two high roads leading to Cremona, the one from Hostilia and the other from Mantua. It was near here that Vitellius defeated Otho, and here that his power fell before Vespasian (cp. iii. [15](#)).

²⁶³See note [231](#).

²⁶⁴This was stated in i. [87](#). The reminder is inserted because they were not mentioned with Gallus in ii. [11](#)—unless, indeed, Mr. Onions is right in suggesting that *quoque* is an error for *duces*.

²⁶⁵He had left him in charge of Rome. See i. [90](#).

²⁶⁶We learn in chap. [33](#) that Gallus was disabled and took no part in this engagement: hence the omission of his name.

²⁶⁷About 10½ English miles.

²⁶⁸Locus Castorum.

²⁶⁹See chap. [11](#).

²⁷⁰The Via Postumia, built up on a causeway high above the fields on either side.

²⁷¹Son of Antiochus, king of Commagene (see note [216](#)). He was in Rome probably as a hostage, and accompanied Otho.

²⁷²An eminent critic has called Tacitus' account of this battle an 'historical nightmare', but those who do not suffer from a surfeit of military knowledge may find that it lies easy upon them. It is written for the plain man with an eye for situations and an ear for phrases.

THE DECISIVE STRUGGLE

²⁷³This reverse reduced the Vitellians not to despair but to discipline. Not only was this the case in Caecina's camp, who blamed his men as being readier for mutiny than for battle, but the troops under Fabius Valens, who had now reached Ticinum,²⁷³ lost their contempt for the enemy, conceived a desire to ¹³⁷retrieve their glory, and offered their general a more respectful and steady obedience. There had, indeed, been a serious outbreak of mutiny, the account of which I may now resume from an earlier chapter,²⁷⁴ where it seemed wrong to break the narrative of Caecina's operations. The Batavian auxiliaries, who had left the Fourteenth legion during the war against , heard of Vitellius' rising while on their way to Britain, and, as I have already described,²⁷⁵ joined Fabius Valens in the country of the Lingones. There they grew insolent. Whenever they passed the tents of the Roman soldiers, they boasted loudly that they had coerced the Fourteenth, had deprived Nero of Italy, and held the whole issue of the war in the hollow of their hand. This insulted the soldiers and annoyed the general; brawls and quarrels ruined good discipline. Ultimately Valens

began to suspect that their insubordination meant treachery.²⁸ Accordingly, on receiving the news that Otho's fleet had defeated the Treviran cavalry²⁷⁶ and the Tungri, and was now blockading Narbonese Gaul, he determined at the same time to assist his allies, and by a stroke of generalship to separate contingents that were so insubordinate and, if united, so strong. He therefore ordered the Batavians to march to the support of Narbo. Immediately this order became generally known, the auxiliaries began to complain and the legionaries to chafe. 'They were being deprived of their strongest support: here were these invincible veterans promptly withdrawn¹³⁸ directly the enemy came in sight: if the province was more important than the safety of Rome and the empire, why not all go there? but if Italy was the corner-stone of their success, he ought not as it were to amputate their strongest limb.'²⁷⁷ 29 In answer to this presumptuous criticism, Valens loosed his lictors upon them and set to work to check the mutiny. They attacked their general, stoned him, and chased him out of the camp, shouting that he was concealing the spoils of Gaul and the gold from Vienne,²⁷⁸ the due reward of their labours. They looted the baggage, ransacked the general's quarters, and even rummaged in the ground with javelins and lances. Valens, in slave's dress, took refuge with a cavalry officer. Gradually the disorder began to die down. Alfenus Varus, the camp-prefect, then hit upon the plan of forbidding the centurions to go the rounds or to have the bugle sounded to summon the men to their duties. No one had anything to do: they eyed each other in astonishment, dismayed above all at having no one to command them. At first by silent submission, at last with tearful prayers, they sought pardon. Valens appeared, haggard and in tears, but above all expectation safe and sound,—joy, sympathy, cheers! With a wild revulsion of feeling—mobs are always extravagant—they made a ring round him with the eagles and standards, and carried him to the Tribunal with loud praises and congratulations. With wise moderation he demanded¹³⁹ no punishment, but, to disarm suspicion of his good faith, he criticized one or two of them severely.²⁷⁹ He was well aware that in civil war the men are allowed more licence than their officers.

30 While they were entrenching themselves at Ticinum they heard the news of Caecina's defeat, and the mutiny nearly broke out afresh: Valens, they thought, had treacherously delayed in order to keep them out of the battle. They refused rest, would not wait for the general, marched on in front of the standards, hurrying on the bearers, and by a forced march joined Caecina. Valens had a bad name with Caecina's army. They complained that despite their greatly inferior numbers he had exposed them to the full force of the enemy. At the same time, for fear of being despised as defeated cowards, they excused themselves by exaggerating the strength of the new arrivals. In fact, though Valens' numbers were larger, and he had almost twice as many legionaries and auxiliaries as Caecina,²⁸⁰ yet it was Caecina who enjoyed the confidence of the men. Apart from his kindness, in which he seemed much readier than Valens, they admired him for his youthful vigour and commanding stature,²⁸¹ and liked him too without exactly knowing why. So there was rivalry between the generals. Caecina mocked at

Valens for ¹⁴⁰his dirty and dishonest ways:²⁸² Valens at Caecina's pompous vanity. But they smothered their dislike and worked together for a common end, writing frequent letters in which they sacrificed all hope of pardon and heaped abuse on Otho. Otho's generals refrained from retaliating upon Vitellius, though his character offered richer scope. ³¹In death Otho earned a noble name and Vitellius infamy, yet at this time people were more afraid of Otho's burning passions than of Vitellius' listless luxury. The murder of Galba had made Otho feared and hated, while no one attributed to Vitellius the outbreak of the war. It was felt that Vitellius' gluttony was a personal disgrace: Otho's excesses, his cruelty and his daring, spelt more danger to the country.

Now that Caecina and Valens had joined forces, the Vitellians had no longer any reason to avoid a decisive battle. Otho accordingly held a council to decide whether they should prolong the war or put their fortune to the test. ³²Suetonius Paulinus, who was considered the most experienced general of his day,²⁸³ now felt it was due to his reputation to deliver his views on the general conduct of the war. His contention was that the enemy's interests were best served by haste, Otho's by delay. He argued thus: 'The whole of Vitellius' force has now arrived and he has ¹⁴¹few reinforcements in his rear, for the Gallic provinces are in a ferment, and it would be fatal to abandon the Rhine with all those hostile tribes ready to swarm across it. The troops in Britain are busy with their own foes and cut off by the sea: the Spanish provinces can scarcely spare any troops: the Narbonese are seriously alarmed by their recent reverse and the inroads of our fleet. The country across the Po is shut in by the Alps and denied all supplies by sea,²⁸⁴ and, besides, its resources have been already exhausted by the passage of their army. Nowhere can they get supplies, and without commissariat no army can be kept together. The German troops are their strongest fighting arm, but their constitutions will not be strong enough to stand the change of weather, if we protract the war into the summer. It has often happened that a force, which seemed irresistible at first, has dwindled to nothing through the tedium of forced inaction.

'On the other hand, our resources are rich and reliable. We have on our side Pannonia, Moesia, Dalmatia, and the East; the armies there are fresh and strong; we have Italy and Rome, the Queen of the World, and the Roman Senate and People: those titles always mean something, though their glory may sometimes be obscured. We have large public and private resources, and in civil war a vast quantity of money is stronger than the sword. Our soldiers are inured to the Italian climate or, at any rate, to heat. We are ¹⁴²entrenched behind the Po:²⁸⁵ its cities are protected by strong walls and willing hands, and the defence of Placentia has shown that none of them will yield to the enemy.' Therefore Otho must remain on the defensive. In a few days the Fourteenth legion would arrive: its fame alone was great, and the Moesian forces²⁸⁶ would be with it. He should, at any rate, postpone his deliberations until then, and fight, if fight he must, with augmented strength.

³³Marius Celsus supported Paulinus. Annius Gallus had been hurt a few days before by a fall from his horse, but messengers were sent to inquire his views, and they reported

that he too agreed. Otho inclined to a decisive engagement. His brother Titianus and Proculus, the prefect of the Guard, with all the impatience of inexperience, stoutly maintained that fortune and Providence, and Otho's own good genius inspired his policy, and would inspire its performance. They had descended to flattery by way of checking opposition. When it was decided to take the offensive, the question arose whether Otho in person should take part in the battle or hold himself in reserve. His evil counsellors again carried their point. Otho was to retire to Brixellum,²⁸⁷ and, by withdrawing from the ¹⁴³hazards of the field, reserve himself for the supreme control of the campaign and of the empire. To this Paulinus and Celsus offered no further opposition, for fear of seeming to endanger the person of their prince. From this day dates the decline of Otho's party. Not only did he take with him a considerable force of the Guards, Body Guard, and cavalry, but the spirit of the troops who remained behind was broken. The men trusted no one but Otho, and Otho no one but the men. His generals were under suspicion and their authority left in doubt.²⁸⁸

34None of these arrangements failed to reach the ears of the Vitellians. Desertions were frequent, as they always are in civil war, and the scouts in their eagerness to discover the enemy's plans always failed to conceal their own. Caecina and Valens, counting on the fatal impatience of the enemy, remained quietly on their guard to see what they would do: for it is always wisdom to profit by another's folly. Feigning an intention of crossing the Po, they began to construct a bridge, partly as a demonstration against the gladiators²⁸⁹ on the opposite bank, partly to find something for their idle troops to do. Boats were placed at equal intervals with their heads up stream and fastened together by strong wooden planks. They also cast anchors from them to ensure the solidity of the ¹⁴⁴bridge, but they allowed the hawsers to drift slack, so that when the river rose the boats might all rise with it without the line being broken. To guard the bridge a high tower was built out on the end boat, from which they could repulse the enemy with various artillery. Meanwhile the Othonians had built a tower on the bank and kept up a steady shower of stones and torches.

35In midstream there was an island, to which the gladiators tried to make their way in boats, but the Germans swam over and got there first. When a good number of them had swam across, Macer manned some Liburnian cruisers²⁹⁰ and attacked them with the bravest of his gladiators. But they fought with less courage than soldiers, and from their unsteady boats they could not shoot so well as the others, who had a firm footing on the bank. Swaying this way and that in their alarm, the sailors and the marines were beginning to get in each other's way, when the Germans actually leapt into the shallows, caught hold of the boats by the stern, and either clambered up by the gangways or sunk them bodily with their own hands. All this took place before the eyes of both armies²⁹¹, and the higher rose the spirits of the Vitellians, the greater became the indignation of the Othonians against Macer, the author and cause of their disaster. 36The ¹⁴⁵remainder of the boats were eventually dragged off,²⁹² and the battle ended in flight. The army demanded Macer's execution. He had been actually wounded by a lance that had been

flung at him, and the soldiers were rushing on him with drawn swords when some tribunes and centurions intervened and rescued him.

Soon after this, Vestricius Spurinna, on Otho's orders, brought up a reinforcement of the Guards, leaving behind a small garrison at Placentia, and before long, Otho sent the consul-elect, Flavius Sabinus,²⁹³ to take command of Macer's force. This change pleased the soldiers, but the frequent mutinies made the generals unwilling to assume such a perilous command.

37In some of my authorities²⁹⁴ I find a statement that either a growing fear of war or dislike of the two emperors, whose discreditable misconduct grew daily more notorious, led the armies to hesitate whether they should not give up the struggle and either themselves combine to choose an emperor or refer the choice to the senate. This, it is suggested, was the motive of Otho's generals in advising delay, and Paulinus in particular had high hopes, since he was the senior ex-consul, and a distinguished general who ¹⁴⁶had earned a brilliant reputation by his operations in Britain. For my own part, while I am ready to admit that a few people may have tacitly wished for peace instead of civil war, or for a good and virtuous emperor instead of two who were the worst of criminals, yet I imagine that Paulinus was much too wise to hope that in a time of universal corruption the people would show such moderation. Those who had sacrificed peace in a passion for war were not likely to stop the war from any affection for peace. Nor was it possible that armies whose language and characteristics differed so widely should ever come to such an agreement. As for the officers; nearly all of them were extravagant, bankrupt, and guilty of some crime: they had not a good enough conscience to put up with any emperor who was not as vicious as themselves and under an obligation for their services.

38The old ingrained human passion for power matured and burst into prominence with the growth of the empire. With straiter resources equality was easily preserved. But when once we had brought the world to our feet and exterminated every rival state or king, we were left free to covet power without fear of interruption. It was then that strife first broke out between patricians and plebeians: at one time arose seditious tribunes,²⁹⁵ at another tyrannous consuls:²⁹⁶ ¹⁴⁷in the Forum at Rome were sown the first seeds of civil war. Before long, Marius, rising from the lowest ranks of the people, and Sulla, the most cruel of all the nobles, crushed our liberty by force of arms and substituted a despotism. Then came Pompey, whose aims, though less patent, were no better than theirs. From that time onwards the one end sought was supreme power in the state. Even at Pharsalia and Philippi the citizen armies did not lay down their arms. How then can we suppose that the troops of Otho and Vitellius would have willingly stopped the war? The same anger of heaven, the same human passions, the same criminal motives drove them into discord. True these wars were each settled by a single battle, but that was due to the generals' cowardice. However, my reflections on

the ancient and the modern character have carried me too far: I must now resume the thread of our narrative.

39When Otho started for Brixellum, he left his brother Titianus in nominal command, though the real power lay with the prefect Proculus. As for Celsus and Paulinus, no use was made of their experience, and their empty titles were used as a screen for other people's blunders. The tribunes and centurions felt themselves in an ambiguous position, seeing the better generals sacrificed and the worst in command. The men were full of spirit, but preferred criticizing to carrying out their officers' orders. It was decided to advance and encamp four miles west of Bedriacum. ¹⁴⁸Though it was spring, and rivers abounded, the men were very foolishly allowed to suffer from want of water. Here a council of war was held, for Otho kept sending dispatches urging haste, and the soldiers kept clamouring for their emperor to lead them. Many demanded that the troops stationed across the Po²⁹⁷ should be brought up. It is not so easy to decide what was the best thing they could have done as to be sure that what they did do was the worst. 40They were in marching order, not fighting trim, and their objective was the confluence of the Po and the Arda,²⁹⁸ sixteen miles away. Celsus and Paulinus refused to expose their troops, fatigued by the march and under heavy kit, to the assault of an enemy who, while still fresh after covering barely four miles, would certainly attack them, either while they were in the disorder of a marching column, or when they had broken up to dig trenches. However, Titianus and Proculus, worsted in argument, appealed to their authority: and there arrived post-haste a Numidian orderly with a peremptory dispatch from Otho, criticizing his generals' inaction, and ordering them to bring matters to a head. He was sick of delay and too impatient to live on hope.

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41On that same day, while Caecina was busy with the bridge-building operations,²⁹⁹ two officers of the Guards came and demanded an interview. He was preparing to hear and answer their proposals, when some scouts burst in with the news that the enemy were close at hand. The officers' conversation was thus interrupted, and it was left uncertain whether they were broaching a hostile plot or a piece of treachery, or some honest plan. Caecina, dismissing the officers, rode back to the camp, where he found that Valens had given orders to sound for battle, and the troops were already under arms. While the legions were balloting for the order in which they were to take the field, the cavalry rode out and charged. Strange to say, they would have been hurtled back upon the trenches by a smaller force of Othonians, had not the Italian legion bravely ¹⁵⁰stopped them by drawing their swords and forcing them to go back and resume the fight. The Vitellian legions formed without any disorder, for though the enemy were close at hand, thick plantations hid the approaching force. In the Othonian army the generals were nervous and the men ill-disposed towards them: their march was hindered by carts and camp-followers, and the high road,³⁰⁰ with its deep ditches on either side, was too narrow even for a peaceful march. Some of the men formed round their standards, others went searching for their place: on every side there was an uproar as men ran about shouting

to each other: the boldest kept pressing on to the front, while the tide of the timid ebbed to the rear.

42Amid the confusion of this sudden panic somebody invented a story that Vitellius' army had abandoned his cause, whereupon an unwarrantable glee relaxed their efforts. It was never fully known whether this report was spread by Vitellian scouts or whether it was started on Otho's side, either by treachery or chance. Losing all their thirst for battle the Othonians actually broke into a cheer. The enemy answered with angry shouts, and most of Otho's soldiers, having no idea what caused the cheering, feared treachery. At this point the Vitellian line charged. They were fresh, and in good order, stronger and more numerous. However, the Othonians, despite their disorder, fewer numbers, and fatigue, offered a stubborn resistance. The ground was encumbered with orchards and vineyards,¹⁵¹ and the character of the battle varied accordingly. They fought now from a distance, now at close quarters, and charged sometimes in detachment, sometimes in column.³⁰¹ On the raised high-road they fought hand to hand, using the weight of their bodies and their shields. They gave up throwing their javelins and cut through helmet and breastplate with sword and axe. Each man knew his foe; they were in view of the other troops;³⁰² and they fought as if the whole issue of the war depended on them.

43It happened that two legions met in the open fields between the high road and the Po. These were: for Vitellius the Twenty-first, commonly called Rapax,³⁰³ a regiment of old renown; and for Otho the First Adiutrix,³⁰⁴ which had never been in battle before, but was full of spirit and eager to win its first laurels. Their charge overthrew the front ranks of the Twenty-first, and they carried off its eagle. Fired with indignation, the Twenty-first rallied and charged the front of the enemy, killing the commanding officer, Orfidius Benignus, and capturing many of their colours.

On the other flank the Fifth³⁰⁵ drove the Thirteenth³⁰⁶ 152 off the field. The Fourteenth³⁰⁷ were surrounded by the numbers that attacked them. Otho's generals had long ago fled. Caecina and Valens began to bring up the reserves to the support of their men, and, as a fresh reinforcement, there arrived Varus Alfenus³⁰⁸ with his Batavians. They had routed the gladiators³⁰⁹ by confronting them and cutting them to pieces in the river before their transports could land, and flushed by their victory came charging in upon the flank of the enemy.

44Their centre broken, the Othonians fled in disorder, making for Bedriacum. The distance was immense;³¹⁰ the road encumbered with heaps of dead. This made the slaughter all the greater, for in civil war captives cannot be turned to profit.³¹¹ Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus avoided the camp at Bedriacum by diverse routes. Vedius Aquila, who commanded the Thirteenth legion, was so paralysed by fear that he allowed himself to fall into the hands of the indignant troops. It was still broad daylight when he entered¹⁵³ the camp. Immediately a crowd of mutinous fugitives came clamouring round him. They spared neither abuse nor violence, assailing him as a deserter and a traitor. They could bring no special charge against him, but the mob

always lay their own disgrace on some one else. Night came to the aid of Titianus and Celsus, for Annius Gallus³¹² had already placed sentinels on guard and got the men under control. Using remonstrances, prayers, and commands, he had induced them not to add to the disaster of their defeat by murdering their own friends. Whether the war was over, or whether they wanted to fight again, in defeat, he told them, union was the one thing that could help them. All the other troops³¹³ were crushed by the blow. The Guards complained that they had been beaten, not by the enemy's valour, but by sheer treachery. 'Why,' they said, 'even the Vitellians have won no bloodless victory. We beat their cavalry and captured a standard from one of their legions. We still have Otho left and all the troops with him on the other side of the Po. The Moesian legions³¹⁴ are on their way. There is a large force left at Bedriacum. These, at any rate, have not been defeated yet. Better fall, if need be, on the field.' Now exasperated, now depressed by these reflections, they were in a state of blank despair, which more often aroused their anger than their fear.

45The Vitellian army halted at the fifth mile-stone on ¹⁵⁴the road from Bedriacum. Their generals would not venture to storm the camp that same day, and hoped the enemy would consent to surrender. However, although they were in fighting trim, and had no implements for digging trenches, they felt safe with their arms and the pride of victory. On the next day there was no doubt about the wishes of the Othonians. Even those who showed most spirit had now changed their minds. So they sent a deputation. The Vitellian generals had no hesitation in granting terms. However, they detained the deputation for a short time, which caused some qualms to those who did not know whether it had been successful. At length the envoys returned, and the gates of the camp were opened. Then both victors and vanquished burst into tears, and with a sort of sorrowful satisfaction cursed their fate of civil war. There in one tent were men of both armies, nursing a wounded brother or some other relative. Their hopes of recompense were doubtful: all that was certain was bereavement and grief, for no one was so fortunate as to mourn no loss. They searched for the body of the fallen officer, Orfidius, and burnt it with due solemnity. Of the other dead, some were buried by their relatives, the rest were left lying on the ground.

46Otho³¹⁵ was awaiting news of the battle with perfect confidence and firm resolve. First came a disquieting rumour. Soon fugitives from the field revealed the ruin of his cause. But the soldiers in their zeal did ¹⁵⁵not wait to hear their emperor speak. 'Keep a good heart,' they said, 'you still have fresh forces left, and, as for us, we are ready to risk everything and suffer everything.' Nor was this flattery. In a wild passion of enthusiasm they urged him to march to the field and restore the fortunes of his party. Those who were near him clasped his knees, while those who stood further off stretched out their arms to him.³¹⁶ The most eager of all was Plotius Firmus, the Prefect of the Guard, who besought Otho again and again not to desert a supremely faithful army, men who had done him such great service. He told him that it showed more courage to bear misfortune than to give in: that men of vigour and courage cling to their hopes even in the face of

disaster: it is only cowards who let their terror hurry them into despair. Amid all these appeals the soldiers now cheered, now groaned, according as Otho's expression showed signs of yielding or seemed to harden. Nor were these feelings confined to Otho's own Guards. The first arrivals from Moesia assured him that the spirit of the advancing force was just as firm, and that they had already entered Aquileia.³¹⁷ There is no room for doubt that it was still possible to revive this cruel and pitiable war, so full of uncertainty to both parties.³¹⁸

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47Otho himself disliked the policy of fighting. 'Am I,' he said, 'to expose all your splendid courage and devotion to further risks? That would be too great a price to pay for my life. Your high hopes of succeeding, if I were minded to live, will only swell the glory of my death. We have learnt to know each other, Fortune and I. Do not reckon the length of my reign. Self-control is all the harder when a man knows that his fortune cannot last. It was Vitellius who began the civil war. He originated the policy of fighting for the throne. But one battle is enough. This is the precedent that I will set. Let posterity judge me by it. I do not grudge Vitellius his brother, or wife, or children. I want neither revenge nor consolation. Others may have held the sceptre longer, but no one can ever have laid it down so bravely. Am I the man to allow the flower of Rome in all these famous armies to be mown down once again and lost to the country? Let me take with me the consciousness that you would have died for me. But you must stay and live. No more delay. I must no longer interfere with your chance of pardon, nor you with my resolve. It is a sort of cowardice to go on talking about the end. Here is your best proof of my determination: I complain of no one. To blame gods or men is his alone who fain would keep his life.'

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48After some such speech as this he urged them courteously to hurry away and not to exasperate the victor by their hesitation. To each man's age and position he paid due regard, using his authority with the young and persuasion with his elders, while his quiet looks and firm speech helped to control their ill-timed tears. He gave orders for boats and carriages to be provided for their departure. All petitions and letters containing any compliments to himself, or marked insults to Vitellius, he destroyed, and distributed his money carefully, not like a man at the point of death. He then actually tried to comfort the sorrowful fears of his nephew, Salvius Cocceianus,³¹⁹ by praising his attachment and chiding his alarm. 'Do you imagine,' he said, 'that Vitellius will be so hard-hearted as not to show me some gratitude for saving his whole household? By promptly putting an end to myself, I deserve to earn some mercy for my family. For it is not in blank despair, but with my army clamouring for battle, that I determine to save my country from the last calamities. I have won enough fame for myself and ennoblement for my posterity; for, after the line of the Julians, Claudians, Servians,³²⁰ I have been the first to bring the principate into a new family. So rouse yourself and go on with your life. Never forget that Otho was your uncle, yet keep your remembrance within bounds.'

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49After this he made them all retire and rested for a while. But his last reflections were interrupted by a sudden disturbance and the news of a mutinous outbreak among the troops. They were threatening to kill all those who were leaving, and turned with especial violence against Verginius,³²¹ whose house was in a state of siege. Otho rebuked the ringleaders and returned, consenting to receive the adieux of those who were going, until it was time for them to depart in safety. As the day deepened into evening he quenched his thirst with a drink of iced water. Two daggers were brought to him and, after trying them both, he put one under his pillow. Being assured on inquiry that his friends had started, he spent a peaceful night, not, it is said, without sleep. At break of day³²² he fell upon his dagger. Hearing his dying groan, his slaves and freedmen entered with Plotius Firmus, the Prefect of the Guards, and found a single wound in his breast. The funeral was hurried forward out of respect for his own earnest entreaties, for he had been afraid his head might be cut off and subjected to outrage. The Guard carried the body, sounding his praises with tears in their eyes, and covering his hands and wounded breast with kisses. Some of the soldiers killed themselves beside the pyre, not because they had harmed Vitellius or feared reprisals, but from love of their emperor, and to follow his noble example. Similar suicides became common afterwards at Bedriacum¹⁵⁹ and Placentia, and in other encampments.³²³ An inconspicuous tomb was built for Otho, as being less likely to be disturbed: and thus he ended his life in his thirty-seventh year.

50Otho came originally from the borough of Ferentium.³²⁴ His father had been consul and his grandfather praetor. His mother's family was inferior, but not without distinction.³²⁵ His boyhood and youth were such as we have seen. By his two great acts,³²⁶ one most criminal and the other heroic, he earned in equal measure the praise and the reprobation of posterity. It would certainly be beneath the dignity of my task to collect fabulous rumours for the amusement of my readers, but there are certain popular traditions which I cannot venture to contradict. On the day of the battle of Bedriacum, according to the account of the local peasants, a strange bird appeared in a much-frequented grove near Regium Lepidum.³²⁷ There it sat, unterrified and unmoved, either by the crowds of people or by the birds which fluttered round it, until the moment at which Otho killed himself. Then it vanished. A calculation of the time showed that the prodigy's appearance and disappearance coincided with the beginning of the battle³²⁸ and Otho's death.

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51At his funeral the rage and grief of the soldiers broke out into another mutiny. This time there was no one to control them. They turned to Verginius and begged him with threats now to accept the principate, now to head a deputation to Caecina and Valens. However, Verginius escaped them, slipping out by the back door of his house just as they broke in at the front. Rubrius Gallus carried a petition from the Guards at Brixellum, and obtained immediate pardon. Simultaneously Flavius Sabinus surrendered to the victor the troops under his command.³²⁹

²⁷³Pavia.

²⁷⁴i. [66](#).

²⁷⁵i. [59](#) and [64](#).

²⁷⁶See chap. [14](#).

²⁷⁷It is Tacitus who has mixed the metaphors.

²⁷⁸See i. [66](#).

²⁷⁹i.e. he pretended that not all but only a few were to blame (cp. i. [84](#)).

²⁸⁰Valens had by now Legion V, I Italica, detachments from I, XV, XVI, and Taurus' Horse: Caecina had Legion XXI and detachments from IV and VII.

²⁸¹Cp. i. [53](#).

²⁸²Cp. i. [66](#).

²⁸³He had made his name in a Moorish war (A.D. 42), when he had penetrated as far as Mount Atlas, and increased his reputation by suppressing the rebellion of Boadicea when he was governor of Britain (A.D. 59).

²⁸⁴Otho held the fleets.

²⁸⁵He means that they would be, if they took his advice and retired across the Po to the south bank.

²⁸⁶According to the rumours quoted in chap. [46](#) they were already at Aquileia, near Venice, but Suetonius, whose father was at this time a tribune in the Thirteenth, says that they heard of Otho's death before arriving at Aquileia.

²⁸⁷Brescello.

²⁸⁸No one knew for certain who was in command. We are told in chap. [39](#) that he left Titianus in nominal command, though the real authority lay with Proculus.

²⁸⁹Macer's, see chap. [23](#).

²⁹⁰See note [247](#).

²⁹¹i.e. of Macer's gladiators on one bank and the detachment employed by Caecina for bridge-building, &c., on the other. The main armies were Otho's at Bedriacum and Vitellius' at Cremona.

²⁹²i.e. from the Germans who were trying to board or sink them.

²⁹³See i. [77](#).

²⁹⁴Plutarch, in his Life of Otho, after quoting the view of the emperor's secretary, Secundus, that Otho was over-strained and desperate, goes on to give the explanation of 'others'. This agrees exactly with the story given here. Plutarch and Tacitus are apparently quoting from the same authority, unknown to us, perhaps Cluvius Rufus.

²⁹⁵e.g. the brothers Gracchus, Saturninus, and Drusus.

²⁹⁶e.g. Appius Claudius and L. Opimius, of whom Plutarch says that in suppressing C. Gracchus he used his consular authority like that of a dictator.

²⁹⁷At Brixellum.

²⁹⁸About seven miles below Cremona. The Medicean MS. has Adua, but as the mouth of the Adua is seven miles west of Cremona and Bedriacum twenty-two miles east of Cremona, the figures given do not suit. For Tacitus says that they marched first four miles and then sixteen. Mr. Henderson proposes to solve the difficulty by reading *quartum decimum* for *quartum* in chap. [39](#). But his reasons are purely *a priori*. If the confluence was that of the Arda with the Po, Tacitus' *quartum* is still unsatisfactory, but the distances given in Plutarch's Life of Otho would suit the facts. He makes the first march a little over six miles. From the camp then pitched to the mouth of the Arda would be by road about sixteen miles. Thus Tacitus' first figure may be a slight underestimate and his second figure correct. The second day's march, according to Plutarch, was rather more than twelve miles, so we may suppose that the armies met about four miles short of the confluence, which was the Othonians' objective. This suits Paulinus' suggestion a few lines lower that the Vitellians need only march four miles to catch them in marching column. The whole question is fully discussed by Mr. Henderson (op. cit.) and by Mr. E.G. Hardy in the *Journal of Philology*, vol. xxxi, no. 61.

²⁹⁹See [34](#) and [35](#).

³⁰⁰Via Postumia.

³⁰¹The word here used, *cuneus* (a wedge), should mean strictly a V-shaped formation, which the troops also called 'pig's-head'. But it is also used more generally of any attacking column advancing to pierce the enemy's line, or indeed of any body of men in close order.

³⁰²Because they were on the raised Postumian road.

³⁰³i.e. The Irresistibles.

³⁰⁴The quondam marines (cp. i. [6](#), &c.).

³⁰⁵From Lower Germany (cp. i. [55](#) and [61](#)).

³⁰⁶From Pannonia (cp. chap. [24](#)).

- ³⁰⁷Only a detachment of the Fourteenth was present at this battle, as is explained below, chap. 66.
- ³⁰⁸The camp-prefect (chap. 29). The Batavians are the detachment which had left the Fourteenth (chap. 27).
- ³⁰⁹This is not an allusion to the fight described in chap. 35. The gladiators, now under Sabinus (ch. 36) seem to have suffered a second defeat.
- ³¹⁰The fixing of this distance rests on the doubtful figures in chap. 39. In any case it must have been between fourteen and twenty miles.
- ³¹¹Plutarch in describing this rout makes the same rather cynical comment. Dio puts the total loss on both sides at 40,000.
- ³¹²He had remained behind in camp (cp. chap. 33).
- ³¹³i.e. other than the Guards.
- ³¹⁴See chap. 32.
- ³¹⁵At Brixellum.
- ³¹⁶Plutarch adds a picturesque detail: 'One of the common soldiers held up his sword and saying, "See, Caesar, we are all prepared to do *this* for you," he stabbed himself.'
- ³¹⁷See note 286.
- ³¹⁸According to Plutarch, Otho's generals, Celsus, Gallus, and Titianus, capitulated at once and admitted Caecina to the camp. Tacitus would doubtless have condemned Plutarch's story for its lack of tragic pathos. The facts, however, are against Tacitus. Now that his main force had capitulated at Bedriacum, Otho had no sufficient army to fight with, since the Vitellians lay between him and his Danube army at Aquileia.
- ³¹⁹Titianus' son. He was eventually executed by Domitian for keeping Otho's birthday.
- ³²⁰Servius Sulpicius Galba.
- ³²¹The conqueror of , now consul-elect (cp. i. 77).
- ³²²April 17.
- ³²³Cp. note 316.
- ³²⁴Ferento in Etruria.
- ³²⁵Albia Terentia was the daughter of a knight who had not risen to office.
- ³²⁶Galba's murder and his own suicide.
- ³²⁷Reggio.
- ³²⁸Accepting Meiser's suggestion *cum initio pugnae et cum Othonis exitu*.

VITELLIUS' PRINCIPATE

52Now that the war was everywhere ended, a large number of senators, who had quitted Rome with Otho and been left behind at Mutina,³³⁰ found themselves in a critical position. When the news of the defeat reached Mutina, the soldiers paid no heed to what they took for a baseless rumour, and, believing the senators to be hostile to Otho, they treasured up their conversation and put the worst interpretation on their looks and behaviour. In time they broke into abusive reproaches, seeking a pretext for starting a general massacre, while the senators suffered at the same time from another source of alarm, for they were afraid of seeming to be slow in welcoming the victory of the now predominant Vitellian party. Terrified at their double danger, they held a meeting. For no one ¹⁶¹dared to form any policy for himself; each felt safer in sharing his guilt with others. The town-council of Mutina, too, kept adding to their anxiety by offering them arms and money, styling them with ill-timed respect 'Conscript Fathers'. 53A remarkable quarrel arose at this meeting. Licinius Caecina attacked Eprius Marcellus³³¹ for the ambiguity of his language. Not that the others disclosed their sentiments, but Caecina, who was still a nobody, recently raised to the senate, sought to distinguish himself by quarrelling with some one of importance, and selected Marcellus, because the memory of his career as an informer made him an object of

loathing. They were parted by the prudent intervention of their betters, and all then retired to Bononia,³³² intending to continue the discussion there, and hoping for more news in the meantime. At Bononia they dispatched men along the roads in every direction to question all new-comers. From one of Otho's freedmen they inquired why he had come away, and were told he was carrying his master's last instructions: the man said that when he had left, Otho was still indeed alive, but had renounced the pleasures of life and was devoting all his thoughts to posterity. This filled them with admiration. They felt ashamed to ask any more questions—and declared unanimously for Vitellius.

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54Vitellius' brother Lucius was present at their discussion, and now displayed his willingness to receive their flattery, but one of Nero's freedmen, called Coenus, suddenly startled them all by inventing the atrocious falsehood that the Fourteenth legion had joined forces with the troops at Brixellum, and that their sudden arrival had turned the fortune of the day: the victorious army had been cut to pieces. He hoped by inventing this good news to regain some authority for Otho's passports,³³³ which were beginning to be disregarded. He did, indeed, thus insure for himself a quick journey to Rome, but was executed by order of Vitellius a few days later. However, the senate's danger was augmented because the soldiers believed the news. Their fears were the more acute, because it looked as if their departure from Mutina was an official move of the Council of State, which thus seemed to have deserted the party. So they refrained from holding any more meetings, and each shifted for himself, until a letter arrived from Fabius Valens which quieted their fears. Besides, the news of Otho's death travelled all the more quickly because it excited admiration.

55At Rome, however, there was no sign of panic. The festival of Ceres³³⁴ was celebrated by the usual crowds. When it was reported in the theatre on reliable authority that Otho had renounced his claim,³³⁵ and ¹⁶³that Flavius Sabinus,³³⁶ the City Prefect, had made all the troops in Rome swear allegiance to Vitellius, the audience cheered Vitellius. The populace decked all the busts of Galba with laurel-leaves and flowers, and carried them round from temple to temple. The garlands were eventually piled up into a sort of tomb near Lake Curtius,³³⁷ on the spot which Galba had stained with his life-blood. In the senate the distinctions devised during the long reigns of other emperors were all conferred on Vitellius at once.³³⁸ To these was added a vote of thanks and congratulation to the German army, and a deputation was dispatched to express the senate's satisfaction. Letters were read which Fabius Valens had addressed to the consuls in very moderate terms. But Caecina's moderation was still more gratifying: he had not written at all.³³⁹

56However, Italy found peace a more ghastly burden than the war. Vitellius' soldiers scattered through all the boroughs and colonial towns, indulging in plunder, violence, and rape. Impelled by their greed or the promise of payment, they cared nothing for right and wrong: kept their hands off nothing sacred or profane. Even civilians put on uniform and seized the opportunity to murder their enemies. The soldiers themselves, ¹⁶⁴knowing the countryside well, marked down the richest fields and

wealthiest houses for plunder, determined to murder any one who offered resistance. Their generals were too much in their debt to venture any opposition. Of the two Caecina showed less greed and more ambition. Valens had earned a bad name by his own ill-gotten gains, and was therefore bound to shut his eyes to others' shortcomings.³⁴⁰ The resources of Italy had long been exhausted; all these thousands of infantry and cavalry, all this violence and damage and outrage was almost more than the country could bear.

57Meanwhile Vitellius knew nothing of his victory. With the remainder of his German army he continued to advance as though the war had just begun. A few of the veterans were left in winter quarters, and troops were hurriedly enlisted in the Gallic provinces, to fill up the vacancies in what were now mere skeleton legions.³⁴¹ Leaving Hordeonius Flaccus to guard the line of the Rhine, Vitellius advanced with a picked detachment from the army in Britain, eight thousand strong. After a few days' march he received news of the victory of Bedriacum and the collapse of the war on the death of Otho. He summoned a meeting and heaped praise on the courage of the troops. When the ¹⁶⁵army demanded that he should confer equestrian rank on his freedman Asiaticus, he checked their shameful flattery. Then with characteristic instability he granted at a private banquet what he had refused in public. This Asiaticus, who was thus decorated with the gold ring, was an infamous menial who rose by his vices.³⁴²

58During these same days news arrived that Albinus, the Governor of Mauretania, had been murdered, and both provinces³⁴³ had declared for Vitellius. Appointed by Nero to the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, Lucceius Albinus had further received from Galba the governorship of Tingitana, and thus commanded a very considerable force, consisting of nineteen cohorts of infantry, five regiments of horse, and an immense horde of Moors, well trained for war by their practice in plunder. After Galba's murder he inclined to Otho's side and, not contented with the province of Africa, began to threaten Spain on the other side of the narrow strait. Cluvius Rufus,³⁴⁴ alarmed at this, moved the Tenth legion³⁴⁵ down to the coast as though for transport. He also sent some centurions ahead to gain the sympathies of the Moors for Vitellius. The great reputation of the German army throughout the provinces facilitated this task, and they also spread a ¹⁶⁶rumour that Albinus was not contented with the title of 'Governor', and wanted to adopt a regal style under the name of Juba. So the sympathies of the army shifted. 59Asinius Pollio, who commanded the local cavalry, one of Albinus' most loyal friends, was assassinated. The same fate befell Festus and Scipio, who were in command of the infantry.³⁴⁶ Albinus himself embarked from Tingitana for Caesariensis, and was murdered as he landed. His wife confronted the assassins and was murdered too. How all this happened Vitellius never inquired. He passed by events of the highest importance after a few moments' attention, being quite unable to cope with serious matters.

On reaching the Arar,³⁴⁷ Vitellius ordered his army to march overland while he sailed down the river. Travelling with no imperial state, he had nothing but his

original poverty³⁴⁸ to make him conspicuous, until Junius Blaesus, Governor of the Lyons division of Gaul, a member of an eminent family, whose liberality matched his wealth, provided the emperor ¹⁶⁷with a staff and escorted him in person with great courtesy, an attention which proved most unwelcome to Vitellius, although he concealed his annoyance under the grossest flattery. At Lugdunum he found the generals of both parties awaiting him. Valens and Caecina were openly commended at a public meeting, and given places on either side of the emperor's throne. He then sent the whole army to fetch his infant son,³⁴⁹ and when they brought him wearing a general's uniform, Vitellius took him up in his arms and named him Germanicus,³⁵⁰ at the same time decorating him with all the insignia of his imperial position. The exaggerated honours of these days proved the child's only consolation for the evil times which followed.³⁵¹

60The most energetic of Otho's centurions were now executed, which did more than anything else to alienate the armies of Illyricum. The other legions also caught the infection, and their dislike of the German troops made them harbour thoughts of war. Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus were kept in mourning³⁵² and suspense, disheartened by delay. When at last their case was heard, their pleas savoured more of necessity than honour. They positively claimed credit for treachery, alleging that the long march before the battle, the fatigue of their troops, and the confusion ¹⁶⁸created by the wagons in their lines were all due not to chance, but to their own treachery. Vitellius believed their protestations of treason, and acquitted them of all suspicion of loyalty.

Otho's brother, Salvius Titianus, was in no danger. His affection for his brother and his personal inefficiency excused him. Marius Celsus was allowed to hold his consulship.³⁵³ But rumour gave rise to a belief which led to an attack being made in the senate against Caecilius Simplex, who was charged with trying to purchase the consulship and to secure Celsus' destruction. Vitellius, however, refused this, and afterwards allowed Simplex to hold the consulship without detriment to his conscience or his purse. Trachalus was protected against his accusers by Galeria, Vitellius' wife.³⁵⁴

61With so many of the great in danger of their lives, an obscure creature called Mariccus, of the tribe of the Boii³⁵⁵—it is a sordid incident³⁵⁶—endeavoured to thrust himself into greatness and to challenge the armies of Rome, pretending to be a minister of Heaven. This divine champion of the Gauls, as he had entitled himself, had already gathered a force of eight thousand men, and began making overtures³⁵⁷ to the neighbouring ¹⁶⁹Aeduan villages. But the chief community of the Aedui wisely sent out a picked force, with some Vitellian troops in support, and scattered the mob of fanatics. Mariccus was captured in the engagement, and later thrown to wild beasts.³⁵⁸ As they refused to devour him, the common people stupidly believed him invulnerable, until he was executed in the presence of Vitellius.

62No further measures were taken against the life or property of the rebels.³⁵⁹ The estates of those who had fallen fighting for Otho were allowed to devolve by will or else by

the law of intestate succession. Indeed, if Vitellius had set limits to his luxury, there was no need to fear his greed for money. It was his foul and insatiable gluttony. Rome and Italy were scoured for dainties to tickle his palate: from shore to shore the high roads rang with the traffic. The leading provincials were ruined by having to provide for his table. The very towns were impoverished. Meanwhile the soldiers were acquiring luxurious habits, learning to despise their general, and gradually losing their former efficiency and courage.

Vitellius sent a manifesto on to Rome in which he declined the title of Caesar, and postponed calling himself Augustus without giving up any portion of ¹⁷⁰his power. All astrologers³⁶⁰ were exiled from Italy, and rigorous provision was made to restrain Roman knights from the disgrace of appearing at the games in the arena.³⁶¹ Former emperors had paid, or more often compelled them to do this, and many of the provincial towns vied together in hiring the most profligate young aristocrats.

⁶³The arrival of his brother and the growing influence of his tutors in tyranny made Vitellius daily more haughty and cruel. He gave orders for the execution of Dolabella, whom Otho, as we have seen,³⁶² had relegated to the colonial town of Aquinum. On hearing of Otho's death, he had ventured back to Rome. Whereupon an ex-praetor, named Plancius Varus, one of Dolabella's closest friends, laid information before the city prefect, Flavius Sabinus, maintaining that he had broken from custody to put himself at the head of the defeated party. He added that Dolabella had tried to tamper with the cohort stationed at Ostia.³⁶³ Having no proof of these very serious charges, he repented and begged for his friend's forgiveness. But it was too late. The crime was committed. While Flavius Sabinus was hesitating what to do in such a serious matter, Lucius Vitellius' wife, ¹⁷¹Triaria, whose cruelty was altogether unwomanly, terrified him by suggesting that he was trying to get a reputation for mercy at the expense of his emperor's safety. Sabinus was naturally of a kindly disposition, but easily changed under the influence of fear. Though it was not he who was in danger, he was full of alarms, and hastened Dolabella's impending ruin for fear of being supposed to have helped him. ⁶⁴Vitellius, accordingly, from motives both of suspicion and of hatred (Dolabella had married his divorced wife Petronia), summoned Dolabella by letter to avoid the crowded thoroughfare of the Flaminian road and to turn off to Interamnium,³⁶⁴ where he gave orders for his murder. The assassin found the journey tedious; discovered his victim sleeping on the floor at a wayside inn, and cut his throat. This gave the new government a very bad name. People took it as a specimen of what to expect. Triaria's shameless behaviour was further emphasized by the exemplary behaviour of her relative Galeria, the emperor's wife, who kept clear of these dreadful doings. Equally admirable was the character of his mother, Sextilia, a woman of the old school. It was even on record that when her son's first letters were read to her, she said, 'It was no Germanicus,³⁶⁵ but a Vitellius that I brought into the world.' From that time neither the attractions of her high station nor the unanimous flattery of Rome could win her over to complacency. She only shared the sorrows of her house.

65When Vitellius left Lugdunum, Cluvius Rufus³⁶⁶ ¹⁷²relinquished his Spanish province and followed him. He knew that serious charges had been made against him, and his smiling congratulations hid an anxious heart. A freedman of the imperial court,³⁶⁷ Hilarus by name, had given evidence against him, alleging that, when Cluvius heard of the rival claims of Otho and Vitellius, he had endeavoured to set up an independent authority of his own in Spain, and to this end had issued passports with no emperor's name at the head.³⁶⁸ Certain phrases in his speeches were also construed as damaging to Vitellius and as a bid for his own popularity. However, Cluvius' influence carried the day, and Vitellius even had his own freedman punished. Cluvius was given a place at court, while still retaining Spain, of which he was absentee governor, following the precedent of Lucius Arruntius. In his case, however, Tiberius' motive had been suspicion, whereas Vitellius detained Cluvius without any such qualms.³⁶⁹ Trebellius Maximus³⁷⁰ was not allowed the same privilege. He had fled from Britain to escape the fury of his troops. Vettius Bolanus, who was then about the court, was sent out to take his place.

¹⁷³

66The soldiers of the defeated legions still gave Vitellius a good deal of anxiety. Their spirit was by no means broken. They distributed themselves all over Italy, mingling with the victors and talking treason. The most uncompromising of all were the Fourteenth, who refused to acknowledge their defeat. At Bedriacum, they argued, it was only a detachment that had been beaten, the main strength of the legion was not present.³⁷¹ It was decided to send them back to Britain, whence Nero had summoned them, and meanwhile they were to share their quarters with the Batavian irregulars, because of the long-standing feud between them.³⁷² Quartered as they were under arms, their mutual hatred soon broke out into disorder.

At Turin³⁷³ one of the Batavians was cursing a workman for having cheated him, when a legionary, who lodged with the workman, took his part. Each quickly gathered his fellow soldiers round him, and from abuse they came to bloodshed. Indeed, a fierce battle would have broken out, unless two regiments of Guards had sided with the Fourteenth, thus giving them confidence and frightening the Batavians. Vitellius gave orders that the Batavians should be drafted into his army, while the legion was to be marched over the Graian Alps³⁷⁴ by a détour which would avoid Vienne.³⁷⁵ Its inhabitants were another ¹⁷⁴cause for alarm.³⁷⁶ On the night on which the legion started they left fires burning all over Turin, and part of the town was burnt down. This disaster, like so many others in the civil war, has been obliterated by the greater calamities which befell other cities. No sooner were the Fourteenth across the Alps than the most mutinous spirits started off to march for Vienne, but they were stopped by the unanimous interference of the better men, and the legion was shipped across to Britain.

67Vitellius' next cause of anxiety was the Guards. At first they were quartered apart, and then, appeased by an honourable discharge,³⁷⁷ they gave up their arms to their officers. But when the news went round of the war with Vespasian, they enlisted again and formed the main strength of the Flavian party.

The First legion of marines was sent to Spain to cultivate docility in peace and quiet. The Eleventh and the Seventh were sent back to their winter quarters.³⁷⁸ The Thirteenth were set to work to build amphitheatres. For Caecina at Cremona and Valens at Bononia were each preparing to give a gladiatorial show. Vitellius never let his anxieties interfere with his pleasures.

68The losing party being thus dispersed by peaceful means, disorder broke out in the victorious camp. ¹⁷⁵It originated in sport, but the number of deaths increased the feeling against Vitellius. He had invited Verginius to dine with him at Ticinum, and they had just sat down to table. The conduct of officers is always determined by the behaviour of their generals; it depends on that whether they adopt the simple life or indulge their taste for riotous living;³⁷⁹ this again determines whether the troops are smart or disorderly. In Vitellius' army disorder and drunkenness were universal: it was more like a midnight orgy³⁸⁰ than a properly disciplined camp. So it happened that two of the soldiers, one belonging to the Fifth legion, the other to the Gallic auxiliaries, in a drunken frolic challenged each other to wrestle. The legionary fell; and when the Gaul began to exult over him, the soldiers who had gathered round took sides, and the legionaries, breaking out against the auxiliaries with murderous intent, actually cut to pieces a couple of cohorts. This commotion was only cured by another. A cloud of dust and the glitter of arms appeared on the horizon. Suddenly a cry arose that the Fourteenth had turned back and were marching on them. However, it was their own rear-guard bringing up the stragglers. This discovery quieted their alarm. Meanwhile, coming across one of Verginius' slaves, they ¹⁷⁶charged him with intending to assassinate Vitellius, and rushed off to the banquet clamouring for Verginius' head. No one really doubted his innocence, not even Vitellius, who always quailed at a breath of suspicion. Yet, though it was the death of an ex-consul, their own former general, which they demanded, it was with difficulty that they were quieted. No one was a target for these outbreaks so often as Verginius. He still retained the admiration and esteem of the men, but they hated him for disdaining their offer.³⁸¹

69On the next day Vitellius granted an audience to the deputation of the senate, which he had told to await him at Ticinum. He then entered the camp and spontaneously complimented the troops on their devotion to him.³⁸² This made the auxiliaries grumble at the growing licence and impunity allowed to the legions. So the Batavians, for fear of some desperate outbreak, were sent back to Germany, where Fortune was contriving for us a war that was at once both civil and foreign.³⁸³ The Gallic auxiliaries were also sent home. Their numbers were very large, and had been used at the first outbreak of the rebellion for an empty parade of force. Indeed, the imperial finances were already embarrassed by the distribution of largess, to meet the expenses of which Vitellius gave orders for ¹⁷⁷depleting the strength of the legions and auxiliaries. Recruiting was forbidden, and discharges offered without restriction. This policy was disastrous for the country and unpopular among the soldiers, who found that their turn for work and danger came round all the more frequently, now that there were so few to share the

duties. Besides, their efficiency was demoralized by luxury. Nothing was left of the old-fashioned discipline and the good rules of our ancestors, who preferred to base the security of Rome on character and not on money.

70 Leaving Ticinum Vitellius turned off to Cremona. There he witnessed Caecina's games and conceived a wish to stand upon the field of Bedriacum, and to see the traces of the recent victory with his own eyes. Within six weeks of the battle, it was a disgusting and horrible sight; mangled bodies, mutilated limbs, rotting carcasses of men and horses, the ground foul with clotted blood. Trees and crops all trampled down: the country-side a miserable waste. No less revolting to all human feeling was the stretch of road which the people of Cremona had strewn with laurel-leaves and roses, erecting altars and sacrificing victims as if in honour of an Oriental despot.³⁸⁴ The rejoicings of the moment soon turned to their destruction.³⁸⁵ Valens and Caecina were in attendance and showed Vitellius over the battle-field: this was where their 178 legions had charged: the cavalry took the field from here: this was where the auxiliaries were outflanked. The various officers³⁸⁶ each praised their own exploits, adding a few false or, at any rate, exaggerated touches. The common soldiers, too, turned gaily shouting from the high road to inspect the scene of their great struggle, gazing with wonder at the huge pile of arms and heaps of bodies.³⁸⁷ There were a few who reflected with tears of pity on the shifting chances of life. But Vitellius never took his eyes off the field: never shuddered at the sight of all these thousands of Roman citizens lying unburied.³⁸⁸ On the contrary, he was very well pleased, and, unconscious of his own impending doom, he offered a sacrifice to the local deities.

71 They next came to Bononia, where Fabius Valens gave a gladiatorial show, for which he had all the apparatus brought from Rome. The nearer they drew to the city, the greater became the disorder of the march, which was now joined by troops of actors, eunuchs and the like, all in the true spirit of Nero's court. For Vitellius always had a great personal admiration for Nero. He used to follow him about to hear him sing, not under compulsion—many a decent 179 man suffered that fate—but because he was the slave of his stomach, and had sold himself to luxury.

To secure a few months of office for Valens and Caecina, the other consuls of the year³⁸⁹ had their terms shortened, while Martius Macer's claim was ignored as belonging to Otho's party. Valerius Marinus, who had been nominated by Galba, had his term postponed, not for any offence, but because he was a mild creature and too lazy to resent an injury. The name of Pedanius Costa was omitted altogether. Vitellius had never forgiven him for rising against Nero and instigating Verginius. However, he alleged other reasons. They all had to observe the servile custom of the time, and offer their thanks to Vitellius.

72 An imposture, received at first with great excitement, failed to last more than a few days. A man had appeared who gave out that he was Scribonianus Camerinus,³⁹⁰ and that during Nero's reign he had taken refuge in Histria, where the Crassi still had their

old connexions and estates, and their name was much respected. He accordingly took all the rascals he could find and cast them for parts. The credulous mob and some of the soldiers, who were either victims of the imposture or anxious for a riot, eagerly flocked to join him. However, he was taken before Vitellius and his ¹⁸⁰identity examined. When it was found that there was no truth in his pretensions, and that his master recognized him as a runaway called Geta, he suffered the execution of a slave.³⁹¹

³²⁹i.e. the gladiators (cp. chap. [36](#)).

³³⁰Modena.

³³¹A famous orator and informer, who from small beginnings acquired great wealth and influence under Nero. Best known as the prosecutor of Thræsea (cp. iv. [6](#), &c.). He eventually conspired against Vespasian and was forced to commit suicide.

³³²Bologna.

³³³They would entitle him to the use of post-horses, &c., as for public business.

³³⁴April 12-19.

³³⁵From this phrase it is not clear whether the actual news of his suicide had arrived. It took place on April 17.

³³⁶Vespasian's brother (see i. [46](#)).

³³⁷See note [70](#).

³³⁸Cp. i. [47](#).

³³⁹By this time no one except the emperor was expected to address official letters referring to the general political situation to the consuls or the senate. Valens' action was therefore presumptuous (cp. iv. [4](#)).

³⁴⁰The meaning seems to be that Caecina indulged the men in order to win popularity, Valens in order to obtain licence for his own dishonesty.

³⁴¹He had depleted them by sending detachments forward with Valens and Caecina (see i. [61](#)).

³⁴²One of the vilest and most hated of imperial menials (see chap. [95](#), and iv. [11](#)). The gold ring was a token of equestrian rank (cp. i. [13](#)).

³⁴³Caesariensis (Fez) and Tingitana (Morocco). They had been imperial provinces since A.D. 40.

³⁴⁴See i. [8](#).

³⁴⁵Gemina.

³⁴⁶The military titles here used have a technical meaning which translation cannot convey. A senior centurion (cp. note [57](#)) could rise to the command of an auxiliary cohort, like the Festus and Scipio here mentioned (*praefecti cohortium*). The next step would be to *tribunus legionis*, and from that again to *praefectus alae*. This was Pollio's position, the highest open to any but soldiers of senatorial rank.

³⁴⁷Saône.

³⁴⁸He was so poor, says Suetonius, that he had no money to take him out to Germany, when appointed to that province. He had to let his house and hire a garret for his wife and family, and to pawn one of his mother's pearl ear-rings.

³⁴⁹Aged 6.

³⁵⁰Cp. i. [62](#).

³⁵¹He was executed by Mucianus (iv. [80](#)).

³⁵²He postponed the hearing of their case, and thus, as accused persons, they had by custom to wear mourning.

³⁵³Cp. i. [77](#).

³⁵⁴Cp. i. [90](#). As Trachalus' gentile name was Galerius, she was presumably a relative.

³⁵⁵Between the Loire and the Allier.

³⁵⁶Mariccus being a provincial 'of no family', Tacitus hardly likes to mention him.

³⁵⁷The word *trahebat* may here mean 'began to plunder', but this seems less likely.

³⁵⁸This punishment seems to have been reserved, appropriately enough, for those who stirred up popular sedition.

³⁵⁹From Vitellius' point of view the Othonians were rebels, since he had been declared emperor before Otho: or else as rebels against Galba.

³⁶⁰Cp. i. [22](#).

³⁶¹i.e. as gladiators. Juvenal says this is what the spendthrifts come to: and also that they would do it for money, without any Nero to compel them. On the whole the bankrupt rich preferred 'knock-about comedy' to the very real dangers of a combat.

³⁶²i. [88](#).

³⁶³Cp. i. [80](#).

³⁶⁴Terni.

³⁶⁵Cp. i. [62](#).

³⁶⁶See chap. [58](#).

³⁶⁷i.e. the property, not of Vitellius personally, but of the imperial household.

³⁶⁸He would entertain some natural doubt as to who *was* emperor. The incriminating suggestion is that he meant to insert his own name.

³⁶⁹In the *Annals* Tacitus mentions Tiberius' habit of appointing provincial governors without any intention of allowing them to leave Rome. See *Ann.* i. 80, vi. 27.

³⁷⁰See i. [60](#).

³⁷¹See chap. [43](#).

³⁷²See i. [59](#), [64](#), ii. [27](#).

³⁷³*Augusta Taurinorum*.

³⁷⁴Little St. Bernard.

³⁷⁵See i. [65](#). The legions there might make common cause with them.

³⁷⁶They had suffered once already (see i. [65](#), [66](#)).

³⁷⁷This meant about £200 to every man who had done sixteen years' service.

³⁷⁸i.e. the Eleventh to Dalmatia, the Seventh to Pannonia.

³⁷⁹Literally, enjoy dinner-parties beginning at an early hour, i.e. before two o'clock. This was considered 'fast'.

³⁸⁰The word here used by Tacitus, *pervigilia*, properly denotes all-night religious festivals. But—like Irish wakes—such festivals tended to deteriorate, and the word acquired a sinister sense.

³⁸¹See i. [6](#) and [8](#).

³⁸²Because they had seized one of Verginius' slaves, as described in the last chapter.

³⁸³The revolt of Civilis described in Book [IV](#). His force included Roman legionaries as well as Batavians, Gauls, and Germans.

³⁸⁴The word 'rex' had still an 'unroman' sound.

³⁸⁵Cremona was sacked and burnt in the following October (cp. iii. [32](#) f.).

³⁸⁶Literally, the tribunes of the legions and the prefects of the auxiliaries.

³⁸⁷A friend told Plutarch that he had seen on this battle-field a pile of corpses so high that they reached the pediment of an ancient temple which stood there.

³⁸⁸Suetonius attributes to him the remark, 'A dead enemy smells good, a dead Roman better.'

³⁸⁹Their names are given i. [77](#).

³⁹⁰Dio tells us that he and his father were murdered by Nero's slave Helios. He was probably related to M. Licinius Crassus Frugi, who was convicted of treason against Nero (see note [79](#)), and to Piso, Galba's adopted successor.

THE REVOLT OF VESPASIAN

73When once his couriers brought news from Syria and Judaea that the East had sworn allegiance to him, Vitellius' vanity and indolence reached a pitch which is almost incredible. For already, though the rumours were still vague and unreliable, Vespasian's name was in everybody's mouth, and the mention of him often roused Vitellius to alarm. Still, he and his army seemed to reck of no rival: they at once broke out into the unbridled cruelty, debauchery and oppression of some outlandish court.

74Vespasian, on the other hand, was meditating war and reckoning all his forces both distant and near at hand. He had so much attached his troops to himself, that when he dictated to them the oath of allegiance and prayed that 'all might be well' with Vitellius, they listened in silence. Mucianus' feelings were not hostile to him, and were strongly sympathetic to Titus. Tiberius Alexander,³⁹² the Governor of Egypt, had made common cause with him. The Third legion,³⁹³ since it had crossed from Syria into Moesia, he

could reckon as his own, and there was good hope that the other legions of Illyria would follow its lead.³⁹⁴ The whole ¹⁸¹army, indeed, was incensed at the arrogance of Vitellius' soldiers: truculent in appearance and rough of tongue, they scoffed at all the other troops as their inferiors. But a war of such magnitude demands delay. High as were his hopes, Vespasian often calculated his risks. He realized that it would be a critical day for him when he committed his sixty summers and his two young sons to the chances of war. In his private ambitions a man may feel his way and take less or more from fortune's hands according as he feels inclined, but when one covets a throne there is no alternative between the zenith of success and headlong ruin. ⁷⁵Moreover, he always kept in view the strength of the German army, which, as a soldier, he realized. His own legions, he knew, had no experience of civil war, while Vitellius' troops were fresh from victory: and the defeated party were richer in grievances than in troops. Civil strife had undermined the loyalty of the troops: there was danger in each single man. What would be the good of all his horse and foot, if one or two traitors should seek the reward the enemy offered and assassinate him then and there? It was thus that Scribonianus³⁹⁵ had been killed in Claudius' reign, and his murderer, Volaginius, raised from a common soldier to the highest rank. It is easier to move men in the mass than to take precautions against them singly.

⁷⁶These anxieties made Vespasian hesitate. Meanwhile the other generals and his friends continued to ¹⁸²encourage him. At last Mucianus after several private interviews went so far as to address him in public. 'Everybody,' he said, 'who plans some great exploit is bound to consider whether his enterprise serves both the public interest and his own reputation, and whether it is easily practicable or, at any rate, not impossible. He must also weigh the advice which he gets. Are those who offer it ready to run the risk themselves? And, if fortune favours, who gains the glory? I myself, Vespasian, call you to the throne. How much that may benefit the country and make you famous it lies with you—under Providence—to decide. You need not be afraid that I may seem to flatter you. It is more of an insult than a compliment to be chosen to succeed Vitellius. It is not against the powerful intellect of the sainted Augustus that we are in revolt; not against the cautious prudence of the old Tiberius; nor even against a long-established imperial family like that of Caligula, Claudius or Nero. You even gave way to Galba's ancient lineage. To remain inactive any longer, to leave your country to ruin and disgrace, that would be sheer sloth and cowardice, even if such slavery were as safe for you as it would be dishonourable. The time is long past when you could be merely *suspected* of ambition: the throne is now your only refuge. Have you forgotten Corbulo's murder?³⁹⁶ He was a man of better family than we, I admit, but so ¹⁸³was Nero more nobly born than Vitellius. A man who is feared always seems illustrious enough to those who fear him. That an army can make an emperor Vitellius himself has proved. He had neither experience nor military reputation, but merely rose on Galba's unpopularity. Even Otho fell not by the strategy or strength of his opponent, but by his own precipitate despair. And to-day he seems a great and desirable emperor, when

Vitellius is disbanding his legions, disarming his Guards, and daily sowing fresh seeds of civil war. Why, any spirit or enthusiasm which his army had is being dissipated in drunken debauches: for they imitate their master. But you, in Judaea, in Syria, in Egypt, you have nine fresh legions. War has not weakened nor mutiny demoralized them. The men are trained to discipline and have already won a foreign war.³⁹⁷ Besides these, you can rely on the strength of your fleet,³⁹⁸ and of your auxiliaries both horse and foot, on the faithful allegiance of foreign princes,³⁹⁹ and on your own unparalleled experience.

77'For ourselves I make but one claim. Let us not rank below Valens and Caecina. Nor must you despise my help because you do not encounter my rivalry. I prefer myself to Vitellius and you to myself. Your house has received the insignia of a triumph.⁴⁰⁰ You ¹⁸⁴have two young sons, one of whom is already old enough to fill the throne, and in his first years of service made a name for himself in the German army.⁴⁰¹ It would be absurd for me not to give way to one whose son I should adopt, were I emperor myself. Apart from this, we shall stand on a different footing in success and in failure, for if we succeed I shall have such honour as you grant me: of the risk and the dangers we shall share the burden equally. Or rather, do what is better still. Dispose your armies yourself and leave me the conduct of the war, and the uncertainties of battle.

'At this moment the defeated are far more strictly disciplined than their conquerors. Indignation, hatred, the passion for revenge, all serve to steel our courage. Theirs is dulled by pride and mutiny. The course of the war will soon bring to light the hidden weakness of their party, and reopen all its festering sores. I rely on your vigilance, your economy, your wisdom, and still more on the indolence, ignorance, and cruelty of Vitellius. Above all, our cause is far safer in war than in peace, for those who plan rebellion have rebelled already.'

78At the end of Mucianus' speech the others all pressed round with new confidence, offering their encouragement and quoting the answers of soothsayers and the movements of the stars. Nor was Vespasian uninfluenced by superstition. In later days, when he ¹⁸⁵was master of the world, he made no secret of keeping a soothsayer called Seleucus to help him by his advice and prophecy. Early omens began to recur to his memory. A tall and conspicuous cypress on his estate had once suddenly collapsed: on the next day it had risen again on the same spot to grow taller and broader than ever. The soothsayers had agreed that this was an omen of great success, and augured the height of fame for the still youthful Vespasian. At first his triumphal honours, his consulship, and the name he won by his Jewish victory seemed to have fulfilled the promise of this omen. But having achieved all this, he began to believe that it portended his rise to the throne.

On the frontier of Judaea and Syria⁴⁰² lies a hill called Carmel. A god of the same name is there worshipped according to ancient ritual. There is no image or temple: only an altar where they reverently worship. Once when Vespasian was sacrificing on this altar, brooding on his secret ambition, the priest, Basilides, after a minute inspection of the

omens said to him: 'Whatever it is which you have in mind, Vespasian, whether it is to build a house or to enlarge your estate, or to increase the number of your slaves, there is granted to you a great habitation, vast acres, and a multitude of men.' Rumour had immediately seized on this riddle and now began to solve it. Nothing was more talked of, especially in Vespasian's presence: such conversation is the food of hope.

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Having come to a definite decision they departed, Mucianus to Antioch, Vespasian to Caesarea. The former is the capital of Syria, the latter of Judaea.⁴⁰³

79The first offer of the throne to Vespasian was made at Alexandria, where Tiberius Alexander with great promptitude administered the oath of allegiance to his troops on the first of July. This was usually celebrated as his day of accession, although it was not until the third that the Jewish army took the oath in his presence. So eager was their enthusiasm that they would not even wait for the arrival of Titus, who was on his way back from Syria, where he had been conducting the negotiations between his father and Mucianus.

What happened was all due to the impulse of the soldiers: there was no set speech, no formal assembly of the troops. 80They were still discussing the time and the place, and trying to decide the hardest point of all, who should speak first, and while their minds were still busy with hopes and fears, reasons and chances, Vespasian happened to come out of his quarters. A few of the soldiers, forming up in the usual way to salute their general, saluted him as emperor. The others promptly rushed up calling him Caesar and Augustus, and heaping on him all the imperial titles. Their fears at once gave way to confidence. Vespasian himself, unchanged by the change of fortune, showed ¹⁸⁷no sign of vanity or arrogance. As soon as he had recovered from the dazzling shock of his sudden elevation, he addressed them in simple soldier fashion, and received a shower of congratulations from every quarter. Mucianus, who had been waiting for this, administered the oath of allegiance to his eager troops, and then entered the theatre at Antioch, where the Greeks ordinarily hold their debates. There, as the fawning crowd came flocking in, he addressed them in their own tongue. For he could speak elegant Greek, and had the art of making the most of all he said or did. What most served to inflame the excitement of the province and of the army, was his statement that Vitellius had determined to transfer the German legions to peaceful service in the rich province of Syria, and to send the Syrian legions to endure the toil and rigours of a winter in Germany. The provincials were accustomed to the soldiers' company and liked to have them quartered there, and many were bound to them by ties of intimacy and kinship, while the soldiers in their long term of service had come to know and love their old camp like a home.

81Before the 15th of July the whole of Syria had sworn allegiance. The party also gained the support of Sohaemus,⁴⁰⁴ with all the resources of his kingdom and a considerable force, and of Antiochus,⁴⁰⁴ the richest of the subject princes, who owed his importance

to his ancestral treasures. Before long Agrippa, too, received a secret summons from his friends at home, and leaving ¹⁸⁸Rome⁴⁰⁵ without the knowledge of Vitellius, sailed as fast as he could to join Vespasian. His sister Berenice⁴⁰⁶ showed equal enthusiasm for the cause. She was then in the flower of her youth and beauty, and her munificent gifts to Vespasian quite won the old man's heart. Indeed, every province on the seaboard as far as Asia and Achaia, and inland to Pontus and Armenia swore allegiance to Vespasian, but their governors were without troops, for as yet no legions had been assigned to Cappadocia.⁴⁰⁷

A meeting was held at Berytus⁴⁰⁸ to discuss the general situation. To this came Mucianus with all his officers and the most distinguished of his centurions and soldiers, besides the elite of the Jewish army in full uniform. All these cavalry and infantry, and the pageant of the subject princes, vying with each other in splendour, gave the meeting an air of imperial grandeur.

82The first step was to levy new troops and to recall the veterans to the standards. Some of the strongest towns were told off to manufacture arms. New gold and silver were coined at Antioch. All these works were promptly carried out, each in the proper place, by competent officials. Vespasian came and inspected them himself, encouraging good work by his praises ¹⁸⁹and rousing the inefficient rather by example than compulsion, always more ready to see the merits than the faults of his friends. Many were rewarded by receiving commands in the auxiliary forces or posts as imperial agents.⁴⁰⁹ Still more were raised to senatorial rank. They were mostly men of distinction who soon rose high, and with others success atoned for any lack of merit. A donation for the troops had been mentioned by Mucianus in his first speech, but in very guarded terms. Even Vespasian offered for the civil war a lower figure than others gave in time of peace, for he had set his face with admirable firmness against largess to the soldiers, and his army was none the worse for it. Envoys were dispatched to Parthia and Armenia to secure that the legions, while engaged in the civil war, should not be exposed to attack in the rear.⁴¹⁰ It was arranged that Titus should carry on the war in Judaea, while Vespasian held the keys of Egypt.⁴¹¹ Against Vitellius it seemed sufficient to send a part of their forces under the command of Mucianus. He would have Vespasian's name behind him and the ¹⁹⁰irresistible force of destiny. Letters were written to all the armies and their generals with instructions that they should try to win over those of the Guards who were hostile to Vitellius by promising them renewal of service.

83Meanwhile, Mucianus, who acted the part more of a partner than a subordinate, moved forward without the encumbrance of baggage, neither marching so slowly as to look like holding back, nor so rapidly as not to allow time for rumours to spread. He realized that his force was small, and that the less people saw the more they would believe of it. However, he had a solid column following in support, composed of the Sixth legion and some picked detachments numbering 13,000 men.⁴¹² He had ordered the fleet to move from Pontus to Byzantium, for he was half-minded to leave Moesia

and with his whole force to hold Dyrrachium, at the same time using his fleet to dominate the Italian sea. He would thus secure Greece and Asia in his rear, which would otherwise be at the mercy of Vitellius, unless furnished with troops. Vitellius also would himself be in doubt what points of the Italian coast to defend, if Mucianus with his ships threatened both Brundisium and Tarentum and the whole coastline of Calabria and Lucania.

84Thus the provinces rang from end to end with the preparations for ships, soldiers and arms. But the ¹⁹¹heaviest burden was the raising of money. 'Funds,' said Mucianus, 'are the sinews of war,'⁴¹³ and in his investigations he cared for neither justice nor equity, but solely for the amount of the sum. Informers abounded, and pounced on every rich man as their prey. This intolerable oppression, excused by the necessities of war, was allowed to continue even in peace. It was not so much that Vespasian at the beginning of his reign had made up his mind to maintain unjust decisions, but fortune spoilt him; he had learnt in a bad school and made a bold use of his lessons. Mucianus also contributed from his private means, of which he was generous, as he hoped to get a high rate of interest out of the country. Others followed his example, but very few had his opportunity of recovering their money.

85In the meantime Vespasian's progress was accelerated by the enthusiasm with which the Illyrian army⁴¹⁴ espoused his cause. The Third set the example to the other legions of Moesia, the Eighth and the Seventh Claudian, both strongly attached to Otho, although they had not been present at the battle. On their arrival at Aquileia⁴¹⁵ they had mobbed the couriers who brought the news of Otho's fall, and torn to pieces the standards bearing Vitellius' name, finally looting the camp-chest and dividing the money among themselves. ¹⁹²These were hostile acts. Alarmed at what they had done they began to reflect that, while their conduct needed excuse before Vitellius, they could make a merit of it with Vespasian. Accordingly, the three Moesian legions addressed letters to the Pannonian army,⁴¹⁶ inviting their co-operation, and meanwhile prepared to meet refusal with force.

Aponius Saturninus, the Governor of Moesia, took this opportunity to attempt an abominable crime. He sent a centurion to murder Tettius Julianus,⁴¹⁷ who commanded the Seventh legion, alleging the interests of his party as a cloak for a personal quarrel. Julianus heard of his danger and, taking some guides who knew the country, escaped into the wilds of Moesia and got as far as Mount Haemus.⁴¹⁸ After that he meddled no more in civil war. Starting to join Vespasian, he prolonged his journey by various expedients, retarding or hastening his pace according to the nature of the news he received.

86In Pannonia the Thirteenth legion and the Seventh Galbian had not forgotten their feelings after the battle of Bedriacum. They lost no time in joining Vespasian's cause, being chiefly instigated by Antonius Primus. This man was a criminal who had been convicted of fraud⁴¹⁹ during Nero's reign. Among the many evils of the war was his

recovery of senatorial ¹⁹³rank. Galba gave him command of the Seventh legion, and he was believed to have written repeatedly to Otho offering his services as general to the party. But, as Otho took no notice of him, he was without employment in the war. When Vitellius' cause began to decline, he joined Vespasian and proved an acquisition. He was a man of great physical energy and a ready tongue; an artist in calumny, invaluable in riots and sedition. Light-fingered and free-handed, he was intolerable in peace, but by no means contemptible in war. The union of the Moesian and Pannonian armies soon attracted the troops in Dalmatia to the cause. Tampus Flavianus and Pompeius Silvanus, the two ex-consuls who governed respectively Pannonia and Dalmatia,⁴²⁰ were wealthy old gentlemen who had no thought of rising. But the imperial agent in Pannonia, Cornelius Fuscus, was a vigorous young man of good family. In his early youth a desire to make money⁴²¹ had led him to resign his senatorial rank. He ¹⁹⁴had headed the townsmen of his colony in declaring for Galba, and his services had won him a position as imperial agent.⁴²² Then he joined Vespasian's party, giving a keen stimulus to the war; for, being attracted more by danger itself than by its prizes, he always disliked what was certain and long established, preferring everything that was new and dangerous and doubtful. So the Vespasian party used all their efforts to fan every spark of discontent throughout the empire. Letters were sent to the Fourteenth in Britain and to the First in Spain,⁴²³ since both these legions had stood for Otho against Vitellius. In Gaul, too, letters were scattered broadcast. All in an instant the war was in full flame. The armies of Illyricum openly revolted, and all the others were ready to follow the first sign of success.

³⁹¹i.e. he was crucified.

³⁹²See note [30](#).

³⁹³Cp. i. [79](#).

³⁹⁴This hope was fulfilled (chap. [85](#)).

³⁹⁵See i. [89](#).

³⁹⁶Under Nero, after brilliant service in Armenia and Parthia. Nero was jealous and afraid of him. So is Vitellius jealous of Vespasian.

³⁹⁷Against the Jews.

³⁹⁸From the Pontus. Cp. ii. [83](#).

³⁹⁹See note [216](#); and cp. chap. [81](#).

⁴⁰⁰For his victories in Britain under the auspices of Claudius, who nominally shared with him the command of the expedition, A.D. 43.

⁴⁰¹Titus, who was now thirty, had served as *Tribunus militum* under his father in Germany and in Britain.

⁴⁰²More exactly of Galilee and Phoenicia.

⁴⁰³This is of course from the Roman point of view. Caesarea was the seat of the procurator. That Jerusalem was the national capital Tacitus recognizes in Book [V](#).

⁴⁰⁴See note [216](#).

⁴⁰⁵He had started for Rome with Titus (chap. [1](#)), and continued his journey when Titus turned back.

⁴⁰⁶See note [205](#).

⁴⁰⁷Cappadocia was under a procurator of equestrian rank until Vespasian some years later was forced to send out troops and a military governor.

⁴⁰⁸Beyrut.

⁴⁰⁹*Procuratio* covers the governorship of an imperial province such as Judaea, the post of financial agent in an imperial province where there was a military governor (*legatus Caesaris*), and the position of collector of imperial taxes in a senatorial province. *Praefectura*, may mean either a command in the auxiliary infantry or the governorship of certain imperial provinces. Here the former seems the more probable sense.

⁴¹⁰They would treat with Vologaeses, king of Parthia, and Tiridates of Armenia, and keep an eye on them. This they did with such success that Vologaeses offered Vespasian 40,000 cavalry.

⁴¹¹Alexandria and Pelusium.

⁴¹²i.e. besides the Sixth Ferrata he had detachments from the other two legions in Syria, and from the three in Judaea. Cp. notes [163](#) and [164](#).

⁴¹³Borrowing this platitude from Cicero, who got it from the Greek.

⁴¹⁴i.e. the legions in Moesia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia (cp. note [3](#)).

⁴¹⁵Cp. note [286](#).

⁴¹⁶XIII Gemina and VII Galbiana (see [below](#)).

⁴¹⁷See i. [79](#).

⁴¹⁸The Balkan range.

⁴¹⁹He was concerned in the forgery of a will: see *Ann.* xiv. 40, where he is called 'a man of ready daring'.

⁴²⁰These were imperial provinces, each governed by a *legatus Caesaris* and a *procurator*, the former a military, the latter a financial officer.

⁴²¹Reading *quaestus cupidine* (Grotius). The reading of the Medicean manuscript is *quietis cupidine*. But Fuscus, as the sequel shows, had little taste for a quiet life. It is more likely that his motives were mercenary, since both law and custom still imposed some restrictions upon a senator's participation in 'business'. In the *Annals* (xvi. 17) Tacitus says that Annaeus Mela abstained from seeking public office, because he 'hoped to find a shorter road to wealth' by entering, as Fuscus did, the imperial civil service. The statement that Fuscus loved danger better than money does not imply any rooted antipathy to the latter.

⁴²²i.e. in Pannonia.

⁴²³Cp. chaps. [66](#) and [67](#).

VITELLIUS IN ROME

87While⁴²⁴ Vespasian and his generals were showing such activity in the provinces, Vitellius grew more contemptible and indolent every day. Halting at every town or country house that offered any attractions, he made his way to Rome with a heavy marching column of sixty thousand troops, demoralized by loose discipline, and an even greater number of menials as well as those camp-followers who are more troublesome than any slaves. Besides these he had the vast retinue of his generals and friends, which not even the strictest discipline could have kept under control. This mob ¹⁹⁵was further encumbered by senators and knights, who came from Rome to meet him, some from fear, some from servility; and gradually all the others followed, so as not to be left behind by themselves. There flocked in, too, a crowd of low-bred buffoons, actors and chariot-drivers, who had gained Vitellius' acquaintance by various dishonest services. He delighted in such discreditable connexions. To furnish supplies for this host not only were the colonies and country towns laid under contribution, but the farmers as well. The crops were just ripe and the fields were ravaged like an enemy's country.

88Many murderous affrays took place among the soldiers, for after the mutiny at Ticinum⁴²⁵ there were ceaseless quarrels between the legions and the auxiliaries. They only united to harry the villagers. The worst bloodshed took place at the seventh milestone from Rome. Here Vitellius had ready-cooked food served to each of the soldiers, as is done with gladiators in training, and the common people flocked out from Rome and wandered all over the camp. Some of these visitors indulged in a cockney practical joke,⁴²⁶ and stole some of the soldiers' swords, quietly cutting their belts while their attention was diverted. Then they kept asking them, 'Have you got your

sword ¹⁹⁶on?' The troops were not used to being laughed at, and refused to tolerate it. They charged the defenceless crowd. Amongst others the father of one of the soldiers was killed while in his son's company. When it was discovered who he was, and the news spread, they shed no more innocent blood. Still there was some panic in the city as the first soldiers arrived and began to roam the streets. They mostly made for the Forum, anxious to see the spot where Galba had fallen.⁴²⁷ They themselves were a sufficiently alarming sight with their rough skin coats and long pikes. Unused to towns, they failed to pick their way in the crowd; or they would slip on the greasy streets, or collide with some one and tumble down, whereupon they took to abuse and before long to violence. Their officers, too, terrified the city by sweeping along the streets with their bands of armed men.

89After crossing the Mulvian bridge, Vitellius himself had been riding on a conspicuous horse, wearing his sword and general's uniform, with the senate and people trooping in front of him. However, as this looked too much like an entry into a captured city, his friends persuaded him to change into civilian dress and walk on foot. At the head of his column were carried the eagles of four legions, surrounded by the colours belonging to the detachments of four other legions.⁴²⁸ Next came the standards of twelve regiments of ¹⁹⁷auxiliary horse, then the files of infantry and the cavalry behind them. Then came thirty-four cohorts of auxiliaries, arranged according to their nationality or the nature of their weapons. In front of the eagles came the camp prefects and tribunes, and the senior centurions,⁴²⁹ all dressed in white. The other centurions marched each at the head of his company, glittering with their armour and decorations. Gaily, too, shone the soldiers' medals⁴³⁰ and their chains of honour. It was a noble spectacle, an army worthy of a better emperor. Thus Vitellius entered the Capitol, where he embraced his mother and conferred on her the title of Augusta.

90On the following day Vitellius delivered a grandiloquent eulogy on his own merits. He might have been addressing the senate and people of some other state, for he extolled his own industry and self-control, although each member of his audience had seen his infamy for himself, and the whole of Italy had witnessed during his march the shameful spectacle of his sloth and luxury. However, the thoughtless crowd could not discriminate between truth and falsehood. They had learnt the usual flatteries by heart and chimed in with loud shouts of applause. They insisted in the face of his protests that he should take the title of ¹⁹⁸Augustus. But neither his refusal nor their insistence made much difference.⁴³¹

91In Rome nothing passes without comment, and it was regarded as a fatal omen that Vitellius took office as high priest, and issued his encyclical on public worship on the 18th of July, which, as the anniversary of the disasters on the Cremera and the Allia,⁴³² had long been considered an unlucky day. But his ignorance of all civil and religious precedent was only equalled by the incapacity of his freedmen and friends. He seemed to live in a society of drunkards. However, at the consular elections he canvassed for his candidates like a common citizen.⁴³³ In everything he courted the

favour of the lowest classes, attending performances in the theatre and backing his favourite at the races. This would undoubtedly have made him popular had his motives been good, but the memory of his former life made his conduct seem cheap and discreditable. He constantly attended the senate, even when the debates were on trivial matters. It once happened that Helvidius Priscus,⁴³⁴ then praetor-elect, opposed Vitellius' policy. At first the emperor showed annoyance,¹⁹⁹ but was content to appeal to the tribunes of the people to come to the rescue of his slighted authority. Afterwards, when his friends, fearing that his resentment might be deep-seated, tried to smooth matters, he replied that there was nothing strange in two senators disagreeing on a question of public policy: he himself had often opposed even such a man as Thrasea. Most people laughed at the impudence of this comparison; others were gratified that he had selected Thrasea, and not some court favourite, as an example of real distinction.⁴³⁵

92 Vitellius had given the command of the Guards to Publilius Sabinus, who had commanded an auxiliary cohort,⁴³⁶ and Julius Priscus, hitherto only a centurion. Priscus owed his rise to Valens' support, Sabinus to that of Caecina. The rivalry between Valens and Caecina left Vitellius no authority at all. They managed the government between them. They had long felt the strain of mutual dislike. During the war they had concealed it. Lately it had been fanned by dishonest friends and by life in the city, which so easily breeds quarrels. They were constant rivals, comparing their respective popularity, the number of their retinue, the size of the crowds that came to wait upon them.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile Vitellius let his favour alternate between them, for personal influence is not to be trusted beyond a certain limit. Meanwhile, they both feared and despised the emperor himself, who thus veered between sudden brusqueness and unseasonable flattery. However, they were not in the least deterred from seizing on the houses, gardens, and funds in the emperor's patronage, while the crowd of miserable and needy nobles, whom Galba had recalled from exile with their children, derived no assistance from the emperor's liberality. He earned the approval both of the upper classes and of the people by granting to the restored full rights over their freedmen.⁴³⁷ But the freed slaves with characteristic meanness did all they could to invalidate the edict. They would hide their money with some obscure friend or in a rich patron's safe. Some, indeed, had passed into the imperial household and become more influential than their masters.

93 As for the soldiers, the Guards' barracks were crowded, and the overflow spread through the city, finding shelter in colonnades and temples. They ceased to recognize any head-quarters, to go on guard, or to keep themselves in training, but fell victims to the attractions of city life and its unmentionable vices, until they deteriorated both physically and morally through idleness and debauchery. A number of them²⁰¹ even imperilled their lives by settling in the pestilent Vatican quarter, thus increasing the rate of mortality. They were close to the Tiber, and the Germans and Gauls, who were peculiarly liable to disease and could ill stand the heat, ruined their constitutions by their immoderate use of the river.⁴³⁸ Moreover, the generals, either for bribes or to earn

popularity, tampered with the rules of the service, enrolling sixteen regiments of Guards⁴³⁹ and four for the city garrison, each composed of a thousand men. In enlisting these troops Valens put himself forward as superior to Caecina, whose life he claimed to have saved. It is true, indeed, that his arrival had consolidated the party, and by his successful engagement he had silenced the current criticism of their slow marching. Besides which the whole of the army of Lower Germany was attached to Valens, and this is said to be the reason why Caecina's loyalty first wavered.

94Whatever indulgence Vitellius showed to his generals, he allowed still more licence to the troops. Each man chose his service. However unfit, he might enlist in ²⁰²the Guards, if he preferred it. On the other hand, good soldiers were allowed, if they wished, to remain in the legions or the auxiliary cavalry. Many wished to do this who suffered from ill health and complained of the climate. However, the best soldiers were thus withdrawn from the legions and from the cavalry; and the Guards were robbed of their prestige when twenty thousand men were thus not so much selected for service with them as drafted at random from the whole army.

While Vitellius was addressing the troops, they demanded the execution of three Gallic chieftains, Asiaticus, Flavus, and Rufinus, on the ground that they had fought for ⁴⁴⁰ Vitellius never checked these outcries. For, apart from the innate cowardice of his nature, he knew that his donation to the soldiers was nearly due, and that he had no money for it; so he freely granted all their other demands. The imperial freedmen were forced to contribute a sort of tax, proportionate to the number of their slaves. Meanwhile, his one serious occupation was extravagance. He built stables for chariot-drivers, filled the arena with gorgeous shows of gladiators and wild beasts, and fooled away his money as though he had more than he wanted.

95Moreover, Valens and Caecina celebrated Vitellius' birthday⁴⁴¹ by holding gladiatorial shows in every quarter of Rome on a scale of magnificence hitherto unknown. Vitellius then gratified the rabble and scandalized all decent people by building altars in the Martian Plain, and holding a funeral service in honour of Nero. Victims were killed and burnt in public: the torch was applied by the Augustales, members of the college which Tiberius Caesar had founded in honour ²⁰³of the Julian family, just as Romulus similarly commemorated King Tatius.

It was not yet four months since Vitellius' victory, and yet his freedman Asiaticus was as bad as a Polyclitus or a Patrobius,⁴⁴² or any of the favourites whose names were hated in earlier days. At this court no one strove to rise by honesty or capacity. There was only one road to power. By lavish banquets, costly profusion, and feats of gastronomy, you had to try and satisfy Vitellius' insatiable gluttony. He himself, without thought for the morrow, was well content to enjoy the present. It is believed that he squandered nine hundred million sesterces⁴⁴³ in these brief months. Truly it shows Rome's greatness and misfortune, that she endured Otho and Vitellius both in the same year, and suffered humiliation of every kind at the hands of men like Vinus and Fabius,⁴⁴⁴ Icelus and

Asiaticus, until at last they gave way to Mucianus and Marcellus—a change of men but not of manners.

96The first news of rebellion which reached Vitellius came from Aponius Saturninus,⁴⁴⁵ who, before himself going over to Vespasian's side, wrote to announce the desertion of the Third legion. But a sudden crisis makes a man nervous: Aponius did not tell the whole story. So the emperor's flattering friends began to explain it all away: what was the defection of a single legion, while the loyalty of the other armies remained ²⁰⁴unshaken? Vitellius himself used the same language to the soldiers. He accused the men, who had been recently discharged from the Guards,⁴⁴⁶ of spreading false rumours, and kept assuring them there was no fear of civil war. All mention of Vespasian was suppressed, and soldiers were sent round the city to frighten people into silence, which, of course, did more than anything else to make them talk.

97Vitellius, nevertheless, sent for reinforcements from Germany, Britain, and the Spanish provinces, though with a lack of urgency which was intended to conceal his straits. The provinces and their governors showed the same want of enthusiasm. Hordeonius Flaccus,⁴⁴⁷ who had suspicions of the Batavi, was distracted with a war of his own,⁴⁴⁸ while Vettius Bolanus⁴⁴⁹ never had Britain under complete control: nor was the loyalty of either beyond doubt. The Spanish provinces, where there was at the time no consular governor,⁴⁵⁰ were equally slow. The three officers in command of the legions held an equal authority, and if Vitellius' cause had prospered, would have each outbid the other for his favour: but they all shared the resolve to leave his misfortunes alone. In Africa the legion and auxiliaries enlisted by Clodius Macer, and subsequently ²⁰⁵disbanded by Galba,⁴⁵¹ took service again at Vitellius' orders, and at the same time all the young men of the province eagerly enlisted. Vitellius had been an honest and popular pro-consul in Africa, while Vespasian had been distrusted and disliked. The provincials took this as an earnest of their reigns; but experience proved them wrong.

98The military legate Valerius Festus⁴⁵² at first loyally seconded the enthusiasm of the province. After a while he began to waver. In his official letters and edicts he still acknowledged Vitellius, while in secret communication with Vespasian and ready to support whichever party proved successful. In Raetia and the Gallic provinces some centurions and men carrying letters and edicts from Vespasian were taken prisoners and sent to Vitellius, who had them executed. But most of these envoys escaped capture either by their own ingenuity or the loyal help of friends. Thus, while Vitellius' plans were known, Vespasian's were for the most part still a secret. This was partly due to Vitellius' negligence, but also to the fact that the garrisons on the Pannonian Alps stopped all messengers. By sea, too, the Etesian⁴⁵³ winds from the north-west favoured ships sailing eastward, but hindered the voyage from the East.

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99Terrified at last by the imminence of invasion and the alarming news that reached him from all quarters, Vitellius instructed Caecina and Valens to prepare for war.

Caecina was sent on ahead, Valens, who was just recovering from a serious illness, being delayed by his weak state of health. Great, indeed, was the change in the appearance of the German army as it marched out of Rome. There was neither energy in their muscles nor fire in their hearts. Slowly the column straggled on, their horses spiritless, their arms neglected. The men grumbled at the sun, the dust, the weather, and were as ready to quarrel as they were unwilling to work. To these disadvantages were added Caecina's inveterate self-seeking and his newly-acquired indolence. An overdose of success had made him slack and self-indulgent, or, if he was plotting treachery, this may have been one of his devices for demoralizing the army. It has often been believed that it was Flavius Sabinus⁴⁵⁴ who, using Rubrius Gallus as his agent, tampered with Caecina's loyalty by promising that, if he came over, Vespasian would ratify any conditions. It may have occurred also to Caecina to remember his quarrels and rivalry with Valens, and to consider that, as he did not stand first with Vitellius, he had better acquire credit and influence with the new emperor.

100After taking an affectionate and respectful farewell of Vitellius, Caecina dispatched a body of cavalry to occupy Cremona. He soon followed with the ²⁰⁷detachments of the First, Fourth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth legions in the van. The centre was composed of the Fifth and Twenty-second, and in the rear of the column came the Twenty-first Rapax and the First Italian legion, with detachments from the three legions of Britain and a select force of auxiliaries. When Caecina had started, Valens wrote instructions to the legions belonging to his old command⁴⁵⁵ to await him on the march, saying that he and Caecina had arranged this. Caecina, however, took advantage of being on the spot, and pretended that this plan had been altered so as to enable them to meet the first outbreak of the war with their full strength. So some legions were hurried forward to Cremona⁴⁵⁶ and part of the force was directed upon Hostilia.⁴⁵⁷ Caecina himself turned aside to Ravenna on the pretext of giving instructions to the fleet. Thence he proceeded to Patavium⁴⁵⁸ to secure secrecy for his treacherous designs. For Lucilius Bassus, whom Vitellius, from a prefect of auxiliary cavalry had raised to the supreme command of the two fleets at Ravenna and Misenum, felt aggrieved at not being immediately given the praefecture of the Guards, and sought in dastardly treachery the remedy for his unjustifiable annoyance. It can never be known whether he influenced Caecina or whether one was as dishonest as the other. There is seldom much to ²⁰⁸choose between rascals. 101The historians⁴⁵⁹ who compiled the records of this war in the days of the Flavian dynasty were led by flattery into adducing as the causes of the rebellion patriotism and the interests of peace. We cannot think them right. Apart from the innate disloyalty of the rebels and the loss of character after Galba's betrayal, they seem to have been led by jealousy and rivalry into sacrificing Vitellius himself for fear that they might lose the first place in his favour. Thus when Caecina joined his army,⁴⁶⁰ he used every device to undermine the staunch fidelity of the centurions and soldiers to Vitellius. Bassus found the same task less difficult, for the fleet remembered that they had lately been in Otho's service, and were therefore already on the brink of rebellion.

⁴²⁴The narrative is here resumed from chap. [72](#).

⁴²⁵See chap. 68.

⁴²⁶The word 'cockney' may perhaps be admitted here to express that which is characteristic of the metropolitan masses. Similarly Petronius speaks of a man as 'a fountain of cockney humour' (*urbanitatis vernaculae fontem*).

⁴²⁷They were cast for the part of Galba's avengers.

⁴²⁸Only detachments of these latter four were present, so they had not got their eagles.

⁴²⁹Under the empire there were six tribunes to each legion, and they took command on the march and on the field, acting under the orders of the *legatus legionis*. The ten centurions of the *pilani* or front rank each commanded his cohort.

⁴³⁰See note 107.

⁴³¹The end was so near.

⁴³²At Cremera, near Veii, the Fabii died like heroes, 477 B.C., and on the Allia the Gauls won their victory over Rome, 390 B.C. The day was called Alliensis, and no work was to be done on it (Livy, vi. 1).

⁴³³See chap. 71. At this time the emperor had in theory only the right of nominating candidates for the consulships, but it was obviously unnecessary for him to do more. The alliteration in this sentence is Tacitus'.

⁴³⁴See iv. 4 f.

⁴³⁵Thrasea, Helvidius' father-in-law, was an honoured member of the Stoic opposition who had been executed by Nero A.D. 66. Here Vitellius is posing as an ordinary senator. If he had opposed so distinguished a man as Thrasea, why should not Helvidius oppose him? Thrasea's end gives the remark a slightly sinister tone.

⁴³⁶See note 346.

⁴³⁷A patron apparently could claim support from his freedmen if he was in want, as these restored exiles certainly were, since their property had been confiscated and was irrecoverable. In exile they had of course lost their rights.

⁴³⁸This probably includes bathing as well as drinking.

⁴³⁹Since Tiberius there had been only nine, and Vespasian restored that number.

⁴⁴⁰See i. 6.

⁴⁴¹Probably September 24. He was 54.

⁴⁴²Cp. i. 37, 49.

⁴⁴³About nine million pounds. Not to be taken too literally.

⁴⁴⁴Valens.

⁴⁴⁵Governor of Moesia (see chap. 85).

⁴⁴⁶See chap. 67.

⁴⁴⁷He had been left to guard the Rhine.

⁴⁴⁸See chap. 57. The revolt of Civilis was soon to break out.

⁴⁴⁹See chap. 65.

⁴⁵⁰Cluvius Rufus was governing the Tarragona division from Rome (chap. 65). Lusitania was under a praetorian legate. Baetica was a senatorial province with no troops.

⁴⁵¹See i. 7 and 11.

⁴⁵²He had succeeded Clodius Macer in command of the Third Augusta, and in virtue of that command governed Numidia (see i. 7).

⁴⁵³These 'annual' winds blew steadily and gently from July 20 for a month.

⁴⁵⁴Vespasian's brother.

⁴⁵⁵In Lower Germany.

⁴⁵⁶Only two legions went to Cremona (see iii. 14).

⁴⁵⁷Ostiglia.

⁴⁵⁸Padua.

⁴⁵⁹e.g. Cluvius Rufus (cp. i. 8), the elder Pliny (cp. iii. 28), and Vipstanus Messala (cp. iii. 9, 25, 28).

⁴⁶⁰i.e. at Hostilia, coming back from Padua.

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3

SUMMARY OF CHIEF EVENTS

I. THE FIGHT FOR THE THRONE.

A.D. 69.

September

Antonius surprises a Vitellian detachment at Forum Alieni.

At Padua the Pannonian legions arrive.

He fortifies Verona. The Moesian legions arrive.

Caecina holds Cremona with Legs. I Italica and XXI Rapax and cavalry.

He encamps with the rest of his force near Hostilia on the Tartaro.

Valens dawdles northward with three praetorian cohorts.

October

The fleet at Ravenna declares for Vespasian.

Caecina attempts treachery and is imprisoned by his army, which starts on a forced march to Cremona.

Antonius starts from Verona to intercept them.

27. Second Battle of Bedriacum. Legs. I Italica and XXI Rapax sally from Cremona and are driven back by Antonius.

The six legions from Hostilia reach Cremona.

The united Vitellian army makes a night sally from Cremona and is defeated.

28. Sack of Cremona.

Surrender of Vitellian army.

4November

Valens, having reached Ariminum, flies to Monaco, and is captured in the Stoechades Islands.

Spain, Gaul, and Britain declare for Vespasian.

Antonius advances via Ariminum to Fanum Fortunae.

Vitellius holds the Apennines at Mevania with fourteen praetorian cohorts, a new legion of marines, and cavalry.

Mutiny of the fleet at Misenum. Tarracina seized.

Vitellius returns to Rome with seven cohorts and part of the cavalry.

The remaining cohorts are moved back from Mevania to Narnia.

L. Vitellius with six cohorts and cavalry besieges Tarracina.

December

Antonius crosses the Apennines and halts at Carsulae.

Varus wins a cavalry skirmish at Interamna.

Valens beheaded at Urbino: his head flung into camp at Narnia.

Surrender of Vitellians at Narnia.

Antonius marches as far as Otricoli, sending Cerialis forward to Rome with 1,000 cavalry.

17. Vitellius, wishing to abdicate, is prevented by troops and mob.

18. They besiege Flavius Sabinus in the Capitol.

19. Capitol stormed. Temple of Jupiter burnt.

Sabinus caught and killed.

L. Vitellius takes Tarracina.

20. Cerialis defeated outside Rome.

5

Antonius makes a forced march along Via Flaminia.

21. Capture of Rome. Murder of Vitellius. Domitian installed as 'Caesar'.

A.D. 70.

January

L. Vitellius surrenders in Campania. Mucianus arrives in Rome as regent.

II. THE REBELLION ON THE RHINE

A.D. 69.

Autumn

Revolt of Civilis and Batavians, at first ostensibly in support of Vespasian.

Revolt supported by Canninefates, Frisii, Marsaci, Cugerni.

Civilis routs Gallic auxiliaries and captures the Rhine flotilla in 'The Island'.

Munius Lupercus advances from Vetera with remnant of Legs. V Alaudae and XV Primigenia, supported by Ubian, Treviran, and Batavian auxiliaries.

Civilis drives him back into Vetera.

The eight Batavian cohorts at Mainz march off to join Civilis, and defeat Leg. I Germanica at Bonn.

Bructeri and Tencteri join revolt.

Civilis blockades Vetera.

Vocula advances to relieve Vetera with detachments of Legs. IV Macedonica, XXII Primigenia, and I Germanica.

Vocula encamps at Gelduba. Flaccus makes head-quarters at Novaesium.

Civilis' assault on Vetera repulsed.

Vocula with difficulty repulses attack on Gelduba.

Relief of Vetera. Vocula then retires to Novaesium.

Civilis takes Gelduba and wins skirmish outside Novaesium.

Mutiny in Novaesium. Flaccus murdered.

Civilis renews blockade of Vetera.

Chatti, Mattiaci, and Usipi threaten Mainz.

Vocula relieves Mainz and winters there.

A.D. 70.

January (?)

Revolt of Gallic tribes, Ubii, Tungri, Treviri, Lingones, headed by Classicus, Tutor, and Sabinus.

Vocula advances to save Vetera, but is driven back to Novaesium by mutiny of Gallic auxiliaries, and there murdered.

His army swears allegiance to 'Empire of Gaul'.

Tutor takes Cologne and Mainz.

Vetera surrenders to Classicus. Garrison massacred.

The Baetasii, Nervii, and Tungri join revolt.

Spring

Mucianus and Domitian start from Rome with reinforcements.

Cerialis, with Legs. XXI Rapax and II Adjutrix, is to operate on Lower Rhine.

Annius Gallus, with Legs. VII Claudia, VIII Augusta, XI Claudia, is to operate on Upper Rhine.

The Sequani, still loyal, defeat Sabinus and Lingones.

7The Remi, also loyal, summon a Gallic Council, which votes for peace, but the Treviri and Lingones hold out under Classicus, Tutor, and Valentinus.

The Roman mutineers return to their allegiance.

Summer

Sextilius Felix routs Tutor near Bingen. Cerialis defeats Valentinus and occupies Trier.

The Germans surprise the Romans in Trier, but Cerialis drives them out and storms their camp.

Massacre of Germans at Cologne. Cohort of Chauci and Frisii entrapped and burnt.

Leg. XIV Gemina arrives from Britain and receives submission of Nervii and Tungri.

Legs. I Adjutrix and VI Victrix arrive from Spain.

Autumn

Civilis defeats Cerialis near Vetera, but is routed on the next day and retires into The Island.

Hard fighting on the Waal.

Germans capture Roman flotilla.

Civilis retires northwards over the Rhine.

Cerialis occupies The Island.

Civilis makes overtures of peace.

NOTE

The text followed is that of C.D. Fisher (*Oxford Classical Texts*). Departures from it are mentioned in the notes.

8
9

BOOK III

ANTONIUS' ADVANCE

1On the Flavian side the generals concerted their plans for the war with greater loyalty and greater success. They had met at Poetovio¹ at the head-quarters of the Third legion, where they debated whether they should block the passage of the Pannonian Alps and wait until their whole strength came up to reinforce them, or whether they should take a bolder line, assume the offensive, and strike for Italy. Those who were in favour of waiting for reinforcements and prolonging the war dwelt on the strength and reputation of the German legions, and pointed out that the flower of the British army had lately arrived in Rome with Vitellius;² their own forces were numerically inferior and had recently suffered defeat; moreover, conquered troops, however bold their language, never show the same courage. On the other hand, if they occupied the Alps, Mucianus would soon arrive with the forces from the East. Besides, Vespasian still³ commanded the sea, and could count on the support of the fleets⁴ and of the provinces, ¹⁰where he could still raise material for a sort of second war. A salutary delay would bring them fresh forces without in any way prejudicing their present position.

2In answer to these arguments Antonius Primus,⁵ who had done more than any one else to stir up the war, stoutly maintained that prompt action would save them and ruin Vitellius. 'Their victory,' he said, 'has not served to inspire but to enervate them. The men are not held in readiness in camp, but are loitering in towns all over Italy. No one but their hosts has any call to fear them. The more unruly and ferocious they showed

themselves before, the greater the greed with which they now indulge in unwonted draughts of pleasure. The circus, the theatre, and the charms of the capital have ruined their hardness and their health. But if we give them time to train for war they will regain their energy. It is not far to Germany, whence they draw their main strength. Britain is only separated by a narrow channel. Close at hand they have Gaul and Spain, from the provinces of which they can get men, horses, and subsidies. Then again, they can rely on Italy itself and all the resources of the capital, while, if they want to take the offensive, they have two fleets⁶ and full command of the Illyrian Sea.⁷ Besides, what good to us are the ramparts of the mountains? Why should we drag on the war into another summer? Where can we get funds and supplies in the meanwhile? No, let us seize our opportunity. The Pannonian legions are ¹¹burning to rise in revenge. They were not defeated but deceived.⁸ The Moesian army has not yet lost a man. If you count not legions but men, our forces are superior both in numbers and in character. The very shame of our defeat² makes for good discipline. And even then our cavalry was not beaten. For though we lost the day, they shattered the enemy's line.¹⁰ And what was the force that broke through the Vitellians? Two regiments of cavalry from Pannonia and Moesia. What have we now? Sixteen regiments. Will not their combined forces, as they roar and thunder down upon the enemy, burying them in clouds of dust, overwhelm these horses and horsemen that have forgotten how to fight? I have given you my plan, and, unless I am stopped, I will put it in operation. Some of you have not yet burnt your boats.¹¹ Well, you can keep back the legions. Give me the auxiliaries in light marching order. They will be enough for me. You will soon hear that the door of Italy is open and the power of Vitellius shaken. You will be glad enough to follow in the footsteps of my victory.'

3All this and much else of the same tenor Antonius poured out with flashing eyes, raising his voice so as to reach the centurions and some of the soldiers, who had gathered round to share in their deliberations.¹² His truculent tone carried away even the more cautious ¹²and far-seeing, while the rest of the crowd were filled with contempt for the cowardice of the other generals, and cheered their one and only leader to the echo. He had already established his reputation at the original meeting, when Vespasian's letter¹³ was read. Most of the generals had then taken an ambiguous line, intending to interpret their language in the light of subsequent events. But Antonius seemed to have taken the field without any disguise, and this carried more weight with the men, who saw that he must share their disgrace or their glory.

4Next to Antonius in influence stood Cornelius Fuscus, the imperial agent.¹⁴ He, too, always attacked Vitellius in no mild terms, and had left himself no hope in case of failure. Tampus Flavianus¹⁵ was a man whose disposition and advanced years inclined him to dilatory measures, and he soon began to earn the dislike and suspicion of the soldiers, who felt he had not forgotten his kinship with Vitellius. Besides this, when the legions first rose, he had fled to Italy and subsequently returned of his own free will, which looked like meditating treachery.¹⁶ Having once given up his province and

returned to Italy, he was out of the reach of danger, but the passion for revolution had induced him to resume his title and meddle in the civil war. It was Cornelius Fuscus who had persuaded him to ¹³this—not that he needed his assistance, but because he felt that, especially at the outset of the rising, the prestige of an ex-consul would be a valuable asset to the party.

5In order to make their march across into Italy safe and effective, letters were sent to Aponius Saturninus¹⁷ to bring the Moesian army up as quickly as possible. To prevent the exposure of the defenceless provinces to the attacks of foreign tribes, the chiefs of the Sarmatian Iazyges,¹⁸ who formed the government of the tribe, were enlisted in the service. They also offered their tribal force, consisting entirely of cavalry, but were excused from this contribution for fear that the civil war might give opportunity for a foreign invasion, or that an offer of higher pay from the enemy might tempt them to sacrifice their duty and their honour.¹⁹ Sido and Italicus, two princes of the Suebi,²⁰ were allowed to join Vespasian's side. They had long acknowledged Roman sovereignty, and companionship in arms²¹ was likely to strengthen the loyalty of the tribe. Some auxiliaries were stationed on the flank towards Raetia, where hostilities were expected, since ¹⁴the imperial agent Porcius Septiminus,²² remained incorruptibly loyal to Vitellius. Sextilius Felix was therefore dispatched with Aurius' Horse²³ and eight cohorts of auxiliary infantry, together with the native levies of Noricum, to hold the line of the river Aenus,²⁴ which forms the frontier of Raetia and Noricum. Neither side provoked a battle: the fortune of the rival parties was decided elsewhere.

6Meanwhile, at the head of a picked band of auxiliaries and part of the cavalry, Antonius hurried off to invade Italy. He took with him an energetic soldier named Arrius Varus, who had made his reputation while serving under Corbulo in his Armenian victories. He was supposed to have sought a private interview with Nero, at which he maligned Corbulo's character. His infamous treachery brought him the emperor's favour and a post as senior centurion. This ill-gotten prize delighted him now, but ultimately proved his ruin.²⁵

After occupying Aquileia,²⁶ Antonius and Varus found a ready welcome at Opitergium and Altinum²⁷ and all the other towns in the neighbourhood. At Altinum a garrison was left behind to guard their communications against the fleet at Ravenna, for the news of its desertion had not as yet arrived. Pressing forward, they won Patavium and Ateste²⁸ for the party.¹⁵ At the latter place they learnt that three cohorts of Vitellius' auxiliary infantry and a regiment of cavalry, known as Sebosus' Horse,²⁹ were established at Forum Alieni,³⁰ where they had constructed a bridge.³¹ The report added that they were off their guard, so this seemed a good opportunity to attack them. They accordingly rushed the position at dawn, and cut down many of the men without their weapons. Orders had been given that, after a few had been killed, the rest should be terrorized into desertion. Some surrendered at once, but the majority succeeded in destroying the bridge, and thus checked the enemy's pursuit. The first bout had gone in the Flavians' favour.

7When the news spread to Poetovio, the Seventh Galbian and the Thirteenth Gemina hurried in high spirits to Patavium under the command of Veditius Aquila. At Patavium they were given a few days' rest, during which Minicius Justus, the camp-prefect of the Seventh legion, who endeavoured to enforce a standard of discipline too severe for civil war, had to be rescued from the fury of his troops and sent to Vespasian. Antonius conceived that his party would gain in prestige, if they showed approval of Galba's government, and stood for the revival of his cause. So he gave orders that all the statues of Galba, which had been thrown down during the civil war, should be replaced for worship throughout the country towns.¹⁶ This was a thing that had long been desired, and in their ambitious imaginations it assumed an undue importance.

8The question then arose where they should choose their seat of war. The best place seemed to be Verona. The open country round it was suited for the manœuvres of the cavalry, in which their strength lay: and they would gain both prestige and profit by wresting from Vitellius a strongly garrisoned town. On the road they occupied Vicetia.³² In itself this was a very small matter, since there was only a moderate force in the town, but it gained considerable importance from the reflection that it was Caecina's birthplace: the enemy's general had thus lost his native town. But Verona was well worth while. The inhabitants could aid the party with encouragement and funds: the army was thrust midway between Raetia and the Julian Alps,³³ and had thus blocked all passages by that route for the German armies.

This move had been made either without the knowledge or against the orders of Vespasian. His instructions were to suspend operations at Aquileia and wait for the arrival of Mucianus. He had further added this consideration, that so long as he held Egypt and the key to the corn-supply,³⁴ as well as the revenue of the richest provinces,³⁵ he could reduce Vitellius' army to submission from sheer lack of money and provisions. Mucianus had sent letter after letter¹⁷ with the same advice, pointing to the prospect of a victory without bloodshed or bereavement, and using other similar pretexts to conceal his real motive. This was ambition. He wanted to keep all the glory of the war to himself. However, the distance was so great that events outran his instructions.

9Antonius accordingly made a sudden sally against the enemy's outposts, and after a slight skirmish, in which they tested each other's temper, both sides withdrew without advantage. Soon after, Caecina entrenched a strong position between a Veronese village called Hostilia³⁶ and the marshes of the river Tartaro. Here he was safe, with the river in his rear and the marsh to guard his flanks. Had he added loyalty to his other advantages, he might have employed the full strength of the Vitellian forces to crush the enemy's two legions, before they were reinforced by the Moesian army, or, at least, have forced them to retire in ignominious flight and abandon Italy. But Caecina used various pretexts for delay, and at the outset of the war treacherously yielded all his advantages to the enemy. While it was open to him to rout them by force of arms, he preferred to pester them with letters and to wait until his intermediaries had settled the terms of his

treason. In the meantime, Aponius Saturninus arrived with the Seventh Claudian legion,³⁷ commanded by the tribune³⁸ Vipstanus Messala, a distinguished member¹⁸ of a famous family, and the only man who brought any honesty to this war.³⁹ To these forces, still only three legions and no match for the Vitellians, Caecina addressed his letters. He criticized their rash attempt to sustain a lost cause, and at the same time praised the courage of the German army in the highest terms. His allusions to Vitellius were few and casual, and he refrained from insulting Vespasian. In fact he used no language calculated either to seduce or to terrorize the enemy. The Flavian generals made no attempt to explain away their former defeat. They proudly championed Vespasian, showing their loyalty to the cause, their confidence in the army, and their hostile prejudice⁴⁰ against Vitellius. To the tribunes and centurions they held out the hope of retaining all the favours they had won from Vitellius, and they urged Caecina himself in plain terms to desert. These letters¹⁹ were both read before a meeting of the Flavian army, and served to increase their confidence, for while Caecina wrote mildly and seemed afraid of offending Vespasian, their own generals had answered contemptuously and scoffed at Vitellius.

10When the two other legions arrived, the Third⁴¹ commanded by Dillius Aponianus, and the Eighth by Numisius Lupus, Antonius decided to entrench Verona and make a demonstration in force. It so happened that the Galbian legion, who had been told off to work in the trenches facing the enemy, catching sight of some of their allies' cavalry in the distance, took them for the enemy, and fell into a groundless panic. Suspecting treachery, they seized their arms and visited their fury on Tampus Flavianus.⁴² They could prove no charge against him, but he had long been unpopular, and a blind impulse made them clamour for his head. He was Vitellius' kinsman, they howled; he had betrayed Otho; he had embezzled their donative. They would listen to no defence, although he implored them with outstretched hands, grovelling for the most part flat upon the ground, his clothes all torn, his face and chest shaken with sobs. This only served to inflame the soldiers' anger. His very excess of terror seemed to prove his guilt. Aponius⁴³ tried to address them, but his voice was drowned in their shouts. The others, too, were contemptuously howled down. They would give no one a hearing except Antonius, who had the power of²⁰ authority as well as the arts of eloquence necessary to quiet a mob. When the riot grew worse, and they began to pass from insulting speeches to murderous violence, he gave orders that Flavianus should be put in chains. Feeling that this was a farce,⁴⁴ the soldiers broke through the guards round the general's quarters, prepared to resort to extremities. Whereupon Antonius, drawing his sword, bared his breast and vowed that he would die either by their hands or his own. Whenever he saw a soldier whom he knew or could recognize by his decorations, he called on him by name to come to the rescue. At last he turned towards the standards and the gods of war,⁴⁵ and prayed incessantly that they would rather inspire the enemy's army with this mad spirit of mutiny. At last the riot died away and at nightfall they all

dispersed to their tents. Flavianus left that same night, and on his way met letters from Vespasian, which delivered him from danger.

11The infection seemed to spread among the legions. They next attacked Aponius Saturninus, who was in command of the Moesian army. This fresh disturbance was caused by the circulation of a letter, which Saturninus was supposed to have written to Vitellius, and it was the more alarming since it broke out not when they were tired by their labours but in the ²¹middle of the day. Once the soldiers had vied with each other in courage and discipline: now they were rivals in ribaldry and riot. They were determined that the fury with which they denounced Aponius should not fall short of their outcry against Flavianus. The Moesian legions remembered that they had helped the Pannonian army to take their revenge; while the Pannonian troops, feeling that their comrades' mutiny acquitted them of blame, were glad enough to repeat the crime. They invaded the country house in which Saturninus was living. He escaped, however, aided not so much by the efforts of Antonius, Aponianus, and Messala, who did everything in their power to rescue him, but rather by the security of his hiding-place, for he concealed himself in the furnace of some disused baths. Eventually he gave up his lictors and retired to Patavium. The departure of both the consular governors left Antonius in supreme command of the two armies. His colleagues⁴⁶ deferred to him and the men gave him enthusiastic support. It was even supposed by some that he had cunningly promoted both outbreaks, to secure for himself the full profit of the war.

¹Petau.

²i.e. the detachments 8,000 strong from the army in Britain (see ii. [57](#)).

³i.e. still, after parting with the force which he had sent forward under Mucianus (see ii. [82](#), [83](#)).

⁴Of Pontus, Syria, and Egypt.

⁵See ii. [86](#).

⁶Of Misenum and Ravenna.

⁷Adriatic.

⁸See ii. [42](#).

⁹At Bedriacum.

¹⁰See ii. [41](#).

¹¹i.e. not yet declared finally against Vitellius.

¹²These were usually confined to the legates, camp-prefects, tribunes, and senior centurions.

¹³See ii. [82](#).

¹⁴In Pannonia (see ii. [86](#)).

¹⁵Military governor of Pannonia (see ii. [86](#)).

¹⁶i.e. they suspected that he wanted to alienate the troops from Vespasian.

¹⁷Military governor of Moesia (see i. [79](#), &c.).

¹⁸They occupied part of Hungary between the Danube and the Theiss.

¹⁹They took the chiefs as a pledge of peace and kept them safely apart from their tribal force.

²⁰Tiberius' son, Drusus, had in A.D. 19 settled the Suebi north of the Danube between the rivers March and Waag.

²¹Reading *commilitio* (Meiser). The word *commissior* in the Medicean manuscript gives no sense.

²²This being a small province the procurator was sole governor.

²³A squadron of Spanish horse, called after some governor of the province where it was raised.

²⁴The Inn.

²⁵Probably under Domitian, who married Corbulo's daughter.

²⁶See ii. [46](#).

²⁷Oderzo and Altino.

²⁸Este.

²⁹A Gallic troop called after some unknown governor.

³⁰(?) Legnago.

³¹Over the Adige.

³²Vicenza.

³³The Brenner.

³⁴i.e. Alexandria.

³⁵i.e. Egypt, Syria, Asia.

³⁶Ostiglia.

³⁷From Moesia (cp. chap. 5).

³⁸The legate Tettius Julianus had fled (see ii. 85).

³⁹He also wrote a history of the period, which Tacitus found useful (see ii. 101, note 459). He is one of the characters in the *Dialogue on Oratory*, and many passages show that Tacitus admired him greatly, both for his character and his eloquence.

⁴⁰The text here is doubtful. There seems to be no exact parallel to the absolute use of *praesumpser*. In the Medicean MS. the whole passage, from *revirescere* at the end of chap. 7 down to *inimici* here, has been transposed to the beginning of chap. 5, where it stands between the second and third syllables of the word *Saturnino*. Thus in M. *praesumpser* stands immediately after *partes*. It is possible that the word *partes* may belong to this passage as well as to the end of chap. 7. *Praesumpser partes* would mean 'they took their own cause for granted' (cp. Quintilian xi. 1. 27). The addition of *ut inimici* would add the sense of 'hostile prejudice'.

⁴¹Gallica.

⁴²See chap. 4, note 15.

⁴³Saturninus.

⁴⁴We have seen this trick before (cp. i. 45).

⁴⁵Mars, Bellona, Victoria, Pavor, &c., whose images were wrought in medallion on the shafts of the standards, which themselves too were held sacred.

⁴⁶i.e. Vedius, Dillius, Numisius, Vipstanus Messala.

DISSENSION IN VITELLIUS' CAMP

124⁴⁷Vitellius' party was equally a prey to disquiet, and there the dissension was the more fatal, since it was aroused not by the men's suspicions but by the ²²treachery of the generals. The sailors of the fleet at Ravenna were mostly drawn from the provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia, which were both held for Vespasian, and while they were still wavering, the admiral, Lucilius Bassus, decided them in favour of the Flavian party. Choosing the night-time for their treason, the conspirators assembled at head-quarters without the knowledge of the other sailors. Bassus, who was either ashamed or uncertain of their success, awaited developments in his house. Amid great disturbance the ships' captains attacked the images of Vitellius and cut down the few men who offered any resistance. The rest of the fleet were glad enough of a change, and their sympathies soon came round to Vespasian. Then Lucilius appeared and publicly claimed responsibility. The fleet appointed Cornelius Fuscus⁴⁸ as their admiral, and he came hurrying on to the scene. Bassus was put under honourable arrest and conveyed with an escort of Liburnian cruisers⁴⁹ to Atria,⁵⁰ where he was imprisoned by Vibennius Rufinus, who commanded a regiment of auxiliary horse in garrison there. However, he was soon set free on the intervention of Hormus, one of the emperor's freedmen. For he, too, ranked as a general.

13When the news that the navy had gone over became known, Caecina, carefully selecting a moment when the camp was deserted, and the men had all gone to their various duties, summoned to head-quarters the senior centurions and a few of the soldiers. He then proceeded ²³to praise the spirit and the strength of Vespasian's party: 'they themselves had been deserted by the fleet; they were cramped for supplies; Spain and Gaul were against them; Rome could not be trusted.' In every way he exaggerated the weakness of Vitellius' position. Eventually, when some of his accomplices had given the cue and the rest were dumbfounded by his change of front, he made them all swear allegiance to Vespasian. Immediately the portraits⁵¹ of Vitellius were torn down and messengers dispatched to Antonius. However, when the treason got abroad in the camp, and the men returning to head-quarters saw Vespasian's name on the standards and Vitellius' portraits scattered on the ground, at first there was an ominous silence: then with one voice they all vented their feelings. Had the pride of the German army sunk so low that without a battle and without a blow they should let their hands be shackled and render up their arms? What had they against them? None but defeated troops. The only sound legions of Otho's army, the First and the Fourteenth, Vespasian had not got, and even those they had routed and cut to pieces on that same field. And all for what? That these thousands of fighting men should be handed over like a drove of slaves to Antonius, the convict!⁵² 'Eight legions, forsooth, are to follow the lead of one miserable fleet. Such is the pleasure of Bassus and Caecina. They have robbed the emperor of his home, his estate, and all his wealth, and now they want to take away his troops.²⁴ We have never lost a man nor shed a drop of blood. The very Flavians will despise us. What answer can we give when they question us about our victory or our defeat?'

14Thus they shouted one and all as their indignation urged them. Led by the Fifth legion, they replaced the portraits of Vitellius and put Caecina in irons. They selected Fabius Fabullus, commanding the Fifth legion, and the camp-prefect, Cassius Longus, to lead them. Some marines who arrived at this point from three Liburnian cruisers,⁵³ quite innocent and unaware of what had happened, were promptly butchered. Then the men deserted their camp, broke down the bridge,⁵⁴ and marched back to Hostilia, and thence to Cremona to join the two legions, the First Italian and Twenty-first Rapax, which Caecina had sent ahead⁵⁵ with some of the cavalry to occupy Cremona.

⁴⁷The narrative is now resumed from the [end](#) of Book [II](#).

⁴⁸See ii. [86](#).

⁴⁹See ii. [16](#), note [247](#).

⁵⁰Atri.

⁵¹i.e. the medallions on the standards.

⁵²See ii. [86](#).

⁵³See ii. [16](#), note [247](#).

⁵⁴Over the Tartaro (chap. [9](#)).

⁵⁵See ii. [100](#).

THE ENGAGEMENT NEAR CREMONA

15When Antonius heard of this he determined to attack the enemy while they were still at variance and their forces divided. The Vitellian generals would soon recover their authority and the troops their discipline, and confidence would come if the two divisions were allowed to join. He guessed also that Fabius Valens had already started from Rome and would hasten his march when he heard of Caecina's ²⁵treachery. Valens was loyal to Vitellius and an experienced soldier. There was good reason, besides, to fear an attack on the side of Raetia from an immense force of German irregulars. Vitellius had already summoned auxiliaries from Britain, Gaul, and Spain in sufficient numbers to blight their chances utterly, had not Antonius in fear of this very prospect forestalled the victory by hurriedly forcing an engagement. In two days he marched his whole force from Verona to Bedriacum.⁵⁶ On the next day⁵⁷ he left his legions behind to fortify the camp, and sent out his auxiliary infantry into territory belonging to Cremona, to taste the joys of plundering their compatriots under pretext of collecting supplies. To secure greater freedom for their depredations, he himself advanced at the head of four thousand cavalry eight miles along the road from Bedriacum. The scouts, as is usual, turned their attention further afield.

16About eleven in the morning a mounted scout galloped up with the news that the enemy were at hand; there was a small body in advance of the rest, but the noise of an army in movement could be heard over the country-side. While Antonius was debating what he ought to do, Arrius Varus, who was greedy to distinguish himself, galloped out with the keenest of the troopers and charged the Vitellians, inflicting only slight loss; for, on the arrival of reinforcements, the tables were turned and those who had been hottest in pursuit were now hindmost in the rout. Their ²⁶haste had no sanction from Antonius, who had foreseen what would happen. Encouraging his men to engage with brave hearts, he drew off the cavalry on to each flank and left a free passage in the centre to receive Varus and his troopers. Orders were sent to the legions to arm and signals were displayed to the foraging party, summoning them to cease plundering and join the battle by the quickest possible path. Meanwhile Varus came plunging in terror into the middle of their ranks, spreading confusion among them. The fresh troops were swept back along with the wounded, themselves sharing the panic and sorely embarrassed by the narrowness of the road.

17In all the confusion of the rout Antonius never for a moment forgot what befitted a determined general and a brave soldier. Staying the panic-stricken, checking the fugitives, wherever the fight was thickest, wherever he saw a gleam of hope, he schemed, he fought, he shouted, always conspicuous to his own men and a mark for the enemy. At last, in the heat of his impatience, he thrust through with a lance a standard-bearer, who was in full flight, then seized the standard and turned it against the enemy. Whereupon for very shame a few of his troopers, not more than a hundred, made a stand. The nature of the ground helped them. The road there was narrower; a stream barred their way, and the bridge was broken; its depth was uncertain and the steep banks

checked their flight. Thus necessity or chance restored their fallen fortunes. Forming in close order, they received ²⁷the Vitellians' reckless and disordered charge, and at once flung them into confusion. Antonius pressed hard on the fugitives and cut down all who blocked his path. The others followed each his inclination, rifling the dead, capturing prisoners, seizing arms and horses. Meanwhile, summoned by their shouts of triumph, those who had just now been in full flight across the fields came hurrying back to share the victory.

¹⁸Four miles from Cremona they saw the standards of the Rapax and Italian legions gleaming in the sun. They had marched out thus far under cover of their cavalry's original success. When fortune turned against them, they neither opened their ranks to receive the routed troops nor marched out to attack the enemy, who were wearied with fighting and their long pursuit. While all went well the Vitellians did not miss their general, but in the hour of danger they realized their loss. The victorious cavalry came charging into their wavering line, and at the same time Vipstanus Messala arrived with the Moesian auxiliaries and a good number of men from the legions, who had kept up with the pace of their forced march.⁵⁸ These combined forces broke the opposing column, and the proximity of Cremona's sheltering walls gave the Vitellians more hope of refuge and less stomach for resistance.

⁵⁶About thirty-three miles.

⁵⁷October 27.

⁵⁸They would be more heavily laden than the Moesian auxiliaries.

THE FATE OF CREMONA

Antonius did not follow up his advantage. He realized that, although the issue had been successful, the battle had long been doubtful, and had cost the troopers and their horses many wounds and much hard fighting. ¹⁹As evening fell, the whole strength of the Flavian army arrived. They had marched among heaps of corpses, and the still reeking traces of slaughter, and now, feeling that the war was over, they clamoured to advance at once on Cremona and either receive its submission or take it by storm. This sounded well for public utterance, but each man in his heart was thinking, 'We could easily rush a city on the plain. In a night-assault men are just as brave and have a better chance of plunder. If we wait for day it will be all peace and petitions, and what shall we get for our wounds and our labours? A reputation for mercy! There's no money in that. All the wealth of Cremona will find its way into the officers' pockets. Storm a city, and the plunder goes to the soldiers: if it surrenders, the generals get it.' They refused to listen to their centurions and tribunes and drowned their voices in a rattle of arms, swearing they would break their orders unless they were led out. ²⁰Antonius then went round among the companies, where his authoritative bearing obtained silence. He assured them that he had no wish to rob them of the glory and the reward they so well deserved. 'But,' he said, 'an army and a general have different functions. It is right that

soldiers ²⁹should be greedy for battle, but the general often does more good not by temerity but by foresight, deliberation and delay. I have done all I could to aid your victory with my sword: now I will serve you by the general's proper arts of calculation and strategy. The risks that face us are obvious. It is night; we know nothing of the lie of the city; the enemy are behind the walls; everything favours an ambush. Even if the gates were open, we cannot safely enter except by day and after due reconnoitring. Are you going to begin storming the town when you cannot possibly see where the ground is level and how high the walls are? How do you know whether to assault it with engines and showers of missiles, or with penthouses and shelters?'⁵⁹ Then he turned to individuals, asking one after another whether they had brought hatchets and pick-axes and other implements for storming a town. When they answered no, 'Well,' he said, 'could any troops possibly break through walls or undermine them with nothing but swords and javelins? Suppose it proves necessary to construct a mound and to shelter ourselves with mantlets and fascines,⁵⁹ are we going to stand idle like a lot of helpless idiots, gaping at the height of the enemy's towers and ramparts? Why not rather wait one night till our siege-train arrives and then carry the victory by force?' So saying, he sent the camp-followers and servants with the freshest of the troopers back to Bedriacum to bring up supplies and whatever else was wanted.

³⁰²¹The soldiers indeed chafed at this and mutiny seemed imminent, when some of the mounted scouts, who had ridden right up to the walls, captured a few stragglers from Cremona, and learnt from them that six Vitellian legions and the whole Hostilia army had that very day covered thirty miles, and, hearing of their comrades' defeat, were already arming for battle and would be on them immediately. This alarming news cured their obstinate deafness to the general's advice. He ordered the Thirteenth legion to take up their position on the raised Postumian high-road. In touch with them on the left wing in the open country were the Seventh Galbian, beside whom stood the Seventh Claudian, so placed that their front was protected by a ditch. On the right wing were the Eighth, drawn up along an open cross-road, and next to them the Third, distributed among some thick clumps of trees. Such, at any rate, was the order of the eagles and standards. In the darkness the soldiers were confused and took their places at random. The band of Guards⁶⁰ was next to the Third, and the auxiliaries on the wings, while the cavalry were disposed in support round the flanks and the rear. Sido and Italicus with their picked band of Suebi⁶¹ fought in the front line.

²²For the Vitellians the right course was to rest at Cremona and recuperate their strength with food and a night's rest, and then on the next day to crush and ³¹ rout the Flavians when they were stiff with cold and weak from hunger. But they had no general;⁶² they had no plan. Though it was nearly nine at night they flung themselves upon the Flavians, who were standing steady in their places to receive them. In their fury and the darkness the Vitellian line was so disordered that one can hardly venture to describe the disposition of their troops. However, it has been stated that the Fourth Macedonian legion were on the right flank; in the centre were the Fifth and Fifteenth with the

detachments of the Ninth, the Second and the Twentieth from Britain; the Sixteenth, the Twenty-second, and the First formed the left wing. The men of the Rapax and Italian legions⁶³ were distributed among all the companies.⁶⁴ The cavalry and auxiliaries picked their own position. All night the battle raged with varying fortune, never decided, always savagely contested. Disaster threatened now one side, now the other. Courage, strength were of little use: their eyes could not even see in front of them. Both sides were armed alike; the watchwords, constantly demanded, soon became known; the standards were all in confusion, as they were captured and carried off from one band to another. The Seventh legion, raised recently by Galba, suffered most severely. Six of the senior centurions fell and several ³²standards were lost. They nearly lost their eagle too, but it was rescued by the bravery of the senior centurion, named Atilius Verus, who after great slaughter of the enemy fell finally himself.

23Antonius had meanwhile called up the Guards to reinforce his wavering line. Taking up the fight, they repulsed the enemy, only to be repulsed in their turn. For the Vitellian artillery, which had at first been scattered all along the line, and had been discharged upon the bushes without hurting the enemy, was now massed upon the high-road, and swept the open space in front. One immense engine in particular, which belonged to the Fifteenth, mowed down the Flavian line with huge stones. The slaughter thus caused would have been enormous, had not two of the Flavian soldiers performed a memorable exploit. Concealing their identity by snatching up shields from among the enemy's dead,⁶⁵ they cut the ropes which suspended the weights of the engine. They fell immediately, riddled with wounds, and so their names have perished. But of their deed there is no doubt.

Fortune had favoured neither side when, as the night wore on, the moon rose and threw a deceptive glamour over the field of battle. Shining from behind the Flavians the moon was in their favour. It magnified the shadows of their men and horses so that the enemy took the shadow for the substance, and their ³³missiles were misdirected and fell short. The Vitellians, on the other hand, had the moon shining full on them and were an easy mark for the Flavians, shooting as it were out of cover.⁶⁶

24Thus being enabled to recognize his own men, and to be recognized by them, Antonius appealed to some by taunting their honour, to many by words of praise and encouragement, to all by promising hope of reward. He asked the Pannonian legions why they had drawn their swords again. Here on this field they could regain their glory and wipe out the stain of their former disgrace.⁶⁷ Then turning to the Moesian troops, who were the chief promoters of the war,⁶⁸ he told them it was no good challenging the Vitellians with verbal threats, if they could not bear to face them and their blows. Thus he addressed each legion as he reached it. To the Third he spoke at greater length, reminding them of their victories both old and new. Had they not under Mark Antony defeated the Parthians⁶⁹ and the Armenians under Corbulo?⁷⁰ Had they not but lately crushed the Sarmatians?⁷¹ Then he turned in fury on the Guards. 'Peasants that you are,' he shouted, 'have you another emperor, another camp waiting to shelter you, if you

are defeated? There in the enemy's line are your standards ³⁴and your arms: defeat means death and—no, you have drained disgrace already to the dregs.'

These words roused cheers on all sides, and the Third, following the Syrian custom, ⁷²saluted the rising sun. ²⁵Thus arose a casual rumour—or possibly it was suggested by the general's ingenuity—that Mucianus had arrived, and that the two armies were cheering each other. On they pressed, feeling they had been reinforced. The Vitellian line was more ragged now, for, having no general to marshal them, their ranks now filled, now thinned, with each alternation of courage and fear. As soon as Antonius saw them waver, he kept thrusting at them in massed column. The line bent and then broke, and the inextricable confusion of wagons and siege-engines prevented their rallying. The victorious troops scattered along the cross-road in headlong pursuit. The slaughter was marked by one peculiar horror. A son killed his father. I give the facts and names on the authority of Vipstanus Messala. ⁷³One Julius Mansuetus, a Spaniard who had joined the legion Rapax, had left a young son at home. This boy subsequently grew up and enlisted in the Seventh legion, raised by Galba. ⁷⁴Chance now sent his father in his way, and he felled him to the ground. While he was ransacking the dying man, they recognized each other. Flinging his arms round the now lifeless corpse, in ^{35a}piteous voice he implored his father's spirit to be appeased and not to turn against him as a parricide. The crime was his country's, he cried; what share had a single soldier in these civil wars? Meanwhile he lifted the body and began to dig a grave and perform the last rites for his father. Those who were nearest noticed this; then the story began to spread, till there ran through the army astonishment and many complaints and curses against this wicked war. Yet they never ceased busily killing and plundering friends and relatives and brothers; and while they talked of the crime they were committing it themselves.

²⁶When they reached Cremona a fresh task of vast difficulty awaited them. During the war with Otho ⁷⁵the German army had entrenched their camp round the walls of Cremona and then erected a rampart round the camp; and these fortifications had been further strengthened. The sight of them brought the victors to a halt, and their generals were uncertain what instructions to give. The troops had had no rest for a day and a night. To storm the town at once would be an arduous and, in the absence of reserves, a perilous task. On the other hand, a retreat to Bedriacum would involve the intolerable fatigue of a long march, and destroy the value of their victory. Again, it would be dangerous to entrench themselves so close to the lines of the enemy, who might at any minute sally forth and rout them while they were dispersed and digging trenches. The chief anxiety lay in the temper ³⁶of the men, who were much more ready to face danger than delay. To them discretion was disagreeable and hazard spelt hope. Their thirst for plunder outweighed all fears of wounds and bloodshed.

²⁷Antonius also inclined to this view and gave orders for them to surround the rampart. At first they stood back and delivered volleys of arrows and stones, suffering themselves the severer loss, for a storm of missiles rained down from the walls.

Antonius then told off each legion to assault a different point of the rampart or one of the gates, hoping that by thus separating them he could distinguish the cowards from the brave and inflame them with a spirit of honourable rivalry. The Third and Seventh took the position nearest the road to Bedriacum; the Eighth and Seventh Claudian assaulted the right-hand side of the rampart; the Thirteenth swept up to the Brixian Gate.⁷⁶ A brief delay was caused while some fetched mattocks and pickaxes from the fields, and others hooks and ladders. Then holding their shields above their heads in close 'tortoise' formation,⁷⁷ they advanced under the rampart. Both sides employed Roman tactics. The Vitellians rolled down huge masses of stones, and, as the sheltering cover of shields parted and wavered, they thrust at it with lances and poles, until at last ³⁷the whole structure was broken up and they mowed down the torn and bleeding soldiers beneath with terrible slaughter.

The men would certainly have hesitated, had not the generals, realizing that they were really too tired to respond to any other form of encouragement, pointed significantly to Cremona. ²⁸Whether this was Hormus's idea, as Messala⁷⁸ records, or whether we should rather follow Caius Pliny, who accuses Antonius, it is not easy to determine. This one may say, that, however abominable the crime, yet in committing it neither Antonius nor Hormus belied the reputation of their lives. After this neither wounds nor bloodshed could stay the Flavian troops. They demolished the rampart, shook the gates, climbed up on each other's shoulders, or over the re-formed 'tortoise', and snatched away the enemy's weapons or caught hold of them by the arms. Thus the wounded and unwounded, the half-dead and the dying, all came rolling down and perished together by every imaginable kind of death.

²⁹The fight raged thickest round the Third and Seventh legions, and the general, Antonius, came up with a picked band of auxiliaries to support their assault. The Vitellians, finding themselves unable to resist the attack of troops thus stubbornly vying with each other, and seeing their missiles all glide off the shelter of shields, at last sent their engine of war crashing down upon their heads. For the moment it ³⁸scattered and crushed beneath it the men on whom it fell, but it dragged with it some of the battlements and the top of the rampart. At the same moment one of the towers on the rampart gave way under a shower of stones. While the men of the Seventh struggled up to the breach in close column,⁷⁹ the Third hewed down the gate with hatchets and swords. All the authorities⁸⁰ agree that Caius Volusius of the Third legion was the first man in. Emerging on the top of the rampart, he hurled down those who barred his path, and from this conspicuous position waved his hand and shouted that the camp was taken. The others poured through, while the Vitellians in panic flung themselves down from the rampart, and the whole space between the camp and the walls became a seething scene of carnage.

³⁰Here, again, was a new type of task for the Flavians. Here were high walls, stone battlements, iron-barred gates, and soldiers hurling javelins. The citizens of Cremona were numerous and devoted to the cause of Vitellius, and half Italy had gathered there

for the Fair which fell just at that time. Their numbers were a help to the defenders, but the prospect of plundering them offered an incentive to their assailants. Antonius ordered his men to bring fire and apply it to the most beautiful of the buildings outside the walls, hoping that the loss of their property might induce the citizens to turn traitor. The houses that stood nearest to ³⁹the walls and overtopped them he crowded with his bravest troops, who dislodged the defenders with showers of beams and tiles and flaming torches. ³¹Meanwhile, some of the legionaries began to advance in 'tortoise' formation,⁸¹ while others kept up a steady fire of javelins and stones.

Gradually the spirit of the Vitellians ebbed. The higher their rank, the more easily they gave way to misfortune. For they were afraid that if Cremona too⁸² was demolished, there would be no hope of pardon; the victors' fury would fall not on the common poor but on the tribunes and centurions, whom it would pay to kill. The common soldiers felt safe in their obscurity, and, careless of the future, continued to offer resistance. They roamed the streets or hid themselves in houses, and though they had given up the war, refused even so to sue for peace. Meanwhile the tribunes and centurions did away with the name and portraits of Vitellius.⁸³ They released Caecina, who was still in irons,⁸⁴ and begged his help in pleading their cause. When he turned from them in haughty contempt they besought him with tears. It was, indeed, the last of evils that all these brave men should invoke a traitor's aid. They then hung veils and fillets⁸⁵ out on the walls, and when Antonius had given the order to cease ⁴⁰firing, they carried out their standards and eagles, followed by a miserable column of disarmed soldiers, dejectedly hanging their heads. The victors had at first crowded round, heaping insults on them and threatening violence, but when they found that the vanquished had lost all their proud spirit, and turned their cheeks with servile endurance to every indignity, they gradually began to recollect that these were the men who had made such a moderate use of their victory at Bedriacum.⁸⁶ But when the crowd parted, and Caecina advanced in his consular robes, attended by his lictors in full state, their indignation broke into flame. They charged him with insolence and cruelty, and—so hateful is crime—they even flung his treachery in his teeth.⁸⁷ Antonius restrained them and sent Caecina under escort to Vespasian.

³²Meanwhile the citizens of Cremona suffered sorely from the violence of the troops, and only the entreaties of their generals could withhold them from a general massacre. Antonius summoned a mass meeting and delivered a eulogy upon his victorious army, promising mercy to the vanquished and speaking of Cremona in ambiguous terms. Besides their natural passion for plunder, there was an old grudge which urged them to sack Cremona. The town was believed to have given assistance to the Vitellian cause before this in the war with Otho;⁸⁸ and again, when the Thirteenth ⁴¹had been left behind to build an amphitheatre,⁸⁹ the populace had shown its town-bred impertinence by assailing them with insolent ridicule. Other causes increased this bad feeling: it was here that Caecina had given his show of gladiators:⁸⁹ the town had become for a second time the theatre of the war: the citizens had conveyed food to the Vitellians during the

battle: some women had been killed, whose enthusiasm for the cause had led them to take part in the fight. Besides all this, the Fair had filled the rich city with an even greater display of wealth than usual. All eyes were now centred on Antonius, whose fame and good fortune overshadowed all the other generals. It so happened that he hurried off to the baths to wash off the stains of blood. Finding fault with the temperature of the water, he received the answer, 'It will not be long before it is hot,' and this phrase was caught up. The attendant's words were repeated, and brought all the odium on Antonius, who was thus believed to have given the signal to set fire to Cremona, which was already in flames.[90](#)

33Thus forty thousand soldiers burst into the town with a yet larger crowd of servants and sutlers, even more depraved than the soldiers in their readiness for cruelty and lust. Without any respect for age or for ⁴²authority they added rape to murder and murder to rape. Aged men and decrepit old women, who were worthless as booty, were hustled off to make sport for them. If some grown girl or a handsome youth fell into their clutches, they would be torn to pieces in the struggle for possession, while the plunderers were left to cut each other's throats. Whoever carried off money or any of the solid gold offerings in the temples was liable to be cut to pieces, if he met another stronger than himself. Some, disdainful of easy finds, hunted for hidden hoards, and dug out buried treasure, flogging and torturing the householders. They held torches in their hands and, having once secured their prize, would fling them wantonly into an empty house or some dismantled temple. Composed as the army was of citizens, allies, and foreign troops, differing widely in language and customs, the objects of the soldiers' greed differed also. But while their views of what was right might vary, they all agreed in thinking nothing wrong.

Cremona lasted them four days. While all other buildings sacred and secular sank in the flames, only the temple of Mefitis outside the walls was left standing, saved either by its position or the power of the presiding deity.[91](#)

34Such was the end of Cremona two hundred and eighty-six years after its foundation. It had been originally built in the consulship of Tiberius Sempronius and Publius Cornelius, while Hannibal was ⁴³threatening to invade Italy, to serve as a bulwark against the Gauls beyond the Po,[92](#) and to resist any other power that might break in over the Alps. And so it grew and flourished, aided by its large number of settlers, its conveniently situated rivers,[93](#) the fertility of its territory, and its connexion through alliance and intermarriage with other communities. Foreign invasions had left it untouched only to become the victim of civil war. Antonius, ashamed of his crime, and realizing his growing disfavour, proclaimed that no citizen of Cremona was to be kept as a prisoner of war; and, indeed, the unanimous feeling in Italy against buying such slaves had already frustrated the soldiers' hope of profit. So they began to kill their captives, whose relatives and friends, when this became known, covertly bought their

release. After a while, the rest of the inhabitants returned, and the squares and temples were rebuilt by the munificence of the burghers and under Vespasian's direct patronage. 35 However, the soil was so foully infected by the reek of blood that it was impossible for the Flavians to encamp for long on the ruins of this buried city. They advanced along the road to the third milestone, and mustered the Vitellians, still straggling and panic-stricken, each under his own standard. The defeated legions were then distributed through Illyricum, for the civil war was still in progress and their fidelity ⁴⁴could not be relied on. They then dispatched couriers to carry the news to Britain and the Spanish provinces. To Gaul they sent an officer named Julius Calenus, to Germany Alpinus Montanus, who had commanded an auxiliary cohort. Montanus was a Treviran and Calenus an Aeduan; both had fought for Vitellius and thus served to advertise Vespasian's victory. At the same time garrisons were sent to hold the passes of the Alps, for fear that Germany might rise in support of Vitellius.

⁵⁹See ii. [21](#).

⁶⁰i.e. the band of Otho's old Guards whom Vitellius had disbanded and Vespasian re-enlisted (see ii. [67](#), [82](#)).

⁶¹See chap. [5](#).

⁶²Caecina was under arrest, Valens still on his way from Rome (see chaps. [14](#), [15](#)).

⁶³XXI and I.

⁶⁴Because they had already suffered heavy losses earlier in the day (see chap. [18](#)).

⁶⁵These shields would have Vitellius' name on them, and thus conceal their identity.

⁶⁶Dio asserts that the moon was 'black and bloody, and gave off other fearsome hues'.

⁶⁷i.e. at the first battle of Bedriacum (see ii. [43](#)).

⁶⁸See ii. [85](#).

⁶⁹36 B.C.

⁷⁰A.D. 63.

⁷¹i.e. the Rhoxolani (cp. i. [79](#)).

⁷²They had served recently in Syria under Corbulo (see above).

⁷³An eyewitness (see note [39](#)).

⁷⁴In Spain.

⁷⁵i.e. at the time of the first battle of Bedriacum in April.

⁷⁶i.e. the gate giving on to the road to Brescia.

⁷⁷In this famous formation the front-rank men kept close together and covered their bodies with long, concave shields, while the others, holding flat shields over their heads and pressing them one against another, formed a protecting roof. They could thus approach the walls under cover.

⁷⁸Cp. ii. [101](#), note [459](#).

⁷⁹For the term (*cuneus*) here used, see [note](#) on ii. [42](#).

⁸⁰Cp. ii. [101](#), note [459](#).

⁸¹See note [77](#).

⁸²As well as the buildings outside the walls.

⁸³i.e. tore them off the standards and shields, and broke the statues at head-quarters.

⁸⁴See chap. [14](#).

⁸⁵Cp. i. [66](#).

⁸⁶Cp. ii. [45](#).

⁸⁷i.e. even though it was in their own interest.

⁸⁸Cp. ii. [70](#).

⁸⁹Cp. ii. [67](#).

⁹⁰The words were either attributed wrongly to Antonius or were supposed to be spoken in answer to his question, 'Are the furnaces not lit?' In either case they were taken to apply not to the heating of the baths but to the burning of the town.

⁹¹i.e. the goddess of malaria, who reigned in terror by the swampy banks of the Po.

⁹²Cremona was founded in 218 B.C. as a Latin colony, together with Placentia, to keep the Gallic tribes of North Italy in check.

⁹³The Po, Adda, and Oglio.

VITELLIUS

36When Caecina had left Rome,⁹⁴ Vitellius, after an interval of a few days, sent Fabius Valens hurrying to the front, and then proceeded to drown his cares in self-indulgence. He neither made any provision for the war, nor tried to increase the efficiency of his troops either by haranguing or by drilling them. He did not keep himself in the public eye, but retired into the pleasant shade of his gardens, regarding past, present, and future with equal indifference, like one of those listless animals which lie sluggish, and torpid so long as you supply them with food. While he thus loitered languid and indolent in the woods of Aricia,⁹⁵ he received the startling news of Lucilius Bassus' treachery and the disaffection of the fleet at Ravenna.⁹⁶ Soon afterwards he heard with mixed feelings of distress and satisfaction that Caecina had deserted him and had been imprisoned by the ⁴⁵army. On his insensate nature joy had more effect than trouble. He returned in triumph to Rome and at a crowded meeting praised the devotion of the troops in extravagant terms. He gave orders for the imprisonment of Publilius Sabinus, the prefect of the Guards, on the ground of his intimacy with Caecina, and appointed Alfenus Varus⁹⁷ in his place.

37He next delivered a pompous and elaborate speech in the senate, where he was loaded with far-fetched compliments by the members. Lucius Vitellius rose to propose a harsh sentence against Caecina. The rest of the house inveighed with assumed indignation against the consul who had betrayed his country, the general who had betrayed his commander-in-chief, the friend who had betrayed his benefactor to whom he owed all his riches and distinction. But their protestations of sympathy with Vitellius really voiced their personal vexation.⁹⁸ None of the speeches contained any criticism of the Flavian generals. They threw the blame on the misguided and impolitic action of the armies, and with cautious circumlocution avoided all direct mention of Vespasian. Caecina's consulship⁹⁹ had still one day to run, and Rosius Regulus actually made humble petition for this one day's office, Vitellius' offer and his acceptance exciting universal derision. Thus he entered and abdicated his office on the same day, the last of October. Men who were learned in constitutional history pointed out ⁴⁶that no one before had ever been elected to fill a vacancy without the passing of a bill or some act of deprivation, although there was precedent for the one day consulship in the case of Caninius Rebilus when Caius Caesar was dictator and the civil war necessitated prompt rewards.¹⁰⁰

38It was at this time that the news of the death of Junius Blaesus¹⁰¹ gave rise to much talk. I give the story as I find it. When Vitellius was lying seriously ill at his house in the Servilian Park, he noticed that a neighbouring mansion was brilliantly illuminated at night. On asking the reason, he was told that Caecina Tuscus¹⁰² was giving a large

dinner-party, at which Junius Blaesus was the chief guest. He further received an exaggerated account of their extravagance and dissipation. Some of his informants even made specific charges against Tuscus and others, but especially accused Blaesus for spending his days in revelry while ⁴⁷his emperor lay ill. There are people who keep a sharp eye on every sign of an emperor's displeasure. They soon made sure that Vitellius was furious and that Blaesus' ruin would be an easy task, so they cast Lucius Vitellius for the part of common informer. He had a mean and jealous dislike for Blaesus, whose spotless reputation far outshone his own, which was tainted with every kind of infamy. Bursting into the emperor's apartment, he caught up Vitellius' young son in his arms and fell at his feet. When asked the reason of this excitement, he said it was due to no anxiety for himself; all his suit and all his prayers were for his brother and his brother's children. Their fears of Vespasian were idle: between him and Vitellius lay all the legions of Germany, all those brave and loyal provinces, and an immeasurable space of land and sea. 'It is here in Rome,' he cried, 'in the bosom of our household that we have an enemy to fear, one who boasts the Junii and Antonii as his ancestors, one who shows himself affable and munificent to the troops, posing as a descendant of imperial stock.¹⁰³ It is to him that Rome's attention turns, while you, Sire, careless who is friend or foe, cherish in your bosom a rival, who sits feasting at his table and watches his emperor in pain. You must requite his unseasonable gaiety with a night of deadly sorrow, in which he ⁴⁸may both know and feel that Vitellius lives and is his emperor, and, if anything should happen, has a son to be his heir.'

³⁹Vitellius hesitated anxiously between his criminal desires and his fear that, if he deferred Blaesus' death, he might hasten his own ruin, or by giving official orders for it might raise a storm of indignation. He decided to proceed by poison. The suspicion against him he confirmed by going to see Blaesus and showing obvious satisfaction. Moreover, he was heard to make the savage boast that he had, to quote his own words, 'feasted his eyes on his enemy's deathbed.'

Blaesus, besides his distinguished origin and refined character, was steadfastly loyal. Even before the decline of Vitellius' cause he had been canvassed by Caecina and other party leaders, who were turning against the emperor, and had met them with a persistent refusal. He was a man of quiet and blameless life, with no ambition for the principate or, indeed, for any sudden distinction, but he could not escape the danger of being considered worthy of it.

⁴⁰Meanwhile Fabius Valens, encumbered by a long train of harlots and eunuchs, was conducting a leisurely advance, most unlike a march to the front, when couriers arrived post-haste with the news that Lucilius Bassus had surrendered the Ravenna fleet.¹⁰⁴ If he had hurried forward on his march he might have been in time to save Caecina's faltering loyalty, or to have joined the legions before the critical engagement was ⁴⁹fought. Many, indeed, advised him to avoid Ravenna and to make his way by obscure by-roads to Hostilia or Cremona. Others wanted him to send to Rome for the

Guards and to break through the enemy's lines with a strong force. Valens himself, with helpless indecision, let the time for action go by while he took advice; and then rejecting the advice he was offered, chose the middle course, which is always the worst in a crisis, and thus failed both in courage and in caution.

41He wrote to Vitellius demanding reinforcements, and there arrived three cohorts of Guards and a regiment of cavalry from Britain, too many to slip through unobserved and too few to force a passage. But even in such a crisis as this Valens' reputation was as unsavoury as ever. He was still believed to use violence in the pursuit of illicit pleasures, and to betray the confidence of his hosts by seducing their wives and families. He had money and authority to help him, and the feverish impatience of one whose star is on the wane. At last the arrival of the reinforcements revealed the perversity of his strategy. He had too few men to assume the offensive, even if they had been unquestionably loyal, and their loyalty was under grave suspicion. However, their sense of decency and respect for the general restrained them for a while, though such ties are soon broken when troops are disinclined for danger and indifferent to disgrace.¹⁰⁵ Fearing trouble, he sent the Guards forward to⁵⁰ Ariminum¹⁰⁶ with the cavalry to secure the rear. Valens himself, with a few companions, whose loyalty had survived misfortune, turned off into Umbria and thence to Etruria, where he learnt the result of the battle of Cremona. Thereupon he formed a plan, which was far from cowardly and might have had alarming consequences, if it had succeeded. He was to seize ships and cross to some point on the coast of Narbonnese Gaul, whence he could rouse the provinces of Gaul and the native German tribes, and thus raise forces for a fresh outbreak of war.

42Valens' departure having dispirited the troops at Ariminum, Cornelius Fuscus¹⁰⁷ advanced his force and, stationing Liburnian¹⁰⁸ cruisers along the adjoining coast, invested the town by land and sea. The Flavians thus occupied the Umbrian plain and the sea-board of Picenum; and the Apennines now divided Italy between Vitellius and Vespasian.

Valens, embarking from the Bay of Pisa, was either becalmed on a slow sea or caught by an unfavourable wind and had to put in at the harbour of Hercules Monoecus.¹⁰⁹ Stationed in the neighbourhood was Marius Maturus, the Governor of the Maritime Alps,¹¹⁰ who had remained loyal to Vitellius, and, though surrounded by enemies, had so far been faithful to his oath of allegiance. He gave Valens a friendly welcome and strongly advised him not to venture rashly into Narbonnese Gaul. This alarmed⁵¹ Valens, who found also that his companions' loyalty was yielding to their fears. 43For Valerius Paulinus, the imperial agent in the province, was an energetic soldier who had been friendly with Vespasian in old days, and had lately sworn all the surrounding communities to his cause. Having summoned to his flag all the Guards discharged by Vitellius,¹¹¹ who needed no persuasion to resume the war, he was now holding the colony of Forum Julii,¹¹² the key to the command of the sea. His influence carried the more weight since Forum Julii was his native town and,

having once been an officer in the Guards, he was respected by the men. Besides this, the inhabitants supported their fellow citizen, and in the hope of future aggrandizement rendered enthusiastic service to the party. When the news of these efficient preparations, somewhat exaggerated by rumour, came to the ears of the Vitellians, who were already in some doubt, Fabius Valens returned to the ships with four men of the Body Guard, three of his friends and three centurions, while Maturus and the rest preferred to remain and swear allegiance to Vespasian. As for Valens, though he felt safer at sea than among the cities on the coast, he was still full of doubts for the future, since he was certain what he had to avoid but quite uncertain whom he could trust. Eventually a gale drove him upon the Stoechades,¹¹³ some islands belonging to Marseilles, and there he was overtaken by the cruisers which Paulinus had sent in pursuit.

⁹⁴The story returns again to ii. [101](#).

⁹⁵La Riccia.

⁹⁶See chap. [12](#).

⁹⁷Hitherto camp-prefect (cp. ii. [29](#)).

⁹⁸Against Caecina for his inefficiency.

⁹⁹Cp. i. [77](#).

¹⁰⁰This was in 45 B.C., when Caesar was carrying on the government with a high hand and small regard for precedent. Holding an election on the last day of the year, he was told that the consul was dead: there was no one to preside. So he promptly announced that Caninius was consul till the next morning. 'So no one,' says Cicero, 'breakfasted during his consulship. However, there was no crime either, and his vigilance was such that he never closed an eye during his whole term of office.'

¹⁰¹Cp. ii. [59](#).

¹⁰²This man had been prefect of Egypt, and had built special baths for Nero, who was expected to visit Alexandria. But he committed the indiscretion of washing in them first, for which Nero had banished him.

¹⁰³Both the Junii and Antonii could claim as an ancestor Augustus' sister Octavia; and the Junii were also connected with M. Junius Silanus, Augustus' great-great-grandson, whom Nero had put out of the way.

¹⁰⁴See chap. [12](#).

¹⁰⁵They had already incurred the disgrace of betraying first Galba, then Otho.

¹⁰⁶Rimini.

¹⁰⁷Now admiral of the Ravenna fleet (see chap. [12](#)).

¹⁰⁸See ii. [16](#), note [247](#).

¹⁰⁹Monaco.

¹¹⁰See ii. [12](#).

¹¹¹Cp. ii. [67](#).

¹¹²Fréjus.

¹¹³Îles d'Hyères.

THE STATE OF THE PROVINCES

44With the capture of Valens the tide had now fully turned in favour of Vespasian. The movement had been begun in Spain by the First legion *Adjutrix*,¹¹⁴ whose reverence for Otho's memory made them hate Vitellius. They carried the Tenth and the Sixth¹¹⁵ with them. The provinces of Gaul soon followed suit. Britain was bound to his cause by the favour felt for one who had been sent there by Claudius in command of the Second legion, and had fought with great distinction in the war. But the adherence

of the province was to some extent opposed by the other legions, in which many of the centurions and soldiers had been promoted by Vitellius. They were used to their emperor and felt some doubt about the change. ⁴⁵This quarrel between the legions and the constant rumours of civil war, encouraged the Britons to take heart. Their chief instigator was one Venutius. He was of a ferocious disposition and hated the name of Rome, but his strongest motive was a private quarrel with Queen Cartimandua, a member of a powerful family, who ruled the Brigantes.¹¹⁶ Her authority had lately increased, since she had betrayed King Caratacus into the hands of the Romans, and was thus considered to have provided Claudius Caesar with material for his triumph.¹¹⁷ Thus she had grown rich, and with ⁵³prosperity came demoralization. She threw over Venutius, who was her husband, and gave her hand and kingdom to his squire, Vellocatus. This crime soon proved the ruin of her house. The people supported her husband: she defended her lover with passionate ferocity. Venutius therefore summoned assistance and, aided by the simultaneous revolt of the Brigantes, brought Cartimandua into dire straits. She petitioned for troops from Rome. Our auxiliaries, both horse and foot, then fought several engagements with varying success, but eventually rescued the queen. Thus the kingdom was left in the hands of Venutius and the war in ours.

⁴⁶Almost simultaneously a disturbance broke out in Germany, where the inefficiency of the generals, the disaffection of the troops, the strength of the enemy, and the treachery of our allies all combined to bring the Roman government into serious danger. The causes and history of this protracted struggle—for such it proved—we must leave to a later chapter.¹¹⁸ Amongst the Dacians¹¹⁹ also there was trouble. They could never be trusted, and now that the army was moved from Moesia they were no longer under the restraint of fear. At first they remained quiet and awaited developments. But when they saw Italy in the flames of war, and found the whole empire divided into hostile camps, ⁵⁴they fell upon the winter-quarters of the auxiliary infantry and cavalry and began to occupy both banks of the Danube. They were on the point of storming the Roman camp as well, when Mucianus, who knew of the victory at Cremona, sent the Sixth legion¹²⁰ against them. For the empire was in danger of a double foreign invasion, if the Dacians and the Germans had broken in from opposite directions. But here, as so often, Rome's good fortune saved her by bringing Mucianus on the scene with the forces of the East just at the moment when we had settled matters at Cremona. Fonteius Agrippa, who had for the last year been pro-consul in Asia, was transferred to the government of Moesia. His forces were strengthened by a draft from the defeated Vitellian army, for in the interest of peace it seemed prudent to distribute these troops over the provinces and to keep their hands tied by a foreign war.

⁴⁷The other peoples soon made their voices heard. Pontus¹²¹ had suddenly risen in a general rebellion at the instigation of a foreign menial, who was in command of what had once been the royal fleet. He was one of Polemo's freedmen, by name Anicetus, who had formerly been influential and resented the change which had converted the

kingdom into a province of the Roman empire. He accordingly enlisted the ⁵⁵maritime tribes of Pontus in Vitellius' service, attracting all the neediest ruffians with promises of plunder. At the head of no mean force he suddenly fell upon Trapezus,¹²² an ancient and famous city, founded by Greek settlers on the frontier of the Pontic kingdom. There he cut to pieces the auxiliaries, who had once formed the king's Body Guard, and, after receiving the Roman franchise, had adopted our ensigns and equipment, while still retaining all the inefficiency and insubordination of Greek troops. Anicetus also set fire to the fleet¹²³ and thus enjoyed complete mastery of the sea, since Mucianus had moved the pick of his cruisers and all his troops to Byzantium. The sea was overrun by natives too, who had hurriedly built themselves boats. These, which they call 'arks',¹²⁴ are broad-bottomed boats with low sides, built without any brass or iron rivets. In a rough sea, as the waves rise higher and higher, the height of the sides is raised by the addition of planks which, in the end, enclose the whole boat under a sort of roof. They are thus left to toss up and down on the waves. They have bows at both ends and the paddles can be used on either side, since it is as easy and as safe to row in one direction as in the other.

48This state of things attracting Vespasian's attention, he was obliged to send out a picked force of detach⁵⁶ments from the legions under Viridius Geminus, a soldier of tried experience. He attacked the enemy while they were dispersed in all directions in quest of plunder, and drove them back to their ships. He then had some Liburnian cruisers hurriedly constructed and ran Anicetus to ground in the mouth of the river Chobus,¹²⁵ where he had taken refuge with the King of the Sedochezi tribe, whose alliance he had purchased by bribes. At first, indeed, the king endeavoured to protect his petitioner by using threats of violence, but he soon saw that it was a choice between making war or being paid for his treachery. The barbarian's sense of honour was unequal to this strain. He came to terms, surrendered Anicetus and the other fugitives, and thus put an end to 'the slaves' war'.

This victory delighted Vespasian: everything was succeeding beyond his hopes: and to crown all the news of the battle of Cremona now reached him in Egypt. He hurried forward all the faster towards Alexandria with the object of bringing starvation¹²⁶ upon Vitellius' defeated troops and the inhabitants of Rome, who were already feeling the pinch of diminished imports. For he was at the same time making preparations for an invasion of the adjacent province of Africa¹²⁷ by land and sea. By cutting off their corn supply he hoped to reduce the enemy to famine and disunion.

¹²²The marines (see ii. [67](#), i. [6](#)).

¹²³X Gemina, VI Victrix.

¹²⁴They occupied a large district of the north of England, from the Trent to the Tyne.

¹²⁷As a matter of fact his triumph took place in 44. Caratacus was brought to Rome in 51. Perhaps Tacitus regards this in itself as a 'triumph', or else he makes a venial mistake.

¹²⁸The rebellion on the Rhine is described in Books IV and V.

¹²⁹In Roumania.

¹²⁰Ferrata. Cp. ii. [83](#).

¹²¹This little kingdom west of Trebizond was left to Rome by Polemo II, A.D. 63. Nero made it a Roman province under the name of Pontus Polemoniacus.

¹²²Trebizond.

¹²³Mucianus had 'ordered the fleet to move from Pontus to Byzantium' (ii. [83](#)). This leads some editors to change the text, and others to suppose that a few ships were left behind.

¹²⁴Literally, arched boats. Tacitus describes somewhat similar craft in *Germania*, 44.

¹²⁵The Khopi, which flows from the Caucasus into the Euxine.

¹²⁶Cp. chap. [8](#).

¹²⁷Africa came next to Egypt in importance as a Roman granary (cp. i. [73](#)).

ANTONIUS' ADVANCE FROM CREMONA

49Thus [128](#) a world-wide convulsion marked the passing of the imperial power into new hands. Meanwhile, after Cremona, the behaviour of Antonius Primus was not so blameless as before. He had settled the war, he felt; the rest would be plain sailing. Or, perhaps, in such a nature as his success only brought to light his greed and arrogance and all his other dormant vices. While harrying Italy like a conquered country, he courted the goodwill of his troops and used every word and every action to pave his way to power. He allowed his men to appoint centurions themselves in place of those who had fallen, and thus gave them a taste for insubordination; for their choice fell on the most turbulent spirits. The generals no longer commanded the men, but were dragged at the heels of their caprices. This revolutionary system, utterly fatal to good discipline, was exploited by Antonius for his own profit.[129](#) Of Mucianus' approach he had no fears, and thus made a mistake even more fatal than despising Vespasian.[130](#)

50His advance, however, continued. As winter was at hand[131](#) and the Po had inundated the meadows, his column marched unencumbered by heavy baggage.⁵⁸ The main body of the victorious legions was left behind at Verona, together with such of the soldiers as were incapacitated by wounds or old age, and many besides who were still in good condition. Having already broken the back of the campaign, Antonius felt strong enough with his auxiliary horse and foot and some picked detachments from the legions. The Eleventh[132](#) had voluntarily joined the advance. They had held back at first, but, seeing Antonius' success, were distressed to think they had had no share in it. The column was also accompanied by a force of six thousand Dalmatian troops, which had been recently raised. The ex-consul, Pompeius Silvanus,[133](#) commanded the column, but the actual control was in the hands of a general named Annius Bassus. Silvanus was quite ineffective as a general, and wasted every chance of action in talking about it. Bassus, while showing all due respect, managed him completely, and was always ready with quiet efficiency to do anything that had to be done. Their force was further increased by enlisting the best of the marines from the Ravenna fleet, who were clamouring for service in the legions. The vacancies in the fleet were filled by Dalmatians. The army and its generals halted at Fanum Fortunae,[134](#) still hesitating what policy to adopt, for they had heard that the Guards were on the move from Rome,

and supposed that the Apennines were held by troops. And they had fears of their own. Supplies ⁵⁹were scarce in a district devastated by war. The men were mutinous and demanded 'shoe-money',[135](#) as they called the donative, with alarming insistence. No provision had been made either for money or for stores. The precipitate greed of the soldiers made further difficulties, for they each looted what might have served for them all.

51I find among the best authorities evidence which shows how wickedly careless were the victorious army of all considerations of right and wrong. They tell how a trooper professed that he had killed his brother in the last battle, and demanded a reward from his generals. The dictates of humanity forbade them to remunerate such a murder, but in the interests of civil war they dared not punish it. They had put him off with the plea that they could not at the moment reward his service adequately. And there the story stops. However, a similar crime had occurred in earlier civil wars. In the battle which Pompeius Strabo fought against Cinna at the Janiculum,[136](#) one of his soldiers killed his own brother and then, realizing what he had done, committed suicide. This is recorded by Sisenna.[137](#) Our ancestors, it seems, had a livelier sense than we have both of the glory of good deeds ⁶⁰and the shame of bad.[138](#) These and other such instances from past history may be appropriately cited, whenever the subject seems to demand either an example of good conduct or some consolation for a crime.

52Antonius and his fellow generals decided to send the cavalry ahead to explore the whole of Umbria, and to see whether any of the Apennines were accessible by a gentler route; to summon the eagles and standards[139](#) and all the troops at Verona,[140](#) and to fill the Po and the sea with provision ships. Some of the generals continually suggested obstacles. Antonius had grown too big for his place, and they had surer hopes of reward from Mucianus. He was distressed that victory had come so soon, and felt that, if he was not present when Rome was taken, he would lose his share in the war and its glory. So he kept on writing to Antonius and Varus in ambiguous terms, sometimes urging them to 'press forward on their path', sometimes expatiating on 'the manifold value of delay'. He thus managed to arrange that he could disclaim responsibility in case of a reverse, or acknowledge their policy as his own if it succeeded. To Plotius Grypus, whom Vespasian had lately raised to senatorial rank and put in command of a legion, and to his other trusty friends he sent less ambiguous instructions, and they all wrote back criticizing the haste with which Antonius and Varus ⁶¹acted. This was just what Mucianus wanted. He forwarded the letters to Vespasian with the result that Antonius' plans and exploits were not appreciated as highly as Antonius had hoped. 53This he took very ill and threw the blame on Mucianus, whose charges he conceived had cheapened his exploits. Being little accustomed to control his tongue or to obey orders, he was most unguarded in his conversation and composed a letter to Vespasian in presumptuous language which ill befitted a subject, making various covert charges against Mucianus. 'It was I,' he wrote, 'who brought the legions of Pannonia into the field:[141](#) it was my stimulus which stirred up the officers in Moesia:[142](#) it was by my

persistence that we broke through the Alps, seized hold of Italy and cut off the German and Raetian auxiliaries.¹⁴³ When Vitellius' legions were all scattered and disunited, it was I who flung the cavalry on them like a whirlwind, and then pressed home the attack with the infantry all day and all night. That victory is my greatest achievement and it is entirely my own. As for the mishap at Cremona, that was the fault of the war. In old days the civil wars cost the country far more damage and involved the destruction of more than one town. It is not with couriers and dispatches that I serve my master, but with my sword in my hand. Nor can it be said that I have interfered with the glory of the men who have meanwhile settled ⁶²matters in Dacia.¹⁴⁴ What peace in Moesia is to them, the safety and welfare of Italy are to me. It was my encouragement which brought the provinces of Gaul and of Spain, the strongest parts of the whole world, over to Vespasian's side. But my labours will prove useless, if the reward for the dangers I have run is to fall to the man who was not there to share them.' All this reached the ears of Mucianus and a serious quarrel resulted. Antonius kept it up in a frank spirit of dislike, while Mucianus showed a cunning which was far more implacable.

¹²⁸The narrative is here resumed from the end of chap. 35.

¹²⁹Would-be centurions doubtless bribed him to influence the soldiers in their favour.

¹³⁰Vespasian was too big to mind being despised; Mucianus was not, and eventually retaliated (cp. iv. 11).

¹³¹November.

¹³²From Dalmatia (see ii. 11, 67).

¹³³Governor of Dalmatia (cp. ii. 86).

¹³⁴Fano.

¹³⁵Apparently soldiers' slang. Probably at some period an officer had bribed his men under the pretence of making special grants for the purchase of nails for their shoes.

¹³⁶87 B.C.

¹³⁷L. Cornelius Sisenna, who died 67 B.C. in Pompey's war against the pirates, wrote a history of his own time, dealing in particular with Sulla's wars.

¹³⁸This or some similar incident seems to have become a respected commonplace of history and poetry (cp. chap. 25).

¹³⁹i.e. the main body of the legions.

¹⁴⁰See chap. 50.

¹⁴¹See ii. 86.

¹⁴²i.e. Aponius, Vipstanus Messala, Dillius, and Numisius (see ii. 85, iii. 9, 10).

¹⁴³Cp. chap. 8.

¹⁴⁴i.e. Mucianus and his officers (see chap. 46).

VITELLIUS' MEASURES OF DEFENCE

54After the crushing defeat at Cremona Vitellius stupidly suppressed the news of the disaster, thus postponing not the danger itself but only his precautions against it. Had he admitted the facts and sought advice, hope and strength were still left to him: his pretension that all went well only made matters worse. He was himself extraordinarily silent about the war, and in Rome all discussion of the subject was forbidden. This only increased the number of people who, if permitted, would have told the truth, but in the face of this prohibition spread grossly exaggerated rumours. Nor were the Flavian leaders slow to foster these rumours. Whenever they captured Vitellian spies they

escorted them round the camp to show them the strength of the winning army, and sent them back ⁶³again. Vitellius cross-examined each of them in private and then had them murdered. A centurion named Julius Agrestis, after many interviews, in which he endeavoured in vain to fire Vitellius' courage, at last with heroic persistence induced the emperor to send him to inspect the enemy's forces and discover what had really happened at Cremona. He made no attempt to deceive Antonius by concealing the object of his mission, but openly avowed the emperor's instructions, stated his intentions and demanded to be shown everything. He was given guides, who showed him the field of battle, the ruins of Cremona and the captured legions. Back went Agrestis to Vitellius. Finding that the emperor disbelieved his report and even suggested that he had been bribed, he said, 'You want some certain evidence and, since you have no further use for me either alive or dead, I will give you evidence that you can believe.' And he was as good as his word. He went straight from the emperor's presence and committed suicide. Some say he was killed by order of Vitellius, but they give the same account of his heroic devotion.¹⁴⁵

⁵⁵Vitellius was like a man roused from sleep. He dispatched Julius Priscus and Alfenus Varus¹⁴⁶ with fourteen cohorts of Guards and all his available cavalry to hold the Apennines. A legion levied from ⁶⁴the marines¹⁴⁷ was sent after them. This large army of picked men and horses, if there had been any general to lead it, was strong enough to have even taken the offensive. His other cohorts¹⁴⁸ were given to his brother, Lucius Vitellius, for the protection of the city. The emperor himself gave up none of his habitual luxuries, but, feeling nervous and depressed, he hurried on the elections and nominated consuls for several years in advance. He lavished special charters¹⁴⁹ on allied communities and extended Latin rights¹⁵⁰ to foreign towns: he remitted taxation here, granted immunities there. In fact, he took no thought for the future, and did his best to cripple the empire. However, the mob accepted these munificent grants with open mouths. Fools paid money for them, but wise men held them invalid, since they could be neither given nor received without a revolution. At last he yielded to the demands of the army and joined the camp at Mevania,¹⁵¹ where they had taken up their position. A long train of senators followed him, many moved by their ambition, but most by their fears. Here he ⁶⁵was still undecided and at the mercy of treacherous advice.

⁵⁶During one of his speeches a portent occurred. A cloud of ill-omened birds¹⁵² flew over his head and its density obscured the daylight. To this was added another omen of disaster. A bull broke from the altar, scattered the utensils for the ceremony, and escaped so far away that it had to be killed instead of being sacrificed according to the proper ritual. But the chief portent was Vitellius himself. He was ignorant of soldiering, incapable of forethought: knew nothing of drill or scouting, or how far operations should be pressed forward or protracted. He always had to ask some one else. At every fresh piece of news his expression and gait betrayed his alarm. And then he would get drunk. At last he found camp life too tedious, and on learning of a mutiny in the fleet

at Misenum¹⁵³ he returned to Rome. Every fresh blow terrified him, but of the real crisis he seemed insensible. For it was open to him to cross the Apennines and with his full strength unimpaired to attack the enemy while they were worn out with cold and hunger. But by breaking up his forces he sent his keenest soldiers, stubbornly loyal to the last, to be killed or taken prisoner. The more experienced of his centurions disapproved of this policy and would have told him the truth, if they had been consulted. But the emperor's intimates refused ⁶⁶them admittance. He had, indeed, formed a habit of regarding wholesome advice as unpleasant, and refusing to listen to any that was not agreeable, and in the long run fatal.

⁵⁷In civil war individual enterprise counts for much. The mutiny of the fleet at Misenum had been engineered by Claudius Faventinus, a centurion whom Galba had dismissed in disgrace. To obtain his object he had forged a letter from Vespasian promising rewards for treachery. The admiral, Claudius Apollinaris,¹⁵⁴ was neither a staunch loyalist nor an enthusiastic traitor. Accordingly Apinius Tiro, an ex-praetor, who happened to be at Minturnae,¹⁵⁵ offered to take the lead of the rebels. They proceeded to win over the colonies and country towns. Puteoli in particular was strong for Vespasian, while Capua remained loyal to Vitellius, for they dragged their local jealousies into the civil war. To pacify the excited troops Vitellius chose Claudius Julianus, who had lately been in command of the fleet at Misenum and had allowed lax discipline. To support him he was given one cohort of the city garrison and the force of gladiators already serving under him. The two parties encamped close to one another, and it was not long before Julianus came over to Vespasian's side. They then joined forces and occupied Tarracina,¹⁵⁶ which owed its strength more to ⁶⁷its walls and situation than to the character of its new garrison.

⁵⁸When news of this reached Vitellius, he left part of his force at Narnia¹⁵⁷ with the prefects of the Guard,¹⁵⁸ and sent his brother Lucius with six regiments of Guards and five hundred horse to cope with the threatened outbreak in Campania. His own nervous depression was somewhat relieved by the enthusiasm of the troops and of the populace, who clamoured loudly for arms. For he dignified this poor-spirited mob, which would never dare to do anything but shout, by the specious titles of 'the army' or 'his legions'. His friends were all untrustworthy in proportion to their eminence; but on the advice of his freedmen he held a levy for conscription and swore in all who gave their names. As their numbers were too great, he gave the task of selection to the two consuls. From each of the senators he levied a fixed number of slaves and a weight of silver. The knights offered money and personal service, while even freedmen volunteered similar assistance. Indeed, protestations of loyalty prompted by fear, had gradually changed into real sympathy. People began to feel pity, not perhaps so much for Vitellius as for the throne and its misfortunes. He himself by his looks, his voice, his tears made ceaseless demands upon their compassion, promising rewards lavishly and, as men do when they are frightened, beyond all limits. He had hitherto ⁶⁸refused the title of Caesar,¹⁵⁹ but he now expressed a wish for it. He had a superstitious respect for the

name, and in moments of terror one listens as much to gossip as to sound advice. However, while a rash and ill-conceived undertaking may prosper at the outset, in time it always begins to flag. Gradually the senators and knights deserted him. At first they hesitated and waited till his back was turned, but soon they ceased to care and openly showed their disrespect. At last Vitellius grew ashamed of the failure of his efforts and excused them from the services which they refused to render.

¹⁴⁵This incident was probably another historical commonplace. See the story from Plutarch (ii. [46](#), note [316](#)), which is also told by Suetonius and Dio.

¹⁴⁶The prefects of the Guards (cp. ii. [92](#)).

¹⁴⁷At Misenum. (Leg. II Adjutrix.) The Ravenna marines were on the Flavian side (see chap. [50](#)).

¹⁴⁸i.e. the rest of the Guards (2), with the city garrison (4), and police (7) (cp. ii. [93](#)).

¹⁴⁹i.e. granting them special privileges denied to other communities in the same province.

¹⁵⁰A sort of 'half-way house to Roman citizenship'. Full commercial rights were included but not those of intermarriage. It was possible for individual citizens in a Latin town to obtain the full rights of a Roman.

¹⁵¹Bevagna.

¹⁵²Dio makes them vultures and the scene a sacrifice: they scattered the victims and nearly knocked Vitellius off his pulpit.

¹⁵³Described in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁴He had succeeded Bassus (iii. [12](#)).

¹⁵⁵Near the mouth of the Liris.

¹⁵⁶Horace's 'Anxur perched on gleaming rocks'. It lay near the Pontine marshes on the Appian way.

¹⁵⁷Narni.

¹⁵⁸Priscus and Varus (see chap. [55](#)).

¹⁵⁹i. [62](#), ii. [62](#).

THE PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES

59The occupation of Mevania [160](#) had terrified Italy with the prospect of a revival of the war, but Vitellius' cowardly retreat [161](#) sensibly strengthened the popularity of the Flavian party. The Samnites, Pelignians, and Marsians were now induced to rise. They were jealous of Campania for stealing a march on them, and the change of masters, as so often happens, made them perform all their military duties with the utmost alacrity. But in crossing the Apennines Antonius' army suffered severely from the rough December weather. Though they met with no opposition, they found it hard enough to struggle through the snow, and realized what danger they would have had to face if Vitellius had not happened to turn back. Certainly chance helped the Flavian generals quite as often ⁶⁹as their own strategy. Here they came across Petilius Cerialis, [162](#) who had been enabled by his knowledge of the country to elude Vitellius' outposts, disguised as a peasant. As he was a near relative of Vespasian and a distinguished soldier he was given a place on the staff. Several authorities say that Flavius Sabinus and Domitian [163](#) were also afforded facilities for escape, and that Antonius sent messengers who contrived by various devices to get through to them, and made arrangements for an interview and safe conduct. Sabinus, however, pleaded that his health was unequal to the fatigue of such a bold step. Domitian was quite ready to venture, but although the guards to whom Vitellius had entrusted him, promised that they would share his flight, he was afraid they might be laying a trap for him. As a

matter of fact, Vitellius was too anxious for the safety of his own relatives to plot any harm against Domitian.

60Arrived at Carsulae¹⁶⁴ the Flavian generals took a few days' rest and awaited the arrival of the main legionary force.¹⁶⁵ The place suited them admirably for an encampment. It commanded a wide view, and with so many prosperous towns in the rear their supplies were safe. The Vitellians too, were only ten miles away, and they had hopes of negotiating treason ⁷⁰with them. The soldiers chafed at this delay, preferring victory to peace. They did not even want to wait for their own legions, for there would be more plunder than danger to share with them. Antonius accordingly summoned a meeting of the men and explained to them that Vitellius still had troops at his command. Reflection might make them waver, despair would steel their hearts. In civil war, he told them, the first steps may be left to chance, nothing but careful strategy can win the final victory. The fleet at Misenum and the richest districts of Campania had already deserted Vitellius, and in the whole world nothing was left to him now except the country between Narnia and Tarracina. The battle of Cremona had brought them credit enough, and the destruction of the town more than enough discredit. Their desire must be not to take Rome but to save it. They would gain richer rewards and far more glory if they could show that they had saved the senate and people of Rome without shedding a drop of blood. Such considerations as these calmed their excitement, and it was not long before the legions arrived.

61Alarmed at the repute of this augmented army, Vitellius' Guards began to waver. There was no one to encourage them to fight, while many urged them to desert, being eager to hand over their companies or squadrons to the enemy and by such a gift to secure the victor's gratitude for the future. These also let the Flavians know that the next camp at Interamna¹⁶⁶⁷¹ had a garrison of four hundred cavalry. Varus was promptly sent off with a light marching force, and the few who offered resistance were killed. The majority threw away their arms and begged for quarter. Some escaped to the main camp¹⁶⁷ and spread universal panic by exaggerating the strength and prowess of the enemy, in order to mitigate the disgrace of losing the fort. In the Vitellian camp all offences went unpunished: desertion met with sure reward. Their loyalty soon gave way and a competition in treachery began. Tribunes and centurions deserted daily, but not the common soldiers, who had grown stubbornly faithful to Vitellius. At last, however, Priscus and Alfenus¹⁶⁸ abandoned the camp and returned to Vitellius, thus finally releasing all the others from any obligation to blush for their treachery.

62About the same time Fabius Valens¹⁶⁹ was executed in his prison at Urbinum, and his head was exhibited to Vitellius' Guards to show them that further hope was vain. For they cherished a belief that Valens had made his way into Germany, and was there mustering his old force and fresh troops as well. This evidence of his death threw them into despair. The Flavian army was vastly inspired by it and regarded Valens' death as the end of the war.

Valens had been born at Anagnia of an equestrian family. He was a man of loose morality, not without intellectual gifts, who by indulging in frivolity ⁷²posed as a wit. In Nero's time he had acted in a harlequinade at the Juvenalian Games.¹⁷⁰ At first he pleaded compulsion, but afterwards he acted voluntarily, and his performances were rather clever than respectable. Rising to the command of a legion, he supported Verginius¹⁷¹ and then defamed his character. He murdered Fonteius Capito,¹⁷¹ whose loyalty he had undermined—or perhaps because he had failed to do so. He betrayed Galba and remained faithful to Vitellius, a merit to which the treachery of others served as a foil.

⁶³Now that their hopes were crushed on all sides, the Vitellians prepared to go over to the enemy. But even at this crisis they saved their honour by marching down with their standards and colours to the plains below Narnia, where the Flavian army was drawn up in full armour ready for battle in two deep lines on either side of the road. The Vitellians marched in between and were surrounded. Antonius then spoke to them kindly and told them to remain, some at Narnia and some at Interamna. He also left behind some of the victorious legions, which were strong enough to quell any outbreak but would not molest them so long as they remained quiet.

¹⁶⁰See chap. [55](#).

¹⁶¹See chap. [56](#).

¹⁶²A distinguished officer, who successfully crushed the rebellion on the Rhine (Book [IV](#)), and became governor of Britain in 71.

¹⁶³Vespasian's brother and younger son were both in Rome, the former still holding the office of city prefect (cp. i. [46](#)).

¹⁶⁴Casigliano.

¹⁶⁵From Verona (see chap. [52](#)).

¹⁶⁶Terni.

¹⁶⁷At Narnia.

¹⁶⁸The two prefects of the guard.

¹⁶⁹See chap. [43](#).

¹⁷⁰Properly a festival to celebrate the first cutting of the beard. Nero forced high officials and their wives to take part in unseemly performances (ii. [62](#)), and the festivities became a public scandal, culminating in Nero's own appearance as a lyrist.

¹⁷¹See i. [7](#), [8](#).

THE ABDICATION OF VITELLIUS AND THE BURNING OF THE CAPITOL

During these days Antonius and Varus kept sending messages to Vitellius, in which they offered him his life, a gift of money, and the choice of a safe retreat in Campania, if he would stop the war and surrender himself and his children to Vespasian. Mucianus wrote him letters to the same effect. Vitellius usually took these offers seriously and talked about the number of slaves he would have and the choice of a seaside place. He had sunk, indeed, into such mental torpor that, if other people had not remembered that he was an emperor, he was certainly beginning to forget it himself. ⁶⁴However, it was to Flavius Sabinus, the City Prefect, that the leading men at Rome addressed themselves. They urged him secretly not to lose all share in the glory of victory. They

pointed out that the City Garrison was under his own command, and that he could count on the police and their own bands of slaves, to say nothing of the good fortune of the party and all the advantage that victory gives. He must not leave all the glory to Antonius and Varus. Vitellius had nothing left but a few regiments of guards, who were seriously alarmed at the bad news which came from every quarter. As for the populace, their feelings soon changed, and if he put himself at their head, they would be just as loud in their flattery of Vespasian. Vitellius himself could not even cope ⁷⁴with success, and disaster had positively paralysed him. The credit of ending the war would go to the man who seized the city. It was eminently fitting that Sabinus should secure the throne for his brother, and that Vespasian should hold him higher than any one else.

65Age had enfeebled Sabinus, and he showed no alacrity to listen to such talk as this. Some people covertly insinuated that he was jealous of his brother's success and was trying to delay its realization. Flavius Sabinus was the elder brother and, while they were both private persons, he had been the richer and more influential. It was also believed that he had been chary in helping Vespasian to recover his financial position, and had taken a mortgage on his house and estates. Consequently, though they remained openly friendly, there were suspicions of a secret enmity between them. The more charitable explanation is that Sabinus's gentle nature shrank from the idea of bloodshed and massacre, and that this was his reason for so constantly discussing with Vitellius the prospects of peace and a capitulation on terms. After several interviews at his house they finally came to a settlement—so the report went—at the Temple of Apollo.¹⁷² To the actual conversation there were only two witnesses, Cluvius Rufus¹⁷³ and Silius Italicus,¹⁷⁴ but the expression of their faces was watched from a distance.⁷⁵ Vitellius was said to look abject and demoralized: Sabinus showed less sign of pride than of pity.

66Had Vitellius found it no harder to persuade his friends than to make his own renunciation, Vespasian's army might have marched into Rome without bloodshed. But as it was, each of his friends in proportion to his loyalty persisted in refusing terms of peace. They pointed to the danger and disgrace. Would their conqueror keep his promises any longer than he liked? However great Vespasian's self-confidence, he could not allow Vitellius to live in private. Nor would the losers acquiesce: their very pity would be a menace.¹⁷⁵ 'Of course,' they said, 'you are an old man. You have done with fortune, good or bad. But what sort of repute or position would your son Germanicus¹⁷⁶ enjoy? At present they are promising you money and a household, and the pleasant shores of Campania. But when once Vespasian has seized the throne, neither he nor his friends nor even his army will feel their safety assured until the rival claimant is dead. They imprisoned Fabius Valens and meant to make use of him if a crisis occurred, but they found him too great an incubus. You may be sure that Antonius and Fuscus and that typical representative of the party, Mucianus, will have no choice but to kill you. Julius Caesar did not let Pompey live unmolested, nor Augustus Antony.¹⁷⁷⁷⁶ Do you suppose that Vespasian's is a loftier disposition? Why,

he was one of your father's dependants,¹⁷⁸ when your father was Claudius's colleague.¹⁷⁹ No, think of your father's censorship, his three consulships,¹⁷⁹ and all the honour your great house has won. You must not disgrace them. Despair, at least, should nerve your courage. The troops are steadfast; you still enjoy the people's favour. Indeed, nothing worse can happen to you than what we are eager to face of our own free will. If we are defeated, we must die; if we surrender, we must die. All that matters is whether we breathe our last amid mockery and insult or bravely and with honour.'

67But Vitellius was deaf to all courageous counsel. His mind was obsessed with pity for his wife and children, and an anxious fear that obstinate resistance might make the conqueror merciless towards them. He had also a mother,¹⁸⁰ very old and infirm, but she had opportunely died a few days before and thus forestalled the ruin of her house. All she had got out of her son's principate was sorrow and a good name. On December 17 he heard the news that the legion and the Guards at Narnia had deserted him and surrendered to the enemy. He at once put on mourning and left the palace, surrounded by his sorrowful household. His small son was carried in a little litter, as though this had been his funeral. The populace ⁷⁷uttered untimely flatteries: the soldiers kept an ominous silence.

68On that day there was no one so indifferent to the tragedy of human life as to be unmoved by this spectacle. A Roman emperor, yesterday master of the inhabited world, had left the seat of his authority, and was now passing through the streets of the city, through the crowding populace, quitting the throne. Such a sight had never been seen or heard of before. The dictator, Caesar, had been the victim of sudden violence; Caligula of a secret conspiracy. Nero's had been a stealthy flight to some obscure country house under cover of night. Piso and Galba might almost be said to have fallen on the field of battle. But here was Vitellius—before the assembly of his own people, his own soldiers around him, with women even looking on—uttering a few sentences suitable to his miserable situation. He said it was in the interest of peace and of his country that he now resigned. He begged them only to retain his memory in their hearts and to take pity on his brother, his wife, and his little innocent children. As he said this, he held out his son to them and commended him, now to individuals, now to the whole assembly. At last tears choked his voice. Turning to the consul, Caecilius Simplex,¹⁸¹ who was standing by, he unstrapped his sword and offered to surrender it as a symbol of his power over the life and death of his subjects. The consul refused. The people in the assembly shouted 'No'. So he left them with the ⁷⁸intention of depositing the regalia in the Temple of Concord and then going to his brother's house. But he was faced with a still louder uproar. They refused to let him enter a private house, and shouted to him to return to the palace. They blocked every other way and only left the road leading into the Via Sacra open.¹⁸² Not knowing what else to do, Vitellius returned to the palace.

69A rumour of his abdication had preceded him, and Flavius Sabinus had sent written instructions to the Guards'¹⁸³ officers to keep the men in hand. Thus the whole empire seemed to have fallen into Vespasian's lap. The chief senators, the majority of the knights, and the whole of the city garrison and the police came flocking to the house of Flavius Sabinus. There they heard the news of the popular enthusiasm for Vitellius and the threatening attitude of the German Guards.¹⁸⁴ But Sabinus had gone too far to draw back, and when he showed hesitation, they all began to urge him to fight, each being afraid for his own safety if the Vitellians were to fall on them when they were disunited and consequently weaker. However, as so often happens on these occasions, every one offered to give ⁷⁹advice but few to share the danger. While Sabinus' Body Guard were marching down by the Fundane reservoir¹⁸⁵ they were attacked by some of the most determined Vitellians. The surprise was unpremeditated, but the Vitellians got the best of an unimportant skirmish. In the panic Sabinus chose what was at the moment the safest course, and occupied the summit of the Capitol,¹⁸⁶ where his troops were joined by a few senators and knights. It is not easy to record their names, since after Vespasian's victory crowds of people claimed credit for this service to the party. There were even some women who endured the siege, the most famous of them being Verulana Gratilla, who had neither children nor relatives to attract her, but only her love of danger.¹⁸⁷

The Vitellians, who were investing them, kept a half-hearted watch, and Sabinus was thus enabled to send for his own children and his nephew Domitian at dead of night, dispatching a courier by an unguarded route to tell the Flavian generals that he and his men were under siege, and would be in great straits unless they were rescued. All night, indeed, he was quite unmolested, and could have escaped with perfect safety. The Vitellian troops could face danger with spirit, but were much too careless in the task of keeping guard; ⁸⁰besides which a sudden storm of chilly rain interfered with their sight and hearing.

70At daybreak, before the two sides commenced hostilities, Sabinus sent Cornelius Martialis, who had been a senior centurion, to Vitellius with instructions to complain that the conditions were being violated; that he had evidently made a mere empty show of abdication, meant to deceive a number of eminent gentlemen. Else why had he gone from the meeting to his brother's house, which caught the eye from a conspicuous position overlooking the Forum, and not rather to his wife's on the Aventine. That was the proper course for a private citizen, anxious to avoid all pretension to supreme authority. But no, Vitellius had returned to the palace, the very stronghold of imperial majesty. From there he had launched a column of armed men, who had strewn with innocent dead the most crowded quarter of Rome, and even laid violent hands upon the Capitol. As for Sabinus himself, the messenger was to say, he was only a civilian, a mere member of the senate. While the issue was being decided between Vespasian and Vitellius by the engagement of legions, the capture of towns, the capitulation of cohorts; even when the provinces of Spain, of Germany, of Britain, had risen in revolt; he,

though Vespasian's brother, had still remained faithful to his allegiance, until Vitellius, unasked, began to invite him to a conference. Peace and union, he was to remind him, serve the interest of the losers, and only the reputation of the winners. If Vitellius ⁸¹regretted their compact, he ought not to take arms against Sabinus, whom he had treacherously deceived, and against Vespasian's son, who was still a mere boy. What was the good of killing one youth and one old man? He ought rather to march out against the legions and fight for the empire on the field. The result of the battle would decide all other questions.

Greatly alarmed, Vitellius replied with a few words in which he tried to excuse himself and throw the blame on his soldiers. 'I am too unassuming,' he said, 'to cope with their overpowering impatience.' He then warned Martialis to make his way out of the house by a secret passage, for fear that the soldiers should kill him as an ambassador of the peace to which they were so hostile. Vitellius himself was not in a position to issue orders or prohibitions; no longer an emperor, merely an excuse for war.

⁷¹Martialis had hardly returned to the Capitol when the furious soldiery arrived. They had no general to lead them: each was a law to himself. Their column marched at full speed through the Forum and past the temples overlooking it. Then in battle order they advanced up the steep hill in front of them, until they reached the lowest gates of the fortress on the Capitol. In old days there was a series of colonnades at the side of this slope, on the right as you go up. Emerging on to the roof of these, the besieged overwhelmed the Vitellians with showers of stones and tiles. The attacking party carried nothing but swords, and it seemed a long business to send for siege-engines and ⁸²missiles. So they flung torches into the nearest [188](#) colonnade and, following in the wake of the flames, would have burst through the burnt gates of the Capitol, if Sabinus had not torn down all the available statues—the monuments of our ancestors' glory—and built a sort of barricade on the very threshold. They then tried to attack the Capitol by two opposite approaches, one near the 'Grove of Refuge' [189](#) and the other by the hundred steps which lead up to the Tarpeian Rock. This double assault came as a surprise. That by the Refuge was the closer and more vigorous. Nothing could stop the Vitellians, who climbed up by some contiguous houses built on to the side of the hill, which in the days of prolonged peace had been raised to such a height that their roofs were level with the floor of the Capitol. It is uncertain whether the buildings at this point were fired by the assailants or—as tradition prefers—by the besieged in trying to dislodge their enemies who had struggled up so far. The fire spread to the colonnades adjoining the temples, and then the 'eagles' [190](#) supporting the roof, which were made of very old wood, caught the flames and fed them. And so the Capitol, with its doors fast shut, undefended and unplundered, was burnt to the ground.

⁷²Since the foundation of the city no such deplorable and horrible disaster had ever befallen the people of ⁸³Rome. It was no case of foreign invasion. Had our own wickedness allowed, the country might have been enjoying the blessings of a benign

Providence; and yet here was the seat of Jupiter Almighty—the temple solemnly founded by our ancestors as the pledge of their imperial greatness, on which not even Porsenna,¹⁹¹ when Rome surrendered, nor the Gauls, when they took it, had ever dared to lay rash hands—being brought utterly to ruin by the mad folly of two rival emperors!¹⁹² The Capitol had been burnt before in civil war,¹⁹³ but that was the crime of private persons. Now it had been openly assaulted by the people of Rome and openly burnt by them. And what was the cause of war? what the recompense for such a disaster? Were we fighting for our country?

King Tarquinius Priscus had vowed to build this temple in the Sabine war, and had laid the foundations on a scale that suited rather his hope of the city's future greatness than the still moderate fortunes of the Roman people. Later Servius Tullius, with the aid of Rome's allies, and Tarquinius Superbus, with the spoils of the Volscians after the capture of Suessa Pometia,¹⁹⁴ continued the building. But the glory of completing it was reserved for the days of freedom. After the expulsion of the kings, Horatius Pulvillus,⁸⁴ in his second consulship¹⁹⁵ dedicated this monument on such a magnificent scale, that in later days, with all her boundless wealth, Rome has been able to embellish but never to enlarge it. After an interval of four hundred and fifteen years, in the consulship of Lucius Scipio and Caius Norbanus,¹⁹⁶ it was burnt and rebuilt on the same site. Sulla after his victory undertook the task of restoring it, but did not dedicate it. This only was lacking to justify his title of 'Fortune's Favourite'.¹⁹⁷ Much as the emperors did to it, the name of Lutatius Catulus¹⁹⁸ still remained upon it up to the time of Vitellius.¹⁹⁹ This was the temple that was now ablaze.

⁷³The besieged suffered more panic than their assailants. The Vitellian soldiers lacked neither resource nor steadiness in moments of crisis. But on the other side the troops were terrified, the general²⁰⁰ inert, and apparently so paralysed that he was practically deaf and dumb. He neither adopted others' plans nor formed any of his own, but only drifted about from place to place, attracted by the shouts of the enemy, contradicting all his own orders. The result was what always happens in a hopeless disaster: everybody gave orders and nobody obeyed them. At last they threw away their weapons and began to peer round for ⁸⁵a way of escape or some means of hiding. Then the Vitellians came bursting in, and with fire and sword made one red havoc. A few good soldiers dared to show fight and were cut to pieces. Of these the most notable were Cornelius Martialis,²⁰¹ Aemilius Pacensis,²⁰² Casperius Niger, and Didius Scaeva. Flavius Sabinus, who stood unarmed and making no attempt to escape, was surrounded together with the consul Quintius Atticus,²⁰³ whose empty title made him a marked man, as well as his personal vanity, which had led him to distribute manifestoes full of compliments to Vespasian and insults against Vitellius. The rest escaped by various means. Some disguised themselves as slaves: some were sheltered by faithful dependants: some hid among the baggage. Others again caught the Vitellians' password, by which they recognized each other, and actually went about demanding it and giving it when challenged, thus escaping under a cloak of effrontery.

74When the enemy first broke in, Domitian had taken refuge with the sacristan, and was enabled by the ingenuity of a freedman to escape among a crowd of worshippers in a linen dress,²⁰⁴ and to take refuge near the Velabrum with Cornelius Primus, one of his father's dependants. When his father came to the throne, Domitian pulled down the sacristan's lodging and ⁸⁶built a little chapel to Jupiter the Saviour with an altar, on which his adventures were depicted in marble relief. Later, when he became emperor, he dedicated a huge temple to Jupiter the Guardian with a statue of himself in the lap of the god.

Sabinus and Atticus were loaded with chains and taken to Vitellius, who received them without any language or looks of disfavour, much to the chagrin of those who wanted to see them punished with death and themselves rewarded for their successful labours. When those who stood nearest started an outcry, the dregs of the populace soon began to demand Sabinus' execution with mingled threats and flatteries. Vitellius came out on to the steps of the palace prepared to plead for him: but they forced him to desist. Sabinus was stabbed and riddled with wounds: his head was cut off and the trunk dragged away to the Ladder ⁷⁵of Sighs.²⁰⁵ Such was the end of a man who certainly merits no contempt. He had served his country for thirty-five years, and won credit both as civilian and soldier. His integrity and fairness were beyond criticism. He talked too much about himself, but this is the one charge which rumour could hint against him in the seven years when he was Governor of Moesia, and the twelve years during which he was Prefect of the City. At the end of his life some thought he showed a lack of enterprise, but many believed him ⁸⁷a moderate man, who was anxious to save his fellow citizens from bloodshed. In this, at any rate, all would agree, that before Vespasian became emperor the reputation of his house rested on Sabinus. It is said that Mucianus was delighted to hear of his murder, and many people maintained that it served the interests of peace by putting an end to the jealousy of two rivals, one of whom was the emperor's brother, while the other posed as his partner in the empire.²⁰⁶

When the people further demanded the execution of the consul, Vitellius withstood them. He had forgiven Atticus, and felt that he owed him a favour, for, when asked who had set fire to the Capitol, Atticus had taken the blame on himself, by which avowal—or was it a well-timed falsehood?—he had fixed all the guilt and odium on himself and exonerated the Vitellian party.

¹⁷²On the Palatine.

¹⁷³See i. [8](#).

¹⁷⁴A friend of Vitellius and the author of the historical epic on the second Punic War.

¹⁷⁵This apparently means that, if Vitellius were spared, pity for his position would inspire his supporters to make further trouble.

¹⁷⁶See ii. [59](#).

¹⁷⁷Two good points, but both untrue.

¹⁷⁸This too is probably hyperbole, but Vespasian may have owed his command in Germany to the influence of Vitellius' father.

¹⁷⁹See i. [52](#), note [99](#).

¹⁸⁰See ii. [64](#), [89](#).

¹⁸¹See ii. [60](#).

¹⁸²i.e. the way back from the Forum to the Palace.

¹⁸³Including the city garrison and police.

¹⁸⁴In chap. [78](#) we find three cohorts of Guards still faithful to Vitellius, and, as it appears from ii. [93](#), [94](#) that men from the legions of Germany had been enlisted in the Guards, the term *Germanicae cohortes* seems to refer to these three cohorts, in which perhaps the majority were men from the German army.

¹⁸⁵Said to be on the Quirinal.

¹⁸⁶Either the whole hill, or, if the expression is exact, the south-west summit.

¹⁸⁷This seems to have led her later into the paths of conspiracy, for she is said to have been banished by Domitian for her friendship with Arulenus Rusticus.

¹⁸⁸*Prominentem* seems to mean the one that projected towards them.

¹⁸⁹The space lying between the two peaks of the Capitoline.

¹⁹⁰A technical term for the beams of the pediment.

¹⁹¹'Lars Porsenna of Clusium,' 507 B.C.

¹⁹²'Burning the Capitol' was a proverb of utter iniquity.

¹⁹³In the war between Sulla and Marius, 83 B.C.

¹⁹⁴The capital town of the Volscians. This early history is told in the first book of Livy.

¹⁹⁵507 B.C.

¹⁹⁶83 B.C. The interval is really 425 years.

¹⁹⁷This, according to Pliny, was Sulla's own saying.

¹⁹⁸Consul in 69 B.C. He took the title of Capitulinus.

¹⁹⁹On the monument which details his exploits Augustus says that he restored the Capitol at immense cost without inscribing his name on it.

²⁰⁰Flavius Sabinus.

²⁰¹Cp. chap. [70](#).

²⁰²Cp. i. [20](#), [87](#); ii. [12](#).

²⁰³Consul for November and December. His colleague, Caecilius Simplex, was on the other side (see chap. [68](#)).

²⁰⁴The dress of the worshippers of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who considered woollen clothes unclean.

²⁰⁵A flight of steps leading down from the Capitol to the Forum. On them the bodies of criminals were exposed after execution.

²⁰⁶Mucianus.

THE TAKING OF TARRACINA

76About this same time Lucius Vitellius,^{[207](#)} who had pitched his camp at the Temple of Feronia,^{[208](#)} made every effort to destroy Tarracina, where he had shut up the gladiators and sailors, who would not venture to leave the shelter of the walls or to face death in the open. The gladiators were commanded, as we have already seen,^{[209](#)} by Julianus, and the sailors by⁸⁸ Apollinaris, men whose dissolute inefficiency better suited gladiators than general officers. They set no watch, and made no attempt to repair the weak places in the walls. Day and night they idled loosely; the soldiers were dispatched in all directions to find them luxuries; that beautiful coast rang with their revelry; and they only spoke of war in their cups. A few days earlier, Apinius Tiro^{[210](#)} had started on his mission, and, by rigorously requisitioning gifts of money in all the country towns, was winning more unpopularity than assistance for the cause.

77In the meantime, one of Vergilius Capito's slaves deserted to Lucius Vitellius, and promised that, if he were provided with men, he would put the abandoned castle into their hands. Accordingly, at dead of night he established a few lightly armed cohorts on

the top of the hills which overlooked the enemy. Thence the soldiers came charging down more to butchery than battle. They cut down their victims standing helpless and unarmed or hunting for their weapons, or perhaps newly startled from their sleep—all in a bewildering confusion of darkness, panic, bugle-calls, and savage cries. A few of the gladiators resisted and sold their lives dearly. The rest rushed to the ships; and there the same panic and confusion reigned, for the villagers were all mixed up with the troops, and the Vitellians slaughtered them too, without distinction. Just as the ⁸⁹first uproar began, six Liburnian cruisers slipped away with the admiral Apollinaris on board. The rest were either captured on the beach or overweighted and sunk by the crowds that clambered over them. Julianus was taken to Lucius Vitellius, who had him flogged till he bled and then killed before his eyes. Some writers have accused Lucius Vitellius' wife, Triaria,²¹¹ of putting on a soldier's sword, and with insolent cruelty showing herself among the horrors of the captured town. Lucius himself sent a laurel-wreath to his brother in token of his success, and inquired whether he wished him to return at once or to continue reducing Campania. This delay saved not only Vespasian's party but Rome as well. Had he marched on the city while his men were fresh from their victory, with the flush of success added to their natural intrepidity, there would have been a tremendous struggle, which must have involved the city's destruction. Lucius Vitellius, too, for all his evil repute, was a man of action. Good men owe their power to their virtues; but he was one of that worst sort whose vices are their only virtue.

²⁰⁷See chap. 58.

²⁰⁸An Italian goddess of freedom. The temple is mentioned in Horace's *Journey to Brundisium*, where Anxur = Tarracina, which was three miles from the temple.

²⁰⁹Chap. 57.

²¹⁰He was in command of the rebels from the fleet at Misenum, and engaged in bringing over the country-towns (see chap. 57).

²¹¹Cp. chaps. 63 and 64.

THE SACK OF ROME AND THE END OF VITELLIUS

78While things²¹² went thus on Vitellius' side, the Flavian army after leaving Narnia spent the days of ⁹⁰the Saturnalian holiday²¹³ quietly at Otricoli.²¹⁴ The object of this disastrous delay was to wait for Mucianus. Antonius has been suspected of delaying treacherously after receiving a secret communication from Vitellius, offering him as the price of treason the consulship, his young daughter, and a rich dowry. Others hold that this story was invented to gratify Mucianus. Many consider that the policy of all the Flavian generals was rather to threaten the city than to attack it. They realized that Vitellius had lost the best cohorts of his Guards, and now that all his forces were cut off they expected he would abdicate. But this prospect was spoilt first by Sabinus' precipitation and then by his cowardice, for, after very rashly taking arms, he failed to defend against three cohorts of Guards the strongly fortified castle on the Capitol, which ought to have been impregnable even to a large army. However, it is not easy to assign to any one man the blame which they all share. Even Mucianus helped to delay the

victors' advance by the ambiguity of his dispatches, and Antonius was also to blame for his untimely compliance with instructions—or else for trying to throw the responsibility²¹⁵ on Mucianus. The other generals thought the war was over, and thus rendered its final scene all the more appalling. Petilius Cerialis was sent forward with a thousand cavalry to ⁹¹make his way by cross-roads through the Sabine country, and enter the city by the Salarian road.²¹⁶ But even he failed to make sufficient haste, and at last the news of the siege of the Capitol brought them all at once to their senses. ⁷⁹Marching up the Flaminian road, it was already deep night when Antonius reached 'The Red Rocks'.²¹⁷ His help had come too late. There he heard that Sabinus had been killed, and the Capitol burnt; the city was in panic; everything looked black; even the populace and the slaves were arming for Vitellius. Petilius Cerialis, too, had been defeated in a cavalry engagement. He had pushed on without caution, thinking the enemy already beaten, and the Vitellians with a mixed force of horse and foot had caught him unawares. The engagement had taken place near the city among farm buildings and gardens and winding lanes, with which the Vitellians were familiar, while the Flavians were terrified by their ignorance. Besides, the troopers were not all of one mind; some of them belonged to the force which had recently surrendered at Narnia, and were waiting to see which side won. Julius Flavianus, who commanded a regiment of cavalry, was taken prisoner. The rest fell into a disgraceful panic and fled, but the pursuit was not continued beyond Fidenae.

⁸⁰This success served to increase the popular excitement. The city rabble now took arms. A few had service-shields: most of them snatched up any weapons ⁹²they could find and clamoured to be given the sign for battle. Vitellius expressed his gratitude to them and bade them sally forth to protect the city. He then summoned a meeting of the senate, at which envoys were appointed to go to the two armies and urge them in the name of public welfare to accept peace. The fortunes of the envoys varied. Those who approached Petilius Cerialis found themselves in dire danger, for the soldiers indignantly refused their terms. The praetor, Arulenus Rusticus,²¹⁸ was wounded. Apart from the wrong done to a praetor and an envoy, the man's own acknowledged worth made this seem all the more scandalous. His companions were flogged, and the lictor nearest to him was killed for venturing to make a way through the crowd. Indeed, if the guard provided by the general had not intervened, a Roman envoy, the sanctity of whose person even foreign nations respect, might have been wickedly murdered in the mad rage of civil strife under the very walls of Rome. Those who went to Antonius met with a more reasonable reception; not that the soldiers were less violent, but the general had more authority.

⁸¹A knight named Musonius Rufus had attached himself to the envoys. He was a student of philosophy and an enthusiastic advocate of Stoicism. He mingled with the armed soldiers offering them advice and discoursing on the advantages of peace and the perils of war. This amused many of them and bored still ⁹³more. Some, indeed, wanted to maul him and kick him out, but the advice of the more sober spirits and the threats

of others persuaded him to cut short his ill-timed lecture. The Vestal Virgins, too, came in procession to bring Antonius a letter from Vitellius, in which he demanded one day's postponement of the final crisis, saying that everything could easily be settled, if only they would grant this respite. Antonius sent the Virgins away with all respect, and wrote in answer to Vitellius that the murder of Sabinus and the burning of the Capitol had broken off all negotiations.⁸² However, he summoned the legions to a meeting and endeavoured to mollify them, proposing that they should pitch their camp near the Mulvian Bridge and enter the city on the following day. His motive for delay was a fear that the troops, when once their blood was up after a skirmish, would have no respect for civilians or senators, or even for the temples and shrines of the gods. But they suspected every postponement as a hindrance to their victory. Moreover, some colours which were seen glittering along the hills, gave the impression of a hostile force, although none but peaceful citizens accompanied them.

The attack was made in three columns. One advanced from its original position on the Flaminian road, one kept near the bank of the Tiber, and the third approached the Colline Gate along the Salarian road. The cavalry rode into the mob and scattered them. But the Vitellian troops faced the enemy, themselves, too, in three separate divisions. Again ⁹⁴and again they engaged before the walls with varying success. But the Flavians had the advantage of being well led and thus more often won success. Only one of the attacking parties suffered at all severely, that which had made its way along narrow, greasy lanes to Sallust's Gardens²¹⁹ on the left side of the city. Standing on the garden walls, the Vitellians hurled stones and javelins down upon them and held them back until late in the day. But at last the cavalry forced an entrance by the Colline Gate and took the defenders in the rear. Then the opposing forces met on the Martian Plain itself. Fortune favoured the Flavians and the sense of victories won. The Vitellians charged in sheer despair, but, though driven back, they gathered again in the city.

⁸³The people came and watched the fighting, cheering and applauding now one side, now the other, like spectators at a gladiatorial contest. Whenever one side gave ground, and the soldiers began to hide in shops or seek refuge in some private house, they clamoured for them to be dragged out and killed, and thus got the greater part of the plunder for themselves: for while the soldiers were busy with the bloody work of massacre, the spoil fell to the crowd. The scene throughout the city was hideous and terrible: on the one side fighting and wounded men, on the other baths and restaurants: here lay heaps of bleeding dead, and close at hand were harlots and their companions—all the vice and licence of luxurious peace, ⁹⁵and all the crime and horror of a captured town. One might well have thought the city mad with fury and mad with pleasure at the same time. Armies had fought in the city before this, twice when Sulla mastered Rome,²²⁰ once under Cinna.²²¹ Nor were there less horrors then. What was now so inhuman was the people's indifference. Not for one minute did they interrupt the life of pleasure. The fighting was a new amusement for their holiday.²²² Caring

nothing for either party, they enjoyed themselves in riotous dissipation and took a frank pleasure in their country's disaster.

84The storming of the Guards' camp was the most troublesome task. It was still held by some of the bravest as a forlorn hope, which made the victors all the more eager to take it, especially those who had originally served in the Guards. They employed against it every means ever devised for the storming of the most strongly fortified towns, a 'tortoise',²²³ artillery, earthworks, firebrands. This, they cried, was the crown of all the toil and danger they had undergone in all their battles. They had restored the city to the senate and people of Rome, and their Temples to the gods: the soldier's pride is his camp, it is his country and his home. If they could not regain it at once, they must spend the night in fighting. The Vitellians, for their part, had numbers and fortune against them, but by marring their enemy's victory, by postponing ⁹⁶peace, by fouling houses and altars with their blood, they embraced the last consolations that the conquered can enjoy. Many lay more dead than alive on the towers and ramparts of the walls and there expired. When the gates were torn down, the remainder faced the conquerors in a body. And there they fell, every man of them facing the enemy with all his wounds in front. Even as they died they took care to make an honourable end.

When the city was taken, Vitellius left the Palace by a back way and was carried in a litter to his wife's house on the Aventine. If he could lie hid during the day, he hoped to make his escape to his brother and the Guards at Tarracina. But it is in the very nature of terror that, while any course looks dangerous, the present state of things seems worst of all. His fickle determination soon changed and he returned to the vast, deserted Palace, whence even the lowest of his menials had fled, or at least avoided meeting him. Shuddering at the solitude and hushed silence of the place, he wandered about, trying closed doors, terrified to find the rooms empty; until at last, wearied with his miserable search, he crept into some shameful hiding-place. There Julius Placidus, an officer of the Guards, found him and dragged him out. His hands were tied behind his back, his clothes were torn, and thus he was led forth—a loathly spectacle at which many hurled insults and no one shed a single tear of pity. The ignominy of his end killed all compassion. On the way a soldier of the German army either ⁹⁷aimed an angry blow at him, or tried to put him out of his shame, or meant, perhaps, to strike the officer in command; at any rate, he cut off the officer's ear and was immediately stabbed. 85With the points of their swords they made Vitellius hold up his head and face their insults, forcing him again and again to watch his own statues hurtling down, or to look at the Rostra and the spot where Galba had been killed. At last he was dragged along to the Ladder of Sighs,²²⁴ where the body of Flavius Sabinus had lain. One saying of his which was recorded had a ring of true nobility. When some officer flung reproaches at him, he answered, 'And yet I was once your emperor.' After that he fell under a shower of wounds, and when he was dead the mob abused him as loudly as they had flattered him in his lifetime—and with as little reason.

86 Vitellius' home was at Luceria.²²⁵ He was in his fifty-seventh year, and had won the consulship, priesthoods, and a name and position among Rome's greatest men, all of which he owed to no efforts of his own, but solely to his father's eminence.²²⁶ Those who offered him the throne had not yet learnt to know him; and yet his slothful cowardice won from his soldiers an enthusiasm which the best of generals have rarely evoked. Still he had the qualities of candour and generosity, which without moderation are liable to prove disastrous. He had few friends, though he bought many, thinking to keep them, not by showing moral stamina, but by giving liberal presents. It was indubitably good for the country that Vitellius should be beaten. But those who betrayed him to Vespasian can hardly make a merit of their perfidy, for they were the very men who had deserted Galba for Vitellius.

The day was already sinking into evening. The magistrates and senators had fled in terror from the city, or were still in hiding at dependants' houses: it was therefore impossible to call a meeting of the senate. When all fear of violence was at an end, Domitian came out²²⁷ and presented himself to the generals of his party. The crowds of soldiers at once hailed him as Caesar, and marched off, still in full armour, to escort him to his father's house.

²¹²The narrative is continued from chap. [63](#).

²¹³December 17-23.

²¹⁴Otricoli.

²¹⁵i.e. for the delay which gave time for the burning of the Capitol. The fact that he tried to shift the responsibility seemed to argue an uncomfortable conscience.

²¹⁶i.e. through the Colline Gate.

²¹⁷Grotta Rosa.

²¹⁸A well-known member of the Stoic opposition, executed by Domitian's order, A.D. 94.

²¹⁹The historian. They now belonged to the emperor.

²²⁰88 and 82 B.C.

²²¹87 B.C.

²²²The Saturnalia.

²²³See chap. [27](#), note [77](#).

²²⁴Cp. note [205](#).

²²⁵The words are uncertain. There is probably a lacuna.

²²⁶Cp. vol. i, note [99](#).

²²⁷He had taken refuge with a humble friend (see chap. [74](#)).

BOOK IV

ROME AFTER THE FALL OF VITELLIUS

(January-July, A.D. 70)

1 The death of Vitellius ended the war without inaugurating peace. The victors remained under arms, and the defeated Vitellians were hunted through the city with implacable

hatred, and butchered promiscuously wherever they were found. The streets were choked with corpses; squares and temples ran with blood. Soon the riot knew no restraint; they began to hunt for those who were in hiding and to drag them out. All who were tall and of youthful appearance, whether soldiers or civilians, were cut down indiscriminately.²²⁸ While their rage was fresh they sated their savage cravings with blood; then suddenly the instinct of greed prevailed. On the pretext of hunting for hidden enemies, they would leave no door unopened and regard no privacy. Thus they began to rifle private houses or else made resistance an excuse for murder. There were plenty of needy citizens, too, and of rascally slaves, who were perfectly ready to betray wealthy householders: others were indicated by their friends. From all sides came cries of mourning ¹⁰⁰and misery. Rome was like a captured city. People even longed to have the insolent soldiery of Otho and Vitellius back again, much as they had been hated. The Flavian generals, who had fanned the flame of civil war with such energy, were incapable of using their victory temperately. In riot and disorder the worst characters take the lead; peace and quiet call for the highest qualities.

2Domitian having secured the title and the official residence of a Caesar,²²⁹ did not as yet busy himself with serious matters, but in his character of emperor's son devoted himself to dissolute intrigues. Arrius Varus²³⁰ took command of the Guards, but the supreme authority rested with Antonius Primus. He removed money and slaves from the emperor's house as though he were plundering Cremona. The other generals, from excess of modesty or lack of spirit, shared neither the distinctions of the war nor the profits of peace.

People in Rome were now so nervous and so resigned to despotism that they demanded that Lucius Vitellius and his force of Guards should be surprised on their way back from Tarracina,²³¹ and the last sparks of the war stamped out. Some cavalry were sent forward to Aricia, while the column of the legions halted short of Bovillae.²³² Vitellius, however, lost no time in surrendering himself and his Guards to the conqueror's ¹⁰¹discretion, and the men flung away their unlucky swords more in anger than in fear. The long line of prisoners filed through the city between ranks of armed guards. None looked like begging for mercy. With sad, set faces they remained sternly indifferent to the applause or the mockery of the ribald crowd. A few tried to break away, but were surrounded and overpowered. The rest were put in prison. Not one of them gave vent to any unseemly complaint. Through all their misfortunes they preserved their reputation for courage. Lucius Vitellius was then executed. He was as weak as his brother, though during the principate he showed himself less indolent. Without sharing his brother's success, he was carried away on the flood of his disaster.

3At this time Lucilius Bassus²³³ was sent off with a force of light horse to quell the disquiet in Campania, which was caused more by the mutual jealousy of the townships than by any opposition to the emperor. The sight of the soldiers restored order. The smaller colonies were pardoned, but at Capua the Third legion²³⁴ was left in winter quarters and some of the leading families fined.²³⁵ Tarracina, on the other hand,

received no relief. It is always easier to requite an injury than a service: gratitude is a burden, but revenge is found to pay. Their only consolation was that one of Vergilius Capito's slaves, who had, as we ¹⁰²have seen,[236](#) betrayed the town, was hanged on the gallows with the very rings[237](#) on his fingers which Vitellius had given him to wear.

At Rome the senate decreed to Vespasian all the usual prerogatives of the principate.[238](#) They were now happy and confident. Seeing that the civil war had broken out in the provinces of Gaul and Spain, and after causing a rebellion first in Germany and then in Illyricum, had spread to Egypt, Judaea, Syria,[239](#) and in fact to all the provinces and armies of the empire, they felt that the world had been purged as by fire and that all was now over. Their satisfaction was still further enhanced by a letter from Vespasian, which at first sight seemed to be phrased as if the war was still going on. Still his tone was that of an emperor, though he spoke of himself as a simple citizen and gave his country all the glory. The senate for its part showed no lack of deference. They decreed that Vespasian himself should be consul with Titus for his colleague, and on Domitian they conferred the praetorship with the powers of a consul.[240](#)

4Mucianus had also addressed a letter to the senate ¹⁰³which gave rise to a good deal of talk.[241](#) If he were a private citizen, why adopt the official tone? He could have expressed the same opinions a few days later from his place in the House. Besides, his attack on Vitellius came too late to prove his independence, and what seemed particularly humiliating for the country and insulting to the emperor was his boast that he had held the empire in the hollow of his hand, and had given it to Vespasian. However, they concealed their ill-will and made a great show of flattery, decreeing to Mucianus in the most complimentary terms full triumphal honours, which were really given him for his success against his fellow countrymen, though they trumped up an expedition to Sarmatia as a pretext.[242](#) On Antonius Primus they conferred the insignia of the consulship, and those of the praetorship on Cornelius Fuscus and Arrius Varus. Then came the turn of the gods: it was decided to restore the Capitol. These proposals were all moved by the consul-designate, Valerius Asiaticus.[243](#) The others signified assent by smiling and holding up their hands, though a few, who were particularly distinguished, or especially practised in the art of flattery, delivered set speeches. When it came to the turn of Helvidius Priscus, the praetor-designate, he expressed himself in terms which, while doing honour to a good emperor, were perfectly frank ¹⁰⁴and honest.[244](#) The senate showed their keen approval, and it was this day which first won for him great disfavour and great distinction.

5Since I have had occasion to make a second allusion[245](#) to a man whom I shall often have to mention again,[246](#) it may be well to give here a brief account of his character and ideals, and of his fortune in life. Helvidius Priscus came from the country town of Cluviae.[247](#) His father had been a senior centurion in the army. From his early youth Helvidius devoted his great intellectual powers to the higher studies, not as many people do, with the idea of using a philosopher's reputation as a cloak for indolence,[248](#) but

rather to fortify himself against the caprice of fortune when he entered public life. He became a follower of that school of philosophy²⁴⁹ which holds that honesty is the one good thing in life and sin the only evil, while power and rank and other such external things, not being qualities of character, are neither good nor bad. He had risen no higher than the rank of quaestor when Paetus Thrasea chose him for his son-in-law,²⁵⁰ and of Thrasea's virtues he absorbed none so much as his independence. As citizen, senator, husband, son-in-law, friend, in every sphere of life he was thoroughly consistent, always showing contempt¹⁰⁵ for money, stubborn persistence in the right, and courage in the face of danger. ⁶Some people thought him too ambitious, for even with philosophers the passion for fame is often their last rag of infirmity. After Thrasea's fall Helvidius was banished, but he returned to Rome under Galba and proceeded to prosecute Eprius Marcellus,²⁵¹ who had informed against his father-in-law. This attempt to secure a revenge, as bold as it was just, divided the senate into two parties, for the fall of Marcellus would involve the ruin of a whole army of similar offenders. At first the struggle was full of recrimination, as the famous speeches on either side testify; but after a while, finding that Galba's attitude was doubtful and that many of the senators begged him to desist, Helvidius dropped the prosecution. On his action in this matter men's comments varied with their character, some praising his moderation, others asking what had become of his tenacity.

To return to the senate: at the same meeting at which they voted powers to Vespasian they also decided to send a deputation to address him. This gave rise to a sharp dispute between Helvidius Priscus and Eprius Marcellus. The former thought the members of the deputation ought to be nominated by magistrates acting under oath; Marcellus demanded their selection by lot. The consul-designate had already spoken in ⁷favour of the latter method, but Marcellus' motive was personal vanity, for he was afraid that if others ¹⁰⁶were chosen he would seem slighted. Their exchange of views gradually grew into a formal and acrimonious debate. Helvidius inquired why it was that Marcellus was so afraid of the magistrates' judgement, seeing that he himself had great advantages of wealth and of eloquence over many others. Could it be the memory of his misdeeds that so oppressed him? The fall of the lot could not discern character: but the whole point of submitting people to the vote and to scrutiny by the senate was to get at the truth about each man's life and reputation. In the interest of the country, and out of respect to Vespasian, it was important that he should be met by men whom the senate considered beyond reproach, men who would give the emperor a taste for honest language. Vespasian had been a friend of Thrasea, Soranus, and Sentius,²⁵² and even though there might be no need to punish their prosecutors, still it would be wrong to put them forward. Moreover, the senate's selection would be a sort of hint to the emperor whom to approve and whom to avoid. 'Good friends are the most effective instruments of good government. Marcellus ought to be content with having driven Nero to destroy so many innocent people. Let him enjoy the impunity and the profit he has won from that, and leave Vespasian to more honest advisers.'

¹⁰⁷8Marcellus replied that the opinion which was being impugned was not his own. The consul-designate had already advised them to follow the established precedent, which was that deputations should be chosen by lot, so that there should be no room for intrigue or personal animosity. Nothing had happened to justify them in setting aside such an ancient system. Why turn a compliment to the emperor into a slight upon some one else? Anybody could do homage. What they had to avoid was the possibility that some people's obstinacy might irritate the emperor at the outset of his reign, while his intentions were undecided and he was still busy watching faces and listening to what was said. 'I have not forgotten,' he went on, 'the days of my youth or the constitution which our fathers and grandfathers established.²⁵³ But while admiring a distant past, I support the existing state of things. I pray for good emperors, but I take them as they come. As for Thrasea, it was not my speech but the senate's verdict which did for him. Nero took a savage delight in farces like that trial, and, really, the friendship of such an emperor cost me as much anxiety as banishment did to others. In fine, Helvidius may be as brave and as firm as any Brutus or Cato; I am but a senator and we are all slaves together. Besides, I advise my friend not to try and get an upper hand with our emperor or to force his tuition on a man of ripe years,²⁵⁴ who wears the insignia of a triumph and is the father ¹⁰⁸of two grown sons. Bad rulers like absolute sovereignty, and even the best of them must set some limit to their subjects' independence.'

This heated interchange of arguments found supporters for both views. The party which wanted the deputies chosen by lot eventually prevailed, since even the moderates were anxious to observe the precedent, and all the most prominent members tended to vote with them, for fear of encountering ill-feeling if they were selected.

⁹This dispute was followed by another. The Praetors, who in those days administered the Treasury,²⁵⁵ complained of the spread of poverty in the country and demanded some restriction of expenditure. The consul-designate said that, as the undertaking would be so vast and the remedy so difficult, he was in favour of leaving it for the emperor. Helvidius maintained that it ought to be settled by the senate's decision. When the consuls began to take each senator's opinion, Vulcarius Tertullinus, one of the tribunes, interposed his veto, on the ground that they could not decide such an important question in the emperor's absence. Helvidius had previously moved that the Capitol should be restored at the public cost, and with the assistance of Vespasian. The moderates all passed over this suggestion in silence and soon ¹⁰⁹forgot it, but there were others who took care to remember it.²⁵⁶

¹⁰It was at this time that Musonius Rufus²⁵⁷ brought an action against Publius Celer on the ground that it was only by perjury that he had secured the conviction of Soranus Barea.²⁵⁸ It was felt that this trial restarted the hue and cry against professional accusers. But the defendant was a rascal of no importance who could not be sheltered, and, moreover, Barea's memory was sacred. Celer had set up as a teacher of philosophy and then committed perjury against his pupil Barea, thus treacherously violating the

very principles of friendship which he professed to teach. The case was put down for the next day's meeting.²⁵⁹ But now that a taste for revenge was aroused, people were all agog to see not so much Musonius and Publius as Priscus and Marcellus and the rest in court.

11 Thus the senate quarrelled; the defeated party nursed their grievances; the winners had no power to enforce their will; law was in abeyance and the emperor absent. This state of things continued until Mucianus arrived in Rome and took everything into his own hands. This shattered the supremacy of Antonius and Varus, for, though Mucianus tried to show a friendly face towards them, he was not very ¹¹⁰successful in concealing his dislike. But the people of Rome, having acquired great skill in detecting strained relations, had already transferred their allegiance. Mucianus was now the sole object of their flattering attentions. And he lived up to them. He surrounded himself with an armed escort, and kept changing his house and gardens. His display, his public appearances, the night-watch that guarded him, all showed that he had adopted the style of an emperor while forgoing the title. The greatest alarm was aroused by his execution of Calpurnius Galerianus, a son of Caius Piso.²⁶⁰ He had attempted no treachery, but his distinguished name and handsome presence had made the youth a subject of common talk, and the country was full of turbulent spirits who delighted in revolutionary rumours and idly talked of his coming to the throne. Mucianus gave orders that he should be arrested by a body of soldiers, and to avoid a conspicuous execution in the heart of the city, they marched him forty miles along the Appian road, where they severed his veins and let him bleed to death. Julius Priscus, who had commanded the Guards under Vitellius, committed suicide, more from shame than of necessity. Alfenus Varus survived the disgrace of his cowardice.²⁶¹ Asiaticus,²⁶² who was a freedman, paid for his malign influence by dying the death of a slave.²⁶³

²²⁸Because they were taken for members of Vitellius' German auxiliary cohorts.

²²⁹Cp. iii. [86](#) sub fin.

²³⁰Cp. iii. [6](#).

²³¹See iii. [76](#).

²³²These three towns are all on the Appian Way, Bovillae ten miles from Rome, Aricia sixteen, Tarracina fifty-nine, on the coast.

²³³Cp. iii. [12](#).

²³⁴Gallica.

²³⁵Capua had adhered to Vitellius. Tarracina had been held for Vespasian (cp. iii. [57](#)).

²³⁶See iii. [77](#).

²³⁷The insignia of equestrian rank (cp. i. [13](#)).

²³⁸The chief of these were the powers of tribune, pro-consul, and censor, and the title of Augustus (cp. i. [47](#), ii. [55](#)).

²³⁹had risen in Gaul; Galba in Spain; Vitellius in Germany; Antonius Primus in the Danube provinces (Illyricum); Vespasian and Mucianus in Judaea, Syria, and Egypt.

²⁴⁰This was necessary in the absence of Vespasian and Titus.

²⁴¹See vol. i, note [339](#).

²⁴²A triumph could, of course, be held only for victories over a foreign enemy. Here the pretext was the repulse of the Dacians (iii. [46](#)).

²⁴³Vitellius' son-in-law (cp. i. [59](#)).

²⁴⁴In the text some words seem to be missing here, but the general sense is clear.

²⁴⁵Cp. ii. [91](#).

²⁴⁶If Tacitus ever told the story of his banishment and death, his version has been lost with the rest of his history of Vespasian's reign.

²⁴⁷In Samnium.

²⁴⁸i.e. shirking the duties of public life.

²⁴⁹i.e. the Stoic.

²⁵⁰See ii. [91](#).

²⁵¹Cp. ii. [53](#).

²⁵²Soranus, like Thræsea, was a Stoic who opposed the government mainly on moral grounds. The story of their end is told in the *Annals*, Book XVI. Sentius was presumably another member of their party.

²⁵³He refers to Augustus' regularization of the principate.

²⁵⁴Fifty-nine.

²⁵⁵The administration of this office was changed several times in the first century of the empire. Here we have a reversion to Augustus' second plan. Trajan restored Augustus' original plan—also adopted by Nero—of appointing special Treasury officials from the ex-prætors.

²⁵⁶His offence lay in assigning to the emperor a merely secondary position.

²⁵⁷His ill-timed advocacy of Stoicism is mentioned iii. [81](#).

²⁵⁸Described in the *Annals*, xvi. 32.

²⁵⁹The description of this is postponed to chap. [40](#). Celer was convicted.

²⁶⁰C. Piso had conspired against Nero, A.D. 65.

²⁶¹They had both abandoned their camp at Narnia (cp. iii. [61](#)).

²⁶²Cp. ii. [57](#).

²⁶³i.e. he was crucified.

THE REVOLT OF CIVILIS AND THE BATAVI

12The growing rumour of a reverse in Germany²⁶⁴ had not as yet caused any alarm in Rome. People alluded to the loss of armies, the capture of the legions' winter quarters, the defection of the Gallic provinces as matters of indifference. I must now go back and explain the origin of this war, and of the widespread rebellion of foreign and allied tribes which now broke into flame.

The Batavi were once a tribe of the Chatti,²⁶⁵ living on the further bank of the Rhine. But an outbreak of civil war had driven them across the river, where they settled in a still unoccupied district on the frontier of Gaul and also in the neighbouring island, enclosed on one side by the ocean and on the other three sides by the Rhine.²⁶⁶ There they fared better than most tribes who ally themselves to a stronger power. Their resources are still intact, and they have only to contribute men and arms for the imperial army.²⁶⁷ After ¹¹²a long training in the German wars, they still further increased their reputation in Britain, where their troops had been sent, commanded according to an ancient custom by some of the noblest chiefs. There still remained behind in their own country a picked troop of horsemen with a peculiar knack of swimming, which enabled them to make a practice²⁶⁸ of crossing the Rhine with unbroken ranks without losing control of their horses or their weapons.

13Of their chieftains two outshone the rest. These were Julius Paulus and Julius Civilis, both of royal stock. Paulus had been executed by Fonteius Capito on a false charge of rebellion.²⁶⁹ On the same occasion Civilis was sent in chains to Nero. Galba, however, set him free, and under Vitellius he again ran great risk of his life, when the army

clamoured for his execution.²⁷⁰ This gave him a motive for hating Rome, and our misfortunes fed his hopes. He was, indeed, far cleverer than most barbarians, and professed to be a second Sertorius or Hannibal, because they all three had the same physical defect.²⁷¹ He was afraid that if he openly rebelled against the Roman people they would treat him as an enemy, and march on him at once, so he pretended to be a keen supporter of Vespasian's party. This much was true, that Antonius¹¹³ Primus had written instructing him to divert the auxiliaries whom Vitellius had summoned, and to delay the legions on the pretence of a rising in Germany. Moreover, Hordeonius Flaccus²⁷² had given him the same advice in person, for Flaccus was inclined to support Vespasian and anxious for the safety of Rome, which was threatened with utter disaster, if the war were to break out afresh and all these thousands of troops come pouring into Italy.

14Having thus made up his mind to rebel, Civilis concealed in the meantime his ulterior design, and while intending to guide his ultimate policy by future events, proceeded to initiate the rising as follows. The young Batavians were by Vitellius' orders being pressed for service, and this burden was being rendered even more irksome than it need have been by the greed and depravity of the recruiting officers. They took to enrolling elderly men and invalids so as to get bribes for excusing them: or, as most of the Batavi are tall and good-looking in their youth, they would seize the handsomest boys for immoral purposes. This caused bad feeling; an agitation was organized, and they were persuaded to refuse service. Accordingly, on the pretext of giving a banquet, Civilis summoned the chief nobles and the most determined of the tribesmen to a sacred grove. Then, when he saw them excited by their revelry and the late hour of the night, he began to speak of the glorious past of the Batavi and to enumerate the wrongs they had suffered, the injustice¹¹⁴ and extortion and all the evils of their slavery. 'We are no longer treated,' he said, 'as we used to be, like allies, but like menials and slaves. Why, we are never even visited by an imperial Governor²⁷³—irksome though the insolence of his staff would be. We are given over to prefects and centurions; and when these subordinates have had their fill of extortion and of bloodshed, they promptly find some one to replace them, and then there are new pockets to fill and new pretexts for plunder. Now conscription is upon us: children are to be torn from parents, brother from brother, never, probably, to meet again. And yet the fortunes of Rome were never more depressed. Their cantonments contain nothing but loot and a lot of old men. Lift up your eyes and look at them. There is nothing to fear from legions that only exist on paper.²⁷⁴ And we are strong. We have infantry and cavalry: the Germans are our kinsmen: the Gauls share our ambition. Even the Romans will be grateful if we go to war.²⁷⁵ If we fail, we can claim credit for supporting Vespasian: if we succeed, there will be no one to call us to account.'

15His speech was received with great approval, and he at once bound them all to union, using the barbarous ceremonies and strange oaths of his country. They¹¹⁵ then sent to the Canninefates to join their enterprise. This tribe inhabits part of the Island,²⁷⁶ and

though inferior in numbers to the Batavi, they are of the same race and language and the same courageous spirit. Civilis next sent secret messages to win over the Batavian troops, which after serving as Roman auxiliaries in Britain had been sent, as we have already seen,²⁷⁷ to Germany and were now stationed at Mainz.²⁷⁸

One of the Canninefates, Brinno by name, was a man of distinguished family and stubborn courage. His father had often ventured acts of hostility, and had with complete impunity shown his contempt for Caligula's farcical expedition.²⁷⁹ To belong to such a family of rebels was in itself a recommendation. He was accordingly placed on a shield, swung up on the shoulders of his friends, and thus elected leader after the fashion of the tribe. Summoning to his aid the Frisii²⁸⁰—a tribe from beyond the Rhine—he fell upon two cohorts of auxiliaries whose camp lay close to the neighbouring shore.²⁸¹ The attack was unexpected, and the troops, even if they had foreseen it, were not strong enough to offer resistance: so the camp was taken and looted. They then fell on the Roman camp—¹¹⁶followers and traders, who had gone off in all directions as if peace were assured. Finding the forts now threatened with destruction, the Roman officers set fire to them, as they had no means of defence. All the troops with their standards and colours retired in a body to the upper end of the island, led by Aquilius, a senior centurion. But they were an army in name only, not in strength, for Vitellius had withdrawn all the efficient soldiers and had replaced them by a useless mob, who had been drawn from the neighbouring Nervian and German villages and were only embarrassed by their armour.²⁸²

¹⁶Civilis thought it best to proceed by guile, and actually ventured to blame the Roman officers for abandoning the forts. He could, he told them, with the cohort under his command, suppress the outbreak of the Canninefates without their assistance: they could all go back to their winter-quarters. However, it was plain that some treachery underlay his advice—it would be easier to crush the cohorts if they were separated—and also that Civilis, not Brinno, was at the head of this war. Evidence of this gradually leaked out, as the Germans loved war too well to keep ¹¹⁷the secret for long. Finding his artifice unsuccessful, Civilis tried force instead, forming the Canninefates, Frisii and Batavi into three separate columns.²⁸³ The Roman line faced them in position near the Rhine bank.²⁸⁴ They had brought their ships there after the burning of the forts, and these were now turned with their prows towards the enemy. Soon after the engagement began a Tungrian cohort deserted to Civilis, and the Romans were so startled by this unexpected treachery that they were cut to pieces by their allies and their enemies combined. Similar treachery occurred in the fleet. Some of the rowers, who were Batavians, feigning clumsiness tried to impede the sailors and marines in the performance of their functions, and after a while openly resisted them and turned the ships' sterns towards the enemy's bank. Finally, they killed the pilots and centurions who refused to join them, and thus all the twenty-four ships of the flotilla either deserted to the enemy or were captured by them.

17This victory made Civilis immediately famous and proved subsequently very useful. Having now got the ships and the weapons which they needed, he and his ¹¹⁸followers were enthusiastically proclaimed as champions of liberty throughout Germany and Gaul. The German provinces immediately sent envoys with offers of help, while Civilis endeavoured by diplomacy and by bribery to secure an alliance with the Gauls. He sent back the auxiliary officers whom he had taken prisoner, each to his own tribe, and offered the cohorts the choice of either going home or remaining with him. Those who remained were given an honourable position in his army: and those who went home received presents out of the Roman spoil. At the same time Civilis talked to them confidentially and reminded them of the miseries they had endured for all these years, in which they had disguised their wretched slavery under the name of peace. 'The Batavi,' he would say, 'were excused from taxation, and yet they have taken arms against the common tyrant. In the first engagement the Romans were routed and beaten. What if Gaul throws off the yoke? What forces are there left in Italy? It is with the blood of provincials that their provinces are won. Don't think of the defeat of . Why, it was the Batavian cavalry which trampled on the Aedui and Arverni,²⁸⁵ and there were Belgic auxiliaries in Verginius' force. The truth is that Gaul succumbed to her own armies. But now we are all united in one party, fortified, moreover, by the military discipline which prevails in Roman camps:¹¹⁹ and we have on our side the veterans before whom Otho's legions lately bit the dust. Let Syria and Asia play the slave: the East is used to tyrants: but there are many still living in Gaul who were born before the days of tribute.²⁸⁶ Indeed, it is only the other day²⁸⁷ that Quintilius Varus was killed, when slavery was driven out of Germany, and they brought into the field not the Emperor Vitellius but Caesar Augustus himself. Why, liberty is the natural prerogative even of dumb animals: courage is the peculiar attribute of man. Heaven helps the brave. Come, then, fall upon them while your hands are free and theirs are tied, while you are fresh and they are weary. Some of them are for Vespasian, others for Vitellius; now is your chance to crush both parties at once.'

18Civilis thus had his eye on Gaul and Germany and aspired, had his project prospered, to become king of two countries, one pre-eminent in wealth and the other in military strength.

²⁶⁴Cp. iii. 46.

²⁶⁵One of the greatest and most warlike of the German tribes living in the modern Hessen-Nassau and Waldeck. Tacitus describes them at length in his *Germania*.

²⁶⁶i.e. a stretch of land about sixty miles in length, from Nymwegen to the Hook of Holland, enclosed by the diverging mouths of the Rhine, the northern of which is now called the Lek, the southern the Waal (in Tacitus' time Vahalís). The name Betuwe is still applied to the eastern part of this island.

²⁶⁷In the *Germania* Tacitus says that, like weapons, they are kept exclusively for use in war, and are spared the indignity of taxation.

²⁶⁸Some such word as *peritus* or *exercitus* must be supplied at the end of this chapter.

²⁶⁹Probably during the revolt of . Capito governed Lower Germany.

²⁷⁰Cp. i. 59.

²⁷¹The loss of an eye.

²⁷²Governor of Upper Germany.

²⁷³As a subordinate division of Lower Germany the Batavian district would be administered by 'prefects' subordinate to the imperial legate.

²⁷⁴Vitellius had reduced the strength of the legions (cp. ii. [94](#)).

²⁷⁵Because it would weaken the position of Vitellius.

²⁷⁶They lived north of the Batavi, between the Zuider Zee and the North Sea.

²⁷⁷ii. [29](#).

²⁷⁸Mogontiacum.

²⁷⁹Caligula's only trophy had been helmetfuls of stones and shells from the sea-shore of Germany.

²⁸⁰Living in Friesland, north-east of the Zuider Zee.

²⁸¹Reading *applicata* (Andresen) instead of *occupata*, which gives no sense. The camp was probably somewhere near Katwyk.

²⁸²The Nervii were a Gallic tribe living on the Sambre, with settlements at Cambray, Tournay, Bavay. Ritter's alteration of *Germanorum* to *Cugernorum* is very probably right. They lived about a dozen miles west of Vetera, and are thus a likely recruiting-ground. They were of German origin, so if *Germanorum* is right, the reference will still be to them and the Tungri and other German Settlements on the east of the Rhine.

²⁸³See ii. [42](#), note [301](#). Here, however, it is not improbable that the word *cuneus* means a V-shaped formation. Tacitus' phrase in *Germ.* 6 is generally taken to mean that the Germans fought in wedge-formation. The separation of the three tribes in three columns was also typical of German tactics. The presence of kinsmen stimulated courage.

²⁸⁴Presumably at the eastern end of the island, near either Nymwegen or Arnheim.

²⁸⁵The Aedui lived in Bourgogne and Nivernois, between the Loire and the Saône; the Arverni in Auvergne, north-west of the Cevennes. Both had joined.

²⁸⁶'Many' must be an exaggeration, since Augustus' census of Gaul took place 27 B.C., ninety-five years ago.

²⁸⁷Sixty years ago, to be exact.

THE MUTINY OF THE BATAVIAN COHORTS

Hordeonius Flaccus at first furthered Civilis' schemes by shutting his eyes to them. But when messengers kept arriving in panic with news that a camp had been stormed, cohorts wiped out, and not a Roman left in the Batavian Island, he instructed¹²⁰ Munius Lupercus, who commanded the two legions²⁸⁸ in winter-quarters,²⁸⁹ to march against the enemy. Lupercus lost no time in crossing the river,²⁹⁰ taking the legions whom he had with him, some Ubii²⁹¹ who were close at hand, and the Treviran cavalry who were stationed not far away. To this force he added a regiment of Batavian cavalry, who, though their loyalty had long ago succumbed, still concealed the fact, because they hoped their desertion would fetch a higher price, if they actually betrayed the Romans on the field. Civilis set the standards of the defeated cohorts²⁹² round him in a ring to keep their fresh honours before the eyes of his men, and to terrify the enemy by reminding them of their disaster. He also gave orders that his own mother and sisters and all the wives and small children of his soldiers should be stationed in the rear to spur them to victory or shame them if they were beaten.²⁹³ When his line raised their battle-cry, the men singing and the women shrieking, the legions and their auxiliaries replied with a comparatively feeble cheer, for their left wing had been exposed by the desertion of the Batavian cavalry, who promptly turned against us. However, despite the confusion, the ¹²¹legionaries gripped their swords and kept their places. Then the Ubian and Treviran auxiliaries broke in shameful flight and went wandering all over the country. The Germans pressed hard on their heels and meanwhile the legions could

make good their escape into the camp, which was called 'Castra Vetera'.²⁹⁴ Claudius Labeo, who commanded the Batavian cavalry, had opposed Civilis as a rival in some petty municipal dispute. Civilis was afraid that, if he killed him, he might offend his countrymen, while if he spared him his presence would give rise to dissension; so he sent him off by sea to the Frisii.

19It was at this time that the cohorts of Batavians and Canninefates, on their way to Rome under orders from Vitellius, received the message which Civilis had sent to them.²⁹⁵ They promptly fell into a ferment of unruly insolence and demanded a special grant as payment for their journey, double pay, and an increase in the number of their cavalry.²⁹⁶ Although all these things had been promised by Vitellius they had no hope of obtaining them, but wanted an excuse for rebellion. Flaccus made many concessions, but the only result was that they redoubled their vigour and demanded what they felt sure he would refuse. Paying no further heed to him they made for Lower Germany, ¹²²to join Civilis. Flaccus summoned the tribunes and centurions and debated with them whether he should use force to punish this defiance of authority. After a while he gave way to his natural cowardice and the fears of his subordinates, who were distressed by the thought that the loyalty of the auxiliaries was doubtful and that the legions had been recruited by a hurried levy. It was decided, therefore, to keep the soldiers in camp.²⁹⁷ However, he soon changed his mind when he found himself criticized by the very men whose advice he had taken. He now seemed bent on pursuit, and wrote to Herennius Gallus in command of the First legion, who was holding Bonn, telling him to bar the path of the Batavians, and promising that he and his army would follow hard upon their heels. The rebels might certainly have been crushed had Flaccus and Gallus each advanced their forces from opposite directions and thus surrounded them. But Flaccus soon gave up the idea, and wrote another letter to Gallus, warning him to let the rebels pass undisturbed. This gave rise to a suspicion that the generals were purposely promoting the war; and all the disasters which had already occurred or were feared in the future, were attributed not to the soldiers' inefficiency or the strength of the enemy, but to the treachery of the generals.

20On nearing the camp at Bonn, the Batavians sent forward a messenger to explain their intentions to Herennius Gallus. Against the Romans, for whom ¹²³they had fought so often, they had no wish to make war: but they were worn out after a long and unprofitable term of service and wanted to go home and rest. If no one opposed them they would march peaceably by; but if hostility was offered they would find a passage at the point of the sword. Gallus hesitated, but his men induced him to risk an engagement. Three thousand legionaries, some hastily recruited Belgic auxiliaries, and a mob of peasants and camp-followers, who were as cowardly in action as they were boastful before it, came pouring out simultaneously from all the gates, hoping with their superior numbers to surround the Batavians. But these were experienced veterans. They formed up into columns²⁹⁸ in deep formation that defied assault on front, flank, or rear. They thus pierced our thinner line. The Belgae giving way, the legion was driven back

and ran in terror to reach the trench and the gates of the camp. It was there that we suffered the heaviest losses. The trenches were filled with dead, who were not all killed by the blows of the enemy, for many were stifled in the press or perished on each other's swords. The victorious cohorts avoided Cologne and marched on without attempting any further hostilities. For the battle at Bonn they continued to excuse themselves. They had asked for peace, they said, and when peace was persistently refused, had merely acted in self-defence.

²⁸⁸V Alaudae and XV Primigenia, both depleted.

²⁸⁹At Vetera.

²⁹⁰Waal.

²⁹¹They lived round their chief town, known since A.D. 50 as Colonia Agrippinensis, now Cologne (cp. i. [56](#), note [106](#)).

²⁹²See chap. [16](#).

²⁹³This was a German custom. We read in the *Germania* that in battle 'they keep their dearest close at hand, where the women's cries and the wailing of their babies can be heard'.

²⁹⁴This means, of course, simply The Old Camp, but, as Tacitus treats Vetera as a proper name, it has been kept in the translation. It was probably on the Rhine near Xanten and Fürstenberg, some sixty-six miles north of Cologne.

²⁹⁵Cp. i. [59](#); ii. [97](#); iv. [15](#).

²⁹⁶Who got better pay for lighter service.

²⁹⁷i.e. at Mainz, Bonn, Novaesium and Vetera.

²⁹⁸See note [283](#).

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THE SIEGE OF VETERA

21After the arrival of these veteran cohorts Civilis was now at the head of a respectable army. But being still uncertain of his plans, and engaged in reckoning up the Roman forces, he made all who were with him swear allegiance to Vespasian, and sent envoys to the two legions, who after their defeat in the former engagement²⁹⁹ had retired into Vetera, asking them to take the same oath. The answer came back that they never followed the advice either of a traitor or of an enemy: Vitellius was their emperor, and they would keep their allegiance and their arms for him so long as they had breath in their bodies. A Batavian deserter need not try to decide the destiny of Rome; he should rather expect the punishment he richly deserved. When this was reported to Civilis he flew into a passion, and called the whole Batavian people to take arms. They were joined by the Bructeri and Tencteri,³⁰⁰ and Germany was summoned to come and share the plunder and the glory.

22Threatened with this gathering storm, Munius Lupercus and Numisius Rufus, who were in command of the two legions, proceeded to strengthen the ramparts and walls. They pulled down the buildings near the military camp, which had grown into a small town during the long years of peace, fearing that the ¹²⁵enemy might make use of them. But they omitted to provide a sufficient store of provisions for the camp, and authorized the soldiers to make up the deficiency by looting, with the result that what might have supplied their needs for a long time was consumed in a few days. Meanwhile Civilis

advanced, himself holding the centre with the flower of the Batavi: on both banks of the Rhine he massed large bands of Germans to strike terror into the enemy: the cavalry galloped through the fields, while the ships were simultaneously moved up the stream. Here could be seen the colours of veteran Roman cohorts, there the figures of beasts which the Germans had brought from their woods and groves, as their tribes do when they go to battle. It seemed both a civil and a savage war at once; and this strange confusion astounded the besieged. The hopes of the assailants rose when they saw the circumference of the ramparts, for there were barely five thousand Roman soldiers to defend a camp which had been laid out to hold two legions.³⁰¹ However, a large number of camp-followers had collected there on the break-up of peace, and remained to give what assistance they could to the military operations.

23The camp was built partly on the gentle slope of a hill and partly on the level ground. Augustus had believed that it would serve as a base of operations and a check upon the German tribes: as for their actually coming to assault our legions, such a disaster ¹²⁶never occurred to him. Consequently no trouble had been taken in choosing the site or erecting defences: the strength of the troops had always seemed sufficient.

The Batavians and the Germans from across the Rhine³⁰² now formed up tribe by tribe—the separation was designed to show their individual prowess—and opened fire from a distance. Finding that most of their missiles fell harmlessly on to the turrets and pinnacles of the walls, and that they were being wounded by stones hurled from above, they charged with a wild shout and surged up to the rampart, some using scaling-ladders, others climbing over their comrades who had formed a 'tortoise'. But no sooner had some of them begun to scale the wall, than they were hurled down by the besieged, who thrust at them with sword and shield, and buried under a shower of stakes and javelins. The Germans are always impetuous at the beginning of an action and over-confident when they are winning; and on this occasion their greed for plunder even steeled them to face difficulties. They actually attempted to use siege-engines, with which they were quite unfamiliar. But though they had no skill themselves, some of the deserters and prisoners showed them how to build a sort of bridge or platform of timber, on to which they fitted wheels and rolled it forward. Thus some of them stood on this platform and fought as though from a mound, while others, concealed inside, tried to undermine the walls. However, stones hurled from catapults soon ¹²⁷destroyed this rude engine. Then they began to get ready hurdles and mantlets, but the besieged shot blazing spears on to them from engines, and even attacked the assailants themselves with fire-darts. At last they gave up all hope of an assault and resolved to try a waiting policy, being well aware that the camp contained only a few days' provisions and a large number of non-combatants. They hoped that famine would breed treason, and counted, besides, on the wavering loyalty of the slaves and the usual hazards of war to aid them.

24Meanwhile, Flaccus,³⁰³ who had received news of the siege of Vetera, dispatched a party to recruit auxiliaries in Gaul, and gave Dillius Vocula, in command of the Twenty-second, a force of picked soldiers from his two legions.³⁰⁴ Vocula was to hurry by

forced marches along the bank of the Rhine, while Flaccus himself was to approach by water, since he was in bad health and unpopular with his men. Indeed, they grumbled openly that he had let the Batavian cohorts get away from Mainz, had connived at Civilis' schemes, and invited the Germans to join the alliance. Vespasian, they said, owed his rise more to Flaccus than to all the assistance of Antonius Primus or of Mucianus, for overt hatred and hostility can be openly crushed, but treachery and deceit cannot be detected, much less parried. While Civilis took the field himself and arranged his own fighting line, Hordeonius lay on a couch in his bedroom and gave whatever orders ¹²⁸best suited the enemy's convenience. Why should all these companies of brave soldiers be commanded by one miserable old invalid? Let them rather kill the traitor and free their brave hearts and good hopes from the incubus of such an evil omen. Having worked on each other's feelings by these complaints, they were still further incensed by the arrival of a letter from Vespasian. As this could not be concealed, Flaccus read it before a meeting of the soldiers, and the messengers who brought it were sent to Vitellius in chains.

²⁵With feelings thus appeased the army marched on to Bonn, the head-quarters of the First legion. There the men were still more indignant with Flaccus, on whom they laid the blame of their recent defeat.³⁰⁵ It was by his orders, they argued, that they had taken the field against the Batavians on the understanding that the legions from Mainz were in pursuit. But no reinforcements had arrived and his treachery was responsible for their losses. The facts, moreover, were unknown to the other armies, nor was any report sent to their emperor, although this treacherous outbreak could have been nipped in the bud by the combined aid of all the provinces. In answer Flaccus read out to the army copies of all the letters which he had sent from time to time all over Gaul and Britain and Spain to ask for assistance, and introduced the disastrous practice of having all letters delivered to the standard-bearers of the legions, who read them to the soldiers before the general had seen them.¹²⁹ He then gave orders that one of the mutineers should be put in irons, more by way of vindicating his authority than because one man was especially to blame. Leaving Bonn, the army moved on to Cologne, where they were joined by large numbers of Gallic auxiliaries, who at first zealously supported the Roman cause: later, when the Germans prospered, most of the tribes took arms against us, actuated by hopes of liberty and an ambition to establish an empire of their own when once they had shaken off the yoke.

Meanwhile the army's indignation steadily increased. The imprisonment of a single soldier was not enough to terrify them, and, indeed, the prisoner actually accused the general of complicity in crime, alleging that he himself had carried messages between Flaccus and Civilis. 'It is because I can testify to the truth,' he said, 'that Flaccus wants to get rid of me on a false charge.' Thereupon Vocula, with admirable self-possession, mounted the tribunal and, in spite of the man's protestations, ordered him to be seized and led away to prison. This alarmed the disaffected, while the better sort obeyed him promptly. The army then unanimously demanded that Vocula should lead them, and

Flaccus accordingly resigned the chief command to him. ²⁶However, there was much to exasperate their disaffection. They were short both of pay and of provisions: the Gauls refused either to enlist or to pay tribute: drought, usually unknown in that climate, made the Rhine almost too low for navigation, and thus hampered their commissariat: patrols had ¹³⁰to be posted at intervals all along the bank to prevent the Germans fording the river: and in consequence of all this they had less food and more mouths to eat it. To the ignorant the lowness of the river seemed in itself an evil omen, as though the ancient bulwarks of the empire were now failing them. In peace they would have called it bad luck or the course of nature: now it was 'fate' and 'the anger of heaven'.

On entering Novaesium³⁰⁶ they were joined by the Sixteenth legion. Herennius Gallus³⁰⁷ now shared with Vocula the responsibility of command. As they could not venture out against the enemy, they encamped ... at a place called Gelduba,³⁰⁸ where the soldiers were trained in deploying, in fortification and entrenchment, and in various other military manœuvres. To inspire their courage with the further incentive of plunder, Vocula led out part of the force against the neighbouring tribe of the Cugerni,³⁰⁹ who had accepted Civilis' offers of alliance. The rest of the troops were left behind with Herennius Gallus,³¹⁰ ²⁷and it happened that a corn-ship with a full cargo, which had run aground close to the camp, was towed over by the Germans to their own bank. This was more than Gallus could tolerate, so he sent a cohort to the rescue. The number of the Germans soon ⁱⁿ¹³¹increased: both sides gradually gathered reinforcements and a regular battle was fought, with the result that the Germans towed off the ship, inflicting heavy losses. The defeated troops followed what had now become their regular custom, and threw the blame not on their own inefficiency but on their commanding-officer's bad faith. They dragged him from his quarters, tore his uniform and flogged him, bidding him tell them how much he had got for betraying the army, and who were his accomplices. Then their indignation recoiled on Hordeonius Flaccus: he was the real criminal: Gallus was only his tool. At last their threats so terrified Gallus that he, too, charged Flaccus with treason. He was put in irons until the arrival of Vocula, who at once set him free, and on the next day had the ringleaders of the riot executed. The army showed, indeed, a strange contrast in its equal readiness to mutiny and to submit to punishment. The common soldiers' loyalty to Vitellius was beyond question,³¹¹ while the higher ranks inclined towards Vespasian. Thus we find a succession of outbreaks and penalties; an alternation of insubordination with obedience to discipline; for the troops could be punished though not controlled.

²⁸Meanwhile the whole of Germany was ready to worship Civilis, sending him vast reinforcements and ratifying the alliance with hostages from their noblest families. He gave orders that the country of the Ubii and Treviri was to be laid waste by their nearest ¹³²neighbours, and sent another party across the Maas to harass the Menapii and Morini³¹² and other frontier tribes of Gaul. In both quarters they plundered freely, and were especially savage towards the Ubii, because they were a tribe of German origin who had renounced their fatherland and adopted the name of

Agrippinenses.³¹³ A Ubian cohort was cut to pieces at the village of Marcodurum,³¹⁴ where they were off their guard, trusting to their distance from the Rhine. The Ubii did not take this quietly, nor hesitate to seek reprisals from the Germans, which they did at first with impunity. In the end, however, the Germans proved too much for them, and throughout the war the Ubii were always more conspicuous for good faith than good fortune. Their collapse strengthened Civilis' position, and emboldened by success, he now vigorously pressed on the blockade of the legions at Vetera, and redoubled his vigilance to prevent any message creeping through from the relieving army. The Batavians were told off to look after the engines and siege-works: the Germans, who clamoured for battle, were sent to demolish the rampart and renew the fight directly they were beaten off. There were so many of them that their losses mattered little.

29Nightfall did not see the end of their task. They built huge fires of wood all round the ramparts and ¹³³sat drinking by them; then, as the wine warmed their hearts, one by one they dashed into the fight with blind courage. In the darkness their missiles were ineffective, but the barbarian troops were clearly visible to the Romans, and any one whose daring or bright ornaments made him conspicuous at once became a mark for their aim. At last Civilis saw their mistake, and gave orders to extinguish the fires and plunge the whole scene into a confusion of darkness and the din of arms. Discordant shouts now arose: everything was vague and uncertain: no one could see to strike or to parry. Wherever a shout was heard, they would wheel round and lunge in that direction. Valour was useless: chance and chaos ruled supreme: and the bravest soldier often fell under a coward's bolt. The Germans fought with blind fury. The Roman troops were more familiar with danger; they hurled down iron-clamped stakes and heavy stones with sure effect. Wherever the sound of some one climbing or the clang of a scaling-ladder betrayed the presence of the enemy, they thrust them back with their shields and followed them with a shower of javelins. Many appeared on top of the walls, and these they stabbed with their short swords. And so the night wore on. 30Day dawned upon new methods of attack. The Batavians had built a wooden tower of two stories and moved it up to the Head-quarters Gate,³¹⁵ which was the most accessible spot. However, our soldiers, by using strong poles and hurling wooden beams, soon ¹³⁴battered it to pieces, with great loss of life to those who were standing on it. While they were still dismayed at this, we made a sudden and successful sally. Meanwhile the legionaries, with remarkable skill and ingenuity, invented still further contrivances. The one which caused most terror was a crane with a movable arm suspended over their assailants' heads: this arm was suddenly lowered, snatched up one or more of the enemy into the air before his fellows' eyes, and, as the heavy end was swung round, tossed him into the middle of the camp. Civilis now gave up hope of storming the camp and renewed a leisurely blockade, trying all the time by messages and offers of reward to undermine the loyalty of the legions.

³⁰⁰The Bructeri lived between the Lippe and the Upper Ems, the Tencteri along the eastern bank of the Rhine, between its tributaries the Ruhr and the Sieg, i.e. opposite Cologne.

³⁰¹i.e. about 12,000 men. The bulk of the Fifth and a detachment of the Fifteenth had gone to Italy.

³⁰²i.e. Frisii, Bructeri, Tencteri, &c.

³⁰³At Mainz.

³⁰⁴His other legion was IV Macedonica.

³⁰⁵Cp. chap. [20](#).

³⁰⁶Neuss.

³⁰⁷He commanded the First legion, which had joined the main column at Bonn.

³⁰⁸Gellep. Some words are lost, perhaps giving the distance from Novaesium.

³⁰⁹See note [282](#).

³¹⁰At Gelduba.

³¹¹Cp. iii. [61](#).

³¹²The Menapii lived between the Maas and the Scheldt; the Morini on the coast in the neighbourhood of Boulogne. They were a proverb for 'the back of beyond'.

³¹³See i. [56](#), note [106](#).

³¹⁴Düren.

³¹⁵i.e. the gate on to the street leading to Head-quarters.

THE RELIEF OF VETERA

31 Such was the course of events in Germany up to the date of the battle of Cremona.³¹⁶ News of this arrived by letter from Antonius Primus, who enclosed a copy of Caecina's edict,³¹⁷ and Alpinus Montanus,³¹⁸ who commanded one of the defeated auxiliary cohorts, came in person to confess that his party had been beaten. The troops were variously affected by the news. The Gallic auxiliaries, who had no feelings of affection or dislike to either party and served without sentiment,¹³⁵ promptly took the advice of their officers and deserted Vitellius. The veterans hesitated; under pressure from Flaccus and their officers they eventually took the oath of allegiance, but it was clear from their faces that their hearts were not in it, and while repeating the rest of the formula they boggled at the name of Vespasian, either muttering it under their breath or more often omitting it altogether. 32 Their suspicions were further inflamed when Antonius' letter to Civilis was read out before the meeting; it seemed to address Civilis as a member of the Flavian party, and to argue hostility to the German army. The news was next brought to the camp at Gelduba, where it gave rise to the same comments and the same scenes. Montanus was sent to carry instructions to Civilis that he was to cease from hostilities and not to make war on Rome under a false pretext; if it was to help Vespasian that he had taken arms, he had now achieved his object. Civilis at first replied in guarded terms. Then, as he saw that Montanus was an impetuous person who would welcome a revolution, he began to complain of all the dangers he had endured in the service of Rome for the last twenty-five years. 'A fine reward I have received,' he cried, 'for all my labours—my brother's execution,³¹⁹ my own imprisonment,³¹⁹ and the bloodthirsty clamours of this army, from which I claim satisfaction by natural right since they have sought my destruction. As for you Trevirans and all the rest that have the souls of slaves, what reward do you hope ¹³⁶to gain for shedding your blood so often in the cause of Rome, except the thankless task of military

service, endless taxation, and the rods and axes of these capricious tyrants? Look at me! I have only a single cohort under my command, and yet with the Canninefates and Batavi, a mere fraction of the Gallic peoples, I am engaged in destroying their great useless camp and besieging them with famine and the sword. In short, our venture will either end in freedom or, if we are beaten, we shall be no worse off than before.' Having thus inflamed Montanus he told him to take back a milder answer and dismissed him. On his return Montanus pretended that his errand had been fruitless, and said nothing about the rest of the interview: but it soon came to light.

33Retaining a portion of his force, Civilis sent the veteran cohorts with the most efficient of the German troops against Vocola and his army.³²⁰ He gave the command to Julius Maximus and his nephew Claudius Victor. After rushing the winter-quarters of a cavalry regiment at Asciburgium³²¹ on their way, they fell upon the Roman camp and so completely surprised it that Vocola had no time to address his army or to form it for battle. The only precaution he could take in the general panic was to mass the legionaries in the centre with the auxiliaries scattered on either flank. Our cavalry charged, but found the enemy in good order ready to receive them, and came flying back on to their own infantry. What followed was ¹³⁷more of a massacre than a battle. The Nervian cohorts, either from panic or treachery, left our flanks exposed; thus the legions had to bear the brunt. They had already lost their standards and were being cut down in the trenches, when a fresh reinforcement suddenly changed the fortune of the fight. Some Basque auxiliaries,³²² originally levied by Galba, who had now been summoned to the rescue, on nearing the camp heard the sound of fighting, and while the enemy were occupied, came charging in on their rear. This caused more consternation than their numbers warranted, the enemy taking them for the whole Roman force, either from Novaesium or from Mainz. This mistake encouraged the Roman troops: their confidence in others brought confidence in themselves. The best of the Batavians, at least of their infantry, fell. The cavalry made off with the standards and prisoners taken in the earlier stage of the battle. Though our losses that day were numerically larger, they were unimportant, whereas the Germans lost their best troops.

34On both sides the generals deserved defeat, and failed to make good use of their success. Their fault was the same. Had Civilis furnished the attacking column with more troops, they could never have been surrounded by such a small force, and having stormed the camp would have destroyed it. Vocola, on the other ¹³⁸hand, had not even set scouts to warn him of the enemy's approach, and consequently no sooner sallied out than he was beaten. Then, when he had won the victory, he showed great lack of confidence, and wasted day after day before moving against the enemy. If he had made haste to follow up his success and struck at the enemy at once, he might have raised the siege of Vetera at one blow.

Meanwhile Civilis had been playing upon the feelings of the besieged by pretending that the Romans had been defeated and success had favoured his arms. The captured standards and colours were carried round the walls and the prisoners also displayed.

One of these did a famous deed of heroism. Shouting at the top of his voice, he revealed the truth. The Germans at once struck him dead, which only served to confirm his information. Soon, too, the besieged saw signs of harried fields and the smoke of burning farms, and began to realize that a victorious army was approaching. When he was in sight of the camp Vocula ordered his men to plant the standards and construct a trench and rampart round them: they were to deposit all their baggage there and fight unencumbered. This made them shout at the general to give them the signal; and they had learnt to use threats too. Without even taking time to form their line they started the battle, all tired as they were, and in disorder. Civilis was ready waiting for them, trusting quite as much to their mistakes as to the merits of his own men. The Romans fought with varying fortune. All the most mutinous ¹³⁹proved cowards: some, however, remembered their recent victory and stuck to their places, cutting down the enemy, and encouraging themselves and their neighbours. When the battle was thus renewed, they waved their hands and signalled to the besieged not to lose their opportunity. These were watching all that happened from the walls, and now came bursting out at every gate. It chanced that at this point Civilis' horse fell and threw him; both armies believed the rumour that he had been wounded and killed. This caused immense consternation to his army and immense encouragement to ours. However, Vocula failed to pursue them when they fled, and merely set about strengthening the rampart and turrets, apparently in fear of another blockade. His frequent failure to make use of his victory gives colour to the suspicion that he preferred war.[323](#)

³⁵What chiefly distressed our troops was the lack of supplies. The baggage-train of the legions was sent to Novaesium with a crowd of non-combatants to fetch provisions thence by land, the enemy being now masters of the river. The first convoy got through ¹⁴⁰safely, while Civilis was recovering from his fall. But when he heard that a second foraging-party had been sent to Novaesium under guard of several cohorts, and that they were proceeding on their way with their arms piled in the wagons as if it was a time of perfect peace, few keeping to the standards and all wandering at will, he sent some men forward to hold the bridges and any places where the road was narrow, and then formed up and attacked. The battle was fought on a long straggling line, and the issue was still doubtful when nightfall broke it off. The cohorts made their way through to Gelduba, where the camp remained as it was,[324](#) garrisoned by the soldiers who had been left behind there. It was obvious what dangers the convoy would have to face on the return journey; they would be heavily laden and had already lost their nerve. Vocula[325](#) accordingly added to his force a thousand picked men from the Fifth and Fifteenth legions who had been at Vetera during the siege, all tough soldiers with a grievance against their generals. Against his orders, more than the thousand started with him, openly complaining on the march that they would not put up with famine and the treachery of their generals any longer. On the other hand, those who stayed behind grumbled that they were left to their fate now that part of the garrison had been removed.

Thus there was a double mutiny, one party ¹⁴¹calling Vocula back, the others refusing to return to camp.

36Meanwhile Civilis laid siege to Vetera. Vocula retired to Gelduba, and thence to Novaesium, shortly afterwards winning a cavalry skirmish just outside Novaesium. The Roman soldiers, however, alike in success and in failure, were as eager as ever to make an end of their generals. Now that their numbers were swelled by the arrival of the detachments from the Fifth and the Fifteenth³²⁶ they demanded their donative, having learnt that money had arrived from Vitellius. Without further delay Flaccus gave it to them in Vespasian's name, and this did more than anything else to promote mutiny. They indulged in wild dissipation and met every night in drinking-parties, at which they revived their old grudge against Hordeonius Flaccus. None of the officers ventured to interfere with them—the darkness somehow obscured their sense of duty—and at last they dragged Flaccus out of bed and murdered him. They were preparing to do the same with Vocula, but he narrowly escaped in the darkness, disguised as a slave. 37When the excitement subsided, their fears returned, and they sent letters round by centurions to all the Gallic communities, asking for reinforcements and money for the soldiers' pay. Without a leader a mob is always rash, timorous, and inactive. On the approach of Civilis they hurriedly snatched up their arms, and then immediately dropped them and took to flight. Misfortune now bred disunion,¹⁴² and the army of the Upper Rhine³²⁷ dissociated itself from the rest. However, they set up the statues of Vitellius again in the camp and in the neighbouring Belgic villages, although by now Vitellius was dead.³²⁸ Soon the soldiers of the First, Fourth, and Twenty-second repented of their folly and rejoined Vocula. He made them take a second oath of allegiance to Vespasian and led them off to raise the siege of Mainz. The besieging army, a combined force of Chatti,³²⁹ Usipi, and Mattiaci,³³⁰ had already retired, having got sufficient loot and suffered some loss. Our troops surprised them while they were scattered along the road, and immediately attacked. Moreover, the Treviri had built a rampart and breastwork all along their frontier and fought the Germans again and again with heavy loss to both sides. Before long, however, they rebelled, and thus sullied their great services to the Roman people.

³¹⁶The end of October, A.D. 69 (see iii. [30-34](#)).

³¹⁷Caecina, as consul, had probably while at Cremona issued a manifesto in favour of joining the Flavian party.

³¹⁸Cp. iii. [35](#).

³¹⁹See chap. [13](#).

³²⁰At Gelduba (chap. [26](#)).

³²¹Asberg.

³²²From the north-east frontier of the Tarragona division of Spain, of which Galba had been governor. Hordeonius explained (chap. [25](#)) that he had summoned aid from Spain.

³²³Mr. Henderson calls this sentence 'a veritable masterpiece of improbability', and finds it 'hard to speak calmly of such a judgement'. He has to confess that a military motive for Vocula's inaction is hard to find. Tacitus, feeling the same, offers a merely human motive. Soldiers of fortune often prefer war to final victory, and in these days the dangers of peace were only equalled by its ennui. Besides, Tacitus' explanation lends itself to an epigram which he would doubtless not have exchanged for the tedium of tactical truth.

³²⁴Cp. chap. [26](#).

³²⁵Having strengthened the defences of Vetera, he was now going back to Gelduba.

³²⁶From the Vetera garrison.

³²⁷i.e. the troops which Flaccus at Mainz had put under Vocula for the relief of Vetera (chap. [24](#)).

³²⁸It was therefore later than December 21.

³²⁹Cp. chap. [12](#).

³³⁰The Usipi lived on the east bank of the Rhine between the Sieg and the Lahn; the Mattiaci between the Lahn and the Main, round Wiesbaden.

ROME AND THE EMPIRE UNDER VESPASIAN

38During these events Vespasian took up his second consulship and Titus his first, both in absence.[331](#) Rome was depressed and beset by manifold anxieties. Apart ¹⁴³from the real miseries of the moment, it was plunged into a groundless panic on the rumour of a rebellion in Africa, where Lucius Piso was supposed to be plotting a revolution. Piso, who was governor of the province, was far from being a firebrand. But the severity of the winter delayed the corn-ships, and the common people, accustomed to buy their bread day by day, whose interest in politics was confined to the corn-supply, soon began to believe their fears that the coast of Africa was being blockaded and supplies withheld. The Vitellians, who were still under the sway of party spirit, fostered this rumour, and even the victorious party were not entirely displeased at it, for none of their victories in the civil war had satisfied their greed, and even foreign wars fell far short of their ambition.

39On the first of January the senate was convened by the Urban Praetor,[332](#) Julius Frontinus, and passed votes of thanks and congratulation to the generals, armies, and foreign princes.[333](#) Tettius Julianus,[334](#) who had left his legion when it went over to Vespasian, was deprived of his praetorship, which was conferred upon Plotius Grypus.[335](#) Hormus[336](#) was raised to equestrian rank. Frontinus then resigned his praetorship and Caesar Domitian succeeded him. His name now stood at the head of all dispatches and edicts, but the real authority ¹⁴⁴lay with Mucianus, although Domitian, following the promptings of his friends and of his own desires, frequently asserted his independence. But Mucianus' chief cause of anxiety lay in Antonius Primus and Arrius Varus. The fame of their exploits was still fresh; the soldiers worshipped them; and they were popular in Rome, because they had used no violence off the field of battle. It was even hinted that Antonius had urged Crassus Scribonianus[337](#) to seize the throne. He was a man who owed his distinction to famous ancestors and to his brother's memory, and Antonius could promise him adequate support for a conspiracy. However, Scribonianus refused. He had a terror of all risks, and would hardly have been seduced even by the certainty of success. Being unable to crush Antonius openly, Mucianus showered compliments on him in the senate and embarrassed him with promises, hinting at the governorship of Nearer Spain, which the departure of Cluvius Rufus[338](#) had left vacant. Meanwhile he lavished military commands on Antonius' friends. Then, having filled his empty head with ambitious hopes, he destroyed his influence at one stroke by moving the Seventh legion,[339](#) which was

passionately attached to Antonius, into winter-quarters. The Third, who were similarly devoted to Arrius Varus, ¹⁴⁵were sent back to Syria,³⁴⁰ and part of the army was taken out to the war in Germany. Thus, on the removal of the disturbing factors, the city could resume its normal life under the old regime of law and civil government.

40On the day of his first appearance in the senate Domitian spoke a few moderate sentences regretting the absence of his father and brother. His behaviour was most proper, and, as his character was still an unknown quantity, his blushes were taken for signs of modesty.³⁴¹ He moved from the chair that all Galba's honours should be restored, to which Curtius Montanus proposed an amendment that some respect should also be paid to the memory of Piso. The senate approved both proposals, though nothing was done about Piso. Next, various commissions were appointed by lot to restore the spoils of war to the owners; to examine and affix the bronze tablets of laws, which in course of time had dropped off the walls; to revise the list of public holidays, which in these days of flattery had been disgracefully tampered with; and to introduce some economy into public expenditure. Tettius Julianus was restored to his praetorship as soon as it was discovered that he had taken refuge with Vespasian: but Grypus was allowed to retain his rank.³⁴² It was then decided to resume the hearing of the case of¹⁴⁶ Musonius Rufus against Publius Celer³⁴³ Publius was convicted and the shade of Soranus satisfied. This strict verdict made the day memorable in the annals of Rome, and credit was also due to private enterprise, for everybody felt that Musonius had done his duty in bringing the action. On the other hand, Demetrius, a professor of Cynic philosophy, earned discredit for defending an obvious criminal³⁴⁴ more for ostentatious motives than from honest conviction. As for Publius, courage and fluency alike failed him at the critical moment. This trial was the signal for further reprisals against prosecutors. Junius Mauricus³⁴⁵ accordingly petitioned Domitian that the senate might be allowed access to the minutes of the imperial cabinet, in order to find out who had applied for leave to bring a prosecution and against whom. The answer was that on such a question as this the emperor must be consulted. 41Accordingly, at the instigation of its leading members, the senate framed an oath in these words, 'I call heaven to witness that I have never countenanced any action prejudicial to any man's civil status, nor have I derived any profit or any office from the misfortune of any Roman citizen.' The magistrates vied with each other in their haste to take this oath, and the other members ¹⁴⁷did the same, when called upon to speak. Those who had a guilty conscience were alarmed, and managed to alter the wording of the oath by various devices. The house meanwhile applauded every sign of scruple, and protested against each case of perjury. This kind of informal censure fell most severely on Sarioleus Vocula, Nonius Attianus, and Cestius Severus, who were notorious as habitual informers under Nero. Against Sarioleus there was also a fresh charge of having continued his practices with Vitellius. The members went on shaking their fists at him until he left the house. They next turned on Paccius Africanus, trying to hound him out in the same way. He was supposed to have suggested to Nero the murder of the two

brothers Scribonius,[346](#) who were famous for their friendship and their wealth. Africanus dared not admit his guilt, though he could not very well deny it. So he swung round on Vibius Crispus,[347](#) who was pestering him with questions, and tried to turn the tables by implicating him in the charges which he could not rebut, thus shifting the odium on to his accomplice.

42On this occasion Vipstanus Messala[348](#) gained a great reputation, both for dutiful affection and for eloquence, by venturing to intercede for his brother Aquilius Regulus,[349](#) although he had not attained the senatorial age.[350](#) Regulus had fallen into great disfavour for having ¹⁴⁸brought about the ruin of the noble families of the Crassi and of Orfitus. It was supposed that, though quite a young man, he had voluntarily undertaken the prosecution, not to escape any danger which was threatening him, but from purely ambitious motives. Crassus' wife, Sulpicia Praetextata, and his four sons were anxious to secure revenge if the senate would grant a trial. Messala therefore made no attempt to defend the case or the accused, but tried to shelter his brother, and had already won over some of the senators. Curtius Montanus now attacked him in a savage speech, and even went so far as to charge Regulus with having given money to Piso's murderer after Galba's death, and with having bitten Piso's head.[351](#) 'That,' said he, 'Nero certainly did not compel you to do. You purchased neither position nor safety by that savage piece of cruelty. We may put up with the pleas of those wretches who prefer to ruin others rather than endanger their own lives. But your father's banishment had guaranteed your security. His property had been divided amongst his creditors.[352](#) You were not of an age to stand for office. Nero had nothing either to hope or to fear from you. Your talents were as yet untried and you had never exerted them in any man's defence, yet your lust for blood, your insatiable ambition, led you to stain your young hands in the blood of Rome's nobility. At one swoop ¹⁴⁹you caused the ruin of innocent youths, of old and distinguished statesmen, of high-born ladies; and out of the country's disaster you secured for yourself the spoils of two ex-consuls,[353](#) stuffed seven million sesterces into your purse, and shone with the reflected glory of a priesthood. You would blame Nero's lack of enterprise because he took one household at a time, thus causing unnecessary fatigue to himself and his informers, when he might have ruined the whole senate at a single word. Why, gentlemen, you must indeed keep and preserve to yourselves a counsellor of such ready resource. Let each generation have its good examples: and as our old men follow Eprius Marcellus or Vibius Crispus, let the rising generation emulate Regulus. Villainy finds followers even when it fails. What if it flourish and prosper? If we hesitate to touch a mere ex-quaestor, shall we be any bolder when he has been praetor and consul? Or do you suppose that the race of tyrants came to an end in Nero? That is what the people believed who outlived Tiberius or Caligula, and meanwhile there arose one more infamous and more bloody still.[354](#) We are not afraid of Vespasian. We trust his years and his natural moderation. But a good precedent outlives a good sovereign. Gentlemen, we are growing effete: we are no longer that senate which, after Nero had been killed,

clamoured for the punishment of all informers and their menials according to our ancestors'¹⁵⁰ rigorous prescription. The best chance comes on the day after the death of a bad emperor.'

43The senate listened to Montanus's speech with such sympathy that Helvidius began to hope that it might be possible to get a verdict even against Marcellus. Beginning with a eulogy of Cluvius Rufus, who, though quite as rich and as eloquent as Marcellus, had never brought any one into trouble under Nero, he went on to attack Marcellus, both by contrasting him with Rufus and by pressing home the charge against him. Feeling that the house was warming to this rhetoric, Marcellus got up as though to leave, exclaiming, 'I am off, Helvidius: I leave you your senate: you can tyrannize over it under Caesar's nose.' Vibius Crispus followed Marcellus, and, though both were angry, their expressions were very different. Marcellus marched out with flashing eyes, Crispus with a smile on his face. Eventually their friends went and brought them back. Thus the struggle grew more and more heated between a well-meaning majority and a small but powerful minority; and since they were both animated by irreconcilable hatred, the day was spent in vain recriminations.

44At the next sitting Domitian opened by recommending them to forget their grievances and grudges and the unavoidable exigences of the recent past. Mucianus then at great length moved a motion in favour of the prosecutors, issuing a mild warning, almost in terms of entreaty, to those who wanted to revive actions which had been begun and dropped.¹⁵¹ Seeing that their attempt at independence was being thwarted, the senate gave it up. However, that it might not seem as if the senate's opinion had been flouted and complete impunity granted for all crimes committed under Nero, Mucianus forced Octavius Sagitta and Antistius Sosianus, who had returned from exile, to go back to the islands to which they had been confined. Octavius had committed adultery with Pontia Postumina, and, on her refusal to marry him, had murdered her in a fit of jealous fury. Sosianus was an unprincipled scoundrel who had been the ruin of many.³⁵⁵ The senate had found them both guilty, and passed a heavy sentence of exile, nor had their penalty been remitted, although others were allowed to return. However, this failed to allay the ill-feeling against Mucianus, for Sosianus and Sagitta, whether they returned or not, were of no importance, whereas people were afraid of the professional prosecutors, who were men of wealth and ability and experts in crime.

45Unanimity was gradually restored in the senate by the holding of a trial according to ancient precedent, before a court of the whole house. A senator named Manlius Patritius complained that he had been beaten before a mob of people in the colony of Siena by order of the local magistrates. Nor had the affront stopped there. They had held a mock funeral before his eyes, and had accompanied their dirges and lamentations with gross insults levelled at the whole senate. The ¹⁵²accused were summoned; their case was tried; they were convicted and punished. A further decree of the senate was passed admonishing the commons of Siena to pay more respect to the laws. About the

same time Antonius Flamma was prosecuted by Cyrene for extortion, and exiled for the inhumanity of his conduct.

46Meanwhile, a mutiny almost broke out among the soldiers. The men who had been discharged by Vitellius³⁵⁶ came together again in support of Vespasian, and demanded re-admission. They were joined by the selected legionaries who had also been led to hope for service in the Guards, and they now demanded the pay they had been promised. Even the Vitellians³⁵⁷ alone could not have been dispersed without serious bloodshed, but it would require immense sums of money to retain the services of such a large number of men. Mucianus accordingly entered the barracks to make a careful estimate of each man's term of service. He formed up the victorious troops with their own arms and distinctive decorations, each company a few paces from the next. Then the Vitellians who had surrendered, as we have described, at Bovillae,³⁵⁸ and all the other soldiers who had been hunted down in the city and its neighbourhood, were marched out almost entirely without arms or uniforms. Mucianus then had them ¹⁵³sorted out, and drew up in separate corps the troops of the German army, of the British army, and of any others that were in Rome. Their first glance at the scene astounded them. Facing them they saw what looked like a fighting front bristling with weapons, while they were caught in a trap, defenceless and foul with dirt. As soon as they began to be sorted out a panic seized them. The German troops in particular were terrified at their isolation, and felt they were being told off for slaughter. They embraced their comrades and clung upon their necks, asking for one last kiss, begging not to be left alone, crying out, 'Our cause is the same as yours, why should our fate be different?' They appealed now to Mucianus, now to the absent emperor, and lastly to the powers of Heaven, until Mucianus came to the rescue of their imaginary terrors by calling them all 'sworn servants of one emperor', for he found that the victorious army was joining in and seconding their tears with cheering. On that day the matter ended there. A few days later, when Domitian addressed them, they received him with renewed confidence, refused his offer of lands, and begged for enlistment and their pay instead. This was only a petition, but one that could not be refused: so they were admitted to the Guards. Subsequently, those who had grown old and completed the regular term of service³⁵⁹ were honourably discharged. Others were dismissed for misbehaviour, but one by one at ¹⁵⁴different times, which is always the safest method of weakening any kind of conspiracy.

47To return to the senate; a bill was now passed that a loan of sixty million sesterces should be raised from private individuals and administered by Pompeius Silvanus. This may have been a financial necessity, or they may have wanted it to seem so. At any rate the necessity soon ceased to exist, or else they gave up the pretence. Domitian then carried a proposal that the consulships conferred by Vitellius should be cancelled, and that a state funeral should be held in honour of Flavius Sabinus.³⁶⁰ Both proposals are striking evidence of the fickleness of human fortune, which so often makes the first last and the last first.

48It was about this time that Lucius Piso,³⁶¹ the pro-consul of Africa, was killed. To give a true explanation of this murder we must go back and take a brief survey of certain matters which are closely connected with the reasons for such crimes. Under the sainted Augustus and Tiberius the pro-consul of Africa had in his command one legion and some auxiliaries with which to guard the frontier of the empire.³⁶² Caligula, who was restless by nature and harboured suspicions ¹⁵⁵of the then pro-consul, Marcus Silanus, withdrew the legion from his command and put it under a legate whom he sent out for the purpose. As each had an equal amount of patronage and their functions overlapped, Caligula thus caused a state of friction which was further aggravated by regrettable quarrels. The greater permanence of his tenure³⁶³ gradually strengthened the legate's position, and perhaps an inferior is always anxious to vie with his betters. The most eminent governors, on the other hand, were more careful of their comfort than of their authority.

49At the present time the legion in Africa was commanded by Valerius Festus,³⁶⁴ an extravagant young man, immoderately ambitious, whose kinship with Vitellius had given him some anxiety. He had frequent interviews with Piso, and it is impossible to tell whether he tempted Piso to rebel or resisted Piso's temptations. No one was present at their interviews, which were held in private, and after Piso's death most people were inclined to sympathize with his murderer. Beyond doubt the province and the garrison were unfavourable to Vespasian. Besides, some of the Vitellian refugees from Rome pointed out to Piso that the Gallic provinces were wavering. Germany was ready to rebel, and he himself was in danger; 'and,' they added, 'if you earn suspicion in peace your safest ¹⁵⁶course is war.' Meanwhile, Claudius Sagitta, who commanded Petra's Horse,³⁶⁵ made a good crossing and outstripped the centurion Papirius, who had been sent out by Mucianus and was commissioned, so Sagitta affirmed, to assassinate Piso. Sagitta further stated that Galerianus,³⁶⁶ Piso's cousin and son-in-law, had already been murdered, and told him that while his one hope lay in taking a bold step, there were two courses open to him: he might either take up arms on the spot, or he might prefer to sail to Gaul and offer to lead the Vitellian armies. This made no impression on Piso. When the centurion whom Mucianus had sent arrived at the gates of Carthage, he kept on shouting all sorts of congratulations to Piso on becoming emperor. The people he met, who were astounded at this unexpected miracle, were instructed to take up the cry. With a crowd's usual credulity, they rushed into the forum calling on Piso to appear, and as they had a passion for flattery and took no interest in the truth, they proceeded to fill the whole place with a confused noise of cheering. Piso, however, either at a hint from Sagitta, or from his natural good sense, would not show himself in public or give way to the excitement of the crowd. He examined the centurion, and learnt that his object was to trump up a charge against him and then kill him.³⁶⁷ He accordingly had the man executed more from indignation against ¹⁵⁷the assassin than in any hope of saving his life; for he found that the man had been one of the murderers of Clodius Macer,³⁶⁸ and after staining his hand in the blood of a military officer was

now proposing to turn it against a civil governor. Piso then reprimanded the Carthaginians in an edict which clearly showed his anxiety, and refrained from performing even the routine of his office, shutting himself up in his house, for fear that he might by accident provide some pretext for further demonstrations.

50When the news of the popular excitement and the centurion's execution reached the ears of Festus, considerably exaggerated and with the usual admixture of falsehood, he at once sent off a party of horsemen to murder Piso. Riding at full speed, they reached the governor's house in the twilight of early dawn and broke in with drawn swords. As Festus had mainly chosen Carthaginian auxiliaries and Moors to do the murder, most of them did not know Piso by sight. However, near his bedroom they happened on a slave and asked him where Piso was and what he looked like. In answer the slave told them a heroic lie and said he was Piso, whereupon they immediately cut him down. However, Piso himself was killed very soon after, for there was one man among them who knew him, and that was Baebius Massa, one of the imperial agents in Africa, who was already a danger to all the best men in Rome. His name will recur again and again in this narrative, as one of the causes of the troubles ¹⁵⁸which beset us later on.[369](#) Festus had been waiting at Adrumetum[370](#) to see how things went, and he now hastened to rejoin his legion. He had the camp-prefect, Caetronius Pisanus, put in irons, alleging that he was one of Piso's accomplices, though his real motive was personal dislike. He then punished some of the soldiers and centurions and rewarded others; in neither case for their deserts, but because he wanted it to be thought that he had stamped out a war. His next task was to settle the differences between Oea and Lepcis.[371](#) These had had a trivial origin in thefts of fruit and cattle by the peasants, but they were now trying to settle them in open warfare. Oea, being inferior in numbers, had called in the aid of the Garamantes,[372](#) an invincible tribe, who were always a fruitful source of damage to their neighbours. Thus the people of Lepcis were in great straits. Their fields had been wasted far and wide, and they had fled in terror under shelter of their walls, when the Roman auxiliaries, both horse and foot, arrived on the scene. They routed the Garamantes and recovered all the booty, except what the nomads had already sold among the inaccessible hut-settlements of the far interior.

51After the battle of Cremona and the arrival of good ¹⁵⁹news from every quarter, Vespasian now heard of Vitellius' death. A large number of people of all classes, who were as lucky as they were adventurous, successfully braved the winter seas on purpose to bring him the news.[373](#) There also arrived envoys from King Vologaesius offering the services of forty thousand Parthian cavalry.[374](#) It was, indeed, a proud and fortunate situation to be courted with such splendid offers of assistance, and to need none of them. Vologaesius was duly thanked and instructed to send his envoys to the senate and to understand that peace had been made. Vespasian now devoted his attention to the affairs of Italy and the Capitol, and received an unfavourable report of Domitian, who seemed to be trespassing beyond the natural sphere of an emperor's youthful son. He

accordingly handed over the flower of his army to Titus, who was to finish off the war with the Jews.[375](#)

52It is said that before his departure Titus had a long talk with his father and begged him not to be rash and lose his temper at these incriminating reports, but to meet his son in a forgiving and unprejudiced spirit, 'Neither legions nor fleets,' he is reported to have said, 'are such sure bulwarks of the throne as a number of children. Time, chance and often, too, ambition and misunderstanding weaken, alienate or extinguish friendship: a man's own blood cannot be severed from him; and above all is this the case with ^{160a} sovereign, for, while others enjoy his good fortune, his misfortunes only concern his nearest kin. Nor again are brothers likely to remain good friends unless their father sets them an example.' These words had the effect of making Vespasian rather delighted at Titus' goodness of heart than inclined to forgive Domitian. 'You may ease your mind,' he said to Titus, 'It is now your duty to increase the prestige of Rome on the field: I will concern myself with peace at home.' Though the weather was still very rough, Vespasian at once launched his fastest corn-ships with a full cargo. For the city was on the verge of famine.[376](#) Indeed, there were not supplies for more than ten days in the public granaries at the moment when Vespasian's convoy brought relief.

53The task of restoring the Capitol[377](#) was entrusted to Lucius Vestinus, who, though only a knight, yet in reputation and influence could rank with the highest. He summoned all the soothsayers,[378](#) and they recommended that the ruins of the former temple should be carried away to the marshes[379](#) and a new temple erected on the same site: the gods were unwilling, they said, that the original form of the building should be changed. On the 21st of June, a day of bright sun¹⁶¹shine, the whole consecrated area of the temple was decorated with chaplets and garlands. In marched soldiers, all men with names of good omen, carrying branches of lucky trees:[380](#) then came the Vestal Virgins accompanied by boys and girls, each of whom had father and mother alive,[381](#) and they cleansed it all by sprinkling fresh water from a spring or river.[382](#) Next, while the high priest, Plautius Aelianus, dictated the proper formulae, Helvidius Priscus, the praetor, first consecrated the site by a solemn sacrifice[383](#) of a pig, a sheep and an ox, and then duly offering the entrails on an altar of turf, he prayed to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, as the guardian deities of the empire, to prosper the enterprise, and by divine grace to bring to completion this house of theirs which human piety had here begun. He then took hold of the chaplets to which the ropes holding the foundation-stone were attached. At the same moment the other magistrates and the priests and senators and knights and large numbers of the populace in joyous excitement with one great effort dragged the huge stone into its place. On every side gifts of gold and silver were flung into the foundations, and ¹⁶²blocks of virgin ore unscathed by any furnace, just as they had come from the womb of the earth. For the soothsayers had given out that the building must not be desecrated by the use of stone or gold that had been put to any other purpose. The height of the roof was raised. This was the only

change that religious scruples would allow, and it was felt to be the only point in which the former temple lacked grandeur.

³³¹We now reach the year A.D. 70. Vespasian had already been consul under Claudius in 51.

³³²In the absence of both consuls.

³³³i.e. Sohaemus, Antiochus, and Agrippa (cp. ii. [81](#)).

³³⁴Cp. ii. [85](#).

³³⁵Cp. iii. [52](#).

³³⁶Vespasian's freedman (cp. iii. [12](#), [28](#).)

³³⁷The elder brother of Galba's adopted son Piso.

³³⁸See ii. [65](#). He must by now have ceased to be absentee governor.

³³⁹It was to the command of this legion that Galba promoted Antonius (see ii. [86](#)).

³⁴⁰Varus had served under Corbulo in Syria.

³⁴¹In his life of *Agricola* Tacitus speaks of Domitian's red face as 'his natural bulwark against shame'.

³⁴²See chap. [39](#).

³⁴³See chap. [10](#).

³⁴⁴i.e. Publius Celer. As this Demetrius was present with Thrasea at the end, holding high philosophical discourse with him (*Ann.* xvi. 34), he seems to have been a Cynic in the modern sense as well.

³⁴⁵Another Stoic malcontent, brother of the Arulenus Rusticus mentioned in iii. [80](#).

³⁴⁶According to Dio they were two devoted and inseparable brothers. They became governors, one of Upper and the other of Lower Germany, and, being wealthy, were forced by Nero to commit suicide.

³⁴⁷Cp. ii. [10](#).

³⁴⁸Cp. iii. [9](#).

³⁴⁹Cp. i. [48](#), note [79](#).

³⁵⁰Twenty-five.

³⁵¹Piso was a brother of Regulus' victim. He was therefore glad to see him incapable of reprisal.

³⁵²i.e. there was no property left to tempt Nero.

³⁵³i.e. the money and other rewards won by prosecuting Crassus and Orfitus.

³⁵⁴Nero.

³⁵⁵He had recited some libellous verses on Nero and been condemned for treason.

³⁵⁶Cp. ii. [67](#).

³⁵⁷i.e. those who had surrendered at Narnia and Bovillae, as distinct from those who had been discharged after Galba's death.

³⁵⁸Chap. [2](#).

³⁵⁹i.e. those who were either over fifty or had served in the Guards sixteen or in a legion twenty years.

³⁶⁰See iii. [74](#).

³⁶¹See chap. [38](#).

³⁶²Africa was peculiar in that the pro-consul, who governed it for the senate, commanded an army. All the other provinces demanding military protection were under imperial control. Caligula, without withdrawing the province from the senate, in some degree regularized the anomaly by transferring this command to a 'legate' of his own, technically inferior to the civil governor.

³⁶³Whereas the pro-consul's appointment was for one year only, the emperor's legate retained his post at the emperor's pleasure, and was usually given several years.

³⁶⁴Cp. ii. [98](#).

³⁶⁵See i. [70](#).

³⁶⁶See chap. [11](#).

³⁶⁷i.e. he hoped that Piso would accept the story with alacrity and thus commit himself.

³⁶⁸Cp. i. [7](#).

³⁶⁹Under Domitian he became one of the most notorious and dreaded of informers. His name doubtless recurred in the lost books of the Histories. But the only other extant mention of him by Tacitus is in the life of *Agricola* (chap. [45](#)).

³⁷⁰On the coast between Carthage and Thapsus.

³⁷¹Tripoli and Lebda.

³⁷²Further inland; probably the modern Fezzan.

³⁷³Vespasian was still at Alexandria.

³⁷⁴Cp. ii. [82](#), note [410](#).

³⁷⁵Cp. ii. [4](#) and Book [V](#).

³⁷⁶It had been Vespasian's original plan to starve Rome out by holding the granaries of Egypt and Africa. See iii. [48](#).

³⁷⁷Cp. iii. [71](#).

³⁷⁸Probably from Etruria, where certain families were credited with the requisite knowledge and skill. Claudius had established a College of Soothsayers in Rome. They ranked lower than the Augurs.

³⁷⁹At Ostia.

³⁸⁰Their names would suggest prosperity and success, e.g. Salvius, Victor, Valerius, and they would carry branches of oak, laurel, myrtle, or beech.

³⁸¹This too was 'lucky' and a common ritualistic requirement.

³⁸²The 'holy water' must come from certain streams of special sanctity, such as the Tiber or its tributary, the Almo. The water would be sprinkled from the 'lucky' branches.

³⁸³To the god Mars.

THE LOSS OF GERMANY

54Meanwhile,[384](#) the news of Vitellius' death had spread through Gaul and Germany and redoubled the vigour of the war. Civilis now dropped all pretence and hurled himself upon the Roman Empire. The Vitellian legions felt that even foreign slavery was preferable to owning Vespasian's sovereignty. The Gauls too had taken heart. A rumour had been spread that our winter camps in Moesia and Pannonia were being blockaded by Sarmatians and Dacians:[385](#) similar stories were fabricated about Britain: the Gauls began to think that the fortune of the Roman arms was the same all the world over. But above all, the burning of the Capitol led them to believe that the empire was coming to an end. 'Once in old days the Gauls had captured Rome, but her empire had stood firm since Jupiter's high-place was left unscathed. But now,¹⁶³SO the Druids[386](#) with superstitious folly kept dinning into their ears, this fatal fire was a sign of Heaven's anger, and meant that the Transalpine tribes were destined now to rule the world.' It was also persistently rumoured that the Gallic chieftains, whom Otho had sent to work against Vitellius,[387](#) had agreed, before they parted, that if Rome sank under its internal troubles in an unbroken sequence of civil wars, they would not fail the cause of the Gallic freedom.

55Previous to the murder of Hordeonius Flaccus[388](#) nothing had leaked out to arouse suspicions of a conspiracy, but when he had been assassinated, negotiations passed between Civilis and Classicus,[389](#) who commanded the Treviran cavalry. Classicus was far above the rest both in birth and in wealth. He came of royal line and his stock was famous both in peace and war. It was his boast that his family had given Rome more enemies than allies. These two were now joined by Julius Tutor and Julius Sabinus, the one a Treviran, the other a Lingonian. Tutor had been appointed by Vitellius to watch the bank of the Rhine.[390](#) Sabinus'¹⁶⁴ natural vanity was further inflamed by spurious pretensions of high birth, for he alleged that his great-grandmother's beauty had caught the fancy of Julius Caesar during the campaign in Gaul, and that they had committed adultery. These four tested the temper of the rest in private interviews, and having bound to the conspiracy those who were considered fit, they held a conference at Cologne in a private house, the general feeling in the city

being hostile to such plans as theirs. A few of the Ubii and Tungri, indeed, attended, but the Treviri and Lingonians were the backbone of the conspiracy. Nor would they tolerate deliberation or delay. They vied with each other in protesting that Rome was distracted by internal quarrels; legions had been cut to pieces, Italy devastated, the city was on the point of being taken, while all her armies were occupied with wars of their own in different quarters. They need only garrison the Alps and then, when liberty had taken firm root, they could discuss together what limit each tribe should set to its exercise of power.

56All this was no sooner spoken than applauded. About the remnant of Vitellius' army they were in some doubt. Many held that they ought to be killed as being treacherous and insubordinate and stained with the blood of their generals. However, the idea of sparing them carried the day. To destroy all hope of pardon would only steel their obstinacy: it was much better to seduce them into alliance: only the generals need be killed; a guilty conscience and the hope of pardon would soon bring the rest flocking over ¹⁶⁵to their flag. Such was the tenor of their first meeting. Agitators were sent all over Gaul to stir up war. The conspirators themselves feigned loyalty to Vocula, hoping to catch him off his guard.³⁹¹ There were, indeed, traitors who reported all this to Vocula, but he was not strong enough to crush the conspiracy, his legions being short-handed and unreliable. Between suspected troops on one side and secret enemies on the other, it seemed his best course under the circumstances to dissemble, as they were doing, and thus use their own weapons against them. So he marched down the river to Cologne. There he found Claudius Labeo, who after being taken prisoner, as described above,³⁹² and relegated to the Frisii, had bribed his guards and escaped to Cologne. He promised that if Vocula would provide him with troops, he would go to the Batavi and win back the better part of their community to the Roman alliance. He was given a small force of horse and foot. Without venturing any attempt upon the Batavi, he attracted a few of the Nervii and Baetasii³⁹³ to his standard, and proceeded to harass the Canninefates and Marsaci³⁹³ more by stealth than open warfare.

57Lured by the treachery of the Gauls, Vocula marched out against his enemy.³⁹⁴ Not far from Vetera, Classicus and Tutor rode forward³⁹⁵ on a pretext of scouting, ¹⁶⁶and ratified their compact with the German leaders. They were now for the first time separated from the legions, and entrenched themselves in a camp of their own. At this, Vocula loudly protested that Rome was not as yet so shattered by civil war as to earn the contempt of tribes like the Treviri and Lingones. She could still rely on loyal provinces and victorious armies, on the good fortune of the empire and the avenging hand of God. Thus it was that in former days Sacrovir and the Aedui,³⁹⁶ more lately and the Gallic provinces had each been crushed at a single battle. Now, again, these treaty-breakers must expect to face the same powers of Providence and Destiny. The sainted Julius and the sainted Augustus had understood these people better: it was Galba's reduction of the tribute³⁹⁷ that had clothed them in enmity and pride. 'They are our enemies to-day because their yoke is easy: when they have been stripped and

plundered they will be our friends.' After these spirited words, seeing that Classicus and Tutor still persisted in their treachery, he turned back and retired to Novaesium, while the Gauls encamped a couple of miles away. Thither the centurions and soldiers flocked to sell their souls. This was, indeed, an unheard ¹⁶⁷of villainy that Roman soldiers should swear allegiance to a foreign power, and offer as a pledge for this heinous crime either to kill or imprison their generals. Though many urged Vocula to escape, he felt that he must make a bold stand, so he summoned a meeting and spoke ⁵⁸somewhat as follows:—'Never before have I addressed you with such feelings of anxiety for you, or with such indifference to my own fate. That plans are being laid for my destruction I am glad enough to hear: in such a parlous case as this I look for death as the end of all my troubles. It is for you that I feel shame and pity. It is not that a field of battle awaits you, for that would only accord with the laws of warfare and the just rights of combatants, but because Classicus hopes that with your hands he can make war upon the Roman people, and flourishes before you an oath of allegiance to the Empire of All Gaul. What though fortune and courage have deserted us for the moment, have we not glorious examples in the past? How often have not Roman soldiers chosen to die rather than be driven from their post? Often have our allies endured the destruction of their cities and given themselves and their wives and children to the flames, without any other reward for such an end save the name of honourable men. At this very moment Roman troops are enduring famine and siege at Vetera, and neither threats nor promises can move them, while we, besides arms and men and fine fortifications, have supplies enough to last through any length of war. Money, too—the other day there was enough even ¹⁶⁸for a donative, and whether you choose to say that it was given you by Vespasian or by Vitellius, at any rate you got it from a Roman Emperor. After all the engagements you have won, after routing the enemy at Gelduba, at Vetera, it would be shameful enough to shirk battle, but you have your trenches and your walls, and there are ways of gaining time until armies come flocking from the neighbouring provinces to your rescue. Granted that you dislike me; well, there are others to lead you, whether legate, tribune, centurion, and even private soldier. But do not let this portent be trumpeted over the whole world, that Civilis and Classicus are going to invade Italy with you in their train. Suppose the Germans and Gauls lead the way to the walls of Rome, will you turn your arms upon your fatherland? The mere thought of such a crime is horrible. Will you stand sentry for the Treviran Tutor? Shall a Batavian give you the signal for battle? Will you swell the ranks of German hordes? And what will be the issue of your crime, when the Roman legions take the field against you? Desertion upon desertion, treachery upon treachery! You will be drifting miserably between the old allegiance and the new, with the curse of Heaven on your heads. Almighty Jupiter, whom we have worshipped at triumph after triumph for eight hundred and twenty years; and Quirinus, Father of our Rome, if it be not your pleasure that under my command this camp be kept clean from the stain of dishonour, grant at the least, I humbly beseech ye, that it never be defiled with ¹⁶⁹the pollution of a Tutor or a Classicus; and to these

soldiers of Rome give either innocence of heart or a speedy repentance before the harm is done.'

59The speech was variously received, with feelings fluctuating between hope, fear, and shame. Vocula withdrew and began to prepare for his end, but his freedmen and slaves prevented him from forestalling by his own hand a dreadful death. As it was, Classicus dispatched Aemilius Longinus, a deserter from the First legion, who quickly murdered him. For Herennius and Numisius imprisonment was thought sufficient. Classicus then assumed the uniform and insignia of a Roman general, and thus entered the camp. Hardened though he was to every kind of crime, words failed him,³⁹⁸ and he could only read out the oath. Those who were present swore allegiance to the Empire of All Gaul. He then gave high promotion to Vocula's assassin, and rewarded the others each according to the villainy of his service.

The command was now divided between Tutor and Classicus. Tutor at the head of a strong force besieged Cologne and forced the inhabitants and all the soldiers on the Upper Rhine to take the same oath of allegiance. At Mainz he killed the officers and drove away the camp-prefect, who had refused to swear. Classicus ordered all the greatest scoundrels among the deserters to go to Vetera and offer pardon to the besieged if they would yield to circumstances: otherwise there was no hope for them: they should suffer famine and sword ¹⁷⁰and every extremity. The messengers further cited their own example.

60Torn by a conflict of loyalty and hunger, the besieged vacillated between honour and disgrace. While they hesitated, all their sources of food, both usual and unusual, began to fail them. They had eaten their mules and horses and all the other animals which, though foul and unclean, their straits had forced into use. At last they took to grubbing up the shrubs and roots and the grass that grew between the stones, and became a very pattern of endurance in wretchedness, until at last they soiled their glory by a shameful end. Envoys were sent to Civilis begging him to save their lives. Even then he refused to receive their petition until they had sworn allegiance to All Gaul. He then negotiated for the plunder of the camp and sent guards, some to secure the money, servants and baggage, and others to conduct the men themselves out of the camp with empty hands. About five miles down the road their line was surprised by an ambush of Germans. The bravest fell on the spot; many were cut down in flight; the rest got back to camp. Civilis, indeed, complained that the Germans had criminally broken faith and rebuked them for it. There is no evidence to show whether this was a pretence or whether he was really unable to restrain his savage troops. The camp was plundered and burnt, and all who had survived the battle were devoured by the flames.

61When Civilis first took up arms against Rome he made a vow, such as is common with barbarians, to ¹⁷¹let his ruddled hair³⁹⁹ grow wild; now that he had at last accomplished the destruction of the legions he had it cut. It is said also that he put up some of the prisoners for his little son to shoot in sport with javelins and arrows. However that may be, he did not himself swear allegiance to All Gaul, nor did he force

any of the Batavi to do so. He felt that he could rely on the strength of the Germans, and that if any quarrel arose with the Gauls about the empire, his fame would give him an advantage. Munius Lupercus, one of the Roman commanding-officers, was sent among other presents to Veleda, a virgin of the Bructeran tribe who wielded a widespread authority.⁴⁰⁰ It is an ancient custom in Germany to credit a number of women with prophetic powers, and with the growth of superstition these develop into goddesses. At this moment Veleda's influence was at its height, for she had prophesied the success of the Germans and the destruction of the Roman army.⁴⁰¹ However, Lupercus was killed on the journey. A few of the centurions and officers who had been born in Gaul were detained as a security for good faith. The winter camps of the legions and of the auxiliary infantry and cavalry were all dismantled and burnt, with the sole exception of those at Mainz and Vindonissa.⁴⁰²

¹⁷²62 The Sixteenth legion and the auxiliary troops who had surrendered with it now received orders to migrate from their quarters at Novaesium to Trier, and a date was fixed by which they had to leave their camp. They spent the meantime brooding on various anxieties, the cowards all shuddering at the precedent of the massacre at Vetera, the better sort covered with shame at their disgrace. 'What sort of a march would this be? Whom would they have to lead them? Everything would be decided by the will of those into whose hands they had put their lives.' Others, again, were quite indifferent to the disgrace, and simply stowed all their money and most cherished possessions about their persons, while many got their armour ready and buckled on their swords, as if for battle. While they were still busy with these preparations the hour struck for their departure, and it proved more bitter than they had expected. Inside the trenches their disgrace was not so noticeable. The open country and the light of day revealed their depth of shame. The emperors' medallions had been torn down⁴⁰³ and their standards desecrated, while Gallic ensigns glittered all around them. They marched in silence, like a long funeral procession, led by Claudius Sanctus,⁴⁰⁴ a man whose sinister appearance—he had lost one eye—was only surpassed by his weakness of intellect. Their disgrace was doubled when they were joined by the First legion, who had left their camp at¹⁷³ Bonn. The famous news of their capture had spread, and all the people who shortly before had trembled at the very name of Rome, now came flocking out from fields and houses, and scattered far and wide in transports of joy at this unwonted sight. Their insulting glee was too much for 'The Picenum Horse'.⁴⁰⁵ Defying all Sanctus' threats and promises, they turned off to Mainz, and coming by chance upon Longinus, the man who killed Vocula, they slew him with a shower of javelins and thus made a beginning of future amends. The legions, without changing their route, came and camped before the walls of Trier.

⁶³ Highly elated by their success, Civilis and Classicus debated whether they should allow their troops to sack Cologne. Their natural savagery and lust for plunder inclined them to destroy the town, but policy forbade; and they felt that in inaugurating a new empire a reputation for clemency would be an asset. Civilis was also moved by the

memory of a past service, for at the beginning of the outbreak his son had been arrested in Cologne, and they had kept him in honourable custody. However, the tribes across the Rhine were jealous of this rich and rising community, and held that the war could only be ended either by throwing the settlement open to all Germans without distinction or by destroying it and thereby dispersing¹⁷⁴ the Ubii together with its other inhabitants.⁴⁰⁶ Accordingly the Tencteri,⁴⁰⁷ their nearest neighbours across the Rhine, dispatched a deputation to lay a message before a public meeting of the town. This was delivered by the haughtiest of the delegates in some such terms as these:— 'We give thanks to the national gods of Germany and above all others, to the god of war, that you are again incorporate in the German nation and the German name, and we congratulate you that you will now at last become free members of a free community. Until to-day the Romans had closed to us the roads and rivers, and almost the very air of heaven, to prevent all intercourse between us; or else they offered a still fouler insult to born warriors, that we should meet under supervision, unarmed and almost naked,⁴⁰⁸ and should pay for the privilege. Now, that our friendly alliance may be ratified for all eternity, we demand of you that you pull down those bulwarks of slavery, the walls of your town, for even wild beasts lose their spirit if you keep them caged: that you put to the sword every Roman on your soil, since tyrants are incompatible with freedom; that all the property of those killed form a common stock and no one be ¹⁷⁵allowed to conceal anything or to secure any private advantage. It must also be open both for us and for you to live on either river-bank, as our forefathers could in earlier days. As daylight is the natural heritage of all mankind, so the land of the world is free to all brave men. Resume again the customs and manners of your own country and throw off those luxurious habits which enslave Rome's subjects far more effectively than Roman arms. Then, grown simple and uncorrupt, you will forget your past slavery and either know none but equals or hold empire over others.'

⁶⁵The townspeople took time to consider these proposals, and, feeling that their apprehensions for the future forbade them to assent, while their present circumstances forbade them to return a plain negative, they answered as follows: 'We have seized our first opportunity of freedom with more haste than prudence, because we wanted to join hands with you and all our other German kinsmen. As for our town-walls, seeing that the Roman armies are massing at this moment, it would be safer for us to heighten them than to pull them down. All the foreigners from Italy or the provinces who lived on our soil have either perished in the war or fled to their own homes. As for the original settlers⁴⁰⁹, who are united to us by ties of marriage, they and their offspring regard this as their home, and we do not think you are so unreason¹⁷⁶able as to ask us to kill our parents and brothers and children. All taxes and commercial restrictions we remit. We grant you free entry without supervision, but you must come in daylight and unarmed, while these ties which are still strange and new are growing into a long-established custom. As arbitrators we will appoint Civilis and Velede, and we will ratify our compact in their presence.'

Thus the Tencteri were pacified. A deputation was sent with presents to Civilis and Velela, and obtained all that the people of Cologne desired. They were not, however, allowed to approach and speak to Velela or even to see her, but were kept at a distance to inspire in them the greater awe. She herself lived at the top of a high tower, and one of her relatives was appointed to carry all the questions and answers like a mediator between God and man.

66Now that he had gained the accession of Cologne, Civilis determined to win over the neighbouring communities or to declare war in case of opposition. He reduced the Sunuci⁴¹⁰ and formed their fighting strength into cohorts, but then found his advance barred by Claudius Labeo⁴¹¹ at the head of a hastily-recruited band of Baetasii, Tungri, and Nervii.⁴¹¹ He had secured the bridge over the Maas and relied on the strength of his position. A skirmish in the narrow defile proved indecisive, until the Germans swam across and took Labeo in the rear. At this point¹⁷⁷ Civilis by a bold move—or possibly by arrangement—rode into the lines of the Tungri and called out in a loud voice, 'Our object in taking up arms is not to secure empire for the Batavi and Treviri over other tribes. We are far from any such arrogance. Take us as allies. I am come to join you; whether as general or as private it is for you to choose.' This had a great effect on the common soldiers, who began to sheathe their swords. Then two of their chieftains, Campanus and Juvenalis, surrendered the entire tribe. Labeo escaped before he was surrounded. Civilis also received the allegiance of the Baetasii and Nervii, and added their forces to his own. His power was now immense, for all the Gallic communities were either terrified or ready to offer willing support.

67In the meantime, Julius Sabinus,⁴¹² who had destroyed every memorial of the Roman alliance,⁴¹³ assumed the title of Caesar and proceeded to hurry a large unwieldy horde of his tribesmen against the Sequani,⁴¹⁴ a neighbouring community, faithful to Rome. The Sequani accepted battle: the good cause prospered: the Lingones were routed. Sabinus fled the field with the same rash haste with which he had plunged into battle. Wishing to spread a rumour of his death, he took refuge in a house and set fire to it, and was thus supposed to have perished by his own act. We shall, however, relate in due course the devices by which ¹⁷⁸he lay in hiding and prolonged his life for nine more years, and allude also to the loyalty of his friends and the memorable example set by his wife Epponina.⁴¹⁵

³⁸⁴Tacitus here resumes the thread of his narrative of the rebellion on the Rhine, interrupted at the end of chap. 37, and goes back from July to January, A.D. 70.

³⁸⁵Cp. iii. 46.

³⁸⁶The danger of Druidism was always before the eyes of the emperors. Augustus had forbidden Roman citizens to adopt it. Claudius had tried to stamp it out in Gaul and in Britain, yet they appear again here to preach a fanatic nationalism. However, this seems to be their last appearance as leaders of revolt.

³⁸⁷Probably they were in Rome, and were sent back to their homes to intrigue against Vitellius' rising power.

³⁸⁸See chap. 36.

³⁸⁹Cp. ii. 14.

³⁹⁰i.e. he was to prevent any incursions from Germany along the frontier of his canton, between Bingen and Coblenz.

³⁹¹At Mainz.

³⁹²Chap. 18.

³⁹³These tribes lived between the Maas and the Scheldt, and the Marsaci were round the mouth of the Scheldt.

³⁹⁴Civilis, again besieging Vetera (chap. 36).

³⁹⁵i.e. from the rest of Vocula's force, which they had not yet deserted.

³⁹⁶The Aedui, one of the most powerful of the Gallic tribes, living between the Saône and the Loire had revolted in A.D. 21, and held out for a short time at their chief town (Autun).

³⁹⁷This had only been granted to a few tribes who had helped in crushing (see i. 8 and 51). The Treviri and Lingones had been punished. But it is a good rhetorical point.

³⁹⁸His presumption took away his breath.

³⁹⁹i.e. artificially reddened according to a Gallic custom.

⁴⁰⁰Cp. chap. 69.

⁴⁰¹Under Vespasian she inspired another rebellion and was brought as a captive to Rome, where she aroused much polite curiosity.

⁴⁰²Windisch.

⁴⁰³From the standards.

⁴⁰⁴Claudius the Holy; *lucus a non lucendo*.

⁴⁰⁵An auxiliary squadron of Italian horse, originally raised, we may suppose, by a provincial governor who was a native of Picenum.

⁴⁰⁶The Ubii were distrusted as having taken the name Agrippinenses and become in some degree Romanized. The town was strongly walled, and Germans from outside only admitted on payment and under Roman supervision.

⁴⁰⁷See chap. 21.

⁴⁰⁸Not, of course, to be taken literally. 'The Germans do no business public or private except in full armour,' says Tacitus in the *Germania*. So to them 'unarmed' meant 'unclothed'.

⁴⁰⁹i.e. the veterans whom Agrippina had sent out to her birthplace in A.D. 50.

⁴¹⁰West of the Ubii, between the Roer and the Maas.

⁴¹¹See chap. 56.

⁴¹²Cp. chap. 55.

⁴¹³e.g. the inscriptions recording the terms of alliance granted to the Lingones by Rome.

⁴¹⁴Round Vesontio (Besançon).

⁴¹⁵The story, which Tacitus presumably told in the lost part of his *History*, dealing with the end of Vespasian's reign, is mentioned both by Plutarch and Dio. Sabinus and his wife lived for nine years in an underground cave, where two sons were born to them. They were eventually discovered and executed.

THE EBB-TIDE OF REVOLT

This success on the part of the Sequani checked the rising flood. The Gallic communities gradually came to their senses and began to remember their obligations as allies. In this movement the Remi⁴¹⁶ took the lead. They circulated a notice throughout Gaul, summoning a meeting of delegates to consider whether liberty or peace was the preferable alternative. ⁶⁸At Rome, however, all these disasters were exaggerated, and Mucianus began to feel anxious. He had already appointed Annius Gallus and Petilius Cerialis to the chief command, and distinguished officers as they were, he was afraid the conduct of such a war might be too much for them. Moreover, he could not leave Rome without government, but he was afraid of Domitian's unbridled passions, while, as we have already seen,⁴¹⁷ he suspected Antonius Primus and Arrius Varus. Varus, as commanding the Guards, still had the chief power and influence in his hands. Mucianus accordingly displaced him, but, as a compensation, made him Director of ¹⁷⁹the Corn-supply. As he had also to placate Domitian, who was inclined to support Varus, he appointed to the command of the Guards Arrecinus Clemens, who was connected with

Vespasian's family⁴¹⁸ and very friendly with Domitian. He also impressed it upon Domitian that Clemens' father had filled this command with great distinction under Caligula: that his name and his character would both find favour with the troops, and that, although he was a member of the senate,⁴¹⁹ he was quite able to fill both positions. He then chose his staff, some as being the most eminent men in the country, others as recommended by private influence.

Thus both Domitian and Mucianus made ready to start, but with very different feelings. Domitian was full of the sanguine haste of youth, while Mucianus kept devising delays to check this enthusiasm. He was afraid that if Domitian once seized control of an army, his youthful self-assurance and his bad advisers would lead him into action prejudicial both to peace and war. Three victorious legions, the Eighth, Eleventh, and Thirteenth;⁴²⁰ the Twenty-first—one of Vitellius' legions—and the Second, which had been newly enrolled, all started for the front, some by way of the Poenine and Cottian⁴²¹ Alps, others over the Graian¹⁸⁰ Alps.⁴²² The Fourteenth was also summoned from Britain, and the Sixth and First from Spain.

The rumour that this force was on its way, combined with the present temper of the Gauls, inclined them to adopt a sober policy. Their delegates now met in the territory of the Remi, where they found the representatives of the Treviri awaiting them. One of these, Julius Valentinus, who was the keenest instigator of a hostile policy, delivered a set speech, in which he heaped spiteful aspersions on the Roman people, making all the charges which are usually brought against great empires. He was a clever agitator, whose mad rhetoric made him popular with the crowd. ⁶⁹However, Julius Auspex, a chieftain of the Remi, enlarged upon the power of Rome and the blessings of peace. 'Any coward can begin a war,' he said, 'but it is the brave who run the risks of its conduct: and here are the legions already upon us.' Thus he restrained them, awakening a sense of duty in all the sager breasts, and appealing to the fears of the younger men. So, while applauding Valentinus' courage, they followed the advice of Auspex. The fact that in 's rising the Treviri and Lingones sided with Verginius is known to have told against them in Gaul. Many, too, were held back by tribal jealousy. They wanted to know where the head-quarters of the war would be, to whom were they to look for auspices and orders, and, if all went well, which town would be chosen as the seat of government. Thus dissension ¹⁸¹preceded victory. They angrily magnified, some their great connexions, others their wealth and strength, others their antiquity, until they grew tired of discussing the future and voted for the existing state of things. Letters were written to the Treviri in the name of All Gaul, bidding them cease hostilities, suggesting, however, that pardon might be obtained, and that many were ready to plead their cause if they showed repentance. Valentinus opposed this mandate and made his tribesmen offer a deaf ear to it. He was always less anxious to organize a campaign than to make speeches on every possible occasion.

⁷⁰The result was that neither the Treviri nor the Lingones nor the other rebel tribes behaved as if aware of the serious risks they were undertaking. Even the leaders did not

act in concert. Civilis wandered over the wilds of the Belgic country, trying to catch or expel Claudius Labeo. Classicus ordinarily took his ease, apparently enjoying the fruits of empire. Even Tutor seemed in no hurry to garrison the Upper Rhine and block the Alpine passes. In the meantime, the Twenty-first legion made its way down from Vindonissa, while Sextilius Felix⁴²³ advanced through Raetia with some auxiliary cohorts. These were joined by the 'Picked Horse',⁴²⁴ a force that had been raised by Vitellius and then deserted to Vespasian. This was commanded by Civilis' nephew, Julius Briganticus,⁴²⁵ for uncle and nephew hated each other¹⁸² with all the aggravated bitterness of near relatives. Tutor swelled his force of Treviri with fresh levies from the Vangiones, Triboci, and Caeracates,⁴²⁶ and a stiffening of Roman veterans, both horse and foot, who had either been bribed or intimidated. These first cut up an auxiliary cohort sent forward by Sextilius Felix, but on the advance of the Roman army with its generals they loyally deserted to their old flag, and were followed by the Triboci, Vangiones, and Caeracates. Tutor, followed by his Treviri, avoided Mainz and fell back on Bingium,⁴²⁷ relying on his position there, as he had broken down the bridge over the river Nava. However, Sextilius' cohorts followed him up; some traitor showed them a ford; Tutor was routed. This disaster was a crushing blow to the Treviri. The rank and file dropped their weapons and took to the fields, while some of their chieftains, hoping it might be thought that they had been the first to lay down arms, took refuge among tribes who had never repudiated the Roman alliance. The legions which had been moved, as we saw above,⁴²⁸ from Novaesium and Bonn to Trier, now administered to themselves the oath of allegiance to Vespasian. This happened in Valentinus' absence. When he arrived in furious excitement, ready to spread universal¹⁸³ ruin and confusion, the legions withdrew into the friendly territory of the Mediomatrici.⁴²⁹ Valentinus and Tutor then led the Treviri forcibly back into the field, but first they killed the two Roman officers, Herennius and Numisius.⁴³⁰ By diminishing the hope of pardon they tried to cement their bond of crime.

71Such was the position when Petilius Cerialis reached Mainz. His arrival roused high hopes. He was himself thirsting for battle, and being always better at despising his enemy than at taking precautions, he fired his men by delivering a spirited harangue, promising that directly there was a chance of getting into touch with the enemy he would engage without delay. He dismissed the Gallic recruits to their homes with a message that the legions were enough for his task: the allies could resume their peaceful occupations, feeling assured that the war was practically ended, now that Roman troops had taken it in hand. This action rendered the Gauls all the more tractable. They made less difficulty about the war-tax, now that they had got their men back again, while his disdain only sharpened their sense of duty. On the other side, when Civilis and Classicus heard of Tutor's defeat, the destruction of the Treviri, and the universal success of the Roman arms, they fell into a panic, hastily mobilized their own scattered forces, and kept sending messages to Valentinus not to risk a decisive battle. This only hastened Cerialis' movements. He sent¹⁸⁴ guides to the legions stationed in the country of the

Mediomatrici to lead them by the shortest route on the enemy's rear. Then, assembling all the troops to be found in Mainz⁴³¹ together with his own force, he marched in three days to Rigodulum.⁴³² Here, on a spot protected by the mountains on one side and the Moselle on the other, Valentinus had already taken his stand with a large force of Treviri. His camp had been strengthened with trenches and stone barricades, but these fortifications had no terrors for the Roman general. He ordered the infantry to force the position in front, while the cavalry were to ascend the hill. Valentinus' hurriedly assembled forces filled him with contempt, for he knew that whatever advantage their position might give them, the superior morale of his men would outweigh it. A short delay was necessary while the cavalry climbed the hill, exposed to the enemy's fire. But when the fight began, the Treviri tumbled headlong down the hill like a house falling. Some of our cavalry, who had ridden round by an easier gradient, captured several Belgic chieftains, including their general, Valentinus.

72On the next day Cerialis entered Trier. The troops clamoured greedily for its destruction. 'It was the native town of Classicus and of Tutor: these were the men who had wickedly entrapped and slaughtered the legions. Its guilt was far worse than that of Cremona, which had been wiped off the face of Italy ¹⁸⁵for causing the victors a single night's delay. Was the chief seat of the rebellion to be left standing untouched on the German frontier, glorying in the spoil of Roman armies and the blood of Roman generals?⁴³³ The plunder could go to the Imperial Treasury. It would be enough for them to see the rebel town in smoking ruins; that would be some compensation for the destruction of so many camps.' Cerialis was afraid of soiling his reputation if it was said that he gave his men a taste for cruelty and riot, so he suppressed their indignation. They obeyed him, too, for now that civil war was done with, there was less insubordination on foreign service. Their thoughts were now distracted by the pitiful plight of the legions who had been summoned from the country of the Mediomatrici.⁴³⁴ Miserably conscious of their guilt, they stood with eyes rooted to the ground. When the armies met, they raised no cheer: they had no answer for those who offered comfort and encouragement: they skulked in their tents, shunning the light of day. It was not fear of punishment so much as the shame of their disgrace which thus overwhelmed them. Even the victorious army showed their bewilderment: hardly venturing to make an audible petition, they craved pardon for them with silent tears. At length Cerialis soothed their alarm. He insisted that all disasters due to dissension between officers and men, or to the enemy's guile, were to be regarded as 'acts ¹⁸⁶of destiny'. They were to count this as their first day of service and sworn allegiance.⁴³⁵ Neither he nor the emperor would remember past misdeeds. He then gave them quarters in his own camp, and sent round orders that no one in the heat of any quarrel should taunt a fellow soldier with mutiny or defeat.

73Cerialis next summoned the Treviri and Lingones, and addressed them as follows: 'Unpractised as I am in public speaking, for it is only on the field that I have asserted the superiority of Rome, yet since words have so much weight with you, and since you

distinguish good and bad not by the light of facts but by what agitators tell you, I have decided to make a few remarks, which, as the war is practically over, are likely to be more profitable to the audience than to ourselves. Roman generals and officers originally set foot in your country and the rest of Gaul from no motives of ambition, but at the call of your ancestors, who were worn almost to ruin by dissension. The Germans whom one party summoned to their aid had forced the yoke of slavery on allies and enemies alike. You know how often we fought against the Cimbri and the Teutons, with what infinite pains and with what striking success our armies have undertaken German wars. All that is notorious. And to-day it is not to protect Italy that we have occupied the Rhine, but to prevent some second Ariovistus making himself ¹⁸⁷master of All Gaul.⁴³⁶ Do you imagine that Civilis and his Batavi and the other tribes across the Rhine care any more about you than their ancestors cared about your fathers and grandfathers? The Germans have always had the same motives for trespassing into Gaul—their greed for gain and their desire to change homes with you. They wanted to leave their marshes and deserts, and to make themselves masters of this magnificently fertile soil and of you who live on it. Of course they use specious pretexts and talk about liberty. No one has ever wanted to enslave others and play the tyrant without making use of the very same phrases.

74'Tyranny and warfare were always rife throughout the length and breadth of Gaul, until you accepted Roman government. Often as we have been provoked, we have never imposed upon you any burden by right of conquest, except what was necessary to maintain peace. Tribes cannot be kept quiet without troops. You cannot have troops without pay; and you cannot raise pay without taxation. In every other respect you are treated as our equals. You frequently command our legions yourselves: you govern this and other provinces yourselves. We have no exclusive privileges. Though you live so far away, you enjoy the blessings of a good emperor no less than we do, ¹⁸⁸whereas the tyrant only oppresses his nearest neighbours. You must put up with luxury and greed in your masters, just as you put up with bad crops or excessive rain, or any other natural disaster. Vice will last as long as mankind. But these evils are not continual. There are intervals of good government, which make up for them. You cannot surely hope that the tyranny of Tutor and Classicus would mean milder government, or that they will need less taxation for the armies they will have to raise to keep the Germans and Britons at bay. For if the Romans were driven out—which Heaven forbid—what could ensue save a universal state of intertribal warfare? During eight hundred years, by good fortune and good organization, the structure of empire has been consolidated. It cannot be pulled down without destroying those who do it. And it is you who would run the greatest risk of all, since you have gold and rich resources, which are the prime causes of war. You must learn, then, to love and foster peace and the city of Rome in which you, the vanquished, have the same rights as your conquerors. You have tried both conditions. Take warning, then, that submission and safety are better than rebellion and

ruin.' By such words as these he quieted and reassured his audience, who had been afraid of more rigorous measures.

75While the victors were occupying Trier, Civilis and Classicus sent a letter to Cerialis, the gist of which was that Vespasian was dead, though the news was being suppressed: Rome and Italy were exhausted by civil ¹⁸⁹war: Mucianus and Domitian were mere names with no power behind them: if Cerialis desired to be emperor of All Gaul, they would be satisfied with their own territory: but if he should prefer battle, that, too, they would not deny him. Cerialis made no answer to Civilis and Classicus, but sent the letter and its bearer to Domitian.

The enemy now approached Trier from every quarter in detached bands, and Cerialis was much criticized for allowing them to unite, when he might have cut them off one by one. The Roman army now threw a trench and rampart round their camp, for they had rashly settled in it without seeing to the fortifications. 76In the German camp different opinions were being keenly debated. Civilis contended that they should wait for the tribes from across the Rhine, whose arrival would spread a panic sufficient to crush the enfeebled forces of the Romans. The Gauls, he urged, were simply a prey for the winning side and, as it was, the Belgae, who were their sole strength, had declared for him or were at least sympathetic. Tutor maintained that delay only strengthened the Roman force, since their armies were converging from every quarter. 'They have brought one legion across from Britain, others have been summoned from Spain, or are on their way from Italy.⁴³⁷ Nor are they raw recruits, but experienced veterans, while the Germans, on whose aid we rely, are subject to no discipline or control, but do whatever they like. You can only ¹⁹⁰bribe them with presents of money, and the Romans have the advantage of us there: besides, however keen to fight, a man always prefers peace to danger, so long as the pay is the same. But if we engage them at once, Cerialis has nothing but the remnants of the German army,⁴³⁸ who have sworn allegiance to the Gallic Empire. The very fact that they have just won an unexpected victory over Valentinus' undisciplined bands⁴³⁹ serves to confirm them and their general in imprudence. They will venture out again and will fall, not into the hands of an inexperienced boy, who knows more about making speeches than war, but into the hands of Civilis and Classicus, at the sight of whom they will recall their fears and their flights and their famine, and remember how often they have had to beg their lives from their captors. Nor, again, is it any liking for the Romans that keeps back the Treviri and Lingones: they will fly to arms again, when once their fears are dispelled.' Classicus finally settled the difference of opinion by declaring for Tutor's policy, and they promptly proceeded to carry it out.

77The Ubii and Lingones were placed in the centre, the Batavian cohorts on the right, and on the left the Bructeri and Tencteri. Advancing, some by the hills and some by the path between the road and the river,⁴⁴⁰ ¹⁹¹they took us completely by surprise. So sudden was their onslaught that Cerialis, who had not spent the night in camp, was still in bed when he heard almost simultaneously that the fighting had begun and that the

day was lost. He cursed the messengers for their cowardice until he saw the whole extent of the disaster with his own eyes. The camp had been forced, the cavalry routed, and the bridge over the Moselle, leading to the outskirts of the town, which lay between him and his army,⁴⁴⁰ was held by the enemy. But confusion had no terrors for Cerialis. Seizing hold on fugitives, flinging himself without any armour into the thick of the fire, he succeeded by his inspired imprudence and the assistance of the braver men in retaking the bridge. Leaving a picked band to hold it, he hurried back to the camp, where he found that the companies of the legions which had surrendered at Bonn and Novaesium⁴⁴¹ were all broken up, few men were left at their posts, and the eagles were all but surrounded by the enemy. He turned on them in blazing anger, 'It is not Flaccus or Vocula that you are deserting. There is no "treason" about me. I have done nothing to be ashamed of, except that I was rash enough to believe that you had forgotten your Gallic ties and awakened to the memory of your Roman allegiance. Am I to be numbered with¹⁹² Numisius and Herennius?⁴⁴² Then you can say that all your generals have fallen either by your hands or the enemy's. Go and tell the news to Vespasian, or rather, to Civilis and Classicus—they are nearer at hand—that you have deserted your general on the field of battle. There will yet come legions who will not leave me unavenged or you unpunished.'

78All he said was true, and the other officers heaped the same reproaches on their heads. The men were drawn up in cohorts and companies, since it was impossible to deploy with the enemy swarming round them, and, the fight being inside the rampart, the tents and baggage were a serious encumbrance. Tutor and Classicus and Civilis, each at his post, were busy rallying their forces, appealing to the Gauls to fight for freedom, the Batavians for glory, and the Germans for plunder. Everything, indeed, went well for the enemy until the Twenty-first legion, who had rallied in a clearer space than any of the others, first sustained their charge and then repulsed them. Then, by divine providence, on the very point of victory the enemy suddenly lost their nerve and turned tail. They themselves attributed their panic to the appearance of the Roman auxiliaries, who, after being scattered by the first charge, formed again on the hill-tops and were taken for fresh reinforcements. However, what really cost the Gauls their victory was that they let their enemy alone and indulged in ignoble squabbles over the spoil. Thus after Cerialis' carelessness had ¹⁹³almost caused disaster, his pluck now saved the day, and he followed up his success by capturing the enemy's camp and destroying it before nightfall.

79Cerialis' troops were allowed short respite. Cologne was clamouring for help and offering to surrender Civilis' wife and sister and Classicus' daughter, who had been left behind there as pledges of the alliance. In the meantime the inhabitants had massacred all the stray Germans to be found in the town. They were now alarmed at this, and had good reason to implore aid before the enemy should recover their strength and bethink themselves of victory, or at any rate of revenge. Indeed, Civilis already had designs on Cologne, and he was still formidable, for the most warlike of his cohorts, composed of

Chauci and Frisii,⁴⁴³ was still in full force at Tolbiacum,⁴⁴⁴ within the territory of Cologne. However, he changed his plans on receiving the bitter news that this force had been entrapped and destroyed by the inhabitants of Cologne. They had entertained them at a lavish banquet, drugged them with wine, shut the doors upon them and burned the place to the ground. At the same moment Cerialis came by forced marches to the relief of Cologne. A further anxiety haunted Civilis. He was afraid that the Fourteenth legion, in conjunction with the fleet from Britain,⁴⁴⁵ might harry ¹⁹⁴the Batavian coast. However, Fabius Priscus, who was in command, led his troops inland into the country of the Nervii and Tungri, who surrendered to him. The Canninefates⁴⁴⁶ made an unprovoked attack upon the fleet and sank or captured the greater number of the ships. They also defeated a band of Nervian volunteers who had been recruited in the Roman interest. Classicus secured a further success against an advance-guard of cavalry which Cerialis had sent forward to Novaesium. These repeated checks, though unimportant in themselves, served to dim the lustre of the recent Roman victory.⁴⁴⁷

⁴¹⁶Round Reims.

⁴¹⁷Chap. 39.

⁴¹⁸His sister was Titus's first wife.

⁴¹⁹Augustus had made it a rule that the *praefectus praetorio* should come from the equestrian order.

⁴²⁰The text is here uncertain, and some historians maintain that the third of these legions was not XIII Gemina but VII Claudia (v. Henderson, *Civil War*, &c., p. 291).

⁴²¹Great St. Bernard and Mt. Genève.

⁴²²Little St. Bernard.

⁴²³See iii. 5.

⁴²⁴i.e. not raised in any one locality.

⁴²⁵Cp. ii. 22.

⁴²⁶The Triboci were in Lower Alsace; the Vangiones north of them in the district of Worms; the Caeracates probably to the north again, in the district between Mainz and the Nahe (Nava).

⁴²⁷Bingen.

⁴²⁸Chap. 62.

⁴²⁹Round Metz.

⁴³⁰See chap. 59.

⁴³¹The other detachments of legions IV and XXII.

⁴³²Riol.

⁴³³Hordeonius Flaccus, Vocula, Herennius, and Numisius.

⁴³⁴Legions I and XVI.

⁴³⁵They had, as a matter of fact, changed their allegiance no less than six times since the outbreak of the civil war.

⁴³⁶Ariovistus, king of the Suebi, summoned to aid one Gallic confederacy against another, formed the ambition of conquering Gaul, but was defeated by Julius Caesar near Besançon (Vesontio) in 58 B.C.

⁴³⁷See chap. 68.

⁴³⁸Tutor erred. Cerialis had also the Twenty-first from Vindonissa, Felix's auxiliary cohorts, and the troops he had found at Mainz (see chaps. 70 and 71).

⁴³⁹He suppresses his own defeat at Bingen (chap. 70).

⁴⁴⁰The town lay on the right bank of the Moselle; the Roman camp on the left bank between the river and the hills. There was only one bridge.

⁴⁴¹The Sixteenth had its permanent camp at Novaesium, the First at Bonn. Both surrendered at Novaesium (cp. chap. 59).

⁴⁴²See chaps. 59 and 70.

⁴⁴³The Frisii occupied part of Friesland; the Chauci lay east of them, between the Ems and Weser.

⁴⁴⁴Zülpich.

⁴⁴⁵A small flotilla on guard in the Channel. It probably now transported the Fourteenth and landed them at Boulogne.

⁴⁴⁶Cp. chap. [15](#).

⁴⁴⁷The narrative is resumed from this point in v. [14](#).

EVENTS IN ROME AND IN THE EAST

80It was about this time that Mucianus gave orders for the murder of Vitellius' son,[448](#) on the plea that dissension would continue until all the seeds of war were stamped out. He also refused to allow Antonius Primus to go out on Domitian's staff, being alarmed at his popularity among the troops and at the man's own vanity, which would brook no equal, much less a superior. Antonius accordingly went to join Vespasian, whose reception, though not hostile, proved a disappointment. The emperor was drawn two ways. On the one side were Antonius' services: it was undeniable that his generalship had ended the war. In the other scale were Mucianus' letters. Besides ¹⁹⁵which, every one else seemed ready to rake up the scandals of his past life and inveigh against his vanity and bad temper. Antonius himself did his best to provoke hostility by expatiating to excess on his services, decrying the other generals as incompetent cowards, and stigmatizing Caecina as a prisoner who had surrendered. Thus without any open breach of friendship he gradually declined lower and lower in the emperor's favour.

81During the months which Vespasian spent at Alexandria waiting for the regular season of the summer winds[449](#) to ensure a safe voyage, there occurred many miraculous events manifesting the goodwill of Heaven and the special favour of Providence towards him. At Alexandria a poor workman who was well known to have a disease of the eye, acting on the advice of Serapis, whom this superstitious people worship as their chief god, fell at Vespasian's feet demanding with sobs a cure for his blindness, and imploring that the emperor would deign to moisten his eyes and eyeballs with the spittle from his mouth. Another man with a maimed hand, also inspired by Serapis, besought Vespasian to imprint his footmark on it. At first Vespasian laughed at them and refused. But they insisted. Half fearing to be thought a fool, half stirred to hopes by their petition and by the flattery of his courtiers, he eventually told the doctors to form an opinion whether such cases of blindness and deformity ¹⁹⁶could be remedied by human aid. The doctors talked round the question, saying that in the one case the power of sight was not extinct and would return, if certain impediments were removed; in the other case the limbs were distorted and could be set right again by the application of an effective remedy: this might be the will of Heaven and the emperor had perhaps been chosen as the divine instrument. They added that he would gain all the credit, if the cure were successful, while, if it failed, the ridicule would fall on the unfortunate patients. This convinced Vespasian that there were no limits to his destiny: nothing now seemed incredible. To the great excitement of the bystanders, he stepped forward with a smile on his face and did as the men desired him. Immediately the hand recovered its

functions and daylight shone once more in the blind man's eyes. Those who were present still attest both miracles to-day,⁴⁵⁰ when there is nothing to gain by lying.

82This occurrence deepened Vespasian's desire to visit the holy-place and consult Serapis about the fortunes of the empire. He gave orders that no one else was to be allowed in the temple, and then went in. While absorbed in his devotions, he suddenly saw behind him an Egyptian noble, named Basilides, whom he knew to be lying ill several days' journey from Alexandria. He inquired of the priests whether Basilides had entered the temple that day. He inquired of every one he met whether he had been seen in the city. Even¹⁹⁷tually he sent some horsemen, who discovered that at the time Basilides was eighty miles away. Vespasian therefore took what he had seen for a divine apparition, and guessed the meaning of the oracle from the name 'Basilides'.⁴⁵¹

83The origins of the god Serapis are not given in any Roman authorities. The high-priests of Egypt give the following account: King Ptolemy, who was the first of the Macedonians to put the power of Egypt on a firm footing,⁴⁵² was engaged in building walls and temples, and instituting religious cults for his newly founded city of Alexandria, when there appeared to him in his sleep a young man of striking beauty and supernatural stature, who warned him to send his most faithful friends to Pontus to fetch his image. After adding that this would bring luck to the kingdom, and that its resting-place would grow great and famous, he appeared to be taken up into heaven in a sheet of flame. Impressed by this miraculous prophecy, Ptolemy revealed his vision to the priests of Egypt, who are used to interpreting such things. As they had but little knowledge of Pontus or of foreign cults, he consulted an Athenian named Timotheus, a member of the Eumolpid clan,⁴⁵³ whom he had brought over from Eleusis to be overseer of ¹⁹⁸religious ceremonies, and asked him what worship and what god could possibly be meant. Timotheus found some people who had travelled in Pontus and learnt from them, that near a town called Sinope there was a temple, which had long been famous in the neighbourhood as the seat of Jupiter-Pluto,⁴⁵⁴ and near it there also stood a female figure, which was commonly called Proserpine. Ptolemy was like most despots, easily terrified at first, but liable, when his panic was over, to think more of his pleasures than of his religious duties. The incident was gradually forgotten, and other thoughts occupied his mind until the vision was repeated in a more terrible and impressive form than before, and he was threatened with death and the destruction of his kingdom if he failed to fulfil his instructions. He at once gave orders that representatives should be sent with presents to King Scydrothemis, who was then reigning at Sinope, and on their departure he instructed them to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. They made a successful voyage and received a clear answer from the oracle: they were to go and bring back the image of Apollo's father but leave his sister's behind.

84On their arrival at Sinope they laid their presents, their petition, and their king's instructions before Scydrothemis. He was in some perplexity. He was afraid of the god and yet alarmed by the threats of his subjects, who opposed the project: then, again, he

often felt tempted by the envoys' presents and ¹⁹⁹promises. Three years passed. Ptolemy's zeal never abated for a moment. He persisted in his petition, and kept sending more and more distinguished envoys, more ships, more gold. Then a threatening vision appeared to Scydrothemis, bidding him no longer thwart the god's design. When he still hesitated, he was beset by every kind of disease and disaster: the gods were plainly angry and their hand was heavier upon him every day. He summoned an assembly and laid before it the divine commands, his own and Ptolemy's visions, and the troubles with which they were visited. The king found the people unfavourable. They were jealous of Egypt and fearful of their own future. So they surged angrily round the temple. The story now grows stranger still. The god himself, it says, embarked unaided on one of the ships that lay beached on the shore, and by a miracle accomplished the long sea-journey and landed at Alexandria within three days. A temple worthy of so important a city was then built in the quarter called Rhacotis, on the site of an ancient temple of Serapis and Isis.⁴⁵⁵ This is the most widely accepted account of the god's origin and arrival. Some people, I am well aware, maintain that the god was brought from the Syrian town of Seleucia during the ²⁰⁰reign of Ptolemy, the third of that name.⁴⁵⁶ Others, again, say it was this same Ptolemy, but make the place of origin the famous town of Memphis,⁴⁵⁷ once the bulwark of ancient Egypt. Many take the god for Aesculapius, because he cures disease: others for Osiris, the oldest of the local gods; some, again, for Jupiter, as being the sovereign lord of the world. But the majority of people, either judging by what are clearly attributes of the god or by an ingenious process of conjecture, identify him with Pluto.

⁸⁵Domitian and Mucianus were now on their way to the Alps.⁴⁵⁸ Before reaching the mountains they received the good news of the victory over the Treviri, the truth of which was fully attested by the presence of their leader Valentinus. His courage was in no way crushed and his face still bore witness to the proud spirit he had shown. He was allowed a hearing, merely to see what he was made of, and condemned to death. At his execution some one cast it in his teeth that his country was conquered, to which he replied, 'Then I am reconciled to death.'

Mucianus now gave utterance to an idea which he had long cherished, though he pretended it was a sudden inspiration. This was that, since by Heaven's grace the forces of the enemy had been broken, it would ill befit Domitian, now that the war was practically ²⁰¹over, to stand in the way of the other generals to whom the credit belonged. Were the fortunes of the empire or the safety of Gaul at stake, it would be right that a Caesar should take the field; the Canninefates and Batavi might be left to minor generals. So Domitian was to stay at Lugdunum and there show them the power and majesty of the throne at close quarters. By abstaining from trifling risks he would be ready to cope with any greater crisis.

⁸⁶The ruse was detected, but it could not be unmasked. That was part of the courtier's policy.⁴⁵⁹ Thus they proceeded to Lugdunum. From there Domitian is supposed to have sent messengers to Cerialis to test his loyalty, and to ask whether the

general would transfer his army and his allegiance to him, should he present himself in person. Whether Domitian's idea was to plan war against his father or to acquire support against his brother, cannot be decided, for Cerialis parried his proposal with a salutary snub and treated it as a boy's day-dream. Realizing that older men despised his youth, Domitian gave up even those functions of government which he had hitherto performed. Aping bashfulness and simple tastes, he hid his feelings under a cloak of impenetrable reserve, professing literary tastes and a passion for poetry. Thus he concealed his real self and withdrew from all rivalry with his brother, whose gentler and altogether different nature he perversely misconstrued.

⁴⁴⁸Cp. ii. [59](#).

⁴⁴⁹During June and July before the Etesian winds (cp. ii. [98](#)) began to blow from the north-west.

⁴⁵⁰Circa A.D. 108.

⁴⁵¹Meaning 'king's son', and therefore portending sovereignty.

⁴⁵²i.e. Ptolemy Soter, who founded the dynasty of the Lagidae, and reigned 306-283 B.C.

⁴⁵³They inherited the priesthood of Demeter at Eleusis and supplied the hierophants who conducted the mysteries.

⁴⁵⁴i.e. the sovereign god of the underworld.

⁴⁵⁵It is evident from these words that the worship of Serapis was ancient in Egypt. It seems to be suggested that the arrival of this statue from Pontus did not originate but invigorated the cult of Serapis. Pluto, Dis, Serapis, are all names for a god of the underworld. Jupiter seems added vaguely to give more power to the title. We cannot expect accurate theology from an amateur antiquarian.

⁴⁵⁶Ptolemy Euergetes, 247-222 B.C.

⁴⁵⁷According to Eustathius there was a Mount Sinopium near Memphis. This suggests an origin for the title Sinopitis, applied to Serapis, and a cause for the invention of the romantic story about Sinope in Pontus.

⁴⁵⁸Cp. chap. [68](#).

⁴⁵⁹i.e. Mucianus was too cunning to give Domitian any excuse for declaring his suspicions.

BOOK V

THE CONQUEST OF JUDAEA

1Early in this same year [460](#) Titus Caesar had been entrusted by his father with the task of completing the reduction of Judaea. [461](#) While he and his father were both still private citizens, Titus had distinguished himself as a soldier, and his reputation for efficiency was steadily increasing, while the provinces and armies vied with one another in their enthusiasm for him. Wishing to seem independent of his good fortune, he always showed dignity and energy in the field. His affability called forth devotion. He constantly helped in the trenches and could mingle with his soldiers on the march without compromising his dignity as general. Three legions awaited him in Judaea, the Fifth, Tenth, and Fifteenth, all veterans from his father's army. These were reinforced by the Twelfth from Syria and by detachments of the Twenty-second and the Third, [462](#) brought over from Alexandria. This force was accompanied by twenty auxiliary cohorts and eight regiments of auxiliary cavalry besides the Kings Agrippa and Sohaemus, King Antiochus' irregulars, [463](#) a strong force of Arabs, who had a neighbourly hatred for the Jews, and a crowd of persons who had come from Rome and

the rest of Italy, each tempted by the hope of securing ²⁰³the first place in the prince's still unoccupied affections. With this force Titus entered the enemy's country at the head of his column, sending out scouts in all directions, and holding himself ready to fight. He pitched his camp not far from Jerusalem.

2Since I am coming now to describe the last days of this famous city, it may not seem out of place to recount here its early history. It is said that the Jews are refugees from Crete,[464](#) who settled on the confines of Libya at the time when Saturn was forcibly deposed by Jupiter. The evidence for this is sought in the name. Ida is a famous mountain in Crete inhabited by the Idaei,[465](#) whose name became lengthened into the foreign form Judaei. Others say that in the reign of Isis the superfluous population of Egypt, under the leadership of Hierosolymus and Juda, discharged itself upon the neighbouring districts, while there are many who think the Jews an Ethiopian stock, driven to migrate by their fear and dislike of King Cepheus.[466](#) Another tradition makes them Assyrian refugees,[467](#) who, ²⁰⁴lacking lands of their own, occupied a district of Egypt, and later took to building cities of their own and tilling Hebrew territory and the frontier-land of Syria. Yet another version assigns to the Jews an illustrious origin as the descendants of the Solymi—a tribe famous in Homer[468](#)—who founded the city and called it *Hierosolyma* after their own name.[469](#)

3Most authorities agree that a foul and disfiguring disease once broke out in Egypt, and that King Bocchoris,[470](#) on approaching the oracle of Ammon and inquiring for a remedy, was told to purge his kingdom of the plague and to transport all who suffered from it into some other country, for they had earned the disfavour of Heaven. A motley crowd was thus collected and abandoned in the desert. While all the other outcasts lay idly lamenting, one of them, named Moses, advised them not to look for help to gods or men, since both had deserted them, but to trust rather in themselves and accept as divine the guidance of the first being by whose aid they should get out of their present plight. They agreed, and set out blindly to march wherever chance might lead them.²⁰⁵ Their worst distress came from lack of water. When they were already at death's door and lying prostrate all over the plain, it so happened that a drove of wild asses moved away from their pasture to a rock densely covered with trees. Guessing the truth from the grassy nature of the ground, Moses followed and disclosed an ample flow of water.[471](#) This saved them. Continuing their march for six successive days, on the seventh they routed the natives and gained possession of the country. There they consecrated their city and their temple.

4To ensure his future hold over the people, Moses introduced a new cult, which was the opposite of all other religions. All that we hold sacred they held profane, and allowed practices which we abominate. They dedicated in a shrine an image of the animal[472](#) whose guidance had put an end to their wandering and thirst. They killed a ram, apparently as an insult to Ammon, and also sacrificed a bull, because the Egyptians worship the bull Apis.[473](#) Pigs are subject to leprosy; so they abstain from pork in memory of their misfortune and the foul plague with which they were once

infected. Their frequent fasts⁴⁷⁴ bear ²⁰⁶witness to the long famine they once endured, and, in token of the corn they carried off, Jewish bread is to this day made without leaven. They are said to have devoted the seventh day to rest, because that day brought an end to their troubles.⁴⁷⁵ Later, finding idleness alluring, they gave up the seventh year as well to sloth.⁴⁷⁶ Others maintain that they do this in honour of Saturn;⁴⁷⁷ either because their religious principles are derived from the Idaei, who are supposed to have been driven out with Saturn and become the ancestors of the Jewish people; or else because, of the seven constellations which govern the lives of men, the star of Saturn moves in the topmost orbit and exercises peculiar influence, and also because most of the heavenly bodies move round⁴⁷⁸ their courses in multiples of seven.

⁵Whatever their origin, these rites are sanctioned by their antiquity. Their other customs are impious and abominable, and owe their prevalence to their depravity. For all the most worthless rascals, renouncing their national cults, were always sending money to swell the sum of offerings and tribute.⁴⁷⁹ This is one cause of Jewish prosperity. Another is that they ²⁰⁷are obstinately loyal to each other, and always ready to show compassion, whereas they feel nothing but hatred and enmity for the rest of the world.⁴⁸⁰ They eat and sleep separately. Though immoderate in sexual indulgence, they refrain from all intercourse with foreign women: among themselves anything is allowed.⁴⁸¹ They have introduced circumcision to distinguish themselves from other people. Those who are converted to their customs adopt the same practice, and the first lessons they learn are to despise the gods,⁴⁸² to renounce their country, and to think nothing of their parents, children, and brethren. However, they take steps to increase their numbers. They count it a crime to kill any of their later-born children,⁴⁸³ and they believe that the souls of those who die in battle or under persecution are immortal.⁴⁸⁴ Thus they think ²⁰⁸much of having children and nothing of facing death. They prefer to bury and not burn their dead.⁴⁸⁵ In this, as in their burial rites, and in their belief in an underworld, they conform to Egyptian custom. Their ideas of heaven are quite different. The Egyptians worship most of their gods as animals, or in shapes half animal and half human. The Jews acknowledge one god only, of whom they have a purely spiritual conception. They think it impious to make images of gods in human shape out of perishable materials. Their god is almighty and inimitable, without beginning and without end. They therefore set up no statues in their temples, nor even in their cities, refusing this homage both to their own kings and to the Roman emperors. However, the fact that their priests intoned to the flute and cymbals and wore wreaths of ivy, and that a golden vine was found in their temple⁴⁸⁶ has led some people to think that they worship Bacchus,⁴⁸⁷ who has so enthralled the East. But their cult would be most inappropriate. Bacchus instituted gay and cheerful rites, but the Jewish ritual is preposterous and morbid.

²⁰⁹⁶The country of the Jews is bounded by Arabia on the east, by Egypt on the south, and on the west by Phoenicia and the sea. On the Syrian frontier they have a distant

view towards the north.⁴⁸⁸ Physically they are healthy and hardy. Rain is rare; the soil infertile; its products are of the same kind as ours with the addition of balsam and palms. The palm is a tall and beautiful tree, the balsam a mere shrub. When its branches are swollen with sap they open them with a sharp piece of stone or crockery, for the sap-vessels shrink up at the touch of iron. The sap is used in medicine. Lebanon, their chief mountain, stands always deep in its eternal snow, a strange phenomenon in such a burning climate. Here, too, the river Jordan has its source⁴⁸⁹ and comes pouring down, to find a home in the sea. It flows undiminished through first one lake, then another, and loses itself in a third.⁴⁹⁰ This last is a lake of immense size, like a sea, though its water has a foul taste and a most unhealthy smell, which poisons the surrounding inhabitants. No wind can stir waves in it: no fish or sea-birds can live there. The sluggish water supports whatever is thrown on to it, as if its surface were solid, while those who cannot swim float on it as easily as those who can. Every year at the same time the lake yields asphalt. As with other arts, it is experience which shows how to collect it. It is a black liquid which, when congealed with a ²¹⁰sprinkling of vinegar, floats on the surface of the water. The men who collect it take it in this state into their hands and haul it on deck. Then without further aid it trickles in and loads the boat until you cut off the stream. But this you cannot do with iron or brass: the current is turned by applying blood or a garment stained with a woman's menstrual discharge. That is what the old authorities say, but those who know the district aver that floating blocks of asphalt are driven landwards by the wind and dragged to shore by hand. The steam out of the earth and the heat of the sun dries them, and they are then split up with axes and wedges, like logs or blocks of stone.

7Not far from this lake are the Plains, which they say were once fertile and covered with large and populous cities which were destroyed by lightning.⁴⁹¹ Traces of the cities are said to remain, and the ground, which looks scorched, has lost all power of production. The plants, whether wild or artificially cultivated, are blighted and sterile and wither into dust and ashes, either when in leaf or flower, or when they have attained their full growth. Without denying that at some date famous cities were there burnt up by lightning, I am yet inclined to think that it is the exhalation from the lake which infects the soil and poisons the surrounding atmosphere. Soil and climate being equally deleterious, the crops and fruits all rot away.

²¹¹The river Belus also falls into this Jewish sea. Round its mouth is found a peculiar kind of sand which is mixed with native soda and smelted into glass. Small though the beach is, its product is inexhaustible.

8The greater part of the population live in scattered villages, but they also have towns. Jerusalem is the Jewish capital, and contained the temple, which was enormously wealthy. A first line of fortifications guarded the city, another the palace, and an innermost line enclosed the temple.⁴⁹² None but a Jew was allowed as far as the doors: none but the priests might cross the threshold.⁴⁹³ When the East was in the hands of the Assyrians, Medes and Persians, they regarded the Jews as the meanest of their

slaves. During the Macedonian ascendancy⁴⁹⁴ King Antiochus⁴⁹⁵ endeavoured to abolish their superstitions and to introduce Greek manners and customs. But Arsaces at that moment rebelled,⁴⁹⁶ and the Parthian war prevented him from effecting any improvement in the character of this grim people. Then, when Macedon waned, as the Parthian power was not yet ripe and Rome was ²¹²still far away, they took kings of their own.⁴⁹⁷ The mob were fickle and drove them out. However, they recovered their throne by force; banished their countrymen, sacked cities, slew their brothers, wives, and parents, and committed all the usual kingly crimes. But this only fostered the hold of the Jewish religion, since the kings had strengthened their authority by assuming the priesthood.

9Cnaeus Pompeius was the first Roman to subdue the Jews and set foot in their temple by right of conquest.⁴⁹⁸ It was then first realized that the temple contained no image of any god: their sanctuary was empty, their mysteries meaningless. The walls of Jerusalem were destroyed, but the temple was left standing. Later, during the Roman civil wars, when the eastern provinces had come under the control of Mark Antony, the Parthian Prince Pacorus seized Judaea,⁴⁹⁹ and was killed by Publius Ventidius. The Parthians were driven back over the Euphrates, and Caius Sosius⁵⁰⁰ subdued the Jews. Antony gave the kingdom to Herod,⁵⁰¹ and Augustus, after his victory, enlarged it. After Herod's death, somebody called²¹³ Simon,⁵⁰² without awaiting the emperor's decision, forcibly assumed the title of king. He was executed by Quintilius Varus, who was Governor of Syria; the Jews were repressed and the kingdom divided between three of Herod's sons.⁵⁰³ Under Tiberius all was quiet. Caligula ordered them to put up his statue in the temple. They preferred war to that. But Caligula's death put an end to the rising.⁵⁰⁴ In Claudius' reign the kings had all either died or lost most of their territory. The emperor therefore made Judaea a province to be governed by Roman knights or freedmen. One of these, Antonius Felix,⁵⁰⁵ indulged in every kind of cruelty and immorality, wielding a king's authority with all the instincts of a slave. He had married Drusilla, a granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, so that he was Antony's grandson-in-law, while Claudius was Antony's grandson.⁵⁰⁶

10The Jews endured such oppression patiently until the time of Gessius Florus,⁵⁰⁷ under whom war broke out. Cestius Gallus, the Governor of Syria, tried to crush it, but met with more reverses than victories. He died, either in the natural course or perhaps of disgust, and Nero sent out Vespasian, who, in a couple of campaigns,⁵⁰⁸ thanks to his reputation, good fortune, and able subordinates, had the whole of the country ²¹⁴districts and all the towns except Jerusalem under the heel of his victorious army. The next year⁵⁰⁹ was taken up with civil war, and passed quietly enough as far as the Jews were concerned. But peace once restored in Italy, foreign troubles began again with feelings embittered on our side by the thought that the Jews were the only people who had not given in. At the same time it seemed best to leave Titus at the head of the army to meet the eventualities of the new reign, whether good or bad.

11Thus, as we have already seen,[510](#) Titus pitched his camp before the walls of Jerusalem and proceeded to display his legions in battle order. The Jews formed up at the foot of their own walls, ready, if successful, to venture further, but assured of their retreat in case of reverse. A body of cavalry and some light-armed foot were sent forward, and fought an indecisive engagement, from which the enemy eventually retired. During the next few days a series of skirmishes took place in front of the gates, and at last continual losses drove the Jews behind their walls. The Romans then determined to take it by storm. It seemed undignified to sit and wait for the enemy to starve, and the men all clamoured for the risks, some being really brave, while many others were wild and greedy for plunder. Titus himself had the vision of Rome with all her wealth and pleasures before his eyes, and felt that their enjoyment was postponed unless Jerusalem fell at once. The city, however, stands high and is ²¹⁵fortified with works strong enough to protect a city standing on the plain. Two enormous hills[511](#) were surrounded by walls ingeniously built so as to project or slope inwards and thus leave the flanks of an attacking party exposed to fire. The rocks were jagged at the top. The towers, where the rising ground helped, were sixty feet high, and in the hollows as much as a hundred and twenty. They are a wonderful sight and seem from a distance to be all of equal height. Within this runs another line of fortification surrounding the palace, and on a conspicuous height stands the Antonia, a castle named by Herod in honour of Mark Antony.

12The temple was built like a citadel with walls of its own, on which more care and labour had been spent than on any of the others. Even the cloisters surrounding the temple formed a splendid rampart. There was a never-failing spring of water,[512](#) catacombs hollowed out of the hills, and pools or cisterns for holding the rain-water. Its original builders had foreseen that the peculiarities of Jewish life would lead to frequent wars, consequently everything was ready for the longest of sieges. Besides this, when Pompey took the city, bitter experience taught them ²¹⁶several lessons, and in the days of Claudius they had taken advantage of his avarice to buy rights of fortification, and built walls in peace-time as though war were imminent. Their numbers were now swelled by floods of human refuse and unfortunate refugees from other towns.[513](#) All the most desperate characters in the country had taken refuge there, which did not conduce to unity. They had three armies, each with its own general. The outermost and largest line of wall was held by Simon; the central city by John, and the temple by Eleazar.[514](#) John and Simon were stronger than Eleazar in numbers and equipment, but he had the advantage of a strong position. Their relations mainly consisted of fighting, treachery, and arson: a large quantity of corn was burnt. Eventually, under pretext of offering a sacrifice, John sent a party of men to massacre Eleazar and his troops, and by this means gained possession of the temple.[515](#) Thus Jerusalem was divided into two hostile parties, but on the approach of the Romans the necessities of foreign warfare reconciled their differences.

13 Various portents had occurred at this time, but so sunk in superstition are the Jews and so opposed to all religious practices that they think it wicked ²¹⁷to avert the threatened evil by sacrifices⁵¹⁶ or vows. Embattled armies were seen to meet in the sky with flashing arms, and the temple shone with sudden fire from heaven. The doors of the shrine suddenly opened, a supernatural voice was heard calling the gods out, and at once there began a mighty movement of departure. Few took alarm at all this. Most people held the belief that, according to the ancient priestly writings, this was the moment at which the East was fated to prevail: they would now start forth from Judaea and conquer the world.⁵¹⁷ This enigmatic prophecy really applied to Vespasian and Titus. But men are blinded by their hopes. The Jews took to themselves the promised destiny, and even defeat could not convince them of the truth. The number of the besieged, men and women of every age, is stated to have reached six hundred thousand. There were arms for all who could carry them, and far more were ready to fight than would be expected from their total numbers. The women were as determined as the men: if they were forced to leave their homes they had more to fear in life than in death. Such was the city and such the people with which²¹⁸ Titus was faced. As the nature of the ground forbade a sudden assault, he determined to employ siege-works and penthouse shelters. The work was accordingly divided among the legions, and there was a truce to fighting until they had got ready every means of storming a town that had ever been devised by experience or inventive ingenuity.

⁴⁶⁰A.D. 70.

⁴⁶¹See ii. 4; iv. 51.

⁴⁶²XXII Deiotariana and III Cyrenaica.

⁴⁶³Cp. ii. 4.

⁴⁶⁴There seems little to recommend Tacitus' theory of the identity of the Idaei and Judaei, though it has been suggested that the Cherethites of 2. Sam. viii. 18 and Ezek. xxv. 16 are Cretans, migrated into the neighbourhood of the Philistines. The Jewish Sabbath (Saturn's day) seems also to have suggested connexion with Saturn and Crete.

⁴⁶⁵Elsewhere the Idaei figure as supernatural genii in attendance on either Jupiter or Saturn.

⁴⁶⁶Ethiopian here means Phoenician. Tradition made Cepheus, the father of Andromeda, king of Joppa.

⁴⁶⁷From Damascus, said Justin, where Abraham was one of their kings, and Trogu Pompeius adds that the name of Abraham was honourably remembered at Damascus. These are variants of the Biblical migration of Abraham.

⁴⁶⁸*Il.* vi. 184; *Od.* v. 282.

⁴⁶⁹Another piece of fanciful philology, based on a misinterpretation of a Greek transliteration of the name Jerusalem. The Solymi are traditionally placed in Lycia. Both Juvenal and Martial use Solymus as equivalent to Judaeus.

⁴⁷⁰The only known King Bocchoris belongs to the eighth century B.C., whereas the Exodus is traditionally placed not later than the sixteenth.

⁴⁷¹See Exod. xvii.

⁴⁷²i.e. an ass. The idea that this animal was sacred to the Jews was so prevalent among 'the Gentiles' that Josephus takes the trouble to refute it.

⁴⁷³Cp. Lev. xvi. 3, 'a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.' Tacitus' reasons are of course errors due to the prevalent confusion of Jewish and Egyptian history.

⁴⁷⁴Cp. Luke xviii. 12, 'I fast twice a week.'

⁴⁷⁵Cp. Deut. v. 15.

⁴⁷⁶Cp. Lev. xxv. 4, '... in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.'

⁴⁷⁷The seventh day being named after Cronos or Saturn (cp. chap. 2, note ⁴⁶⁴).

⁴⁷⁸Reading *commeent* (Wölfflin).

⁴⁷⁹This refers to proselytes, who, like Jews resident abroad, contributed annually to the Temple treasury. They numbered at this time about four millions. Romans naturally regarded this diversion of funds with disfavour.

⁴⁸⁰Jewish exclusiveness always roused Roman indignation, and 'hatred of the human race' was the usual charge against Christians (see *Ann.* xv. 44).

⁴⁸¹The strict regulations of Deut. xxii. &c. give a strange irony to this slander. Most of these libels originated in Alexandria.

⁴⁸²'A people,' says the elder Pliny, 'distinguished by their contemptuous atheism.'

⁴⁸³*Agnati*, as used here and in *Germ.* 19 means a child born after the father has made his will and therein specified the number of his children. The mere birth of such a child invalidated any earlier will that the father had made, but the fact of its birth might be concealed by making away with the baby. This crime seems to have been not uncommon, but there is no evidence that 'exposure of infants' was permitted.

⁴⁸⁴Josephus also alludes to this belief that the corruption of disease chained the soul to the buried body, while violent death freed it to live for ever in the air and protect posterity.

⁴⁸⁵Under the kings cremation was an honourable form of burial, but in Babylon the Jews came to regard fire as a sacred element which should not be thus defiled.

⁴⁸⁶This was over the door of the Temple. Aristobulus gave it as a present to Pompey.

⁴⁸⁷Plutarch shared this error, which seems somehow to have been based on a misinterpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles, at which they were to 'take ... the fruit of goodly trees, ... and willows of the brook; and ... rejoice before the Lord your God seven days' (Lev. xxiii. 40).

⁴⁸⁸Over Coele-Syria, from the range of Lebanon.

⁴⁸⁹i.e. from Mount Hermon, nearly 9,000 feet high.

⁴⁹⁰Merom; Gennesareth; the Dead Sea.

⁴⁹¹'Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain' (Gen. xix. 24).

⁴⁹²These were not concentric, but an enemy approaching from the north-west would have to carry all three before reaching the temple, which stood on Mount Moriah at the eastern extremity of the city.

⁴⁹³Cp. Luke i. 8-10, where Zacharias entered the temple to burn incense, 'and the whole multitude of the people were praying without.'

⁴⁹⁴The Seleucids.

⁴⁹⁵Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164 B.C.).

⁴⁹⁶This was really in the reign of Antiochus II (260-245 B.C.).

⁴⁹⁷Of the Hasmonean or Maccabean family.

⁴⁹⁸63 B.C. when he was called in to decide between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus.

⁴⁹⁹At the invitation of the Maccabean Antigonus, who thus recovered the throne.

⁵⁰⁰Ventidius and Sosius were Antony's officers. The former was famous as having begun life as a mule-driver and risen to be a consul and to hold the first triumph over the Parthians.

⁵⁰¹Herod the Great, who on the return of Antigonus had fled to Rome and chosen the winning side.

⁵⁰²One of Herod's slaves.

⁵⁰³Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip.

⁵⁰⁴A.D. 40.

⁵⁰⁵A freedman, Procurator of Judaea, A.D. 52-60 (cp. Acts xxiv).

⁵⁰⁶Claudius' mother, Antonia, was the daughter of Antony's first marriage.

⁵⁰⁷A.D. 64-66.

⁵⁰⁸A.D. 67 and 68.

⁵⁰⁹A.D. 69.

⁵¹⁰Chap. 1.

⁵¹¹Jerusalem stands on a rock which rises into three main hills, Zion (south), Acra (north), and Moriah (east). It is not clear to which two of these Tacitus alludes; probably Zion and Moriah.

⁵¹²Of this no traces remain, and the tradition may have been based on the metaphorical prophecy that a fount of living water would issue from the Sanctuary.

⁵¹³i.e. the Galilean towns captured by Vespasian in A.D. 67 and 68.

⁵¹⁴Simon was a bandit from the east of Jordan; John of Gischala headed a party of refugees from Galilee; Eleazar was the leader of the Jewish war-party, and related to the high priests.

⁵¹⁵They submitted to John's authority and were not killed.

⁵¹⁶'Ye shall not ... use enchantments, nor practise augury' (Lev. xix. 26).

⁵¹⁷e.g. 'And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms' (Dan. ii. 44). The Jews were looking for Messiah: the Romans thought of Vespasian.

THE END OF THE GERMAN REVOLT

14After the severe reverse at Trier⁵¹⁸ Civilis recruited his army in Germany, and pitched his camp near Vetera. The position was a safe one, and he hoped to inspire his native troops with the memory of their former victories there.⁵¹⁹ Cerialis followed in his footsteps, with forces now doubled by the arrival of the Second,⁵²⁰ Thirteenth, and Fourteenth legions, besides auxiliary troops, both horse and foot,⁵²¹ who had long received their summons and came hurrying on the news of victory. Neither general was dilatory, but a vast plain lay between them. It was by nature swampy, and Civilis had built a dam projecting into the Rhine, which stemmed the current and flooded the adjacent fields. The treacherous nature of the ground, where the shallows were hard to find, told against our men, who were heavily armed and afraid ²¹⁹of swimming. The Germans, on the other hand, were used to rivers, lightly armed, and tall enough to keep their heads above water.

15Provoked by the Batavi, the bravest of our troops opened the engagement at once, but soon fell into a panic when their arms and horses began to sink in the deep marshes. The Germans, who knew the fords, came leaping across them, often leaving our front alone and running round to the flanks or the rear. It was not like an infantry engagement at close quarters, but more like a naval battle. The men floundered about in the water or, finding firm foothold, strove with all their might for possession of it. Thus, wounded and whole, those who could swim and those who could not, struggled helplessly with each other and perished all alike. However, considering the confusion, our loss was less than might have been expected, for the Germans, not daring to venture out of the marsh, withdrew to their camp. The result of this engagement gave each of the generals a different motive for hastening on a decisive battle. Civilis wanted to follow up his success, Cerialis to wipe out his disgrace. Success stimulated the pride of the Germans; the Romans thrilled with shame. The natives spent the night singing uproariously, while our men muttered angry threats.

16At daybreak Cerialis formed up his cavalry and the auxiliary cohorts on his front, with the legions behind them, while he himself held a picked body in reserve for emergencies. Civilis did not deploy his line, but ²²⁰halted them in columns,⁵²² with the Batavi and Cugerni⁵²³ on his right, and the forces from across the Rhine⁵²⁴ near the river on the left. Neither general followed the usual custom of haranguing the whole army. They rode along and addressed their various divisions in turn. Cerialis spoke of the ancient glory of the Roman name and of all their victories old and new. He urged them 'to blot out for ever their treacherous and cowardly enemy whom they had already beaten. They had to punish not to fight them. They had just fought against superior numbers and had yet routed the Germans, and, moreover, the pick of their troops. This

remnant had their hearts full of panic and all their wounds behind them.' He then gave special encouragement to each of the legions, calling the Fourteenth the conquerors of Britain,⁵²⁵ reminding the Sixth that the influence of their example had set Galba on the throne,⁵²⁶ and telling the Second that in the coming fight they would for the first time dedicate their new colours and their new eagle to Rome's service.⁵²⁷ Then riding along to the German army,⁵²⁸ he pointed with his hand and bade them recover their own river-bank and their own camp⁵²⁹ at the enemy's expense. They all cheered with hearts the lighter for his words. Some longed for ²²¹battle after a long spell of quiet: others were weary of war and pined for peace, hoping that the future would bring them rest and recompense.

17Nor was there silence in Civilis' lines. As he formed them up he appealed to the spot as evidence of their valour. The Germans and Batavians were standing, he told them, 'on the field of their glory, trampling the charred bones of Roman soldiers under foot. Wherever the Romans turned their eyes they saw nothing but menacing reminders of surrender and defeat. They must not be alarmed by that sudden change of fortune in the battle at Trier. It was their own victory which hampered the Germans there: they had dropped their weapons and filled their hands with loot. Since then everything had gone in their favour and against the Romans. He had taken every possible precaution, as befitted a cunning general. They themselves were familiar with these soaking plains, but the swamps would be a deadly trap for the enemy. They had the Rhine and the gods of Germany before their eyes, and in the might of these they must go to battle, remembering their wives and parents and their fatherland. This day would either gild the glory of their ancestors or earn the execration of posterity.' They applauded his words according to their custom by dancing and clashing their arms, and then opened the battle with showers of stones and leaden balls and other missiles, trying to lure on our men, who had not yet entered the marsh.

18Their missiles exhausted, the enemy warmed to their work and made an angry charge. Thanks to their ²²²great height and their very long spears they could thrust from some distance at our men, who were floundering and slipping about in the marsh. While this went on, a column⁵³⁰ of Batavi swam across from the dam which, as we described above,⁵³¹ had been built out into the Rhine. This started a panic and the line of our auxiliaries began to be driven back. Then the legions took up the fight and equalized matters by staying the enemy's wild charge. Meanwhile a Batavian deserter approached Cerialis, avowing that he could take the enemy in the rear if the cavalry were sent round the edge of the swamp: the ground was solid there, and the Cugerni, whose task it was to keep watch, were off their guard. Two squadrons of horse were sent with the deserter, and succeeded in outflanking the unsuspecting enemy. The legions in front, when the din told them what had happened, redoubled their efforts. The Germans were beaten and fled to the Rhine. This day might have brought the war to an end, had the Roman fleet⁵³² arrived in time. As it was, even the cavalry were prevented from pursuit by a sudden downpour of rain shortly before nightfall.

19On the next day the Fourteenth legion were sent to join Annius Gallus⁵³³ in Upper Germany, and their place in Cerialis' army was filled by the Tenth from Spain. Civilis was reinforced by the Chauci.⁵³⁴ Feeling ²²³that he was not strong enough to hold the Batavian capital,⁵³⁵ he took whatever was portable with him, burnt everything else, and retired into the island. He knew that the Romans had not enough ships to build a bridge, and that they had no other means of getting across. He also destroyed the mole built by Drusus Germanicus.⁵³⁶ As the bed of the Rhine here falls towards Gaul, his removal of all obstacles gave it free course; the river was practically diverted, and the channel between the Germans and the island became so small and dry as to form no barrier between them. Tutor and Classicus also crossed the Rhine,⁵³⁷ together with a hundred and thirteen town-councillors from Trier, among whom was Alpinus Montanus, who, as we have already seen,⁵³⁸ had been sent by Antonius Primus into Gaul. He was accompanied by his brother. By arousing sympathy and by offering presents, the others, too, were all busy raising reinforcements among these eagerly adventurous tribes.

20The war was far from being over. Dividing his forces, Civilis suddenly made a simultaneous attack on all four Roman garrisons—the Tenth at Arenacum, the Second at Batavodurum, and the auxiliary horse and ²²⁴foot at Grinnes and at Vada.⁵³⁹ Civilis himself, Verax his nephew, Classicus and Tutor each led one of the attacking parties. They could not hope all to be successful, but reckoned that, if they made several ventures, fortune would probably favour one or the other. Besides, Cerialis, they supposed, was off his guard; on receiving news from several places at once he would hurry from one garrison to another, and might be cut off on his way. The party told off against the Tenth considered it no light task to storm a legion, so they fell on the soldiers, who had come outside to cut timber, and killed the camp-prefect, five senior centurions, and a handful of the men. The rest defended themselves in the trenches. Meanwhile another party of Germans endeavoured to break the bridge⁵⁴⁰ which had been begun at Batavodurum, but nightfall put an end to the battle before it was won.

21The attack on Grinnes and Vada proved more formidable. Civilis led the assault on Vada, Classicus on Grinnes. Nothing could stop them. The bravest of the defenders had fallen, among them, commanding a cavalry squadron, Briganticus, whom we have seen already, as a faithful ally of Rome and a bitter enemy of his uncle Civilis.⁵⁴¹ However, when Cerialis came to the rescue with a picked troop of horse, the tables were turned, and the Germans were ²²⁵driven headlong into the river. While Civilis was trying to stop the rout he was recognized, and finding himself a target, he left his horse and swam across the river. Verax escaped in the same way, while some boats put in to fetch Tutor and Classicus.

Even now the Roman fleet had not joined the army. They had, indeed, received orders, but fear held them back, and the rowers were employed on various duties elsewhere. It must be admitted, also, that Cerialis did not give them time enough to carry out his orders. He was a man of sudden resolves and brilliant successes. Even when his strategy

had failed, good luck always came to his rescue. Thus neither he nor his army cared much about discipline. A few days later, again, he narrowly escaped being taken prisoner and did not escape disgrace. ²²He had gone to Novaesium and Bonn to inspect the winter quarters that were being built for his legions, and was returning with the fleet.⁵⁴² The Germans noticed that his escort⁵⁴³ straggled, and that watch was carelessly kept at night. So they planned a surprise. Choosing a night black with clouds they slipped down stream and made their way unmolested into the camp.⁵⁴⁴ For the first onslaught they called cunning to their aid. They cut the tent-ropes and slaughtered the soldiers as they struggled under their own canvas. Another party fell on the ships, threw ²²⁶hawsers aboard, and towed them off. Having surprised the camp in dead silence, when once the carnage began they added to the panic by making the whole place ring with shouts. Awakened by their wounds the Romans hunted for weapons and rushed along the streets,⁵⁴⁵ some few in uniform, most of them with their clothes wrapped round their arms and a drawn sword in their hand. The general, who was half-asleep and almost naked, was only saved by the enemy's mistake. His flag-ship being easily distinguishable, they carried it off, thinking he was there. But Cerialis had been spending the night elsewhere; as most people believed, carrying on an intrigue with a Ubian woman named Claudia Sacrata. The sentries sheltered their guilt under the general's disgrace, pretending that they had orders to keep quiet and not disturb him: so they had dispensed with the bugle-call and the challenge on rounds, and dropped off to sleep themselves. In full daylight the enemy sailed off with their captive vessels and towed the flag-ship up the Lippe as an offering to Veleda.⁵⁴⁶

²³Civilis was now seized with a desire to make a naval display. He manned all the available biremes and all the ships with single banks of oars, and added to this fleet an immense number of small craft. These carry thirty or forty men apiece and are rigged like Illyrian cruisers.⁵⁴⁷ The small craft he had captured⁵⁴⁸ were ²²⁷worked with bright, parti-coloured plaids, which served as sails and made a fine show. He chose for review the miniature sea of water where the Rhine comes pouring down to the ocean through the mouth of the Maas.⁵⁴⁹ His reason for the demonstration—apart from Batavian vanity—was to scare away the provision-convoys that were already on their way from Gaul. Cerialis, who was less alarmed than astonished, at once formed up a fleet. Though inferior in numbers, he had the advantage of larger ships, experienced rowers, and clever pilots. The Romans had the stream with them, the Germans the wind. So they sailed past each other, and after trying a few shots with light missiles they parted. Civilis without more ado retired across the Rhine.⁵⁵⁰ Cerialis vigorously laid waste the island of the Batavi, and employed the common device of leaving Civilis's houses and fields untouched.⁵⁵¹ They were now well into autumn. The heavy equinoctial rains had set the river in flood and thus turned the marshy, low-lying island into a sort of lake. Neither fleet nor provision-convoys had arrived, and their camp on the flat plain began to be washed away by the force of the current.

²²⁸24 Civilis afterwards claimed that at this point the Germans could have crushed the Roman legions and wanted to do so, but that he had cunningly dissuaded them. Nor does this seem far from true, since his surrender followed in a few days' time. Cerialis had been sending secret messages, promising the Batavians peace and Civilis pardon, urging Veleda and her relatives⁵⁵² to change the fortune of a war that had only brought disaster after disaster, by doing a timely service to Rome.⁵⁵³ 'The Treviri,' he reminded them, 'had been slaughtered; the allegiance of the Ubii recovered; the Batavians robbed of their home. By supporting Civilis they had gained nothing but bloodshed, banishment, and bereavement. He was a fugitive exile, a burden to those who harboured him. Besides, they had earned blame enough by crossing the Rhine so often: if they took any further steps,—from the one side they might expect insult and injury, from the other vengeance and the wrath of heaven.'

25 Thus Cerialis mingled threats and promises. The loyalty of the tribes across the Rhine was shaken, and murmurs began to make themselves heard among the Batavi. 'How much further is our ruin to go?' they asked. 'One tribe cannot free the whole world from the yoke. What good have we done by slaughtering and burning Roman legions except to bring out others, larger and stronger? If it was to help Vespasian that we have fought so vigorously, Vespasian is master of the world. If we are challenging Rome—what an ²²⁹infinitesimal fraction of the human race we Batavians are! We must remember what burdens Raetia and Noricum and all Rome's other allies bear. From us they levy no tribute, only our manhood and our men.⁵⁵⁴ That is next door to freedom. And, after all, if we have to choose our masters, it is less disgrace to put up with Roman emperors than with German priestesses.' Thus the common people: the chieftains used more violent language. 'It was Civilis' lunacy that had driven them to war. He wanted to remedy his private troubles⁵⁵⁵ by ruining his country. The Batavians had incurred the wrath of heaven by blockading Roman legions, murdering Roman officers, and plunging into a war which was useful for one of them and deadly for the rest. Now they had reached the limit, unless they came to their senses and openly showed their repentance by punishing the culprit.'

26 Civilis was well aware of their changed feelings and determined to forestall them. He was tired of hardship, and he felt, besides, that desire to live which so often weakens the resolution of the bravest spirits. He demanded an interview. The bridge over the river Nabal⁵⁵⁶ was broken down in the middle, and the two generals advanced on to the broken ends. Civilis began as follows: 'If I were defending myself before one of Vitellius' officers, I could expect neither ²³⁰pardon for my conduct nor credence for my words. Between him and me there has been nothing but hatred. He began the quarrel, I fostered it. Towards Vespasian I have from the beginning shown respect. When he was a private citizen, we were known as friends. Antonius Primus was aware of this when he wrote urging me to take up arms to prevent the legions from Germany and the Gallic levies from crossing the Alps.⁵⁵⁷ The instructions which Antonius gave in his letter

Hordeonius Flaccus ratified by word of mouth. I raised the standard in Germania, as did Mucianus in Syria, Aponius in Moesia, Flavianus in Pannonia....'

[The rest is lost.]

⁵¹⁸iv. [78](#).

⁵¹⁹Cp. iv. [28](#), [33](#), [35](#).

⁵²⁰Adiutrix.

⁵²¹Before this Cerialis had five legions, I, IV, XVI, XXI, and XXII, but of these only XXI was in full force, so these new reinforcements may have doubled his army. The auxiliaries had been called out by Hordeonius Flaccus (iv. [24](#)).

⁵²²Perhaps 'in wedge-formation' (see note [283](#)).

⁵²³Cp. iv. [26](#).

⁵²⁴Bructeri, Tencteri, &c. (cp. iv. [23](#)).

⁵²⁵Cp. ii. [11](#).

⁵²⁶Cp. iii. [44](#).

⁵²⁷They had been newly enrolled (see iv. [68](#)).

⁵²⁸i.e. the Roman army of occupation which had joined the Gauls and come over again.

⁵²⁹Vetera.

⁵³⁰See note [522](#).

⁵³¹Chap. [14](#).

⁵³²Stationed in the Rhine (see chap. [21](#)).

⁵³³Cp. iv. [68](#).

⁵³⁴Cp. iv. [79](#).

⁵³⁵? Cleves.

⁵³⁶This mole, begun by Drusus in A.D. 9, was built out from the left bank of the Rhine near Cleves. It turned most of the water into the Lek, thus making the island easily accessible from the Roman side and barring access from the north. Civilis now reversed this position. His friends were now on the north. The swollen Waal would be an obstacle to the Romans.

⁵³⁷i.e. the Waal.

⁵³⁸See iii. [35](#).

⁵³⁹These places cannot be certainly identified. They must have lain on the south of the Waal, probably east and west of Nymwegen.

⁵⁴⁰Across the now swollen Waal.

⁵⁴¹See iv. [70](#).

⁵⁴²Which he had found on his way.

⁵⁴³Marching along the bank.

⁵⁴⁴Pitched on the left bank somewhere between Novaesium and Vetera. The German assailants were probably Tencteri.

⁵⁴⁵Dividing the different portions of the camp.

⁵⁴⁶Cp. iv. [61](#).

⁵⁴⁷Cp. ii. [16](#).

⁵⁴⁸See chap. [22](#) and iv. [16](#) and [79](#). But the ships captured by Civilis were not small craft. Perhaps *luntres* is here repeated from the preceding sentence by mistake for *naves* or *puppes*.

⁵⁴⁹The de Noord channel carries the combined waters of the Maas and the Waal into the Lek a few miles above Rotterdam. From the point of this confluence to the sea the Lek takes the name of Maas.

⁵⁵⁰Into the country of the Frisii up toward the Zuyder Zee.

⁵⁵¹To make his party suspect that he was in league with the Romans.

⁵⁵²Cp. iv. [65](#).

⁵⁵³i.e. by betraying Civilis to them.

⁵⁵⁴Tacitus remarks in the *Germania* (chap. 29) that the Batavi do not suffer the indignity of paying tribute, but, 'like armour and weapons are reserved for use in war.'

⁵⁵⁵Cp. iv. [13](#).

⁵⁵⁶Perhaps the Neue Yssel, near Arnhem.

⁵⁵⁷Cp. iv. [13](#), [32](#).

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