



and shows? Of the gladiators? Relate the episode of Telemachus. What is said of the theatres? What of names? Titles? Describe the clothing—the distinctive marks of the various dignities. What is said of the dwellings? Describe the Roman manner at meals—the courses, the drinking. What is said of luxurious living? What was the result? Describe the treatment of the dead—funerals. How did coined money come into use in Rome? What was the as? The denarius? The sesterce? The aureus? What is said of weights? Measures? Of the division of the year? The calends? The ides? The nones? How was the day divided? What of the manufactures? What of the arts? Of the sciences? What is said of the origin of Latin literature? What of Ennius? Terence? Plautus? Cato the Elder? Cæsar? Sallust? Cicero? Catullus? Lucretius?

## THE EMPIRE,

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN (B.C. 29—A.D. 476).

The history of the Roman Empire is divided into three grand periods: in the first (B.C. 29—A.D. 284), called the Principate, the emperor governed with the support of the army and the concurrence of the Senate, of which he was the prince; in the second (A.D. 284—395) the Empire became monarchical and Christian—that is to say, the emperor himself governed with absolute authority, and established a regular hierarchy of civil and military officers, but admitting as lawful the influence of Christianity on Roman society; finally, in the third period (A.D. 395—476), the Empire was divided into the Western or Roman Empire, properly so called, which lasted eighty-one years, and the Eastern Empire, or that of Constantinople, which lasted until 1453. The duration of this epoch was five hundred and five years.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE PRINCIPATE (B.C. 29—A.D. 284).

During this period, which embraced three hundred and thirteen years, the empire was governed, 1st, by the princes of the family of Augustus (B.C. 29—A.D. 68); 2d, by three military usurpers (A.D. 68—69), and by princes of the first family of Flavius (A.D. 69—96); 3d, by the Antonines, or the adopted princes (A.D. 96—192); 4th, by the Syrian



princes (A.D. 193–235), by the usurpers of the epoch called the military anarchy (A.D. 235–268), and finally by the Illyrian princes (A.D. 268–284).

**Sec. 1. THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS** (B.C. 29–A.D. 68); **BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY;**  
*First Persecution under Nero.*

AUGUSTUS (B.C. 29–A.D. 14); ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.—Octavius having received from the Senate the name of Augustus, until then bestowed only on the gods, soon acquired sovereign power by uniting in his person all the ancient magisterial offices of the Republic. Already consul for the third time in A.D. 29, he had obtained, with the title of emperor, the chief command of all the Roman armies; named “Prince of the Senate,” he could direct at his pleasure this assembly, which became the principal instrument of his government. In order to exclude unworthy or suspected members, Augustus obtained the censorship, under the name of “prefecture of morals.” The title of tribune rendered his person sacred and inviolable; that of proconsul extended his authority over all the provinces; and, lastly, that of supreme pontiff, at the death of Lepidus, ensured to him the supreme direction in matters of religion.

It was thus that the new master of Rome, in obtaining one after another the principal offices



of the state, assumed little by little the imperial authority, without changing in appearance the republican institutions. The Romans preserved the liberty to assemble in comitia, but on condition that they ratified the choice already made by the prince, who knew how to gain the suffrages of the people by giving them what they desired—bread and the games of the circus (*panem et circenses*).

POPULARITY OF AUGUSTUS; HIS HABITS AND HIS FAMILY.—The new emperor abandoned the name of Octavius to assume that of Augustus, and seemed to change his character with his name. Once peaceful master of the Roman Empire, he hastened to heal the wounds which he had inflicted in enslaving it. To civil wars, to proscriptions, to massacres, to bloodshed at once succeeded order, security, and abundance. All quarrels were forgotten, all factions dissolved, all hatreds buried; and the happiness which the Romans enjoyed under the government of so just and moderate a prince soon caused them to forget or cease to regret the loss of liberty.

Augustus, eager to conciliate the affection of the Romans, had banished from his house all luxury and every distinctive mark of sovereignty. Of extreme simplicity of manners, he received all petitioners and delighted to render them service. One of his old soldiers having implored



his protection in a lawsuit, he counselled him at first to consult a lawyer. "Ah! it was not by a lawyer," replied the veteran, "that I defended your cause at the battle of Actium." The emperor, struck by this reply, himself pleaded the cause of the soldier, and gained it. This sweetness and affability had the more merit as Augustus was naturally of a quick and passionate disposition. If he almost always remained master of himself, he was indebted for it, it was said, to his preceptor, the philosopher Athenodorus of Tarsus, who gave him this wise counsel: "Cæsar, when you feel within you any emotion of anger, say the twenty-four letters of the alphabet before speaking or acting."

Augustus had by his second marriage a daughter, named Julia. Livia, his third wife, had no children, but she induced him to adopt two sons which she had had by a previous marriage—Tiberius, who became emperor, and Drusus, father of the celebrated Germanicus. The emperor, wishing to reward the services of Agrippa, his ablest general, gave him in marriage his daughter Julia, and of this marriage three children were born, who died before reaching the age of maturity. Octavia, sister of Augustus, had a son named Marcellus, who was to have inherited the imperial dignity, and who showed himself worthy of it by his brilliant qualities; but he died in the flower of his youth, and his death



inspired Virgil with the most touching verses of the *Aeneid*: "Tu Marcellus eris."

CONSPIRACY OF CINNA (A.D. 4).—The rule of Augustus, moderate as it was, did not secure him perfect tranquillity. Besides the affliction which the bad conduct of his children caused him, he had to meet and repress several conspiracies. These enterprises ended in the death of the guilty. But Cinna, grandson of the great Pompey, undeterred by the punishment of others, and ungrateful for the kindness of Augustus, formed a new conspiracy against his life. The emperor, informed of the plot, sent for Cinna, retired alone with him to a secluded apartment, and bade him be seated; then, having made him promise not to interrupt him, the emperor recounted in detail the many benefits and favors with which he had continually honored him, and ended with these words: "You know all this, Cinna, and yet you would assassinate me!" At those words Cinna cried out that such a rash deed was far from his thoughts. "You do not keep your word," answered Augustus; "you were not to interrupt me. Yes, I repeat it, you wish to assassinate me!"

He then related the circumstances of the conspiracy, naming the conspirators, and seeing that Cinna then remained silent, not in virtue of the agreement but through surprise and terror, he showered upon him the most feeling and ten-



der reproaches for his ingratitude and perfidy. He concluded by saying to Cinna: "I give you life a second time. I gave it to you formerly when you were my enemy; I give it to you again to-day, though you have added to this title that of traitor and parricide. Let us be friends henceforth, and give a grand spectacle to the Roman people—I of generosity, you of gratitude." To language so noble Augustus added deeds: he offered the consulate to Cinna for the following year; and Cinna, on his part, became the faithful friend of his prince. Augustus was well repaid for his clemency, for from that time no conspiracy was formed against his person.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE UNDER AUGUSTUS; DISASTER OF VARUS (A.D. 9).—Augustus, through his lieutenants, had the glory of extending the limits of the Roman Empire in three parts of the world. This great success was impaired by the disaster of Varus in Germany. That general had imprudently entangled himself in the forest of Teutberg, in the midst of a country newly conquered. Suddenly the Germans surrounded him and assailed him in his camp. He perished, and with him three Roman legions. The remembrance of this terrible disaster, ever present to the mind of Augustus, saddened the last years of his reign. It is said he was seen to strike his head against the wall, crying out: "Varus, Va-



rus, give me back my legions!" He did not long survive this grief. His death was mourned by the people, and well deserved to be; indeed, if we could dissociate the name of Octavius from that of Augustus, he would, without doubt, be one of the best princes whose memory is transmitted to us by history.

Augustus added to the Roman provinces Egypt, and all the country comprised between the Alps and the Danube; he also subdued in Spain the Asturians and the Cantabrians; drove the Germans to the other side of the Rhine, and obtained from the Parthians the restitution of the eagles taken from Crassus. The boundaries of the empire under his reign were as follows: on the west, the ocean from Mauritania to the mouth of the Rhine; on the north, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euxine Sea; on the east, Armenia, the Euphrates, and the deserts of Arabia; on the south, the cataracts of Syene, the Libyan deserts, and the Atlas chain.

The empire was divided into thirty provinces, situated beyond Italy, of which nineteen were imperial provinces and eleven senatorial: Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, Bætica, Narbonensis, Africa, Crete and Cyrenaica, Achaia, Macedonia, Asia, Bithynia and Cyprus. The senate named annual proconsuls to govern the senatorial provinces. The imperial provinces, more difficult to govern, and which it was necessary to defend



against the neighboring people, had governors named by the emperor, and called "lieutenants of Cæsar," "procurators," "presidents," or "prefects." There were sixteen thousand men in the urban and prætorian guards to watch over the safety of Rome and the emperor, and a standing army of four hundred thousand men to defend the frontiers of the empire. The security of the seas was guaranteed by six fleets, which were stationed at Ravenna, Misena, Frejus, Boulogne, on the Danube and the Euxine Sea. Rome then comprised more than four millions of inhabitants, and the whole empire one hundred and twenty millions.

THE AGE OF AUGUSTUS.—Augustus, not content to govern with wisdom, was also the patron of letters, and the most brilliant age of Latinity is known by his name. Rome had just lost the orator Cicero and the historians Sallust and Cornelius Nepos. The emperor indemnified this loss by bestowing benefits upon, and honoring with his friendship, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Titus Livy, and others of those admirable geniuses who enabled Rome to dispute with Greece the palm of eloquence and poetry.

Virgil (B.C. 69–19), born near Mantua, composed one of his first *Eclogues* to express his gratitude to Octavius for restoring to him his patrimony, of which the triumvirs had deprived him for the benefit of their soldiers. On the invitation



of Mæcenas, minister of the emperor, and like him a generous patron of arts, the poet depicted in his *Georgics* the labors and happiness of rural life. The publication of this masterpiece coincided with the re-establishment of peace in Italy and throughout the world. Virgil, to reanimate the patriotism of the Romans, wished to deduce their origin from that of the Trojans, and composed the *Æneid*, a poem in which he approximates to Homer without equalling him.

Horace (B.C. 64–7), a contemporary of Virgil, and like him a favorite of Augustus and Mæcenas, had neither his lofty genius nor his exquisite sensibility; but he composed satires, odes, and epics worthy to serve as models for accuracy of thought as well as perfection of a style always simple and natural.

Ovid, an easy and elegant poet, in his verses too often gave expression to a licentiousness which led Augustus to banish him to the shores of the Euxine Sea. At the same epoch Tibullus and Propertius breathed their sadness in touching elegies.

Under the reign of Augustus there were no orators nor dramatic authors worthy of note, but there appeared a great number of remarkably learned men, such as the geographer Strabo, the architect Vitruvius, and Varro, esteemed the most learned of the Romans. The most celebrated prose writer of the time was Titus Livy,

who wrote, in one hundred and forty-two books, the entire history of Rome from its foundation to the year B.C. 10. There remain to us only thirty-five books of this work and some fragments, but these suffice to prove what perfection the genius and the language of the Romans had then attained. The city which had subdued the world had thus the glory of enlightening it, and, by the superiority of its writers as well as by the valor of its soldiers, could justly be called the mistress of nations.

**BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.**—That which especially rendered the age of Augustus for ever memorable was the coming of the Redeemer, promised to man and expected by the people of God for more than forty centuries. Augustus unconsciously concurred in the execution of the heavenly decrees. He ordained throughout the whole empire a general census, commanding the inhabitants of the provinces to inscribe their names in the place where their family had its origin. Mary and Joseph, both descended from David, were thus obliged to go to Bethlehem. It was there that, as foretold by the prophets, our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, according to the latest authorities, in the year of Rome 750, fifteen years before the death of Augustus.

**TIBERIUS (A.D. 14-37): HIS TYRANNICAL GOVERNMENT.**—As soon as Augustus had closed

his eyes, Tiberius, his step-son and successor entered without difficulty into possession of all the pomp and prerogatives of the imperial dignity. The ancient republic was forgotten, and the reign of Augustus had sufficed to reconcile the Romans to imperial sway. Tiberius, whose chief characteristics were harshness and cruelty, was as yet little known; skilled in dissimulation, he had made a display of virtue in order to preserve the favor of Augustus and to smoothe his own way to the throne. As soon as he had gained it he cast off all restraint. The good were persecuted; informations and accusations multiplied; the most illustrious personages of the state were exiled, despoiled, imprisoned, condemned, for no other crime than having by their merit and reputation excited the jealousy of a suspicious and sanguinary prince.

His government, therefore, was detested. That which augmented the public hatred was the comparison which was made between Tiberius and Germanicus, his nephew. This young prince was mild, affable, full of candor and generosity; consequently he was much loved by the people and soldiers. The emperor feared him; nevertheless he was obliged to send him against the Germans, who had formed a new league against the empire.

**GERMANICUS IN GERMANY (A.D. 16).**—Germanicus, by prudent firmness tempered with



mildness, appeased the mutiny of the German legions, who wished to proclaim him emperor. Placing himself at their head, he crossed the Rhine, ravaged the enemy's country, and, arriving near the Weser, reached the fatal spot where, six years before, the legions of Varus had been cut to pieces. Their bleached bones covered the country, dispersed or in heaps, according as those who had perished were separated by flight or united for battle. Fragments of broken arms, skeletons of horses, the instruments of torture which the Germans had used to inflict suffering on their prisoners, and the altars where these barbarians had sacrificed to their gods the officers of the Roman legions, were found.

Germanicus and his soldiers were unable to restrain their tears at the sight of so deplorable a spectacle. Divided between grief and indignation, they gathered the bones into a heap and covered them with earth; then, burning with a desire for revenge, they marched at once in quest of the Germans. Arminius, their chief, employed all the resources of valor and cunning against the Romans, but in vain; he suffered defeat as often as he gave battle, and would have been entirely conquered if Tiberius, jealous of the glory and successes of Germanicus, had not recalled him to Rome.

DEATH OF GERMANICUS.—The transports of joy with which the conqueror of Germany was



received served but to inflame the hatred of Tiberius. Even his presence became insupportable to the emperor, who, in order to rid himself of him, sent him to the East, where soon after he perished by poison. The most remote provinces bitterly mourned this young hero, whose loss seemed to leave them a prey to the malice of Tiberius. In all Italy, and especially Rome, the grief was extreme. The day on which the ashes of Germanicus were borne to the tomb of Augustus was passed in tears and mournful lamentations. The magistrates, soldiers, and people exclaimed that the republic was lost, and that no hope remained either for themselves or their children.

Tiberius, dissembling his joy at having no longer to fear a rival, pretended to share the general sorrow. As he could not hinder the course of justice, and wishing to appear impartial, he submitted to the senate the trial of Piso, governor of Syria, accused of poisoning Germanicus. Ample testimony was produced against the governor, but the following day he was found dead in his prison. Tiberius tried to spread the report that he had committed suicide; but it was suspected that the emperor wished to prevent, by a new crime, revelations of the accused by which he himself would be compromised.

TIBERIUS IN THE ISLE OF CAPREÆ.—Tiberius, in order to escape public malediction, re-



tired to the little isle of Caprea, near Naples, which he rendered infamous by his debaucheries and cruelties. He passed there many years without wishing to return to Rome, which he hated almost as much as it hated him. This ferocious tyrant, as jealous of his authority as he was regardless of making good use of it, said of the Romans: "Let them execrate me, provided they obey me." A host of informers devoted themselves to his service, in order to be enriched at the expense of innocent citizens whom they denounced. In order to condemn the accused it sufficed to have recourse to the terrible law of *high treason*, which decreed the penalty of death for any offence against the emperor.

The senate, cowed by the condemnation of its most illustrious members, evinced great servility in enacting the most tyrannical measures, so that the emperor himself was often heard to exclaim: "O the dastards! who hasten to embrace servitude." Tiberius had confided the care of the government to Sejanus, who was his prime minister, under the name of prætorian prefect, or commander of the prætorian cohorts. This ambitious man had already committed several crimes in order to open a way to the throne when he was denounced to the senate by a letter from the emperor, and massacred by the Roman populace. Thenceforth the cruelty of Tiberius increased with his suspicions, while he



plunged deeper than ever into debaucheries. As his health became impaired he fell into swoons, in one of which he seemed dead. Afterwards he showed signs of rousing from his lethargy, when his attendants smothered him with pillows, and thus put an end to his crimes (A.D. 37).

DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST (A.D. 33).—While these disgraceful scenes were enacting in the West, an event was transpiring, almost unregarded, in the East which was to regenerate the whole world. Jesus Christ, having wrought his miracles and preached his Gospel in Judea, now consummated, by a voluntary death and a glorious resurrection, the great work of man's redemption.

CALIGULA (A.D. 37-41): HIS EXTRAVAGANCES, HIS AVARICE, AND HIS CRUELTY.—Caligula, son of Germanicus and by adoption grandson of Tiberius, had none of the virtues of the former and seemed determined to outdo the latter in vices and crimes. He carried his extravagance so far as to require divine honors to be paid to his person. Sometimes he assumed the name of Mars or Jupiter, again that of Diana or Venus; clad in the costumes of these deities, he received adoration and sacrifice. His prodigality caused him in less than two years to exhaust the treasury of the empire. In order to refill his empty coffers Caligula resorted to proscriptions, and in





this way seized upon the wealth of the richest citizens of Rome. At times he did this in a manner peculiarly characteristic: he would compel the most opulent persons to adopt him and by will make him their heir; if they continued to live, he accused them of mocking him, and sent them poisoned sweetmeats. One day, when gambling, he wanted money. He immediately sent for the public register, which contained the names of the citizens, condemned a certain number of the richest to death, and said to those who played with him: "How I pity you! It takes you a long time to gain a small sum, while I have won in an instant six hundred millions of sesterces" (about fifteen millions of dollars).

During a grand banquet, at which there were two consuls, all at once he began to laugh immoderately. The consuls respectfully asked him the cause of his merriment. "I was thinking," he replied, "that in the twinkling of an eye I might have both of you put to death." On another occasion, when the citizens offered him incense, he uttered these words, the most horrible, perhaps, that ever issued from the mouth of man: "Would to the gods that the Roman people had but one head, that I might cut it off with a single blow!"

This madman was as kind to beasts as he was cruel to men. He erected a palace for his horse *Incitatus* and invited him to eat at his table.



He even, as an insult to the republic, appointed him consul. At last he resolved that his own statue, decorated with the attributes of Jupiter, should be placed in the Temple of Jerusalem and adored. But divine justice overtook this impious prince before he could execute his design. He was murdered in Rome, with his wife and children, and his death, in the fourth year of his reign, delivered the earth of a monster.

Caligula was more formidable to the Romans than to the enemies of the empire. The desire to pass for a great general prompted him to undertake two expeditions, one against the Germans, the other against the Britons. In the first he crossed the Rhine with an army of two hundred thousand men, but hastily returned after travelling a few miles; in the second, having collected an army and the engines of war on the coast of Gaul, he embarked in a galley, but hardly had he left the shore when he returned and disembarked, ordering his soldiers to fill their helmets with shells as trophies of his expedition. In default of German or British prisoners, he chose the largest and handsomest Gauls he could find. "Let the triumph," he wrote to his intendants, "be extraordinarily brilliant. This is not out of your power, since you have control of the wealth of all the citizens."

CLAUDIUS (A. D. 41-54); MESSALINA AND AGRIPPINA.—The prætorian soldiers having slain



the emperor, whom they were bound to protect, arrogated to themselves the right of choosing his successor. While they were pillaging the palace they discovered in an obscure corner a man who, trembling with terror, begged for mercy. It was Claudius, brother of Germanicus and uncle of Caligula. He was at that time about fifty years of age, and by his imbecility had escaped the fate of the other members of his family. The soldiers adjudged him worthy to be emperor.

Claudius, heretofore an object of scorn to his relatives, became on the throne the plaything of his wife and his freedmen. These latter, born in slavery, on obtaining liberty became the tyrants of the palace and of the empire. One of them, named Narcissus, fearing the influence of the empress, Messalina, caused her to be put to death. That shameless woman, infamous for her scandals, had had by Claudius two children, Britannicus and Octavius.

The emperor soon after chose for his wife his niece Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus. Being ambitious and wily, the new empress had little difficulty in prevailing upon Claudius to adopt as his successor Nero, her son by a former husband. When the emperor afterwards showed a disposition to restore his own son, the disinherited Britannicus, she caused him to be poisoned, and Nero mounted the throne. Claudius left the reputation of a prince guilty of having tol-



rated evil rather than having committed it, and who would have been a great and good monarch if he had been as well versed in the art of governing as he was in the Greek language and Roman antiquities.

NERO (A.D. 54-68); BURRHUS AND SENECA.—Although Nero was only seventeen years of age when he succeeded Claudius, he began his reign with general approbation. Burrhus, the commander of his guards, and Seneca the philosopher, both celebrated, the one for his integrity, the other for his talents, had been entrusted with the education of the young prince; and if they did not succeed in making him virtuous, they had at least checked the fury of his youthful passions. His artful conduct at first prepossessed the people in his favor. One day, when he had to sign a death-warrant, he exclaimed: "I wish that I had never learned to write." Another day, when the senate testified to him their gratitude, "I shall accept your thanks," replied he, "when I truly merit them." But these laudable sentiments did not proceed from his heart; his wickedness increased with age, and he soon refused to listen to the counsels of his former tutors.

CRIMES OF NERO.—The first use which he made of his independence was to poison, at his own table and under his own eyes, the young Britannicus, his adopted brother. Emboldened by success, and galled by the imperious temper



of his mother, Agrippina, he resolved to murder her. He attempted at first to drown her; this attempt having failed, he feigned to be reconciled to her, but the same day caused her to be stabbed. Thenceforth the lives of men were his sport, and his reign equalled in horrors that of Caligula. In addition to his mother and brother, Nero murdered his first wife, Octavia, and Poppæa, his second; also the philosopher Seneca and the poet Lucan, as accomplices in a conspiracy. Rome was deluged in the blood of its most illustrious citizens.

Seneca has left us many philosophical treatises which contain wise maxims, and which have given rise to a supposition that the author had known St. Paul and embraced Christianity. But this supposition, devoid of all positive proof, seems refuted by the conduct of the philosopher. He who composed a eulogy on sincerity wrote for Nero a pompous panegyric on Claudius; he extolled filial piety, but composed a discourse in order to justify Nero for having assassinated his mother; he recommended love of poverty, and even caused a eulogy thereof to be engraved on a desk of gold, but he accumulated enormous wealth; finally, at the moment when he terminated his life by suicide, this pagan moralist had the lamentable assurance to say to his friends that he left them as his most precious legacy the example of his life.



BURNING OF ROME (A.D. 64).—The tyrant Nero, not content with having desolated the city, and wishing to give himself the pleasure of reducing it to ashes, caused it to be set on fire. During the conflagration, which consumed two-thirds of Rome, Nero ascended a tower and sang verses describing the burning of Troy. To crown this exploit in a manner worthy of himself he laid the blame of it on the Christians, and it was from the hand of Nero, the most wicked of men, that the first edict of general persecution was issued against the Christians.

FIRST PERSECUTION (A.D. 64-68); MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.—The apostles, conformably to the mission which they had received from Jesus Christ, were eager to preach the Gospel in the empire and surrounding countries. St. Peter, who converted the first of the gentiles, or pagans, in the person of the Roman centurion Cornelius, had already founded the church of Antioch, where the disciples of Jesus Christ were first called *Christians*. But the head of the Catholic Church was destined to establish his see in the capital of the Roman world. He went to Rome, and there, with St. Paul, preached the true faith. The two apostles, arrested by order of Nero, were confined in the prison of the Capitol.

St. Peter was sentenced to death on the cross; but he asked to be crucified with his head down-



ward, judging himself unworthy to die in the same posture as Jesus Christ. St. Paul, being a Roman citizen, was beheaded. Nero was not content to inflict ordinary punishments on the great number of Christians whom he put to death. Some, enveloped in the skins of wild beasts, were torn to pieces by dogs; others, clothed in tunics steeped in pitch, were suspended to posts, or put into barrels besmeared with pitch, and set on fire to serve as torches during the night to illuminate the games of the circus, the streets of the city, and the gardens of the emperor.

EXPEDITION OF CORBULO AGAINST THE PARTHIANS.—About this time the Parthians invaded Armenia, an allied kingdom of the empire. Corbulo, the ablest general of that time, was sent against them. On arriving in Syria he found an army without discipline and enervated by idleness and inaction. When he had trained them by military exercises, he led them against the Parthians. The latter divided into small bodies and harassed the Romans, but, according to their custom, scattered when the enemy offered them battle. Corbulo, changing his tactics, also divided his troops and attacked different posts at once. He was so successful that he soon became master of the country. Artaxata, capital of Armenia, was captured in one day and burned; Tigranocerta, another important city, sur-



rendered without resistance and was spared by the victor.

The Parthians, alarmed by the success of Corbulo, sued for peace. It was granted, and Armenia was restored to a prince of their nation, on condition that he would go to the Roman camp to lay his diadem at the foot of the emperor's statue, and that he would then proceed to Rome in order to receive it from the hands of the emperor himself, which was done.

NERO AS A BUFFOON.—While Corbulo thus sustained the majesty of the empire in the East Nero completed its disgrace in the West. He passed his nights in the streets and in taverns, followed by licentious youths, with whom he maltreated and plundered the passers-by. His passion for music was extreme; and as no sense of decorum restrained him, he would appear on the stage dressed like a comedian, contending for the prize of singing, sometimes basely soliciting, then again winning by terror, the votes and plaudits of the assembly.

DEATH OF NERO.—Finally, Rome grew weary of this buffoon-emperor, whose ferocity was in nowise lessened by his mania for the stage. Galba, governor of Spain, raised the standard of revolt. Nero at this news planned to massacre all his generals, poison the senate, and burn Rome a second time. But no time was given him. The armies, the provinces, the capital, the



empire rose against him. The senate, so long silent, resumed its former vigor, and issued a decree which condemned him to an ignominious death. Nero, terrified at this, began to weep; he regretted life much, but his musical talent and his fine voice still more. "Can it be," he cried, "that so great a musician must perish?" While he was lamenting, horsemen were heard hastily approaching to drag him from his retreat and lead him to the scaffold. Then, seizing his sword, he became his own executioner, and thereby, says an author, rendered justice to himself, since the blow which killed him could not have been inflicted by a hand more vile than his own. With him ended the Augustan family. (Other writers, and the best authorities seem on their side, say that Nero requested one of his slaves to despatch him, after having made an ineffectual attempt to do so with his own hand.)

## Sec. 2. THE THREE MILITARY USURPERS

(A. D. 68-69), and the *Three Princes of the Flavian Family* (A. D. 69-96); the *Catacombs*.

GALBA, OTHO, AND VITELLIUS (A. D. 68-69).—The legions of Spain, jealous of the influence which the prætorians exercised at Rome, arrogated to themselves the right to choose an emperor, by proclaiming Galba. He was an old man of seventy years, but age had not weakened his



inflexibility of character. When he arrived in Rome the prætorians, according to the established usage, demanded of the new prince a gratuity in money. "An emperor," replied Galba, "chooses his soldiers, and does not buy them." But Galba brought discredit on himself by his avarice and the power which he granted to unworthy favorites. Otho, one of his former lieutenants, caused him to be murdered in a revolt of the prætorian soldiers, and obtained the title of emperor. This title was disputed by Vitellius, whom the legions of Germany had proclaimed. Otho, vanquished at Bedriacum, killed himself in despair. Rome's new emperor seemed to have ascended the throne only to satisfy his shameful gluttony. We are assured that Vitellius, during the eight months of his reign, spent on his table more than forty million dollars of our money. His voracity, says a historian, would have ruined the empire had not the legions of the East chosen an emperor more worthy of governing the Roman people.

ELECTION OF VESPASIAN; DEATH OF VITELLIUS (A. D. 69).—Vespasian had been appointed by Nero to conduct the war against the insurgent Jews. This able general had subdued the whole of Palestine, Jerusalem alone remaining to be taken, when his legions, indignant at seeing themselves subject to such a man as Vitellius, resolved to choose another emperor. Vespasian



was proclaimed at the same time at Alexandria, Antioch, and Cæsarea. His design was to reduce Rome by famine, by arresting the convoys of wheat which Egypt furnished to Italy, and thus terminate the war without effusion of blood. But Antonius Primus, one of the generals who had declared in his favor, took more decisive measures. This general, full of ardor, having crossed the Alps at the head of the Illyrian legions, cut in pieces an army of Vitellius, took by assault the enemy's camp which surrounded Cremona, captured the place itself, and reduced it to ashes. All this was the work of a day and a night. Then he marched directly to Rome and entered it by force, while the populace put Vitellius to death in the most ignominious manner.

WISE REFORMS OF VESPASIAN.—Titus Flavius Vespasian, head of the Flavian family, enjoyed a peaceful reign. On ascending the throne, he fully realized the high hopes which had been conceived of him. Indefatigable and assiduous, he devoted himself to the reform of abuses. He expelled from the senate those members who dishonored it by their vices; he reformed the tribunals, and enforced military discipline. The luxury of the Roman table was then an inveterate evil. Vespasian checked it by his example, for under an emperor who was a pattern of simplicity private individuals were ashamed to



indulge in extravagance. Whatever savored of effeminacy so displeased him that, being accosted by a young man strongly perfumed, who came to thank him for a preferment, he made a gesture of indignation and dismissed him, saying: "I would rather you smelt of garlic."

AVARICE OF VESPASIAN.—With all the good qualities of this prince, he had one weak point, which was his love of money. This he did not conceal—indeed, was the first to jest about it. The deputies of a city having come to announce that they had voted a million of sesterces to erect a statue to him, "Place it here," said he to them; "behold the base all ready." He died at an advanced age, after a reign of ten years. He may fairly be compared with Augustus, whom he surpassed by the lawfulness of the means which raised him to the throne, and whom he equalled by the manner in which he discharged his obligations.

VIRTUES OF TITUS.—To Vespasian succeeded his son Titus, who had taken Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. He was an excellent prince, whose highest praise is the appellation which the people gave him of "Delight of mankind." A saying of his will be lauded by remotest posterity. Once, when he had let a day pass without doing some good act, he appeared sad in the evening. Being asked the reason, "My friends," replied he, sighing, "I have lost a day." After a



reign of two years and two months Titus died, poisoned, it was believed, by his brother Domitian.

ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS (A.D. 79); THE TWO PLINYs.—The reign of Titus is remarkable for a dreadful eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The violent concussions of the earth, accompanied by subterranean sounds like thunder, the agitation of the sea, the heavens seemingly on fire—all inspired dread and consternation. The volcano hurled into the air enormous stones, which in falling rolled with a crash down the sides of the mountain. Afterwards flames burst forth, followed by a dense smoke which darkened the sky and changed the day into a frightful night. Pliny the Naturalist, who at that time was commander of the Roman fleet at Misenum, twenty or twenty-five miles from Mount Vesuvius, wished to have a nearer view of the terrible phenomenon. He approached the mountain when all others were fleeing from it. But his curiosity cost him dear; he was suffocated by the ashes and the sulphurous exhalation. His nephew, Pliny the Younger, then living at Misenum, risked still greater danger. His mother wished him to fly. "Infirm and aged as I am," said she, "I shall be happy to die, provided you are safe." But this generous son declared that he was resolved either to perish himself or rescue her. They were frequently covered with ashes;



even the flame came near the place where they were, but it did not reach them.

RUINS OF HERCULANEUM.—The city of Herculaneum was buried under heaps of ashes, and remained unknown till 1710, when it was discovered at a depth of sixty feet beneath the village of Portici, near Naples. There were found temples, public and private edifices, statues, furniture and vases of all kinds, and, what is most extraordinary, nuts, raisins, olives, wheat, bread, and a pie about a foot in diameter, burnt within, but preserving its exterior form. At a depth of some feet there were found the remains of still another city, which had been built above Herculaneum, and which had been also buried by later eruptions of Vesuvius. The village of Portici is built upon the crusts which have successively covered these two cities.

DOMITIAN: HIS CRUELTY (A.D. 81-96).—No prince, however virtuous or talented, could have supplanted Titus in the hearts of the Romans. Domitian, however, by his vices, contrived to render the loss of his brother more afflicting to the Romans. Far from laboring for their happiness, he thought only of robbing them of their property and making them suffer like criminals guilty of high treason. In his leisure moments the emperor amused himself either in killing flies with a golden bodkin or in showing his skill in piercing his slaves with arrows. Cowardly and



vain as well as cruel, he dared not attack the barbarian hordes that were ravaging the frontiers of the empire; and yet he gave himself the surnames of Germanicus and Dacius. One of his lieutenants, named Julius Agricola, having excited his jealousy by achieving the conquest of Britain (A.D. 86), was recalled by Domitian to Italy, and ordered to return to Rome during the night, so as to rob him of the applause of the people. Agricola obeyed, and ended his days in seclusion; but his son-in-law, the great historian Tacitus, has left us a portrait of his virtues, which strongly contrast with the vices of Domitian.

SECOND PERSECUTION (A.D. 93-96).—Domitian, who gloried in imitating Nero, shared also his hatred of the Christians. He published a bloody edict against them. Amid a multitude of persons of every age and condition, he caused the consul Flavius Clemens, who was his cousin-german, to be put to death. But that which rendered the second persecution still more infamous was the attempted martyrdom of St. John. He was plunged into a caldron of boiling oil, but without receiving any injury. This miracle occurred at Rome, near the Lateran gate. St. John, having thus escaped death, was banished by Domitian to the isle of Patmos, where he predicted, in his Apocalypse, the triumph of the Church over all her persecutors.

Domitian, after a reign of fifteen years, was



murdered by his wife and his principal officers at the moment when he had planned their assassination. He is the last of the twelve Cæsars whose history has been recorded in detail by Suetonius, a writer of the second century A.D.

THE CATACOMBS.—The Christians, already numerous at Rome, in order to practise their religion and to escape for the time the sword of the persecutor, assembled in secret in the Catacombs. These were vast subterranean caves under the foundations of the city. They were entered by narrow passages, the lateral partitions of which served as cemeteries for the disciples of Jesus Christ. These galleries ended in chambers, more or less spacious, according to the number of the faithful who there held their meetings. By the light of a lamp suspended from the roof a pontiff offered the Holy Sacrifice on the tomb of a martyr. The attendants only interrupted the silence of their recollection by the recitation of prayers in unison or the chant of sacred canticles. When the pontiff exhorted his brethren to despise the vanities of the world for the happiness of heaven, his words convinced them, for they saw around them the relics of those slain for the faith; and they knew that above their heads was an idolatrous people, perhaps even then inflicting on some Christian the torments with which they were themselves menaced.

The Church, no longer in fear, under Constan-