

# The New Deal in Old Rome

How Government  
in the Ancient World  
Tried to Deal with  
Modern Problems

H.J. Haskell



T H E  
N E W D E A L  
I N O L D R O M E

H O W G O V E R N M E N T I N T H E  
A N C I E N T W O R L D  
T R I E D T O D E A L W I T H  
M O D E R N P R O B L E M S

B Y  
H . J . H A S K E L L

*N E W Y O R K* · A L F R E D A K N O P F · 1947

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TO

A·L·H·

WHOSE ENTHUSIASM TOOK US TO THE  
PONT DU GARD, WHERE THIS  
ADVENTURE BEGAN





## PREFACE

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AN AMATEUR is, of course, presuming to enter the field of the historian. In this case there may be mitigating circumstances. Work as a newspaper man has kept me in touch with political and economic problems in the modern world. I hope familiarity with these problems has given a fresh slant on similar problems in the past.

To prevent any misconception let me say at the outset that this book is neither a criticism nor a defence of the New Deal. It is an attempt to provide an objective survey of instances of government intervention in the ancient world. Many of these were so like experiments tried in the United States in recent years that they may fairly be classed as New Deal measures. I have tried to show what these experiments were, why they were tried, and how they worked. Making allowance for the differences between ancient and modern society, I have ventured to call attention to certain warning signals from the past.

## PREFACE

While directed primarily at the economic aspects of the history of Rome, the book is intended to include enough of the political background to make the economic aspects intelligible. In the discussion I have introduced personal incidents to reveal the Romans as human beings, moved by motives and emotions very like those in modern America.

The failure of the Roman system to furnish decent minimum standards of living for the mass of the people was a fundamental cause of instability, both political and economic. The decay of character that attended the sudden rush of great wealth undermined the Republic even before it was submerged by civil wars. Later, in a society unstable through social bitterness, extravagant public spending proved fatal. A British commentator, Professor F. E. Adcock of Cambridge University, remarks on the price the world finally had to pay for "the gilding of the Golden Age of the Antonines." The spending for non-productive public works, for the bureaucracy, and for the army, led to excessive taxation, inflation, and the ruin of the essential middle class and its leaders. It destroyed the men whom Léon Homo, French historian, calls, in a brilliant phrase, "the general staff of civilization." These facts have implications that may be pertinent today.

I have not cited authorities. The ordinary reader,

## PREFACE

I suspect, finds footnotes a rather formidable interruption, and my references should be familiar to historians, should any do me the honour to read the book. I may say, however, that for the sake of my own conscience and for the convenience of consultants I have prepared a reference list citing a respectable authority, I believe, for every statement of fact. Historical soundness has been a constant aim.

So far as I am aware, no historian has collected in a single volume the economic material here used. It has therefore been necessary to comb out the relevant matter from many books and monographs, including those of ancient as well as modern writers. Perhaps my chief debt is to Tenney Frank, M. Rostovtzeff, Frank Burr Marsh, Rice Holmes, W. E. Heitland, Léon Homo, and contributors to the *Cambridge Ancient History*. The Latin and Greek writers of the period, translated in the Loeb Classical Library, published by the Harvard University Press, have been an ever present help. Most of the translated quotations in this book are from the Loeb Library, with its generous permission. Further I am under heavy obligation to scores of modern historians, such as A. H. J. Greenidge, H. F. Pelham, Sir Samuel Dill, H. M. D. Parker, F. F. Abbott, J. F. Thompson, Warde Fowler, T. G. Tucker, Grant Showerman, R. G. Collingwood, M. Cary, Eugène Albertini, and Henri

## PREFACE

Pirenne — to mention only a few. For the benefit of those who may wish to pursue the subject further, I have supplied a reading list as an appendix.

In preparing the book I have been fortunate in assistance from specialists. I am exceedingly grateful to Professor Marsh for suggestions on many points and especially for helping me straighten out various complicated problems in which I found myself involved. I have also had frequent and generous aid from Professor Arthur T. Walker of the University of Kansas, and Professor Louis E. Lord of Oberlin College.

To soften the wrath of meticulous classicists, I may say that I have deliberately tried to keep away from words with an archaic flavour that are commonly used in historical writing. So far as possible I have avoided Latin words. I have spoken of the Big Business crowd instead of "equites" or "knights." I have referred to the granaries along the Tiber as "elevators." As an aside to historians, I trust they will believe that I recognize the controversial nature of many of the subjects discussed — the real object of the Gracchan public works, the effect on unemployment, Catiline's platform when he ran for consul in 63 B.C., Cæsar's first land legislation, and so on. In all these cases I have followed what has seemed to me the weight of the rather insubstantial evidence available.

The history of economic experiments by the gov-

PREFACE

ernment in the Roman world has proved a fascinating field for inquiry. I can only hope the facts set forth in this book will prove as interesting to others as they have to me.

H. J. HASKELL

*The Kansas City Star*

January 1, 1939

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The reprinting of this volume has given an opportunity to make a few minor changes. Most of these have to do with historical comparisons involving the second World War.

H. J. H.

*The Kansas City Star*

October 1, 1946





## CONTENTS

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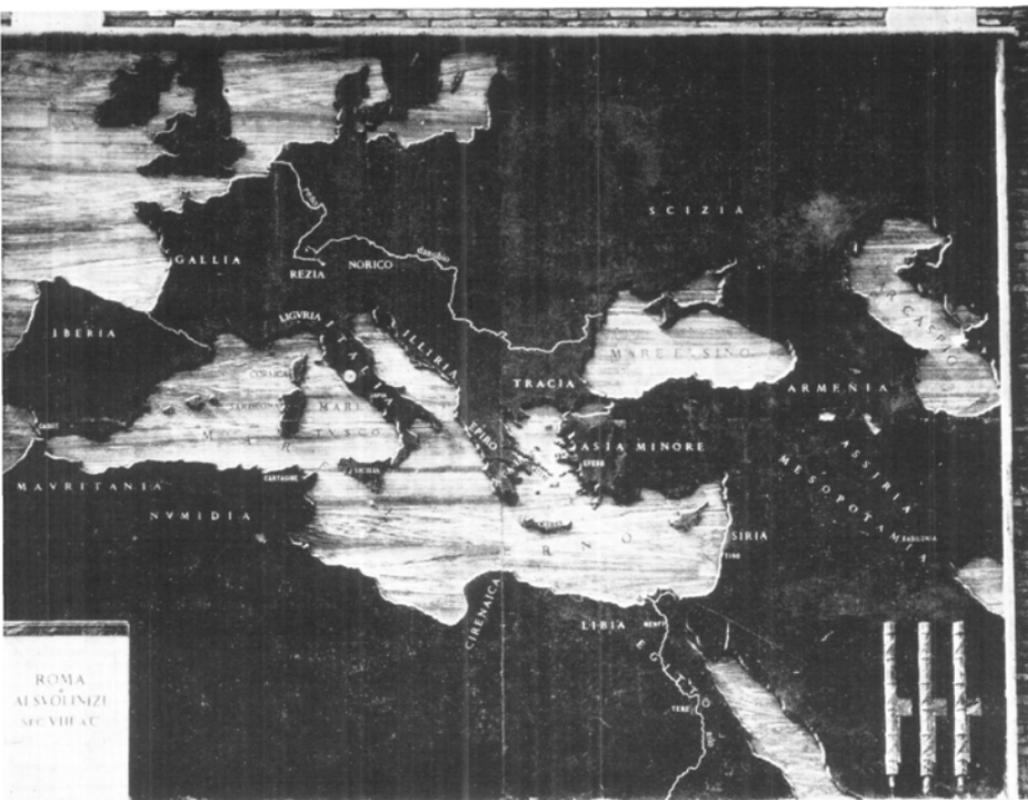
CHAPTER I.	<i>Beginning an Adventure</i>	3
CHAPTER II.	<i>When Rome Went Modern</i>	18
CHAPTER III.	<i>A Tour of Orientation</i>	36
CHAPTER IV.	<i>Early New Deal Experiments</i>	50
CHAPTER V.	<i>The Get-Rich-Quick Era</i>	73
CHAPTER VI.	<i>The Farm Problem Emerges</i>	86
CHAPTER VII.	<i>Big Business in Politics</i>	104
CHAPTER VIII.	<i>The Republic Couldn't Stand Prosperity</i>	134
CHAPTER IX.	<i>Drift to Dictatorship</i>	154
CHAPTER X.	<i>Boom and Depression</i>	178
CHAPTER XI.	<i>Prelude to Crisis</i>	194
CHAPTER XII.	<i>The Totalitarian State</i>	214
CHAPTER XIII.	<i>Warning Signals</i>	226

## CONTENTS

APPENDIX I.	<i>Chronology of Roman New Deal Measures and Other Economic Experiments</i>	237
APPENDIX II.	<i>If You Wish to Read Further</i>	242
APPENDIX III.	<i>A List of Books</i>	251
INDEX	<i>follows page</i>	258

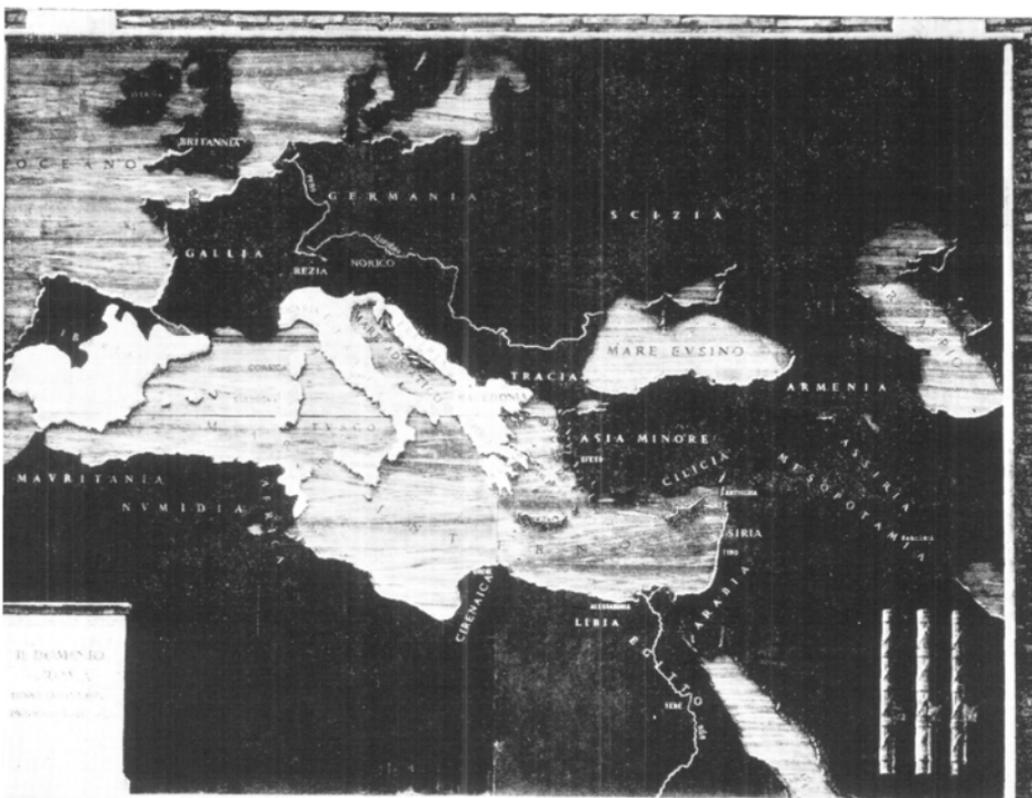
### *The Italian Maps*

The four maps grouped before the first page of text are reproductions of the marble maps set by the Italian Government on the brick wall of the fourth-century Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine in Rome. The wall abuts on the Via dell'Impero, the new boulevard from the Victor Emmanuel Monument to the Colosseum. The maps illustrate the expansion of the Roman domain from the Tiber settlement of the eighth century before Christ to the Empire at its greatest extent under Trajan early in the second century of the Christian era. The Roman territory is shown in white, the rest of the world in black. (*Photos by courtesy of the ENIT.*)



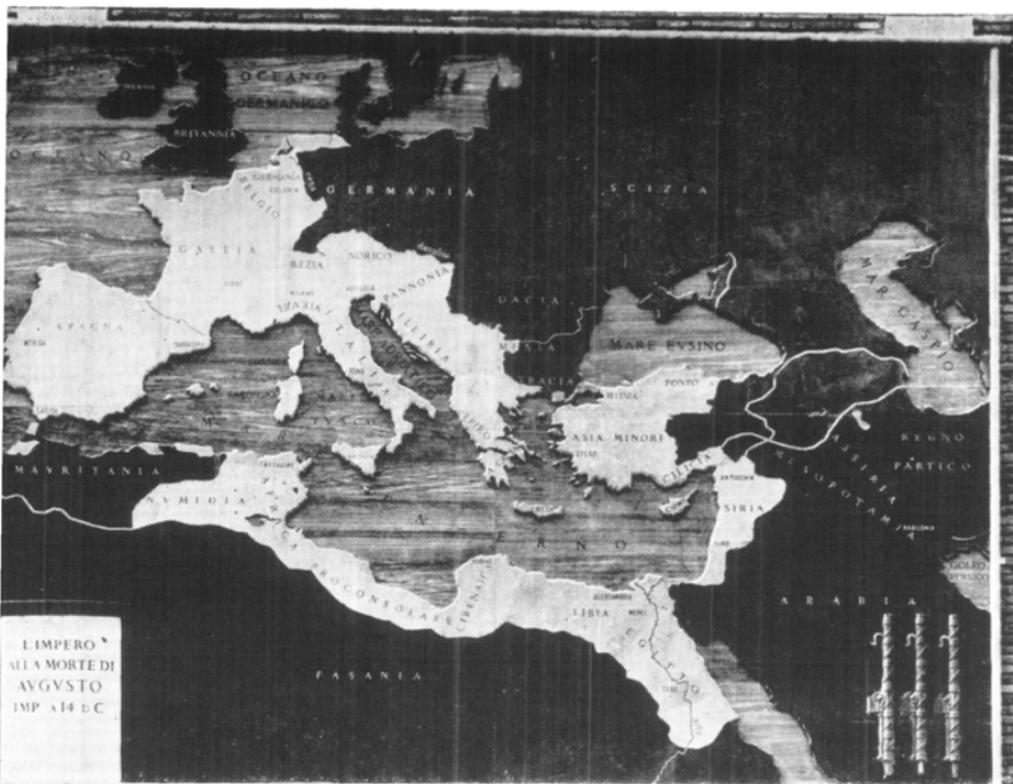
THE SHEPHERDS' SETTLEMENT ON THE TIBER  
IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST.





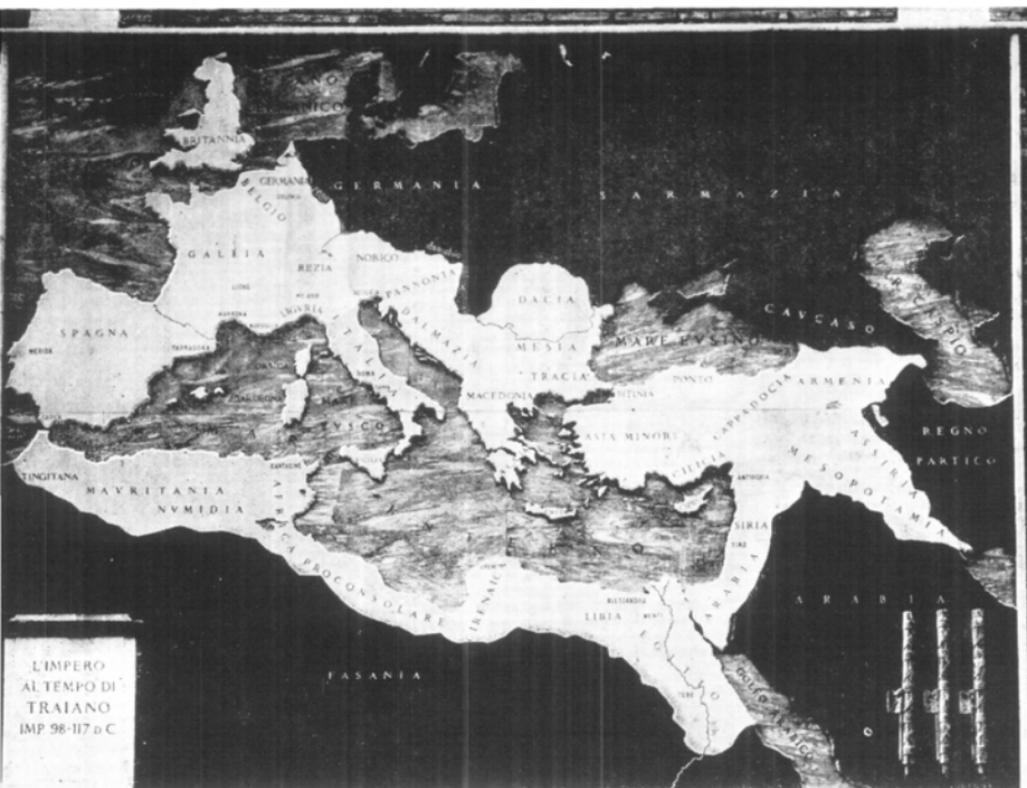
BY THE END OF THE THIRD WAR WITH CARTHAGE,  
146 B.C., THE REPUBLIC HAD CARRIED ITS RULE  
ALONG THE NORTHERN SHORE OF THE MEDITER-  
RANEAN AND ACROSS TO AFRICA.





AT THE DEATH OF AUGUSTUS, A.D. 14, WESTERN AND PART OF CENTRAL EUROPE HAD BEEN BROUGHT WITHIN THE ROMAN ORBIT, TOGETHER WITH THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN BASIN AND MUCH OF NORTHERN AFRICA.





UNDER TRAJAN, EARLY IN THE SECOND CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA, THE EMPIRE REACHED ITS GREATEST EXTENT. IT COVERED THE ENTIRE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN TO THE RIVERS OF ASIA AND INCLUDED RUMANIA AND ENGLAND.



THE NEW DEAL  
IN OLD ROME





## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNING AN ADVENTURE

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It was a drive with Mrs. Haskell over the Pont du Gard in southern France that led to the adventure of this little book. Here was a fine stone bridge surmounted by an aqueduct that crossed the River Gard near Avignon at an elevation of 165 feet above the bed of the stream. The aqueduct was built in the time of Augustus, nineteen hundred years ago. The soaring structure stands a monument to the architectural and artistic ability of Rome. Under its spell I began to consider what sort of civilization had produced it. Then the old problem recurred as to the reasons for the decay of the administrative and engineering genius that had been required to carry out such an achievement so far from the centre of the Roman world.

The journey that had taken us to Avignon continued through southern France and Italy, down the Dalmatian coast, back to Paris, across to England, and north to Hadrian's Wall that had guarded the Imperial frontier in Britain. The effect was cumulative. I realized as never before that we live in the long shadow of a civilization outwardly as magnificent as that of the present age. This gave new interest to my discovery at the Pont du Gard that Rome had fallen. This phenomenon, I perfectly understood, had attracted the attention of writers from Gibbon down to the present time. But for me it assumed a fresh significance. Returning home full of my discovery, I was discussing it with friends in New York when Katharine Dayton, playwright, told of a talk with the eminent historian Professor James H. Breasted, shortly before his death. She had asked him whether he had discovered any New Deals in the ancient world. "Yes, my dear," he had replied, "I've dug up at least a dozen."

This observation opened a fascinating field. Old and familiar facts took on a new aspect. Of course, as civilization has advanced, every government has found it necessary to intervene in social and economic affairs; to undertake various collective services, to assume certain obligations to the unfortunate, to set the rules of the game in private enterprise. In the ancient empires, in China, in Egypt, in Greece, and

## BEGINNING AN ADVENTURE

especially in Rome, government through the years had adopted a series of economic policies, some of them strikingly like those of the New Deal. They could not be identified by their modern names by pre-depression historians. But there they were — the Farm Debt Conciliation Committee, Resettlement Administration, Public Works Administration, Food Relief, Home Owners' Loan Corporation, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Farm Credit Administration, Price-and-Wage Act — one after another of the much-discussed alphabetical agencies. These seemed worth examining to determine their background and development. In spite of profound differences between the Mediterranean world of Rome and the world today, there might be lessons from the experiences of the past.

For such a study, it seemed to me, the reader might find the best introduction in the sort of survey that had led to my own interest in the subject. What sort of civilization was it that rose and fell on the shores of the Mediterranean and through western Europe over a period of a thousand years? Even with the efflux of centuries, the hand of Rome is all over the place. In the Balkans as a boy I had seen stretches of the original Roman pavement of the great highway from Vienna to Constantinople. Now on the recent journey Mrs. Haskell and I inspected fragments of the Roman wall that had enclosed London and looked

upon the timbers of a barge that had been part of the busy traffic of the Thames nearly two thousand years ago. Near St. Albans, a few miles north of London, we saw the remains of the ancient theatre of Verulamium, with its oyster bar where young bloods took their girl friends between acts for food and drink. Near by were the handsome mosaic floor and central heating system of a comfortable Romano-British town house.

Driving west from London a hundred miles to Bath, a famous watering-place in Roman times, we looked again at the great Roman bath, its floor still covered with sheets of lead, ten feet by five, from the Roman lead mines in the Mendips. Going by rail to Carlisle, a few miles south of the Scottish border, we drove east along Hadrian's Wall to the fort and garrison town of Housteads. The wall was built early in the second century under the direction of the Emperor Hadrian as the first line of defence for the province of Britain. It ran serpent-like over hill and dale more than seventy miles from the Solway on the west coast to the Tyne on the east. Long stretches of it remain. We stood within the foundation walls of the fort — a fort was built every four miles along the wall — and studied the remains of barracks, washroom, latrines, and granaries with elevated floors to keep the wheat off the ground. In *Puck of Pook's Hill* Kipling wrote vivid chapters about a Romano-British

centurion who was stationed on the wall. His family had lived in Britain for three hundred years or more. "Remember," said the boy's father, when the son was talking about his future career, "remember we are people of the Old Stock and our duty is to the Empire. . . . Your place is among the men on the wall."

"Think of it," the young officer told Kipling's English children, describing the wall with its long line of forts and settlements that had grown up around them. "One roaring, rioting, cock-fighting, wolf-baiting, horse-racing town, from Ituna on the west to Segedunum on the cold eastern beach!"

There it had stood, the long frontier settlement, with the characteristics of all frontier settlements down to the rough cow towns of the Western American plains of the nineteenth century.

Britain was conquered by Rome in the middle of the first century and for a longer period than from Plymouth Rock to the New Deal was a Roman province. For nearly three hundred years of that time, from early in the second century to the latter part of the fourth, the country, except in the north, was as peaceful as it is today. A garrison and patrolling force of about nineteen thousand men was kept on the wall. If invaders broke through this first line they encountered troops from the numerous forts built along the north-south highways. The final defence lay in the great legion camps at York and Chester. A

third legion camp at Caerleon on the north side of the Severn, not far from the present city of Cardiff, guarded the gate to Wales. All together some fifty-five thousand troops made a barrier from southwest to northeast to protect the civilized southeastern plains. So well was peace maintained that the farm estates off the great highways did not require the moats for defence that were common in the disorders of the Middle Ages. Fine country villas sprang up and the Romanized British squires lived in a comfort and security that were not equalled again until the eighteenth century. In the important matter of central heating modern Britain still lags behind the Roman province. The heating arrangements were destroyed in the barbarian invasions. The barbarians did such a thorough job that not even a memory of furnaces and hot-air pipes was left to warm the British imagination. Only in recent years have bold and adventuresome Englishmen here and there begun to rediscover central heating — what it is and how it works.

This far outpost of the Empire failed to develop a literature of its own and we have to depend largely upon the archæologists for our knowledge of the progress of Roman civilization. But there are occasional interesting references in contemporary writers. It is amazing that a Greek geographer, Strabo, writing nearly two thousand years ago, should have esti-

mated Great Britain as five hundred and fifty miles long, which is not far wrong. "Most of the island," he says, "is flat and overgrown with forests, although many of the districts are hilly." Then, as now, the British specialized on hunting-dogs and fogs. "Even on clear days, fogs shut out the sun except for three or four hours at midday." The modern name Eire, for Ireland, appears in Strabo as Ierne, a word of three syllables with the accent on the second. Its inhabitants, he writes, are more savage than the Britons.

The climate impressed the historian Tacitus a century later. He remarks that it was "always damp with rains and overcast with clouds." Because of the "constant moisture in the atmosphere and the dampness of the soil," vegetation grew rapidly. It was too cold for olives and grapes, but produced wheat abundantly. The story is told in his biography of his able father-in-law, Agricola, who was sent to Britain to command the Twentieth Legion, stationed at Chester, and later to be governor of the province. The Twentieth was withdrawn, A.D. 401, after a continuous service overseas of 358 years. It would be hard to match this record in military history. In the long Roman period, Latin became the language of the upper classes and even spread through the workers in the cities. In the Guildhall museum in London is preserved a tile upon which a bricklayer had scratched in rather bad Latin a comment on the spree

of a fellow worker: "Austalis has been wandering off on his own for the last fortnight."

It is curious to find the same love of country life in Roman Britain that characterizes England today. The province never was urbanized. The well-to-do Romanized Briton preferred to live in the country, as does the modern Englishman. The remains of five hundred country houses have been found, the residences of the Romano-British squires of the second, third, and fourth centuries.

In Paris, visiting the Cluny Museum, we were shown the baths of a Roman emperor's palace, one of them a room sixty-five feet long and fifty-nine feet high. Not far away French boys were playing basketball in the Arènes de Lutèce, the reconstructed Roman stadium built in the second century, when Paris was still the Roman Lutetia. Roman remains are conspicuous throughout France, especially in the southern part. At Nîmes pageants are still given in the Roman amphitheatre. A drive of a few miles north from Avignon took us to Orange, with its magnificent triple triumphal arch that has stood for nineteen hundred years, and its fine Roman theatre of the second century. Farther on, in Spain, Segovia is still supplied with water from the Roman aqueduct entering the city across a valley on a double tier of arches half a mile long. The traveller may cross the Tagus River at Alcántara on a massive Roman arched bridge. If

he motors over the arid North African plains of Algeria he comes abruptly upon a lonely forest of pillars and a great triumphal arch, remote from settlements. These are the remains of the veterans' colony of Timgad, established by the Emperor Trajan, A.D. 100.

Sailing down the Dalmatian coast across the Adriatic from Italy, we paused at Pola. Here is a large Roman stadium of the second century, its walls still intact, that would delight any American college athletic association. It would accommodate twenty-three thousand spectators. Farther down the coast we called on Diocletian at his immense country estate at Spalato, now given the atrocious name of Split. Here the Roman Emperor, the country boy who had gone to town and made good, retired early in the fourth century to raise cabbages near the scenes of his boyhood. Within its massive walls hundreds of families still live. Robert Adam, British architect and designer, visited the spectacular remains, was impressed with their magnificence, and returned to London to design Adelphi Terrace in the spirit of the Roman palace. Americans living in comfortable Georgian houses do not realize that their dwellings show the influence of Diocletian's architects, transmitted through Robert Adam.

From Spalato the traveller may journey seven hundred miles to the east and near Smyrna find a great double-arched Roman aqueduct. Out in the Asiatic

desert at Baalbek are the Roman ruins that stunned Mark Twain in *The Innocents Abroad*. Looking at the impressive remains of the vast Temple of the Sun, built by a Roman emperor of the second century, he remarked that "a race of gods or giants must have inhabited Baalbek many a century ago." Neither gods nor giants carried out the work, but engineers of a great race. What a sweep of empire! Speaking of the splendid cities that were built from Spain to Asia, from North Africa to the Rhine, M. Rostovtzeff says: "Never, not even in the nineteenth century, did men live in such a surrounding of beautiful buildings and monuments as in the first two centuries of the Roman era."

At the centre of this tremendous human achievement stood the capital. Rome has long been a favourite objective of American tourists. It has become doubly interesting through the competent work of Italian archæologists under the direction of Mussolini, who had a fine sense of historical values. In the old days the Forum and the Palatine hill were obscured by a rabbit warren of slums. Today we may pause before the huge mass of the Victor Emmanuel monument where the ancient Great North Road, now the Corso, enters the Piazza Venezia. It was the famous Flaminian Way, called within the city the Via Lata, or Broadway. To the southwest is the new Via del Mare, which connects with the motor road to the

port of Ostia. To the southeast stretches the broad new Via dell' Impero, which gives an unobstructed view of the Colosseum in the distance. On either side are the remains of the business district of old Rome, with important additions revealed through the Mussolini excavations. It must be borne in mind that the surface of Rome has risen a foot or more a century through the accumulation of dust and debris. This accumulation is being cleared away from famous buildings to give them their proper setting. Thus the massive tomb of Augustus, in which we attended a symphony concert a few years ago, has been freed from encrusting buildings, and the ground about it excavated to the old city level. Familiar to all tourists is the Pantheon, rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian. Its dome, 142 feet in diameter, is 142 feet above the pavement. Yet it stands with the concrete as perfect as when it was poured eighteen hundred years ago. The baths of Caracalla, built early in the third century, are now used for summer opera. Twenty-five hundred performers can be accommodated on the stage and there is seating capacity for more than twenty thousand spectators, all within the ancient walls. A bridge across the Tiber to the island, the Pons Fabricius, erected in 62 B.C., is still in use, as is the bridge that Hadrian threw across the river near his mausoleum, the Castel Sant' Angelo, in the second century. Farther up the river we may cross the

Mulvian bridge, built one hundred years before Christ. Here, near the monumental athletic field developed by Mussolini, Constantine fought the battle whose victorious outcome had been forecast by the cross in the sky.

Driving out of the city on the ancient Appian Way, we see the massive yet graceful arches of the Claudian aqueduct, opened A.D. 52, striding across the plain. It is uncertain how much water the eleven great Roman aqueducts could supply. The amount probably was between two hundred and three hundred million gallons daily. Three of these aqueducts still serve the city. Rome today is famous for its fountains. They were a feature of the ancient city as well. In the fourth century, the Gazetteer shows 856 baths, 11 great combination baths and athletic clubs, and several hundred swimming-pools. Two centuries later, 13,000 fountains were enumerated.

Julius Frontinus was appointed water commissioner of Rome near the end of the first century. His elaborate report of the water system and its history is still the delight of engineers. He tells of his annoyance at finding the government was supplying considerably more water than was being paid for. He deplores the dishonesty of "the watermen whom we have detected diverting water from the public conduits for private use. But a large number of landed proprietors also," he adds, "past whose fields the

aqueducts run, tap the conduits just to water their gardens." Incidentally he discusses the use of settling-basins to purify the supply. The water department maintained a working staff of seven hundred slaves.

Visiting Rome in the year of the great Augustan exposition celebrating the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of the first Roman Emperor, we saw the Empire re-created before our eyes. Plaster reproductions in miniature had been assembled of important buildings, bridges, and aqueducts in every part of the Roman world. In imagination we travelled from Dover Castle in England to Leptis Magna in North Africa; from the baths of Trier, Germany, to the temples of Asia Minor. Spread before us was a model of Imperial Rome, with scores of magnificent public buildings on the scale of the newer buildings in Washington. We entered a reconstructed Roman house with indoor toilet flushed with running water. We saw modern surgical instruments, busts of Roman women with hair done in permanent waves; farm tools, field and heavy artillery. On a wall an ingenious electric map pictured with coloured lighting the growth of the Empire from the original Tiber settlement until it covered the Mediterranean basin and western Europe. As we entered the rotunda of the exposition building we looked down a long room through the gateway of the fine Augustan temple at

Ancyra, the modern Ankara, capital of Turkey. Beyond the gateway, on a brilliantly lighted platform, stood a reproduction of the idealized statue of the Genius of Augustus, brooding over the wide empire which he had organized and to which he had brought the blessing of the Roman peace.

At its height Rome had a population probably in excess of a million. Then a decline set in. The capital of the Empire was removed to Constantinople — where was the Roman Chamber of Commerce to submit tamely to such an outrage? — and the city was repeatedly plundered by barbarians. Visitors in the early Middle Ages speak of its being “all but utterly in ruins,” like “a village of herdsmen: sheep and cows wandered in the city.” At the end of the fourteenth century its population was estimated at perhaps twenty thousand. The site of the Forum, originally pasture land, reverted to its ancient use. It was called the Campo Vaccino, the cow pasture, within the memory of men whose lives reached into the twentieth century.

In the light of this survey of the physical aspects of the ancient Empire the question recurs: How did it come that all this varied ability should finally have failed? Why should this magnificent civilization have gone down into the night of the dark ages — into what an indignant French historian, Ferdinand Lot, calls “an accursed period of history”?

## BEGINNING AN ADVENTURE

We have been considering, however, only the externals of the Roman world. Before we come to the New Deal experiments we have still to reconstruct in imagination the sort of society that lived in these magnificent surroundings and to review briefly the course of its development.



## CHAPTER II

### WHEN ROME WENT MODERN

---

“THE CREDIT of the Roman money market,” said Cicero in one of his speeches, “is intimately bound up with the prosperity of Asia; a disaster cannot occur there without shaking our credit to its foundations.” This curiously modern remark indicates the high degree of the commercial organization of the ancient world. In the time of Cicero, in the last century before Christ, wealthy Romans were busily exploiting the eastern provinces. Companies of contractors were organized to construct public works and to collect government revenues, from which the contractors took a large cut. They sold shares in offices on the Via Sacra, the Wall Street of Rome. Everybody, says the Greek historian Polybius, meaning all the country-club crowd, bought them. Exactions in the province

of Asia were so heavy that the way was prepared for the concerted massacre on one day of eighty thousand Italians at the instigation of the native ruler of an adjoining kingdom. We may imagine how the bottom dropped out of Asiatic stocks on the Roman market when the news came.

Under the Augustan peace a half-century later, order was imposed on the provinces, roads were repaired and extended, trade routes were protected, and with virtual free trade throughout the Western world prosperity flowed over Rome. For two hundred years this peace endured. In a famous passage Gibbon wrote that "if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most prosperous and happy, he would without hesitation" name the last half of this period to the death of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. With important reservations, there is reason for this enthusiasm. The reservations involve the slaves and the submerged class of free citizens, who together constituted an important part of the population of Italy. The condition of most of the slaves was wretched; that of the submerged freemen thoroughly unwholesome. They got a bare living through public and private relief and were kept entertained by the brutal gladiatorial contests and other games — the familiar "bread and circuses" of Juvenal. But ignoring the unhappy lot of these classes, as

the "best people" of the time ignored it, we may turn to the splendid achievements of the two centuries of peace.

Rome itself, the capital of an empire which may have included seventy million inhabitants, was transformed by Augustus into a magnificent city; he "found it brick and left it marble." It had its police and fire departments. Traffic jams in the business district had become such a problem in the time of Julius Cæsar that all vehicular traffic, chiefly trucking, had been ordered off the streets by day. The order brought bitter complaints from the residents of the district. The rumbling of the trucks kept them awake at night. With the growth of the city, real-estate values increased and apartment houses sprang up, some of them so sleazily built that they collapsed. Augustus was forced to set a limit of six to seven storeys on the height of buildings. Later this was reduced by one storey.

The immense burst of prosperity that followed the accession of Augustus a few years before the beginning of the Christian era was based on a series of enlightened Imperial policies, plus government spending of the treasure seized in Egypt. A war-torn world was given the Pax Romana; in the words of the elder Pliny, "the boundless majesty of the Roman peace." Property was protected and trade routes made safe. Both private and public exploitation of the provinces

was limited by the organization of an efficient and honest Imperial civil service that gradually spread throughout the world. Finally, transportation was developed to a point that was not again reached in Europe until the advent of steam in the nineteenth century.

While there was fighting to round out the Empire and while a few sporadic revolts occurred, the frontier wars no more disturbed the general peace than the fighting in Africa and on the Indian border disturbed Victorian England. Pirates were cleared off the seas and police boats patrolled navigable rivers. There were scattered stations of Imperial police. Except for these, the traveller could proceed from Rome to Paris, and a few years later to London, without seeing a Roman soldier. He would find evidence of the Empire's military forces only in the frontier camps along the Rhine or at Chester and York, where the legions kept their ceaseless watch.

Virgil, who like Rudyard Kipling was the poet of empire, saw in the rise of Rome "a new hope for the human race, a hope of peace, of order, of civilization." In a few famous lines in the *Æneid* he sums up his conception of the mission of his people. Other races, he says, may have more skill in the arts, may be able to trace the paths of the stars in their courses. "Remember thou, O Roman, to rule the nations with thy sway. These shall be thine arts — to crown

Peace with Law, to spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud." In the same spirit, although not with the same organ music, Kipling wrote: "Take up the White Man's Burden."

Dollar diplomacy had been one of the moving forces in building the Empire; desire for slaves, plunder, and land. In view of this acquisitive motive and of the terrible cost in human suffering that had attended the progress of the Roman eagles we might, with a modern critic, Burton Rascoe, impute hypocrisy to the poet and call him the publicity agent for a plunderbund. That would be unfair. It would involve judging the ancient world by moral standards that are only imperfectly accepted today. Even Polybius, writing in the brutal days of Republican imperialism, a century and a half before Virgil, could say that the Roman Empire was "the best thing that Fortune ever did for the world." Once the vast domain conquered by the Republic had been provided with decent government during the first two centuries of the Empire, conditions rapidly improved. For a time it looked as if Virgil's noble conception of Rome's mission might be realized.

The civil service organized by Augustus and perfected by his successors probably was not again equalled until the development of the German civil service in the eighteenth century. Indeed, it became so devastatingly efficient that it finally superseded

even local governments and helped to destroy the sense of social responsibility of the natural leaders. How carefully the Imperial government looked after details of administration is shown by official correspondence of the second century between the Emperor Trajan and Pliny the younger, Governor of the Asiatic province of Bithynia. Thus Pliny, who was a good deal of a fuss-budget, reports that the citizens of Nicæa have started to rebuild on a larger scale the gymnasium that had burned some time before. But he fears the money they have voted for the project will be wasted, because it is badly planned and rambling. Also the architect is complaining that the walls, erected under the supervision of a rival, are not strong enough to support the superstructure.

The answer shows some impatience on the part of the Emperor. The Governor, he says, is on the spot and ought to know what should be done. "Those fool Greeks have a foible for gymnasia, so perhaps the citizens of Nicæa have been too ambitious in their plans. They must be contented with a building that will be adequate for their needs."

Again Pliny writes that the water system of Nicomedia is in a mess. Large sums have been spent on two aqueducts, and neither is completed. He thinks the second might be extended and put into use. Trajan replies that he may use his own judgment, as the city must have water. But he suggests

an inquiry to learn whether the money had not been squandered by collusion with contractors.

The foundation of the transportation system that bound the Empire together was a vast network of highways, the famous Roman roads. Sixteen roads converged in ancient Rome, of which seven came from the Alps or the sea. Their focal point was the Golden Milestone set up by Augustus in the Forum. This was a column sheathed in gilded bronze upon which were engraved the names of the chief cities of the Roman world and their distances from the capital. At its height the Empire was gridironed by forty to fifty thousand miles of highway, of which thirteen thousand miles were in France and five thousand miles in Britain.

It was possible to travel over these roads across Europe, northern Africa, and Asia Minor at the rate of fifty miles a day. At the beginning of the last century it took an American traveller six days of hard driving by stage to go from Boston to New York. The principal streams had to be crossed by ferry. A Roman traveller could have made the same distance in greater comfort in five days, crossing the rivers on massive stone bridges. Under military necessity Cæsar once journeyed seven hundred odd miles in eight days, ninety miles a day from Rome to Geneva in a hired carriage, and we have the record of an Imperial messenger who covered three hundred and

thirty-six miles in Spain in thirty-six hours. The journey between London and Rome took as long at the beginning of the nineteenth century as at the beginning of the first. In 1834 Sir Robert Peel was unexpectedly summoned from Rome to London to form a cabinet. He was a month on the way. In 54 B.C. Cæsar sent a letter from Britain to Cicero in Rome. Cicero wrote his friend Atticus that the letter was sent September 25 and that it arrived October 24. Nearly nineteen hundred years later Peel was able to make no better time.

The great network of roads was of immense value for commerce. But primarily it was a military system over which troops could speedily be transferred from one part of the Empire to another for the protection of the frontiers. Also it enabled the central government to keep in close touch with provincial administration. The Imperial posts went through by pony express in time that was not equalled again until the advent of railroads. Private correspondence was facilitated, although for such correspondence messengers were used from staffs privately employed. Professor Breasted describes letters found in Egypt written by a young Egyptian recruit stationed on a northern frontier to his father and sister in a little village on the Nile. People were able to travel freely throughout the Empire, and great travellers the Romans were. There was no modern fanaticism of race, colour, or language to make travelling disagreeable.

In the north of England has been found a tombstone commemorating a native of Palmyra in an oasis of the Syrian desert. He had migrated to Britain, had married a British woman, and had died in that distant land, still a Roman.

Shipping was developed for freight and passenger traffic. A city of a million population like Rome requires a well-organized food-supply. Grain-ships plied regularly between its port, Ostia, and the wheat centres in Sardinia, Sicily, Spain, Africa, and Egypt. Along the Tiber at the foot of the Aventine were large grain elevators and warehouses in which were stored the commodities brought up the river from Ostia. Merchantmen used sails. War galleys depended primarily on oars, with sails for auxiliary power. The Vatican obelisk was brought from Egypt in a specially constructed ship of 3,200 tons displacement. It could have carried 500,000 bushels of wheat. The average Roman ship was perhaps 200 feet long and 50 wide, with a carrying capacity of 250 tons. St. Paul's ship carried 276 persons as well as a cargo of grain. We hear of one ship that could carry 600 passengers. Commerce was so well organized that when a vessel reached Puteoli, an important port near Naples, the news was semaphored to Rome.

Early in the reign of Augustus there were 120 merchantmen in the trade with India. In favourable weather a Roman merchant could send a letter to his

agent in Alexandria, the Liverpool of the Mediterranean, in ten days. A traveller could leave the fine docks of Ostia and land in Spain within a week. Parties of wealthy Romans used to take the Mediterranean cruise or go up the Nile. In the older lands to the east, Greek was the polite language and the language of commerce, much as French is today. In the newer lands of the west, corresponding to America, Latin was generally spoken.

While there were no public elementary or secondary schools, the private schools in the early grades were cheap, and pretty much everybody learned the three R's. The poorer children then dropped out to find work if possible. But the boys of well-to-do families went on, although the curriculum was narrow. It was the thing for the sons of wealthy families to go to college at Athens. A Roman could send a draft to his son for university expenses, and the boy might be spending the money within a week. Bad weather, slowing down transportation, might lengthen the time to a month. The story of Cicero's son, Marcus, should appeal to many American parents with children of college age. The boy wanted to enter the army, but his father insisted that he go to Athens to finish his education, and provided him an allowance of four thousand dollars a year. Athens was no place for a poor lad. Away from home restraints, Marcus indulged his tastes. He was proud

to be known as the hardest drinker in the city. Instead of attending lectures, he was always going to entertainments and dinners. Cicero undoubtedly was distressed when he learned what his son was up to. Perhaps he remonstrated, as may be inferred from a letter that has been preserved, from Marcus to Tiro, his father's confidential secretary. The boy writes that he is terribly sorry for the way he has been wasting his time, and he assures Tiro he has begun to lead a better life. He is always inviting one of his professors to dinner and they sit up late discussing problems of philosophy. He has cut all his old friends and he associates only with members of the faculty. Finally he admonishes Tiro: "Take care of yourself so we may be able to talk science and philosophy together when I get home." It is a safe guess that Marcus expected the letter to be shown to his father to prepare the way for the suggestion that a larger allowance would be appropriate for such a studious young man.

Rome was pre-eminently an agricultural state. Fortunes were made by shrewd speculators in provincial real estate, by public contracting companies, and by money-lenders. But with the advent of Augustus, "this thrifty, respectable, long-headed and long-lived representative of the Italian middle class," as H. A. L. Fisher calls him, commercial pursuits became more respectable, although it was never really fashionable

to be "in trade." In the two centuries of peace, industry developed to the verge of mass production. Here, however, we must bear in mind the "peculiar institution" already mentioned. Slavery deeply affected the Roman world and differentiated it from the world today. Italian industry, like much of Italian agriculture, was based on slave labour. Later we shall consider some of the disastrous consequences of this social system.

Although Horace refers to "the smoke, wealth, and noise of prosperous Rome," the capital, like Washington, never became a great manufacturing centre. Household goods were made, including lamps and luxury furniture. There was a considerable production of lead pipe, and we read of an establishment in which paper was manufactured from Egyptian papyrus. Brick-making was the chief industry. It underwent a large expansion to supply materials for the rebuilding of Rome after the great fire of Nero's reign. But factories sprang up in many bustling Italian towns. Terracotta lamps made by Fortis, in northern Italy, with the name stamped on them, have been found all over Europe and even in Britain. We may still see them in museums. There was large-scale production of pottery, metalware, glass, and paper. A mixing-tank of ten thousand gallons' capacity was used in the pottery works at Arretium, the modern Arezzo. Arretine red glazed tableware was used ex-

tensively in the Empire. The Cornelius factory employed forty designers. When the technique of glass-blowing was discovered, prices fell so that a glass cup and saucer could be bought for a cent, and window glass became available.

Puteoli captured a large share of the world's iron trade. Ore from Elba was brought there and smelted with wood from the neighbouring forests into what a writer of the time calls "a spongy mass," and then worked into agricultural implements, weapons, and knives. For a significant reason, of which I shall speak later, the process of making cast iron was not discovered until the fourth century, and so mass production did not develop. A factory system for the manufacture of copper and bronze utensils, however, was built up and the exports went as far north as Scotland and Sweden. There was a thriving trade with the East as far as China. "Every peasant's wife of the country beyond the Po," the elder Pliny says, "wears amber trinkets, and every servant girl has a silver mirror."

At the same time large-scale farm production of wine and oil contributed to the export trade. In the neighbourhood of Pompeii excavations have revealed the remains of wine- and oil-presses, store-houses, and forwarding departments, with dormitories for the slaves. In the Po Valley Pliny says wine was made in vats "bigger than houses." Italian wine-

containers have been found in the Danubian countries, in Roman Germany and Britain, as well as in France, Spain, and North Africa.

There were no newspapers, but Cæsar had introduced shorthand stenographers in the Senate and a *Congressional Record* was published in the *Acta Diurna*, the *Daily Record*, issued by the government. It was posted in the Forum and a corps of copyists made a fair living by reproducing it, or excerpts from it, and sending copies to out-of-town subscribers who wanted to keep in touch with the news and gossip of the capital. From incidental references to the *Daily Record* it is inferred that it contained lists of births and deaths, a statement of treasury receipts from the provinces, information about the grain-supply, edicts of magistrates, wills of prominent men, reports of trials, news of the Imperial court, and election returns. Apparently, too, divorces and scandals in high society were reported. In short, the *Daily Record* was the forerunner of the modern newspaper.

Books were plentiful. Every wealthy gentleman had his library and there were twenty-eight public libraries in Rome in the fourth century. Provincial cities also had their libraries, often the gifts of Roman Andrew Carnegies. Authors were out of luck; there were no copyright laws. Publishers maintained staffs of slaves who copied manuscripts from dictation. Occasionally a publisher would buy a manu-

script from an author, but there always was danger of competition from pirated editions cheaply got out and poorly copied. There were bookshops near the Forum in "Booksellers' Row," and the names and prices of books were inscribed on pillars at the doors. The equivalent to a modern book of thirty pages might be issued for twenty cents. School books usually cost less than a dollar.

The law in Rome was an honourable and profitable profession. In the earlier days a law was enacted prohibiting the payment of fees to lawyers. Theoretically the lawyer was at the service of all who applied to him. It was an aristocratic law, like the old English provision against paying members of the House of Commons. Only the rich could afford to practise, just as only men with resources could serve in the Commons. Gradually the law became a dead letter, and by the time of the early Empire, lawyers were authorized to accept fees not in excess of five hundred dollars. Clients recognized that they received better service if their lawyers were rewarded. Various means were found through gifts or legacies to get around the statute. When Cicero bought his expensive house on the Palatine, he borrowed from clients. One lent him a hundred thousand dollars, and when Cicero was attacked in the Senate for taking the money, he laughed it off. He estimated his legacies

at more than a million dollars, a large share from clients.

But the supply of lawyers was, as always, greatly in excess of the demand. The run-of-the-mine attorney could barely make a living. "Put in one scale," Juvenal wrote, "the estates of one hundred lawyers, and you may balance it in the other with the single fortune of a racing magnate."

While lawyers had excellent social standing — indeed, the law was a common stepping-stone to high public office in Rome as it is today in America — the doctors, along with architects and even engineers, were regarded as socially inferior. The stigma came from the fact that so many of the medical practitioners were Greek slaves. Rich men often kept their own physicians. Anyone might practise, and quacks abounded. But medical science had made progress and specialists began to appear. Medicine and surgery rarely were practised by the same man. There were oculists and dentists. Teeth bound together with gold have been found in Italian tombs, and one of the Roman satirists makes fun of a lady whose false teeth were prominent.

Physicians and surgeons of high reputation commanded good fees in the Imperial period. One of the emperors paid his personal physician twenty-five thousand dollars a year. Two medical partners left a

joint estate of a million dollars. In the reign of Nero a famous surgeon was called from Marseilles to perform an operation in Italy. He received a fee, including his travelling expenses, of ten thousand dollars.

Wealthy Romans lived in houses in many respects as comfortable as those in America of the last century. These houses had bathrooms with hot and cold water, libraries, dining- and drawing-rooms. There is a delightful letter from the younger Pliny describing his seaside villa with its windows commanding views of sea and mountains, its swimming-pool and tennis courts. The larger houses, especially in the colder climates of Gaul and Britain, had central heating. Hot-air systems were used. In most of them the heated air was carried under the floors to hollow tiles in the walls from which the heat was radiated. In some, however, with charcoal-burning furnaces, the hot gases were admitted through registers from the wall flues.

Even after the decay of Rome and Italy the same sort of pleasant living survived in France to the end of the fifth century. "It was as though," says an English archæologist, Stanley Casson, "England had been overrun and almost destroyed while British culture still survived in Australia." We have descriptions of this life in the letters of a Gallo-Roman country gentleman, who later became a bishop. Sidonius had a villa in the lovely hill country of southern France

near Clermont. He describes it with its library, its dining-room equipped with an open fireplace, its baths, its hunting and dinner parties. But already the barbarians had broken through and Sidonius was uneasy. However, he could not believe his civilization was doomed. "Providence," he wrote a friend, "I doubt not will grant a happy issue to our prayers and under new blessings of peace we shall look back upon these terrors as mere memories."

Providence failed him. Within a few years after his death the handsome villas had been burned, the cities were shrinking and drying up, and the sort of life he knew had vanished from Europe. It took thirteen hundred years for the world to build back to the level of comfort in which Sidonius lived in his villa in the French hills.



## CHAPTER III

### A TOUR OF ORIENTATION

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#### Important Dates in the Tour

1000 B.C. — Shepherds' settlement on the Tiber.

753 B.C. — Traditional date of founding of Rome.

509 B.C. — Republic established with overthrow of monarchy.

509–265 B.C. — Unification of Italy.

264–133 B.C. — Period of rapid territorial expansion.

133–31 B.C. — Revolutionary era, culminating in civil war, ending in battle of Actium and disappearance of the Republic.

31 B.C.–A.D. 235 — Empire established, with Roman peace; Golden Age.

235–284 — Military anarchy.

284–476 — Totalitarian state and end of Western Empire.

## A TOUR OF ORIENTATION

ON a visit to Athens we were called upon by a learned guide with a large supply of dictionary English. "Before I conduct you to the Acropolis and other places of historical interest," he said, "we must first undertake a tour of orientation to acquire a general conception of the city." His plan quite justified itself in practice. In the next few pages we shall make a brief tour of orientation of Roman history. Such a tour should provide a framework for the events we are about to consider and clear up some of the confusion in which they often seem enveloped.

There is no more concise and vivid summary of the Roman achievement than was given in a public address a few years ago by a prime minister of England. "Only a few short years after the fall of Troy," Stanley Baldwin said, "there was but a settlement of shepherds on the Palatine hill. Yet within a thousand years the tramp of the Roman sentinel was heard along the Wall; his watchfires illuminated the waters of the Euphrates; the hand of Rome reached from the Biscay to the Euxine, from the Danube to the Nile."

Speaking to the British Classical Association, he did not need to remind his hearers that Troy fell a little less than twelve hundred years before Christ; that by 1000 B.C. a few Latin shepherds had settled on a low hill some fifteen miles above the mouth of the Tiber; that within the next two centuries they had begun to spread out; that they had consolidated their

## THE NEW DEAL IN OLD ROME

rule over Italy and then had entered upon an era of spectacular expansion that took the Roman sentinel to Hadrian's Wall in the northwest, across Europe and beyond the Black Sea to the rivers of Asia, along the coast of North Africa, and northwest from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay.

This was the achievement: It was followed by centuries of disintegration. The driving energy that had built the Empire finally failed. The barbarians filtered into its lands and gradually civilization died out of Europe. Any lessons for modern times must be drawn from a consideration of both the achievement and the decline.

Roughly, the history of Rome which we are to survey covers a period of a thousand years, divided sharply in the middle shortly before the birth of Christ. For the first five hundred years the city-state thought of itself as a republic governed by a council of Elder Statesmen, the Senate, in conjunction with assemblies of all citizens and with elective magistrates. For the last five hundred the government hardened into an autocracy, "despotism tempered by assassination." The Republic finally disappeared shortly after the murder of Julius Cæsar; the Empire began with the accession of Augustus.

It may help us get our bearings to note the periods to which some of the most familiar Roman names be-

long. Most of them are grouped in the last century of the Republic and the first century of the Empire. To the Republican century belong the brothers Gracchus, social reformers; Catiline, the famous conspirator; Cicero, lawyer, statesman, practical philosopher, "Rome's least mortal mind," Byron calls him; Lucretius, Voltairian poet; Catullus, the young John Keats who fell for "the burning eyes of Clodia," the Lesbia of his poems; Julius Cæsar, the universal genius. With the Empire came Virgil to celebrate the eternal mission of Rome; Horace, the gifted writer of light verse; Livy, the nostalgic historian of the Republic; Seneca, multimillionaire moral essayist whose practice, observes an acid Greek chronicler, Dio Cassius, unhappily fell considerably below his preaching; Tacitus, grand, gloomy, and cynical historical writer; Juvenal and Martial, who satirized the smart set; and a century later the lonely figure of Marcus Aurelius, who wrote in Greek his meditations by the light of the campfires of his military campaigns.

There are important differences in life and temper between Republic and Empire. The Republic was characterized by self-reliance and rugged individualism. Under the paternalism of the Empire Rome swung to the opposite extreme and became, in the words of Tenney Frank, a nation of "coupon-cutters." "Coupon-cutting on a large scale," he adds, "does not make for national morale." In a famous passage

Gilbert Murray speaks of the growth in the later Imperial period of mysticism and pessimism. There was, he says, "a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life, and of faith in normal human effort . . . an indifference to the welfare of the state . . . a failure of nerve." Nerve and the failure of nerve! These two phrases characterize Rome in its periods of achievement and decline. Characterize, but do not explain. We have still to explore the causes behind these descriptive phrases.

Each of these two long eras has its own subdivisions. The little shepherds' settlement near the mouth of the Tiber had become a thriving market town. For the first two hundred and fifty years after it had overthrown its early kings it was busy with the unification of Italy. It achieved this task, as later it rounded out its vast empire, with no set purpose, but haphazard, as conditions arose that seemed almost to force it to extend its frontiers. In the get-rich-quick era of rapid territorial expansion that followed, lasting nearly a century and a half, social bitterness and governmental incompetence developed to a point where they threatened to destroy the state. This led to nearly a hundred years of civil war and the revolution in which the decaying Republic collapsed before a series of military dictators. Their successor, Augustus, founded the Empire and inaugurated the Golden Age of two centuries of the Roman peace. The death

## A TOUR OF ORIENTATION

of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 180 — or, more exactly, the beginning of the military anarchy a half-century later — marks the division between the Imperial splendour and the final long decay.

As the Roman settlement emerges into the light of history, its people show substantial qualities rather than brilliance. They are simple farmers, rude and unlettered. Certain traits stand out. They have a fierce energy controlled by common sense. They submit readily to discipline. This discipline, combined with courage and persistence, makes them successful soldiers. The stern old New England virtues of the Puritan fathers characterize the early Romans. They have seriousness, self-restraint, industry, perseverance. As they develop they are distinguished by a hard-headed practicality, immense organizing ability, and a sense of justice.

As we are concerned primarily with the intervention of government in the economic life of the people, it is interesting to observe for a moment the practicality of the Romans in contrast with the more theoretical qualities of their brilliant neighbours the Greeks. In their attitude we are reminded of the attitude of the French toward the Germans and the Germans toward the French between the last two great World Wars. With their devotion to things of the spirit, the French looked with dread toward the powerful mechanical civilization to the northeast.

They feared this great juggernaut might some day roll down over them, crushing out all that made life worth while. The Germans, for their part, admired French culture and esprit, but deplored what they regarded as the French lack of order and precision, and deficiency in organizing ability. It will not do to press the analogy too far. We recall German music and French thrift and practicality. But the parallel illumines some aspects of the ancient world.

The Greeks were a highly endowed people. Driven by endless curiosity, they produced a philosophy, literature, and art to which the modern world is profoundly indebted. They failed in the field of political organization, administration, and law. The Greeks always were involved in bitter squabbles between communities. As someone has said, they seemed to be children in a world of action. They regarded the Romans as boors. In turn, the Romans looked down on the Greeks as clever, but slick and unsubstantial. Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* makes a discriminating analysis of the two peoples. In learning and all branches of literature, he says, the Greeks are superior. But the Romans excel, he thinks, in morality, in dignified family life, in law, in government, and in the art of war.

Rome constantly borrowed from Athens and adapted Greek culture to its own ends. Such obligation was felt to the older civilization that in the sec-

ond century before Christ, in an outburst of what has been called "sentimental politics," Rome went to the rescue of the Greek cities from an oppressor. It was a crusade in something of the same sentimental spirit in which the United States intervened in Cuba in 1898. At the end of the war, to the astonished delight of the Greeks, the Roman army withdrew, as the United States withdrew from Cuba, although later Rome was forced to return.

The extreme practicality of the Romans proved a handicap to their higher development. Their lack of inventiveness stood in the way of progress. A people that despised pure mathematics could not reap the practical results of the extension of mathematical theory.

At the same time, in their human and political relations, this same practicality helped them organize the world in a way that was essential for preserving the work of the Greek genius for modern times. Common sense, directed by experience, guided them in their liberal treatment of the Latin communities that early came under their control. The conquered cities were allowed local self-government. The loyalty thus created proved the salvation of Rome in the ordeal of the great war in which Hannibal, the brilliant commander of Rome's chief rival, Carthage, threatened the conquest of Italy.

Another shining example of Roman practicality was

the development of law. By the middle of the third century before Christ, traders were putting in at Roman ports. Friction arose from the lack of understanding by foreign merchants of the Roman law of contracts. So Rome set up a special court for foreigners in which the practices of other nations were recognized. For the first time the Roman Republic realized that its procedure failed to take into account some of the wider interests of commerce. This was a jolt to local complacency. But under its stimulus the Roman courts directed their efforts to searching out general rules of equity on which decisions might be based. They became convinced that there was a "natural law" whose principles might everywhere be applied.

It was not until two centuries later that Cicero formulated the Roman practice in words that have had a far-reaching influence upon European history. "True law," he wrote, "is right reason consonant with nature, world-wide in scope, unchanging and everlasting. . . . We may not oppose or alter that law, we cannot abolish it, we cannot be freed from its obligations by any legislature, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder of it. This law does not differ for Rome and for Athens, for the present and for the future, but one eternal and unchanging law will be valid for all nations and all times. . . . He who disobeys it denies himself and his own nature."

Here was laid down the principle of natural rights, so familiar in the eighteenth century, to which Jefferson appealed in the Declaration of Independence. In practice, the principle has proved its value through all the long struggle for human freedom. This paragraph from Cicero, Professor Frank says, "has wrought greater progress in jurisprudence for nearly two thousand years than any other statement of the same length." Without the Roman law the Roman Empire could not have carried on.

The unification of Italian life and culture had not been completed when Rome stumbled into war with Carthage, the first of a series of wars which were destined to give it control of the whole Mediterranean basin. In the span of one lifetime in the second century before Christ was wrought one of the miracles of history, the conquest of the larger part of the known world by the vast energy of the Italian farmers.

The repercussions upon Rome were tremendous and unexpected. According to the custom of the time, war captives were sold as slaves. Plunder from the conquered provinces, including hundreds of thousands of slaves, poured into Italy. With exploited wealth, the stream swelled to a torrent. The power of the landed aristocracy was challenged by the new rich, the mercantile and money-lending plutocracy. As always in the break-up of a social system, there

was great hardship and suffering. Elective office acquired a high commercial value. Government became an instrument for private gain. Unscrupulous men now had the money to buy elections from the masses of unemployed who thronged the capital. Upon a city-state controlled by corruption fell the crushing burden of governing the world — a burden which it was wholly unprepared to carry.

At a time when Rome seemed likely to collapse from internal dissensions, from the struggle between the oligarchy of the rich and the masses of the wretchedly poor, including slaves, it was again menaced by formidable external wars. From these it was saved by a succession of great commanders. Their brilliant successes proved fatal to the Republic. The old citizen armies with which Rome had won the World War against Carthage no longer were available. The generals were obliged to raise and train their own armies. The soldiers' loyalty was no longer to the civil government. It was to the commander who was able to reward them with bonus payments and land grants, which the Senate for various reasons failed to offer.

As the Republic passed into the shadows, Rome was governed by generals whose ambitions led to destructive civil wars from which the proverbial strong man came to the front in Julius Cæsar, the forerunner of Augustus and the Empire.

Thus after five hundred years the great experiment

in self-government failed. It failed because of the incapacity of the people to deal with new and complex problems of politics, economics, and national defence, just as the liberal experiment failed in large sections of Europe in the twentieth century under the impact of the problems left by the first World War. It was succeeded by a military autocracy veiled under republican forms, just as the democratic governments of Italy and Germany were succeeded by military dictatorships in which democratic forms were preserved after their life had departed.

To the Roman world, however, an enlightened autocracy brought the two hundred years of the Roman peace. A relatively complex agricultural-commercial society had now developed, with a degree of industrialization. This society was based on slave labour. We begin to recognize typically modern problems. The unemployment which had followed the wars of the Republic was now regarded as chronic, to be dealt with on a permanent basis. In the last half-century of the Republic and the first half-century of the Empire we find boom years succeeded by years of depression culminating in panics, which called for government intervention. The problem of parity prices for agriculture developed. Italian agriculture and industry were faced with severe competition from new lands and the growing industrialization of the provinces.

Then came the closing scene. The Roman peace

was succeeded by a half-century of military anarchy in which business was disrupted and wealth redistributed. To meet the demands of the soldiers and of the growing bureaucracy, the government resorted to repeated devaluation of the currency, accompanied by increasing taxation. The energetic middle class was hard hit and the poor were further impoverished. Finally there was complete regimentation in a totalitarian state. The heart had gone out of the people, and the Empire crumbled.

Each of the periods just outlined is strikingly different from the one preceding in political, social, and economic aspects. While we are to be chiefly concerned with the economic, there were many other forces in Roman history. No narrowly economic interpretation is adequate. Among the factors affecting the Republic and the Empire were the problems of overrapid territorial expansion with the failure to subordinate the military to the civil authorities; political inexperience in facing new and difficult conditions; the clash of personal ambitions; the influx of a large slave population, an uprooted population, as the French say, and so a population without character; the destructiveness of wars and great plagues; the "roaring chaos" of the barbarian world beyond the frontiers. All these affected the destiny of Rome. But there is one thread that runs through the entire thousand years and helps explain the course of events.

From the early days of the Republic down through the fatal third century and beyond, there is a persistent struggle that bursts out, is suppressed, and again bursts out. It is the struggle between the Haves and the Have-nots. The fortunate classes were corrupted by wealth that largely was unearned. The less fortunate were corrupted by their poverty, which Rome never was able to cure. This situation played a large part in the conquest of culture by the ignorance of the submerged masses, including the barbarians who long had been drifting in and finally came in waves. "At first," Professor Lot writes, "the barbarians had become Romanized, but at the end the Romans became barbarized."



## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY NEW DEAL EXPERIMENTS

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THE TOUR of orientation of Roman history that we have just made prepares us for a fuller consideration of those instances of government intervention in social and economic affairs which became such a conspicuous development of the New Deal in America. In the first epoch of which I spoke, from the beginning of the Republic through the two and a half centuries required for the unification of Italy under the leadership of Rome, the chief recorded domestic issues have to do with the efforts of the mass of the people to gain a larger share in a government which had been monopolized by the aristocracy. But it is perfectly evident that a desire to right economic injustices was at the bottom of Roman politics throughout this period of comparatively simple country life. This was the

beginning of that long conflict, to which I have referred, between the rich and the poor. Writing of the early period of the Republic, Livy speaks of a year when there was a "short interval of peace." The reader can almost hear the sigh with which he ends: "But as usual it was marred by the struggle between the aristocrats and the common people."

Driving past the Capitoline we may see a pair of wolves in a den carved in the base of the hill. They are kept there in memory of the legend of the founding of the city in 753 B.C. by the twins Romulus and Remus — or, rather, by Romulus. All Remus had to do with it was to get killed. Most of us have a dim remembrance of the famous story: how the twin babies in line for the Latin throne were exposed beside the Tiber by order of their usurping wicked great-uncle; and how they were suckled by a she-wolf that heard their cries. The early history of Rome abounds in legends, some of them preserved to our advantage by Macaulay in his stirring *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Livy, who wrote many centuries after the events, is our best source.

His point of view is significant of his age. In his very modern preface he speaks of the importance of recording the annals of "the foremost world power." Writing at the end of a terrible century of disorder, when Rome seemed to have lost its earlier virtues, he thinks it essential to recall the great days of old. The

dawn of Roman history, he admits, can be seen only through a mist. The primitive traditions might seem better fitted for poetry than for historic records. He does not pretend, he says, to distinguish the authentic from the fanciful. That task he frankly leaves to the reader. But the old standards are slipping away. The future seems dark with heavy problems. "We can bear," he writes, "neither our diseases nor their remedies," since luxury has brought "avarice and self-indulgence." Therefore he desires to stress the ancient qualities upon which Rome was built. We, as well as his contemporaries, are indebted to his moralistic industry.

Fascinating as this legendary period is, we must pass it over to begin with the independent farm-market town that threw off the domination of foreign kings in 509 B.C., with an enduring hatred of monarchy and devotion to the self-government of the Republic. Thus originated the great republican tradition that had immense influence upon the history of Europe down to the fanatical republicans of the French Revolution and beyond. Only a few years ago there was an old French teacher at Toulouse who always removed his black skull-cap when he reverentially mentioned "*la Republique*." The early Romans would have appreciated his gesture. The sturdy farmers of the city on the Tiber gradually expanded into adjoining communities by conquest. For their

time they showed amazing moderation and a real instinct for statesmanship in devising leagues founded finally on voluntary co-operation rather than force. The same instinct for wise moderation was shown in domestic difficulties. Even bitter disputes were settled without violence for a period more than twice that covered by the life of the American Republic. Modern history affords no parallel to this record of nearly four hundred years. In self-discipline, reasonableness, readiness to compromise, the early Romans set an example for all time. These were the qualities, as was suggested earlier, through which Rome survived while the more brilliant Greek civilization, for lack of them, disintegrated. They were finally swamped, as Livy believed, by the growth of luxury and selfishness. This phase of Roman history carries uneasy implications for modern America.

To understand the development of the social and economic problems that led the Romans to their early New Deal experiments we must glance at their form of government. Like the British, they were a practical people, and their Constitution, like the British, was gradually hammered out of hard experience to meet changing conditions. The Romans, Polybius wrote, did not achieve their Constitution by mere thinking, but after many struggles and difficulties they chose what seemed the best course in the light of actual experience with misfortune. The system they evolved

was marred by contradictions and absurdities that would have outraged a logical mind. One assembly of the people was set up beside another with overlapping functions. The relation of the upper to the lower house was vague, if we may call a town meeting a lower house. There was nothing tidy about the government. But the early Romans, in the philosopher's phrase, were "politically minded animals." The conservatives were not reactionaries, the liberals were not fanatics. So the system worked.

When the Republic emerged five hundred years before Christ, Roman society already was divided into two classes, aristocrats and commons. The old landed families of warriors were the patricians, the aristocrats. With them dwelt the more numerous humble folk, the plebs, the commons. These were largely composed of war captives and aliens who had settled in Rome: traders, manufacturers, workmen. Only gradually were the commons admitted to citizenship.

Certain procedures of the earlier monarchy were carried over into the Republic and strongly influenced the political institutions of the new regime. The Roman kings were not hereditary monarchs like those of the Orient. Tradition represents them as elected by the popular Assembly. Modern research indicates that tradition was wrong. The king was a military chieftain, ruling through his command of the army. He may have designated his successor — as was done

by the Roman emperors — in consultation with his council of elder statesmen, the Senate, made up from the aristocracy. The choice probably was ratified by the Assembly, which was identical with the army. The last King, Tarquin the Proud, seized power by murdering his predecessor, and governed as a tyrant. His rule was magnificent, as is often the case with the rule of tyrants. But his oppression led to the revolution of 509 B.C., and left the legacy of bitterness to which I have just referred.

The aristocratic Republic which replaced the monarchy was administered by two consuls of equal authority, chosen annually by the Assembly. Thus one could act as a check on the other and their short term was expected to curb the ambition of either magistrate to build himself into a king. The Senate was retained as a council of state. Final control in enacting laws and electing magistrates rested with the Assembly. The Assembly also was made the court of last resort in criminal cases. No power but the people had the right to pronounce the death sentence on a Roman citizen.

Two assemblies eventually developed, but for practical purposes we need not distinguish between them. Here the big landowning nobles put something over on their fellow citizens. They were outnumbered by the commons ten to one. But it was arranged that the voting in the Assembly be done by groups, a majority

of the groups controlling. By an ingenious gerrymander a minority of the groups were heavily packed with commons, while the nobles were scattered sparsely through the majority, and thus usually were able to dominate the decisions of the Assembly. A somewhat similar system exists in the United States Senate today, where a population of 100,000 in Nevada has the same representation as a population of 13,000,000 in New York.

For other very human reasons the senatorial machine became the dominant factor in the government of the Republic. The senators were ex-magistrates, mostly from the landed aristocracy. They had a life term. So the Senate was a body of competent experts and experienced administrators, bound together by a common economic interest. It met often and, with its membership of some three hundred, was a small enough body to permit free debate. The Assembly was summoned infrequently by a magistrate who dominated its proceedings. It used to be complained that "Czar" Reed and later "Uncle Joe" Cannon controlled the House of Representatives. But in their heyday they had nothing like the power of the magistrate who presided over the Assembly. It could consider only what he brought to its attention. This body was simply a mass meeting of citizens to which bills were presented, customarily after they had been approved by the Senate. Then it broke up into

## EARLY NEW DEAL EXPERIMENTS

groups for voting. A house with many thousand members cannot be a deliberative body. Most of the members of the Roman Assembly could not hear what was under consideration. They were lucky if they knew what they were voting on.

It may be recalled that the Republican national convention of 1920 was controlled by a little group of half a dozen senators who were referred to as "the elder statesmen." Perhaps a dozen Republican governors were at the convention. They had no influence. A newspaper correspondent spoke of this contrast to a governor. "How can we governors act effectively?" was the reply. "We don't even know each other by sight. These senators have been working together for years. They call each other by their first names."

The same sort of advantage rested with the Roman Senate. It was a continuing body, while the magistrates held office only for a year. The Senate chose the generals, conducted wars, made peace treaties, decided on alliances, and thus became the arbiter of foreign policy. Most of the time for several centuries it did an excellent job. Naturally, however, the senators looked upon public questions from the standpoint of their own class and its social and economic interests. This attitude led to the clashes that were frequent in the history of the Republic. The voting was done in Rome. It was possible for an energetic popu-

lar leader to line up the Assembly against the Senate, especially if he could stir up the farmers to go to the city to vote. At such times the senators were often able to play for delay by inducing one of the state officials with veto power to annul the Assembly's action. But if the people were really aroused they could finally have their way and the Senate would yield, sometimes to return later to the attack.

Social and political rights were of slow growth. In the early days intermarriage between aristocrats and the commons was forbidden. The snobbery was carried into the field of religion. It was the aristocratic theory that the gods would deal only with aristocrats in matters affecting the state. When the common people finally won their fight to be admitted to the official church board of augurs, as they won their right to marry outside their class, Livy reports great indignation among the nobles. Not that they minded, he says, but they feared the gods would mind, and they only hoped and prayed no disaster would befall the Republic. Roman high society was taking itself pretty seriously.

Economic difficulties, however, were more important than the social and religious disputes that resulted from class distinctions. In this period the difficulties centred on debts, interest, and the Roman equivalent to the growth of big business — the absorption of small farms into large estates. In all these

matters it was possible for government to intervene, and the common people believed, with reason, that they would not get a square deal until they had representation in the high offices of state. The question of debt had been especially pressing from the early years of the Republic. Small farmers in a year of crop failure might have to borrow from their richer neighbours. Wars were frequent, and when a farmer was called to military service he often had to get a loan to maintain his family in his absence. When he returned he had to have help to put his farm in shape after it had grown up to weeds, to replenish his stock, and to buy new farm implements. There were so many interruptions by military campaigns and production at best was so small that a farmer once in debt had little chance of getting out. The creditors who controlled the government saw to it that the laws concerning debts were extremely harsh. A debtor might be imprisoned, enslaved to his creditor, or sold "beyond the Tiber" into slavery.

A vivid illustration of what was happening is given in a story of the period told by Livy. A dishevelled old man suddenly appeared in the Forum. He was recognized as a former military officer, distinguished for valour. To a crowd that gathered he explained that while serving in war not only had he lost the produce of his land through depredations of the enemy, but his farmhouse had been burned, his prop-

erty plundered, his cattle driven away. On this ruined soldier-farmer a war tax had then been imposed and he had gone heavily into debt. The debt had been vastly increased through extortionate interest charges and he had lost his father's and grandfather's farms and had been enslaved by his creditor.

To dramatize the struggle that developed between rich and poor we may introduce the original Roman standpatter and economic royalist, Gaius Marcius, later given the additional name of Coriolanus, which furnished the title of Shakespeare's play. Here we follow the story told by Plutarch to show Roman feeling in a period of class conflict early in the fifth century B.C. The common people, Plutarch says, were complaining of inhuman treatment by money-lenders. An invasion was just then threatened by one of Rome's enemies. The commons refused to join the army and began to hold pacifist meetings. Alarmed over the prospects, some of the moderate aristocrats urged the Senate to make concessions and "mitigate the extreme rigour of the law" against debtors. Such weakness was denounced by Gaius Marcius. Money, he said, had nothing to do with the case. It was a matter of principle; of law and order. If there were any yielding the common people would be encouraged to open revolt against the law. How familiar it all sounds!

At this the people staged a general strike. They

marched out of town to emphasize their refusal to do military service. There was no violence, but Plutarch reports they were heard to say that anywhere in Italy they could find air and water and a place of burial, which was all they could expect in Rome, "unless it were, perhaps, the privilege of being wounded and killed in war for the defence of their creditors." This attitude would never do. So the aristocrats overrode their die-hard leader and compromised by allowing the people to elect tribunes, magistrates who had the right to intervene in any proceeding against a commoner. Later the tribunes so developed their power that they became possible instruments of revolutionary movements.

While Plutarch's story is not authentic history, it provides a human setting for certain events of the period, especially for the peaceful general strike by which the commons won their right to be represented among the magistrates. On other occasions the people forced concessions by a resort to the same bloodless weapon of the general strike.

Now that the commons had obtained protection through the tribunes against arbitrary action by officials from the upper class, they began agitating for further reform. The lives and activities of Roman citizens were subject to what might be called the common law, an unwritten mass of customs, as well as judicial decisions. The commons believed they often

were victims of injustice because of the uncertainty of the unpublished law and their ignorance of it. Within a few years they had forced the codification and publication of the law in the famous Twelve Tables, 451 B.C. While the law of the Twelve Tables chiefly embodied existing practices, it recognized important safeguards for personal liberty and forbade the death penalty except by sentence of a competent court. On this foundation Roman law was developed so that by the middle period of the Republic a citizen was not subject to arrest in his home, there was no arbitrary action in criminal cases, and the writ of habeas corpus "ran hard and fast."

Useful as the law of the Twelve Tables proved to be, it contributed little to alleviate distress due to bad economic conditions. The insolvent debtor still could be sold into slavery, although he could obtain a short stay of execution to give him the chance to raise money to meet his obligations. Agitation for economic relief went forward.

We have just considered the most conspicuous of the early Roman standpatters. We now turn to the first of the New Dealers of the Roman world. Licinius Stolo, a tribune, first elected in 376 B.C., was the product of a depression — a depression considerably more prolonged than the one that ushered in the New Dealers in the United States. For more than a century Rome had been suffering an economic decline

because of the dislocation of trade by wars. As a climax the city was captured and burned by the Gauls. Layers of ashes from that ancient fire have been discovered in modern excavations. The conquerors finally were induced to depart by the payment of a heavy ransom. This transaction gave rise to a phrase that has had a malignant influence on history.

As the gold was being weighed out, a tribune protested that the Gauls were using a false weight in the balance. Whereupon the Gallic leader threw his sword into the scale, exclaiming: "*Væ victis!*" "Woe to the vanquished!" — "a phrase," says H. G. Wells, "that has haunted the discussions of all subsequent ransoms and indemnities down to the present time."

Crops and houses had been destroyed and the expense of rehabilitation was heavy. People were burdened with debt, and again protests rose against the severe punishment of helpless debtors. Roman farms were small and there was a strong land hunger among the farmers. Much public domain had been acquired by conquest. But the more energetic and prosperous farmers had taken over a good share of this for a nominal rental from the state. The little fellows were crowded out. Here was another farm grievance.

Fourteen years after the Gallic invasion Licinius and a colleague came forward with a New Deal program that included several proposals. The most important was a moratorium on debts. Interest already

paid could be deducted from the principal and the balance made payable over a period of three years. There was a Small Holdings Act under which thereafter no single individual could hold more than three hundred acres of the public domain. Help was offered the unemployed by a provision requiring landlords to employ a certain proportion of free labourers on farms with their slaves. It was proposed also that at least one of the two consuls, the highest magistrates of the state, be a commoner. There is a touch of human nature in the gossip related by Livy that Licinius was spurred on by his wife, daughter of a nobleman. Her sister was married to a man of her own rank, and it burned up the wife of the tribune, who was a commoner, to think that because of her marriage she was socially inferior to her sister.

These proposals evoked bitter protests from the old aristocracy. Anyone familiar with current procedure in Congress cannot fail to be impressed with the similarity of technique in ancient Rome. In the long struggle the aristocratic leaders recognized they were in a losing fight. But they thought that if they could get the various measures separated and introduced as independent bills, there would be a chance to do some trading. They would agree to let certain measures through without longer delay if their opponents would ditch the other reforms. But Licinius and his colleague were clever enough to insist on an omnibus

bill; take it or leave it. On this platform they ran year after year and were elected. As tribunes they were able to block routine legislation desired by their opponents. Finally after a ten-year struggle Licinius won. Another great political victory had been carried through without bloodshed.

An unpleasant incident growing out of the Licinian laws should not shock a generation in America that grew accustomed to politicians in the prohibition era who drank wet but voted dry. A few years after the adoption of the Small Holdings Act its sponsor, Licinius, was fined \$125 for violating his own law. It was found that he was carrying an extra three hundred acres of land in his son's name.

While the aristocracy had sourly bowed to the inevitable and permitted the highest office in the state to be opened to a commoner, some of the *grandes dames* refused to be reconciled to this deplorable triumph of the lower classes. Shortly thereafter they tore society in the capital wide open by barring from the fashionable charity ball the nobly born wife of a high plebeian official. Her shocking *mésalliance*, while now legal, made her socially impossible. If we wish to be meticulous we will call it the Festival of the Goddess of Chastity, although it was the ancient equivalent of such a social event as a modern charity ball. There was a dreadful commotion in the best circles. The outraged lady refused to swallow the insult.

She had enough influence to start a rival organization. Henceforth separate aristocratic and plebeian Goddesses of Chastity were worshipped in Rome.

But the nobles had sense. After this breach in their ranks they saw the necessity of making further concessions. In the next century the Senate no longer was an exclusive club. If an energetic commoner came stamping up in hobnailed boots and kicked on the door, he was admitted. He might not be welcome, but he was not barred out. In modern times the British nobility adopted the same wise procedure and so avoided building up a powerful opposition with a social and political grievance. The Roman commoner thus admitted to the ruling class soon adopted its point of view. Livy quotes a popular leader of the second century before Christ as complaining that "the plebeian nobles have all been taken into camp by the old aristocrats. When they no longer are looked down on by the old nobles, they begin to look down on the plebeians."

But to get back to the economic features of the Licinian legislation. In the year 367 B.C. we have three typical New Dealish measures for the relief of the underprivileged — a debt moratorium, a Small Holdings Act, and a Farm-Labour Act. The results did not come up to the campaign promises. The debt moratorium was useful as far as it went, but it failed to meet the needs of many hard-pressed debtors. As for

the other measures, we hear the familiar and not surprising complaint that they lacked teeth and were not enforced.

There were enough debtors who could not make the grade to constitute a formidable pressure group, with a cause that appealed to the public as just. In 352 B.C. the government set up a Federal Land Bank working in conjunction with a Farm Debt Conciliation Committee. In this attempt to deal with the farm debt problem Rome used precisely the method that was adopted twenty-three hundred years later in the period of the New Deal at Washington. In the long depression many American farmers had become hopelessly involved in debt. Under "an Act to Establish a Uniform System of Bankruptcy," machinery was provided for establishing a Farm Debt Conciliation Committee in every rural county. Five men of standing in each county were drafted for service. To this committee distressed farmers would bring their mortgages and all their other evidences of indebtedness, except of taxes. In each case the committee would decide how much the farmer might reasonably be expected to pay, and it would then allocate the total amount among the various creditors. Almost invariably they would accept its judgment and scale down their claims in accordance with the allocation. A Federal Land Bank would then take a new and reasonable first mortgage on the property and in addition

make what was virtually a second mortgage loan. This cash from the Land Bank would be distributed among the creditors and the farmer would make a fresh start, with his indebtedness reduced to manageable proportions.

This procedure was followed in Rome, even to the number of members of the Debt Conciliation Committee. Livy says the newly elected consuls in 352 "made the discharge of debts a concern of the state." They appointed five commissioners of high standing, two nobles and three commoners, who opened offices in the Forum. Debts long in default were brought before them, which they dealt with "in one of the following ways: either they paid them out of the treasury, taking security for the people first" (that is, the Federal Land Bank made a new loan to the debtor, taking a mortgage on his property as security); or they settled them upon a valuation at fair prices of the debtor's effects (inducing the creditors to scale down their claims). "And so, not only without injustice, but even without complaint from either side, a vast amount of indebtedness was cleared off." Precisely. The plan proved as conspicuous a success in helping American farmers as it proved in helping the farmers of Rome.

But in Rome imprisonment for debt still was legal. When this was abolished a quarter of a century later

there was "a new beginning," the historian says, "of the liberty of the common people."

Meanwhile the government found it necessary to intervene by setting maximum interest rates. Shortly before the Farm Debt Conciliation Committee started work the rate was limited to a trifle above eight per cent. There was still complaint, and ten years later, under pressure of the debtors, the government adopted what seemed the obvious remedy and cut the rate in half. Then a politician, who doubtless considered himself a monetary expert, got through a law abolishing interest altogether. Also, doubtless to his surprise and the surprise of his supporters, the measure failed to work. People who needed money found nobody would lend. The law became a dead letter, and the old eight-per-cent rate was restored; restored but not observed.

A half-century later came the final triumph of democracy in Rome. There had been various irritations, including more trouble over debts. One of these irritations is so modern that it deserves a word. In one of the wars for the unification of Italy a hard-bitten, bullying old aristocrat, Postumius, who happened to be consul at the time, took command of the army. Thereupon he detailed two thousand soldiers to work on his own estate cutting brushwood. These soldiers were small farmers who had left their own farms to

fight for their country. They were outraged at being set to work for their general without wages. It is a satisfaction to know that he was prosecuted and fined at the end of his term. Unhappily abuse of power is never outmoded. As I write this paragraph I read of the fining of a Missouri mayor for using the labour of men on work relief in his private business.

As a result of accumulating resentment there was another and final general strike of the commons of Rome. This enabled them to force the adoption of a law formally recognizing the Assembly as the fundamental authority. Its resolutions were made binding on the whole community. In Latin the commons were the "plebs." The resolution of the Roman House of Commons was a "plebiscitum." From this comes the English word "plebiscite." This law, called from its author the "Hortensian law," adopted in 287 B.C., was regarded as the culminating victory of the commons. It made Rome safe for democracy until the stream of wealth from conquered lands to the east upset the economic balance of Italy.

Throughout all the two hundred and fifty years, while the Roman people were struggling over domestic questions of popular sovereignty, they were proceeding systematically with the unification of Italy. For many years the city on the Tiber was assailed by the highlanders and other adjoining neighbours who coveted the richer land of the plains. Its existence re-

peatedly was threatened. But after one hundred and fifty years of almost incessant warfare Rome had beaten back all the invaders and in the next hundred years had established her rule over the entire peninsula. There is reason to believe that land hunger was responsible for some of these conflicts. But only defensive wars were constitutional. Rome's insistence that she had brought all Italy under her control without an offensive war was only in accordance with what has become the best modern practice.

The unification was finally sealed early in the third century by the failure of an ambitious Greek king, a second cousin of Alexander the Great, to defend the last hold-out city. Tarentum, in the heel of Italy's boot, invited Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, to come to its rescue.

This episode has a current interest because it involves a conspicuous early pacifist. Plutarch relates the incident. Cineas, he says, a man of "very good sense," was a valued court counsellor. When Cineas learned Pyrrhus was preparing for an Italian campaign, he found an occasion for tactful remonstrance. After Pyrrhus had made himself master of the world, what would he do then, Cineas inquired.

"We will live at our ease, my dear fellow, and drink all day and divert ourselves with pleasant conversation."

"And what hinders us now, sir," Cineas asked, "to

be merry and enjoy this conversation without going through blood, labour, and infinite hazards?"

It was a reasonable argument and it "rather troubled Pyrrhus," who was really a very decent chap. But of course he ignored it and started on a series of campaigns, in which he finally was killed. The supply of good advice is always so in excess of the demand!



## CHAPTER V

### THE GET-RICH-QUICK ERA

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THE ITALIAN peninsula is a natural political unit. The unification so painfully won in the earlier half of the Republic lasted, with interruptions, for a thousand years. It finally dissolved in the anarchy that followed the death of Charlemagne. Not until more than a thousand years later, in the nineteenth century, was Cavour able to start the movement that made Italy again a nation.

With the unification of the peninsula under Roman rule the Republic took its place among the world powers. Its larger interests inevitably came into conflict with the interests of other great nations. The result was a series of wars that made Rome supreme in the Mediterranean world. But war and the opening of new lands brought their problems. These were com-

plicated by the vastly increased use of money that only a short time before had been introduced into the Roman economy. It was a get-rich-quick era. The New Deal experiments of the next two centuries — resettlement administration, work relief, the ever normal granary, poor relief, anti-hoarding measures, the scaling down of debts — were responses to the many social and economic ailments that such an era produces.

The most significant of these foreign conflicts was the second war with Carthage. In its importance and far-reaching effects it is comparable to a modern world war.

It was deliberately brought on by the restless military genius of the Carthaginian Hannibal as a war of revenge. His father had been defeated and humiliated in the first war between Rome and Carthage. The son was determined to avenge his memory. Here, again, we have a blazing instance of pacifistic common sense overridden by jingoism. Hannibal had begun military operations in Spain, and Rome had sent a delegation to the Carthaginian Senate to protest. There Senator Hanno alone supported the Roman position. Hannibal, he said, had a spirit that could not rest. "You have sent to the Spanish army," he continued, "a young man who is consumed with a passion for power. He believes the only way to reach it is to live surrounded by armed legions and perpetu-

ally to stir up fresh wars." Now he was undertaking a war in violation of Rome's treaty rights that was likely to end in disaster for Carthage. When Hanno sat down, no senator rose to second him. He was regarded as pro-Roman and ignored.

In the first part of the long war that followed, everything went Hannibal's way. He won a series of brilliant victories. The tactics of Cannæ are still studied in military schools. When the Carthaginian Senate was rejoicing over a successful campaign, a leader of the war party recalled the original warnings of Hanno and asked him whether he still disapproved the war. The old senator did not weaken. In reply he pointed out that in spite of the victories Rome was still far from beaten. He urged that advantage be taken of the existing favourable situation to negotiate peace. Otherwise he feared the worst. "But very few," says Livy, "were influenced by Hanno's speech." The war dragged on and the superior resources of Rome finally crushed Carthage. Livy's account might have been profitable reading for some of the modern militarists.

With the military aspects of the protracted struggle between Rome and the greatest military genius of the age we are not here concerned. Until the end Hannibal outmatched every general sent against him. But like England, accustomed to losing every battle except the last, the Republic doggedly muddled

through. The conquest of Carthage, 202 B.C., left Rome mistress of the whole Mediterranean basin. Within the next two generations "the peasants of the Tiber" had come to dominate most of the land bordering on the sea, and in less than another century they had filled in the gaps and added Gaul.

On the eve of her first important foreign war, 264 B.C., Rome controlled an area about the size of that of the combined states of Ohio and Kentucky. Before the end of the first century B.C. its domain would have covered the entire United States east of the Mississippi. A brilliant English historian compares the expansion of Rome with that of the British Empire, which is said to have developed in a fit of absentmindedness. Not quite in a fit of absentmindedness, says Mr. Fisher, but "half reluctantly and of no set plan." Successive stages of conquest were forced by the necessity of quenching turbulence upon the frontiers. Undoubtedly the purpose of protecting conquered territory animated both Rome and Britain. After the exhausting conflict with Carthage the people loathed the idea of war with the shortlived intensity of twentieth-century Europeans. It was with the greatest difficulty that the Senate was able to persuade them to honour the blank cheques Rome had signed for its allies in the East and to consolidate the gains in the West. For a considerable time the problem of administering conquered territories ap-

## THE GET-RICH-QUICK ERA

palled the ruling class. Not enough capable administrators were to be found in the senatorial aristocracy, and the nobles of the second century had become as reluctant to admit new men to their charmed circle as the British peers of the nineteenth century were to allow the House of Lords to be packed with new members.

On the side of further expansion, however, was the powerful motive of prestige and later of profits. Any Roman senator would have understood the former German Emperor's insistence that his government be consulted on every matter of international interest and Hitler's belief that Germany had the divine right to impose its rule upon the world. So it was the mission of Rome to bring order, law, and justice to backward or frivolous nations.

But the thought of profits was increasingly present. Under the later Republic certain rich provinces were regarded as fair loot for the influential classes. A consul expected the governorship of a province as a reward so he could reimburse himself for the heavy expenses of the campaign. Cicero cleared \$110,000 as Governor of Cilicia by perfectly legal methods and, like Lord Clive in India, was astonished at his own moderation. Any conquest was expected to yield a rich booty in captives, who were sold as slaves. A profitable commerce developed within the Empire and later a cynical observer, the elder Pliny, wrote

that campaigns had been undertaken in order that Roman ladies and gentlemen might have a better choice of perfumes. Evidently there was constant pressure at home for bringing additional territory under Roman control. Resisting this, as has previously been suggested, was strong conservative opposition to the policy of expansion. After a survey of the evidence Professor Frank writes in his *Roman Imperialism*, that the Roman people "stumbled on falteringly and unwittingly into ever increasing dominion." Julius Cæsar, who conquered what is now France in the middle of the first century B.C., he regards as "the first candid imperialist of Rome."

A turbulent century and a half followed the momentous struggle with Carthage. In this period the Tiber peasants scaled the dizzy heights and saw the kingdoms of this world spread at their feet. On the whole, the Empire, especially after the central government had organized decent administration under Augustus and his successors, was a great civilizing influence. But under the corrupting stress of war the Romans became a hard and ruthless people. An atrocious affair is reported in a perfectly matter-of-fact way by Livy. After the conquest of Macedonia early in the second century B.C., the commanding general organized a punitive raid with such perfection of detail that at a set time on one day seventy towns were plundered and their inhabitants

## THE GET-RICH-QUICK ERA

were sold into slavery. It was not until a century of peace had done its civilizing work that a voice of protest was lifted by Plutarch. He figured that each soldier received a trifle more than two dollars as his share of the booty. "So that men could only shudder," he wrote, "at the issue of a war when the wealth of a whole nation thus divided turned to so little advantage and profit to each man."

In the same spirit his disillusioned contemporary, Tacitus, writing of the conquest of Britain, puts in the mouth of a Scottish chieftain a tremendous indictment of commercialized imperialism. "Vain hope," he says to his followers, whom he has rallied against the legions, "vain hope to evade the Romans' clutches by obsequious submission. The whole world is to them a prey. They have ransacked the continents, and now they must search the seas. If their foe be rich, they are ravenous for gold; if he be poor, for glory; and neither East nor West can sate an appetite, unique in this, that plenty or dearth is alike to them a lure. Empire is the name they give to a policy of plunder, bloodshed, and rapine; and when they have created a desert they call it 'peace.'"

In the era of rapid expansion power and wealth flooded into Rome. But the governing class had not yet learned how to use power, and unearned wealth is demoralizing. When it includes slave labour it is devastating. Rome's was not a wholesome and bal-

anced prosperity that comes from the production of new goods and services. It was chiefly a parasitic prosperity based on the consumption of the accumulated savings of the East and the exploitation of slave labour in mines and on farms.

“For Rome,” Paul Louis, a French economist, writes, “humanity laboured, toiled in the mines, wrested fine pearls from the sea, netted the purple fish which supplied the precious dye, wove the wool of Asia Minor, blew the glass of Egypt, smelted Thracian iron and Cyprian copper. For Rome, gangs of slaves threshed grain in the plains of Palermo, upon the plateaus of Numidia, along the damp banks of the Nile; for Rome, ships ploughed the seas from India and even from China and the Somali coast to the misty littoral of the Veneti and to the Cimbric peninsula.”

From the standpoint of the outlying regions, however, it should be remembered that the people had been exploited under their native rulers, and that Rome gave them order and a larger measure of justice than had previously been theirs. In Sicily, for instance, under Roman rule taxes actually were reduced. Later Rome made increasing contributions to the welfare of its possessions outside of Italy. The city, it has been said, “exported brains.” The capital itself was perhaps the greater sufferer in the period of expansion, although no one would have admitted

this at the time. Only a comparatively small class benefited from the conquests, and society was more and more sharply divided into what the great German historian Mommsen calls "the world of beggars and the world of the rich." The bitter fruits of this division were to ripen in the next century.

Contact with the older civilizations of the East, and especially with that of Greece, had a deep effect both materially and spiritually. "Captive Greece," Horace wrote, "took captive her fierce conqueror." The rough farmer-soldiers learned what luxury was at a time when the spoils of conquest and the money-making opportunities of the new lands enabled them to pay for it. The swift rise of the standards of living of the more fortunate is indicated by a Roman of the first century B.C. who wrote of his boyhood as a forgotten age. "For me, when a boy," he said, "there sufficed a single rough coat and a single undergarment, the coarsest of shoes, a horse without a saddle. I had no daily warm bath and but seldom a river-dip."

In Rome of the second century B.C., as in other nations later, the contact of the ideas of a lower culture with those of a higher produced mixed results. Under the influence of Greece the interests of the Romans were enriched and their horizon widened. But the impact of Greek philosophy and rationalism upon men who were not mentally prepared to give up

traditional beliefs was often demoralizing. Polybius, a sympathetic Greek observer of the Roman scene, wrote that a powerful influence in holding the Roman commonwealth together was fear of the gods. This, he said, was carried to extraordinary lengths and he believed it was deliberately used by the upper classes "as a check upon the common people." Therefore he looked with apprehension upon the evidence of growing scepticism that he saw around him. The moderns, he insisted, were "most foolish" in banishing belief in the "terror of hell."

One other disturbing ferment of the second century must be mentioned. This was the greatly increased use of money. The coinage of money was a comparatively new invention for Rome. A half-century before the final unification of Italy the capital had reached a stage in its economic development when it no longer could do business with the primitive coinage of which the unit was a chunk of bronze weighing a pound. As someone has said, with this money a housewife's journey to market must have been as fatiguing as her return. Coined money had been invented in the eastern Mediterranean world perhaps seven hundred years before Christ. It had been circulating for two hundred years in the Greek cities of southern Italy before the growing demands of trade brought it to Rome. It was not until 269 B.C. that a mint for the coinage of silver was set up in

the temple of Juno Moneta on the Capitoline hill. "Moneta" soon came to mean "mint" and then was connected with the coins produced by the mint to give us our words "money" and "monetary."

But even the bronze coinage that was used before Rome began issuing silver invited the disturbances of funny money that have been with the world in all ages. A tradition of the first century after Christ was that during the first great war of Rome with Carthage three hundred years earlier, the resources of the commonwealth were inadequate to meet its expenditures, and by a reduction of five-sixths in the weight of the bronze coins the public debt was virtually cancelled. This statement is extravagant. But when Hannibal was threatening Rome in the second war with Carthage near the end of the third century B.C., the difficulty of financing the war and especially of meeting the soldier's pay led to a financial crisis. By vote of the Assembly the bronze coin was halved in weight and the silver coin, the denarius, worth something less than the English shilling, was cut fourteen per cent. Gradually, however, the currency was stabilized and for several centuries Rome provided the world with a sound monetary system which enabled trade to develop on a satisfactory basis. Wild inflation did not appear until the anarchy of the third century of our era.

With the rapid expansion after the second war

with Carthage, money came into general use with growing velocity of circulation. The whole Roman economy was upset. The United States knows what it is to have a great new credit machine run wild, as bank credits ran wild to produce the boom years of the 1920's. But America had had experience with credit inflation during the war, from which it might have learned. Rome's experience had been slight. People flocked to borrow the convenient new money for speculation. In the barter economy under which Italian farmers had largely operated, there was strong inducement for the farmer to live on his land. With money available it was possible for him to receive a cash income while living in Rome. Wealthy men in the capital could buy up distressed farms at a bargain, sell them at a profit, or operate them in large tracts with slave labour. With banking offices springing up in the Forum there always was a temptation to adventuresome men to go in debt in order to make a killing in the new lands that were being opened up. Working men constantly were attracted away from Rome by the prospect of cheap land in Italy and the provinces. With both capital and labour absorbed elsewhere, industry did not develop at this time as an attractive field for investment. As the Empire grew, it failed to solve the problem of a balanced farm-industry economy.

Speculators had their chance also in the jumpy and

## THE GET-RICH-QUICK ERA

uncertain prices resulting from a primitive monetary system. There were no reserve banks and the value of money, and consequently prices, would be affected by the arrival of silver from the Spanish mines or loot from the provinces. By the second century B.C. Rome was rocking with the results of its wild discovery. Money, command of the Mediterranean, plunder from the provinces, slavery, and contact with the luxuries and philosophies of the East were to combine to transform Roman character as well as to create a new world.



## CHAPTER VI

# THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

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IN America rapid westward expansion and the opening of new lands created an acute farm problem. In the West there was overproduction. In the East farm values sank. With the growth of population and the European demand for farm exports, the problem was eased. Later it was aggravated or assuaged in accordance with the state of world markets. Production would be greatly overexpanded under the stimulus of abnormal European demand. The drying up of this demand would depress the farm industry. At the same time the rapid mechanization of the farm brought new difficulties.

In the Roman Republic we find strikingly similar conditions. Throughout its early history Italy was a land of small farmers. Wheat products were the

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

staple food, as they are in Italy today. The Roman Empire, it has been said, was won by armies on a diet of porridge. With the extensive conquests of foreign wars the wheat farmers of western Italy faced a crisis. They met disastrous competition from new lands, just as the wheat farmers of the Atlantic seaboard in America met disastrous competition from the new farm regions of the West. To complete the parallel, Italian farmers encountered the equivalent to modern farm mechanization in the hordes of war captives who were imported for farm labour. These captives were sold as slaves and treated as machines. The capital required for farming under the new conditions was beyond the reach of the small operators. The little fellow began to be crowded to the wall by the big commercial farmer. The new system was an economic success but a social failure.

The farm problem was one of the chief disturbing factors that threatened to wreck the Roman Republic after its long period of successful wars of expansion. It was an effort to solve this problem that brought to the front the two great liberal statesmen of the latter part of the second century B.C., the brothers Gracchus. Included in their New Deal measures was a back-to-the-land movement. It was their purpose to discourage large-scale commercial farming and to re-establish the small farmer with farming as a way of life rather than as a commercial enterprise. If they

had succeeded the history of Rome might have been different. Possibly the Republic might have been preserved. But the obstacles in their way were too great.

The first important new land that brought the Roman farm problem to the front was in the island of Sicily, which lies just off the toe of Italy's boot. Like the state of Kansas for America today, Sicily was the great surplus-wheat area for mid-republican Rome. When it came into the Roman orbit it rocked the farm structure of central Italy. Wheat could be produced more cheaply in Sicily and the natural economic competition of Sicilian wheat would have been sufficiently severe. But state intervention made the competition ruinous. Rome was collecting taxes from Sicily in the shape of wheat which it used to feed the army. Any surplus was dumped on the market, with disorganizing effect. The taxes were collected by Roman corporations under government contracts. Their profits came from the sale of wheat that they collected in excess of what was due the government. Water transportation was cheap, and they sold their surplus to the Italian coastal cities for what it would bring. It was regarded as the duty of the state to keep down the cost of living in the capital, which was the great centre of population. In time of war, when wheat prices went up, the government would go into foreign markets, buy wheat, and sell it at a loss. Under normal foreign competition prices

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

were low in peace times, while the farmer was prevented from recouping from the natural rise in prices during the emergencies of war. The Italian farm bloc lacked the political power of the farm bloc in Congress.

Land transportation was expensive. There were inland districts that were little affected by competition from abroad, but in the important coastal area the small wheat farmer could not maintain himself.

There were other troubles. The farmer drafted into the army and sent abroad on long campaigns was obliged to leave his farm in the care of his family and perhaps a few slaves. When he came back he found his tools gone to pieces, his farm deteriorated; and he lacked the capital for its rehabilitation.

There is a legend that a farmer-general of a Roman army in Africa wrote home asking to be relieved of his command. The manager whom he had left in charge of his small farm had died, the hired man had run away with the farm tools, and the farm lay desolate. If the owner were not allowed to return, his wife and children would lack the bare necessities of existence.

Many farmers, of course, did not come back. In the long campaigns against Hannibal, Rome lost perhaps a third of its citizens, and their small farms were available to buyers with ready money.

What happened is recorded in connection with the

long struggle with Carthage. The state had had to resort to loans. The final large Liberty Loan was to be repaid in three instalments. When the second instalment came due, the state was short of cash. Livy says the cry of many creditors was: "There are plenty of farms for sale and we want to buy." These farms were doubtless distressed land that had come on the market as a result of the conditions just described. The state effected a settlement by arranging with its creditors to take their second instalment in land from the public domain. Four years later the third instalment was paid in cash. The capitalists who were buying up distressed farms and acquiring land from the public domain were thus building large estates which supplanted the small holdings of the independent farmers.

New conditions promoted this process. By a law enacted near the close of the third century B.C. the rich senatorial class was forbidden to take part in foreign trade. As the Senate was in charge of foreign policy it was perhaps felt that its members should be clear of foreign business entanglements. But as wealth was coming into Rome in the second century from its conquests abroad, the effect was to concentrate senatorial investments in large estates in Italy. These investments were facilitated by the recent general use of money, which made absentee landlordism practicable, and by the advent of hundreds of thou-

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

sands of the war captives just mentioned, who could be used like farm machinery to operate big plantations and ranches. The long-run results of slave labour were bad, but in the earlier years it produced large and quick returns. Another factor favourable to the growth of big estates was the remission of all direct taxes in Italy early in the second century, including the land tax. The government had come to be supported by levies from the provinces and by income from the public domain. The absence of a land tax encouraged speculation in land by large operators. Finally, as wheat farming in extensive regions became unprofitable because of the competition of wheat from the new lands, the raising of livestock and the growing of vineyards and olive trees took its place. These were all branches of agriculture that required more capital than the small Roman farmer could afford, and he was impelled to sell to speculators or to operators with cash reserves.

In his little book on *Moral Duties*, addressed to his wild son, Marcus, away in college at Athens, Cicero quotes that stern old farmer-magistrate Cato on farming. "When he was asked what was the most profitable feature of an estate, he replied: 'Raising cattle successfully.' What next to that? 'Raising cattle with fair success.' And next? 'Raising cattle with but slight success.' And fourth? 'Raising crops.' And when his questioner asked: 'How about money-

lending?' Cato replied: 'How about murder?'" It may be added that Cato was another conspicuous man who failed to live up to his precepts. He evaded the law against senators' engaging in foreign trade by organizing a company in which he held stock in the name of a freedman, and thus, his biographer says, made large profits with little risk.

The acute farm problem now developing cannot be understood without some consideration of the importance of slavery in the economic and social structure of Rome and Italy. In the ancient world slavery was taken for granted. That war captives should be sold as slaves seemed as natural as that conquered cities should be looted. In his treatise on farm management Cato advises that the owner should order the sale of "worn-out bulls, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, any plough that is old, old tools, old slaves, slaves who are diseased, or anything else which is useless." The casual classification of old slaves with old tools gives a vivid idea of the brutal outlook of the age.

In the earlier years of Rome, in the days of small farms and simple households, the slaves were Italian captives or debtors who became virtually members of their owners' families. But in the conquests following the war with Hannibal conditions changed. One hundred and fifty thousand captives were taken in a day by a series of raids back from the Adriatic coast

across from Italy. A single victory by Cæsar in Gaul yielded 53,000 slaves, and it is estimated, probably with exaggeration, that in nine years he sent back 400,000 slaves to Rome. The island of Delos became the great slave mart for the East; there is a record of the sale of 10,000 slaves there in one day.

At a time when the population of Rome was under a million, the slave population was estimated at 200,000. Prices ranged from fifty dollars up. Many well-educated slaves were acquired in the East. One trouble with Roman education was that wealthy men thought they could buy it in the slave marts. Mr. Fisher, who as warden of New College, Oxford, should be informed on educational practice, writes: "The Eton master of the eighteenth century flogged his boys. The Roman youth of the second and third centuries flogged his masters," for the masters were slaves.

The institution of slavery had a brutalizing effect upon the owners. It also had a far-reaching effect upon farm life and later on factory development. In the Southern states of America slave labour could not be used effectively in the cultivation of small farms. It could be used on the big cotton plantations. So in Italy the abundance of slaves tended to promote the establishment of large cattle ranches, with which the small farmer could not compete.

One important difficulty was that the free farmer

was liable to conscription for military service from which slaves were exempt. Wars followed one another in rapid succession and it is estimated that for many years one-tenth of the population always was in the army. Even when a farmer had sold his land to a rich neighbour, his liability to military service handicapped him in getting a job as a farm hand. So he went back to the legions or became a wanderer.

Up to the time of the foreign wars in the first half of the second century B.C. life in Rome had been comparatively simple. But with the newly acquired wealth the whole tone of society changed. Official life was affected. Many of the magistrates sent out to govern the conquered provinces were demoralized by the lack of supervision. Repeated laws against extortion show the existence of a growing group of Romans who were becoming rich at the expense of the subject peoples. Speculators, too, did not overlook the opportunities in the new lands. Luxuries were lavishly imported, but only the lucky few could afford them. The landless farmers drifted to the big city. Unfortunately no industries had developed there in which they might have found employment. For various reasons banking, foreign trade, and the management of large Italian estates had proved more attractive to enterprising Romans than manufacturing. Few jobs were to be had in a city where slaves were doing a large share of the work. Social snobbishness was an

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

important obstacle to progress. This was due partly to the natural contempt that a landed aristocracy always feels for men "in trade," partly to the effects of slavery. The feeling dominated society. Cicero, a typical representative of the middle class, wrote to his son in his *Moral Duties* about occupations in which a gentleman might engage. Tax-collectors and money-lenders, he says, are exposed to public contempt. Manual labour is vulgar. So, too, is retail selling and the work of mechanics. It isn't respectable to engage in occupations having to do with food, such as those of butchers, cooks, and poulterers. Dancers and actors are out. Medicine, architecture, and teaching are dignified professions. "Trade, if it is on a small scale, is vulgar, but if wholesale and on a large scale is not to be greatly disparaged." Agriculture, however, is considered the most proper of all gainful occupations.

With little chance to find work, the immigrant farmers lived in poverty in the slums on the low ground and looked with envy upon the mansions that were being built on the heights. The men who were able to stay on the farms, barely keeping their heads above water, also were embittered. In Sicily the brutal treatment of slaves on the big plantations led to uprisings that reached the stage of civil wars. It is significant of the growing bitterness that in these revolts the small farmers joined with the slaves in burning the villas of

the owners of the big estates. The rich landlords were hated by all the less fortunate, by free men as well as by slaves.

Thus by the beginning of the last century of the Republic Rome and Italy were divided into two bitterly hostile camps, a governing oligarchy of wealthy men, and an impoverished mass of poor people and slaves. At this time Tiberius Gracchus was elected a tribune. He came of a family distinguished for public service. His father was an honest old aristocrat who had made a reputation as a military commander as well as a civil magistrate. His mother, Cornelia, was the daughter of one of the most celebrated of Roman generals, Scipio Africanus. A great lady she was, cultured, high-minded, public-spirited. Her salon, frequented by all the clever people, was a centre of intelligent and witty conversation. It probably was as distinguished as any of the famous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century salons of Paris. Here Tiberius and his younger and more brilliant brother, Gaius, undoubtedly heard serious public questions discussed.

With his family connections and his own fine qualities, the young Tiberius was regarded as the catch of the town. At a dinner party the head of one of the first families, by discreet inquiry, found the young man was interested in his daughter. Then and there the engagement was arranged. When the old gentleman returned home he greeted his wife with the

news. "Antistia," he exclaimed, "I've found a husband for Claudia!" Before he could tell her the lucky man's name she exploded. Why hadn't she been consulted? There was only one boy in their set that she would stand for. That was Tiberius Gracchus.

The incident indicates a social standing that would open a political career to any ambitious youngster in Rome. Tiberius was elected to the tribunate with general approval when he was only thirty. But like many another generous-spirited young man he was moved by the evils that he saw around him to desert his class. In the end his friends turned on him with all the savageness that often is visited on a man who is regarded by his former associates as a traitor to their common interests. In his travels on official duties Tiberius had been shocked by the depopulation of the countryside and the growth of big estates operated by slaves. In Rome he saw a great mass of unemployed, many of them dispossessed farmers, constantly on the verge of starvation. His indignation flamed high. One of his speeches has been preserved.

"The savage beasts in Italy," he exclaimed, "have their dens, their places of rest and refuge. But the men who fight their country's battles have nothing but air and sunlight. They wander homeless with their wives and children. Their generals appeal to them to fight in defence of their homes, but they have none. They fight and are killed to maintain the lux-

ury of others. They are called the masters of the world. But they haven't a foot of ground to call their own."

This sort of language horrified the best circles. His old associates had looked on him as a harmless parlour pink. They were not prepared for such an outburst as this. Really, he was going too far. But Tiberius proceeded with his program. The remedy seemed obvious. It was to set up a Resettlement Administration, an R.A. He proposed to move the city unemployed out to farms in the country. The government still owned a large public domain, much of which had been pre-empted by wealthy landlords at a small rental, which they had long since ceased to pay. Gracchus undertook to revive the old Licinian Small Holdings Act, which had become a dead letter, and once more restrict the amount of public land held by one person to three hundred acres. Public land thus taken back by the government was to be allotted to landless citizens in small holdings. The government was to retain title so that the land could not be immediately bought up by speculators.

"What Gracchus had in mind in proposing the measure," the historian Appian wrote, "was not money but men." But the arguments he presented to the hard-headed Roman landed aristocracy were not based on sentiment. His appeal was on more practical grounds. Rome had won its empire by ar-

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

mies made up of small farmers. If these were destroyed how was the Empire to be defended? But the big landowners were obdurate. The evils set forth by Tiberius were obvious and the governing crowd in the Senate had long agreed that something should be done. But it always had found objections to every proposal offered. The Gracchan program shocked the landlords because it threatened to deprive them of part of their profitable holdings of the public domain. It antagonized the bankers because it attacked the security of their mortgages. The question was how to prevent the popular tribune from putting his measure through the Assembly, which was the law-making body. His senatorial opponents found a constitutional method.

In order to prevent hasty legislation by a one-chamber house, it had been provided that any one of the ten tribunes could exercise the veto power. Then the whole matter would go over until the next election so that it could be given further consideration and be passed upon by the people. A tribune was found to veto the consideration of Tiberius's bill. At that time the anti-second-term tradition as to the tribunate was so strong as to be regarded as part of the law of the land. A tribune could not run for re-election. Tiberius believed he must get his measure through within his year of office or it would die, as other somewhat similar measures had died in the past. So he in-

troduced the principle of the "recall." At his request the Assembly deposed the objecting official and elected a Gracchus man in his place. The law went through and a commission was appointed to supervise its operation.

Here we come upon another phenomenon familiar to modern politics. Appropriations had to come from the Senate. It hampered the work of the commission by refusing to appropriate money for its necessary expenses. This same method of putting brakes on embarrassing activities of committees has repeatedly been resorted to in Washington.

Just at this time came what Gracchus must have regarded as a providential windfall. The monarch of the Asiatic kingdom of Pergamum died and bequeathed his kingdom, including accumulated treasures, to the Roman people. Tiberius at once proposed a bill appropriating the funds derived from the Pergamum treasury to the use of the land commission. The money was to be distributed among the new settlers to finance them in erecting houses and buying necessary farm equipment. This was a blow at the Senate's provincial authority and its control of the purse. The tribune's action increased the bitterness of the conservatives.

As his year of office expired Tiberius determined to run again in violation of precedent. There was much still to be done that he felt could not be en-

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

trusted to others. But he had assailed the dominant crowd in a vital spot. The brilliance of Roman society was supported primarily by income from the big estates upon which he had laid his hands. Vested interests were threatened. They would not surrender without bloodshed. Besides, Gracchus had attacked the Senate's authority both at home and in the provinces. The senatorial machine did not propose to take another chance with this brash young reformer. A bitter campaign followed. Stories were circulated that Tiberius intended to make himself dictator and that he proposed a general redistribution of wealth. The tenant farmers and farm hands with Roman citizenship had flocked to town to vote when his land measure was before the Assembly. But when election time came it was summer, the farmers were busy in their fields, and the old families had great influence with the city voters. Nevertheless, when the voting began, it was going in favour of the popular young tribune. A die-hard leader of the Senate proposed that martial law be decreed. The presiding officer refused to put the question, whereupon the die-hards organized a riot. Tiberius and more than three hundred of his followers were killed. For the first time in its long history Rome had seen an issue settled by violence instead of by peaceful compromise.

The work of the land-distribution commission was too popular to be destroyed with the death of its origi-

nator. It went forward for several years and perhaps seventy-five thousand families were settled on small farms. Later, when Gaius Gracchus was elected tribune, a further impetus was given to the project. Nevertheless its permanent results were small. The fundamental causes of the farm problem had not been reached. The independent small farmer could not have been restored to his old position without abolishing slavery. On a commercial basis many of the new farmers could not compete with the owners of the big slave-operated estates and ranches. The brothers doubtless hoped that there were still many dispossessed farmers who would be glad to be re-established to practise farming as a way of life with no expectation of making money. The number of these proved disappointingly small. As soon as a modification in the law made it possible, many of the settlers sold their holdings and moved back to the city. Still, in the next century the Resettlement Administration project in modified form was revived to take care of ex-service men, as was done in the Western American states after the Civil War. Some five hundred thousand allotments were made. The results were fairly satisfactory and the farm problem did not again become acute until the end of the first century after Christ.

The methods to which Tiberius resorted to carry through his program left lasting impressions upon the

## THE FARM PROBLEM EMERGES

Roman political structure. Heretofore the Assembly had been theoretically the supreme legislative body. Practically, it had been controlled by the old families, just as the House of Commons was long dominated by the British aristocracy. Tiberius had demonstrated that under an energetic leader the Assembly could run the government. Within a few years the tribunes were legally declared eligible for re-election and in the next century the recall of elective officials was occasionally employed. Unwittingly the first of the Gracchi had prepared the way for Big Business to enter politics.



## CHAPTER VII

# BIG BUSINESS IN POLITICS

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THE POLITICAL machine is familiar to Americans. While it may lead to gross abuses experience shows that some sort of behind-the-scenes organization may be useful to the functioning of democratic institutions. Such an organization may hold diverse elements of the population together and provide continuity of policy through all the shifting personnel of official life.

In Rome through the greater part of the existence of the Republic, the senatorial machine ran the show. The magistrates might change every year; the machine carried on. It represented the landed aristocracy. The big landowners had common economic interests. They had their personal ambitions and differences. They might disagree on foreign policy; on

domestic affairs they stood together. The senatorial machine was the instrument through which they operated. It ran smoothly and efficiently in managing the unification of Italy and the expansion about the Mediterranean basin. In its great days the Roman Senate probably included a larger number of competent and experienced public men than any subsequent legislative body. Its members were reared under a stern code. They were proud, courageous, resolute, never daunted by defeat. But the unearned wealth that Rome drained from the provinces in the last century and a half of the Republic sapped the older virtues. The Senate gradually lost its ability to meet new situations and became rigidly reactionary. Then came Tiberius Gracchus, forerunner of the American Boss-Buster.

To be sure, this turbulent insurgent had finally been disposed of by the ruthless machine, but the gathering forces he had represented still remained. The slums of Rome housed a mass of embittered voters. They could be handled in various ways by the senatorial organization. But another element in the population had come to the front in the second century. Business men, bankers, and traders had found great opportunities for making money in the new lands that had been added to the Empire. Often their interests differed from those of the old aristocrats. By the time of the death of the elder Gracchus

it was apparent that under competent leadership the Chamber of Commerce crowd might unite with the poorer voters to take charge of the government.

Rome set the example to modern Germany of making war profitable. It is calculated that in the half-century following the fall of Carthage fifty million dollars in tribute and plunder drained into Rome. This sum, huge for its day, gave a great opportunity to energetic men with the acquisitive instinct. As the senators were barred from foreign trade by law, an important plutocracy of business men developed. They were impatient of the restrictions that a group of the elder statesmen, who still cherished the old-fashioned Roman ideals of honesty and fair dealing, had been able to impose upon the exploitation of the provinces.

With the foundations of political revolt thus laid, ten years after the death of Tiberius Gracchus his brother, nine years his junior, returned from a minor office in Sardinia to Rome and crashed the gate of the ruling class. Against machine opposition he was elected tribune.

Gaius Gracchus was a young man of thirty, vigorous, intelligent, passionate, a great natural leader. Behind the burning words that could sway a popular audience was a cool, calculating intellect. He combined traits not often found in one man: ability as an orator and unusual administrative capacity. Plu-

tarch gives an attractive picture of him after he had come into the tribunate and was immersed in its duties. His office was crowded with officials, military officers, contractors, work superintendents, scholars. A competent and just executive of immense industry, the biographer says, he was always dignified, courteous, scrupulously honest.

The older brother was high-minded and sincere. He believed life is organized on a purely rational basis and that men can be persuaded by argument to surrender selfish interests. On one occasion he had taken his case before a Senate that was packed against him. Apparently he was surprised that it would not listen to the voice of reason. Gaius Gracchus had entered public life completely disillusioned by his brother's experience. He was driven by the same passion to correct the obvious evils that were threatening the very life of the state, supplemented by a human desire to avenge his brother's death. But he had a flair for politics that his brother lacked. He would have been perfectly at home in the White House in the Washington of the twentieth century. His brother's appeal had been to one class. Patiently Gaius set to work on a program that would appeal to all the important classes in the state. Against the senatorial machine he proposed to organize a coalition that could be fused into a real democratic party. This

party he hoped to make an instrument for public service to carry out reforms that could not be obtained from the entrenched interests in the Senate.

We can only guess at his motives. But to anyone familiar with the working of the political mind, the implications of the Gracchan policies are obvious. There were four important groups of voters who might be united against the senatorial machine. There were the small farmers who wanted access to the public domain for themselves and their children. Tiberius had made a good beginning in this direction, but his land commission in the hostile atmosphere of Rome had bogged down. There were the unemployed who lived in abject poverty. There were small shopkeepers and business men. Finally there were the bankers, contractors, and large commercial operators who constituted Roman Big Business.

In the program of Gaius there were measures that appealed to each of these groups. For the farmer he revived and revamped his brother's legislation for the allotment of land from the public domain. For the urban poor he provided the sale of wheat by the government below the market price. For the little fellow who wanted larger business opportunities he proposed the establishment of trading centres in Italy and one in the territory of Carthage in North Africa. Allotments of land were to be made in these centres to selected colonists of good character. For the big

business men he provided contracts for great warehouses for the storage of grain, for an extensive system of farm-to-market roads, and for the collection of taxes in the province of Asia, in western Asia Minor. At the same time he recognized their importance in the state by transferring to them the right to make up the juries that tried provincial governors for extortion, hitherto a prerogative of senators. There were other measures, not of an economic character, intended to curtail the power of the old senatorial machine.

Most of these measures may be classed as New Deal experiments. Perhaps it would be imputing to the Rome of the second century B.C. modern economic ideas to suggest that Gracchus intended to relieve unemployment. Nevertheless there is reason to regard the building of roads and other public works as projects designed to provide employment at government expense and to stimulate business, as well as to reflect credit upon the responsible official. Land-distribution and the founding of colonies were the equivalent of the modern Resettlement Administration. The warehouses may be considered the instrument for carrying out the modern Ever Normal Granary idea, with an important difference. The Ever Normal Granary is intended to stabilize wheat prices at a fairly high level for the benefit of the producer. Gracchus desired to stabilize prices at a low level for

the benefit of the consumer. In the ancient world transportation difficulties were responsible for famines and for wild fluctuations in wheat prices. Gracchus proposed that the government procure an adequate supply of wheat to be sold at a low and fixed price to everyone who was willing to stand in line once a month at a warehouse. The prevalence of local famines in antiquity had forced governments to resort to similar methods to keep their people from starving. But now Gracchus was transforming an emergency measure into a permanent system. The wheat was sold for thirty-two cents a bushel, which was below the normal price; in the absence of Board of Trade figures we do not know how much below. Historians rather generally have guessed that thirty-two cents was about half-price. To judge from the screams of the conservatives of that day and later, this guess may be right. In America we have seen wheat sell as low as twenty-five cents a bushel on the farm, and as high as three dollars. In ancient Italy prices ranging from ten cents to four dollars are mentioned. Thirty years before the Gracchan Ever Normal Granary plan was adopted the normal price was apparently regarded as about sixty cents. Fifty years after this legislation the same figure is recorded. In any event, thirty-two cents represented a sharp cut.

The idea that the state should tax its richer citizens to take care of the unfortunate on a permanent basis

was shocking to the old Roman ideas of self-reliance. An illuminating tale has come down to us that shows the attitude of the sincere conservatives of the time. Cicero tells the story in his *Tusculan Disputations*. A consul, Piso, had fought the proposal. After the law had been enacted Piso appeared in the throng standing in line to get the low-price grain. Gracchus saw him there and inquired about his consistency in taking advantage of a law that he had opposed.

“I shouldn’t like it, Gracchus,” the old gentleman replied, “if the bright idea should come into your head to divide up my property among all the citizens. But if you should do it, I would be on hand to get my share.”

The plan that Gracchus put into effect was really the two-price system discussed by farm leaders in America. Under such a system food is sold at the market price to the bulk of consumers. Those unable to pay this price may buy at a reduction food subsidized by the government. In Rome the two-price program proved the beginning of what soon became direct relief. By any humane standard this grain subsidy was needed to mitigate the evils of unemployment. Presumably the unemployed were able to get occasional odd jobs and they could sponge on the rich. But undoubtedly low-price wheat was a great help. Gracchus was a keen business man. He may reasonably have calculated that if the grain which the

government could collect as tribute from the provinces was not enough, more could be bought when the price was low and that in the long run the cost to the treasury would be less than under the existing system. As it was, when a shortage of grain caused the cost of living to rise above a certain point, the government had to sell grain at a heavy loss till the crisis was passed. But a man as politically minded as Gracchus could not possibly have overlooked the political implications of the policy. It is a fair assumption that he figured, with a modern American director of relief, that "ninety per cent of these people are naturally with us." In starting the project he was thinking of votes as well as of human needs.

As this is one of the most famous pieces of social legislation in antiquity, we may here summarize its development and later history. Events proved how dangerous a necessary public subsidy may become under political pressure. There was no means test. Anyone willing to stand in the bread line could take advantage of the low price. There were perhaps fifty thousand who applied at first. But the number kept increasing.

Unfortunately, in the absence of government reports the record at times is hazy. When the senatorial machine regained control after the death of Gracchus, it dared not abolish the sale of cheap wheat, but it modified the law in the interest of economy.

Twenty years later a leader with large ambitions sought popularity by proposing to reduce the price to four cents a bushel. If this proposal was adopted it was soon annulled. Later as part of the budget-balancing activities of a conservative government under Sulla, who had an army at his back, the cheap wheat was withdrawn.

This economy could not be maintained in the face of public pressure. Shortly afterwards in a period of great unrest the government restored cheap wheat and 200,000 persons appeared as purchasers. Then a smart politician named Clodius ran for tribune on a free-wheat platform, and won. A decade later when Julius Cæsar came to power he found 320,000 persons were on grain relief. He had plans for taking care of at least part of the unemployed through a large-scale Resettlement Administration. As dictator he no longer needed the votes of citizens on the dole. To promote migration of the unemployed he brought pressure on those who were unwilling to leave the exciting life of the capital, by ordering the relief rolls cut to 150,000 with a means test. Eighty thousand citizens were sent overseas. The fact that as a result of these measures some ninety thousand persons were left unprovided for and that there are no reports that any of them starved may have a certain significance. It is a fair assumption that people were going to the government for relief who might

have got on without it. Such imposition has been heard of even in modern times.

Under the Empire the rolls were maintained and finally food relief was greatly extended and made hereditary. The progress of direct relief in Rome is a conspicuous example of the menacing possibilities of pressure groups.

As for Gracchus, his vision extended beyond Rome. He was the first really Italian statesman. A grievance was cherished by the Italian cities that had fought with Rome against Carthage and in the subsequent wars. They had not been put on a political equality with Rome by the grant of Roman citizenship. Shortly before Gracchus came into office one of the important central Italian cities had revolted against this injustice and had been destroyed. The tribune sensed the growing discontent which only a few years later was to lead to a civil war that cost thousands of lives. He was not satisfied with having created, at least temporarily, a democratic party. He desired to continue to make the party an agency of progress. He took the statesmanlike view and became the champion of the wronged Italian cities. Success would have averted the future bitter struggle.

The proposals of Gracchus to extend Roman citizenship gave his eager enemies an opening. As tribune he had to stand for election every year. His

opponents resorted to a political trick that is familiar today. They put up a candidate against him who promised impossible gifts of colonial land to the people and appealed to the hundred-per-cent Roman sentiment against sharing citizenship with outsiders. The people deserted their leader and he was defeated. In a riot that followed, the great reformer was killed. His biographer gives a moving account of the circumstances of his death. With a sprained ankle he had escaped across the Tiber, his enemies in hot pursuit. As he limped along, those whose champion he had been encouraged him and wished him success, "as standers-by may do to those who are engaged in a race." But nobody in that stolid throng would furnish him the horse for which he asked. In a little grove in which he finally hid he was overtaken and met his death.

The influence of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus did not die with them. "At every turn in the paths of political life," says the English historian A. H. J. Greenidge, "the Roman statesman was confronted by two figures whom fear or admiration raised to gigantic proportions. . . . The youth, the brotherhood, the martyrdom of the men were the very elements that gave a softening radiance to the hard contour of their lives. The Gracchi were a stern and ever present reality; they were also a bright and gracious memory. In either character they must have lived; but the com-

bination of both presentments had secured them an immortality which age, wisdom, experience and success have often struggled vainly to secure."

The devotion of Cornelia to her sons has become a legend. It was she about whom the famous story is told that when a lady showed her jewels to Cornelia and asked to see Cornelia's, the mother brought out her sons, saying: "These are my jewels." The spirit in which she took their death is described by Mr. Greenidge in a passage of classic beauty. "That strange feeling," he writes, "which a great and beautiful life has often inspired, that it belongs to eternity rather than to the immediate past, and that it has few points of contact with the prosaic round of present existence, had almost banished from Cornelia's mind the selfish instincts of her loss, and had perhaps even dulled the tender memories which cluster round the frailer rather than the stronger elements in the characters of those we love. Those who visited her in her villa at Misenum, where she kept her intellectual court, surrounded by all that was best in letters, and exchanging greetings or gifts with the potentates of the earth, were amazed at the composure with which she spoke of the lives and actions of her sons. The memory drew no tear, her voice conveyed no intonation of sorrow or regret. She spoke of them as though they were historical figures of the past, men too distant and too great to arouse the weak emotion which dark-

ens contemplation. Some thought that her mind had been shaken by age, or that her sensibility had been dulled by misfortune. 'In this they proved their own lack of sensibility,' says the loving biographer of the Gracchi. They did not know, he adds, the signs of that nobility of soul which is sometimes given by birth and is always perfected by culture, or the reasonable spirit of endurance which mental and moral excellence supply. The calmness of Cornelia proved, as well, that she was at one with her children after their death, and their identity with a mind so pure is as great a tribute to their motives as the admiration or fear of the Romans is to their intellect and their deeds. Cornelia deserved a memorial in Rome for her own intrinsic worth; but the demeanour of her latter days justifies the legend engraved on the statue which was to be seen in the portico of Metellus: 'To Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi.'

The younger Gracchus, as I have said, set out to challenge the authority of the senatorial machine with his coalition democratic party. For a brief time he succeeded. Appian makes the acute observation that under Gracchus "political power was turned upside down. The power was in the hands of Big Business. Empty honour was left to the Senate." The coalition soon went to pieces. But the business leaders had learned that their group held the balance of power. They adopted the policy so successfully used

in the American labour movement by Samuel Gompers. Under Gompers, organized labour supported whichever party seemed to offer the greater inducements. Big Business joined the Popular party of small business men, farmers, and relievers to obtain its objectives. When the Popular party swung too far to the left, the important business leaders allied themselves with the conservative senatorial machine. For a good share of the last republican century Big Business was able to exert a strong influence on the policies of the government.

The chief policies in which the business group was interested had to do with territorial expansion and the exploitation of the conquered provinces. The conservative senators shrank from the annexation of additional territory. This presented governmental problems which they were not ready to undertake. But new lands brought under Roman control gave the business men opportunities for profitable investments, for handling government contracts, for lending money, and for opening new markets for trade. Rome became the banking centre and clearing house of the world. Cicero boasted that not a single transaction could take place in southern Gaul without an entry in a Roman account-book.

The history of the contracts that were let for tax-collections belongs to the seamy side of Roman expansion. The Republic had no permanent civil service

for provincial administration. Following a common practice, it let five-year contracts to business syndicates. These paid the taxes in lump sums and the government was relieved of all trouble. But in certain provinces the syndicates would extort enough taxes in the five-year period above what was due Rome to enrich their members. The evil reputation of the oppressive tax-collectors, the *publicani*, has come down to us from the New Testament references to "publicans and sinners." "Wherever the publican penetrates," wrote Livy, "there is no more justice or liberty for anyone." With the backing of troops tax-collecting frequently became organized plundering. These conditions were not universal. There were parts of the Empire in western Europe and northern Africa where taxes were not farmed. These were generally free from extortion and the condition of their people was much improved under Roman rule. It would be a distorted picture that presented Rome's colonial government as everywhere oppressive. Nevertheless provincial extortion had become a glaring evil.

In connection with provincial dealings and contracts there were many opportunities for shrewd business men to pick up money on the side. They could hold Asiatic grain that they had collected for taxes and sell at high winter prices. They could speculate in land that went on the market at distressed prices

during unsettled times, knowing that values would advance under the Roman peace. They could lend money to cities at high rates of interest, running to four or five per cent a month.

Marcus Junius Brutus, one of those grim republicans who murdered Julius Cæsar, was a man universally respected for his integrity. Yet he saw nothing out of the way in lending the city of Salamis a large sum of money at forty-eight per cent a year and then bringing pressure on the provincial Governor to use troops to collect the debt. It was in the judicial proceedings for trying provincial governors for extortion that one of the Gracchan laws proved an instrument of oppression, wholly contrary to the purposes of the reformer who obtained its adoption. In the time of Gracchus governors accused of extortion were tried by juries made up of senators, men of their own class and naturally sympathetic with them. To avoid this abuse, Gracchus substituted business men for senators. But an unforeseen evil developed. If an honest governor tried to protect the provincials from exactions from a tax-collecting syndicate, its stockholders could frame up charges against him and have him tried by a jury whose members might be financially interested in the syndicate that he had antagonized. The make-up of these juries became one of the important issues between the senatorial machine and

the big business operators. So often do reforms produce unhappy consequences!

How the business group intervened in politics is apparent in several incidents. There was a civil war in northern Africa in which a considerable number of representatives of Roman commercial houses were killed. The Senate was reluctant to prosecute a punitive war which might bring Rome a new province to govern. An expeditionary force was conducting a half-hearted campaign when the business crowd intervened. It stirred up the Assembly in defiance of the Senate to investigate the conduct of the war and finally to send a new general, Marius, of humble origin, to replace the dilatory aristocratic commander.

Another incident was in connection with the depredations of pirates in the Mediterranean. Rome had been too preoccupied with other matters to police the seas, and the pirates had multiplied and become a serious menace to commerce. While the Senate finally sent forces against them, it never was particularly concerned about trade. The campaign was allowed to drift. The business men were outraged, and when pirate raids threatened the capital's grain-supply public sentiment reacted against senatorial incompetence. The Senate's dignity could not prevail against the soaring price of wheat. A magistrate proposed to the Assembly that Pompey, a competent mid-

dle-class general, be given extraordinary powers to deal with the situation. The Senate strenuously objected to such a surrender of its authority. A tribune was found to interpose a veto and announce that the new command would be set up only over his dead body. But the magistrate who had proposed the bill now invoked the principle of the recall, which Tiberius Gracchus had used. As the vote proceeded and it was apparent that the obstructionist would be removed from office he withdrew his veto and the bill passed. Pompey was allowed three years for the task. But he acted with such energy that within three months the pirates had been virtually swept from the seas.

Still another instance of business intervention in the field of government had to do with Asia Minor. This had proved a profitable field for Roman business, especially for the tax-collecting corporations. Mithridates, an able native ruler of a kingdom beyond the Roman province, had raised the cry of "Asia for the Asiatics" and invaded Roman territory. I have already referred to the sudden massacre of the unpopular Italian business men instigated by him. The war to expel the invader dragged along. Dividends in Asiatic stocks widely held in Rome were suspended. Finally the business men forced a transfer of the command from the senatorial general to Pompey, who they believed was sympathetic with their

policy of expansion. They depended on him, not merely to end the war, but to find excuse for annexing additional territory to which government contracts for taxes and public works might be extended.

The feverish business and speculative activity that had sprung up in Rome with the great era of expansion continued to enrich the few at the expense of the many. The situation would have been different if the new capital could have been used to develop industries whose production would have been distributed in wages and salaries to the benefit of the whole community. But such a use requires a degree of industrialization that was wholly lacking in ancient Italy. The wealth that flowed in was concentrated in a comparatively few hands. It was spent on luxuries from abroad, on maintaining large slave establishments, on big country estates, and sometimes on investments in the provinces. It created few new jobs. There was little chance for the poor man to get ahead. In spite of the primitive economic ideas of the time, these significant facts did not escape contemporary observers. One of them wrote that "conquests enriched the wealthy and impoverished the poor."

Reckless speculation induced by easy money had the usual consequences. Business men became overextended. The panic of 86 B.C., and a severe depression less than a quarter of a century later, testified to the unhealthiness of the economic situation.

Civil war in Italy, which Gaius Gracchus had tried to prevent, led to a slump in the value of real estate, the chief form of investment in Rome. A few years previously the government had attempted to meet extravagant expenditures by devaluing the currency. This had added to the uncertainty. As Cicero remarked, no one was able to tell what he was really worth. Then came the shock of extensive losses in Asia. In this emergency the government dominated by the Popular party enacted a bankruptcy law by which debts were scaled down by seventy-five per cent. The financial stringency was relieved by spoils from the Asiatic provinces. But the lesson of the panic was soon forgotten. Within a few years the gambling spirit again permeated Italian society and wild land speculation became general. Looking back near the close of his life, Cicero wrote of conditions in the year 63 B.C. that at no time in his recollection was the world so heavily involved in debt. "Never," he said, "were measures for the repudiation of debts more strenuously agitated. Men of every sort and rank attempted with arms and armies to force the project through."

An explosion came in the famous conspiracy of Catiline in the very year to which Cicero referred. It is worth examining briefly for the light it throws on the bitterness between the oligarchy of wealth and the submerged masses that flared up under the strain

of the depression. Catiline has come down to us from accounts written by his bitter enemies as a villain of purest ray serene, an upper-class gangster, the unsuccessful leader of a dangerous conspiracy. But four years after his death the populace strewed flowers upon his tomb. He must have had redeeming qualities. An enigmatical fellow, this Catiline; embittered by political failure, heavily in debt, courageous, dashing, magnetic, driven by combined ambition and sympathy for the forgotten man. Our accounts of him are based chiefly on the writings of Sallust and Cicero. Sallust had been proconsular Governor of Numidia. "Thereafter he retired from public affairs and lived in great splendour, having acquired his wealth, it was said, by extortion in his province." Cicero was Rome's leading lawyer, with a \$175,000 mansion on the Palatine and several country estates. To him the Popular party was made up of the "scum and dregs of the town," the "miserable starveling rabble." In their attitude toward Catiline these men probably were no more objective than modern industrial leaders would be in discussing issues in a bitter labour controversy today.

Vituperation was even more common and more extreme in Roman controversies than it is in modern campaigns in America. The "smearing" attacks by American politicians are not taken seriously by disinterested observers. Reading the violent language

used against Catiline we are constantly reminded of gutter politics at home. In the light of American experience we cannot be sure of the facts in this ancient conspiracy case, especially in the prelude. Certainly we have abundant reason to discount some of the charges made. A century later accusations on a similar scale were circulated against the Emperor Tiberius. They no longer are believed.

What has completed the damnation of Catiline in the eyes of historians is a letter he wrote to an aged aristocrat, an old friend, just before he left Rome to join the rebel farmers who had been attracted to his cause. He is determined, he says, to publish no defence of his course, but he feels he owes an explanation to a friend. He has suffered injuries and indignities. Robbed of the fruit of his exertions, he has been defeated for the honour of the consulship, which he had fairly earned. So, he adds, "I have undertaken, as is my wont, the public cause of the distressed."

Anyone who condemns Catiline as merely a self-seeking demagogue on the strength of this letter is unfamiliar with the political mentality. In an acquaintance with American political leaders covering many years, I do not recall a single one who did not combine personal ambition with a desire, in varying degrees, to serve the public. Indeed, without the personal motive a man does not become a successful politician. In the heated Bull Moose campaign of

1912, Theodore Roosevelt on one occasion frankly avowed that he would show the Republican bosses that "they can't do this to me," referring to the steam-roller methods used to prevent his obtaining the Republican nomination for President. I knew Colonel Roosevelt fairly well, and I recognized his faults. But there is not the slightest question in my mind that desire to be of public service in the troubled years preceding the World War was dominant with him, although it was mixed with a human determination to get back at his political enemies. In his letter to his friend, Catiline merely shows himself a typical politician.

Undoubtedly Catiline was a man of violent nature. "If a fire is lighted against me," he is quoted by Cicero as saying, "I shall put it out, not by water, but by pulling down the roof of things." That he regarded himself as the leader of the helpless masses is shown by another remark that Cicero has preserved. "There are two bodies in the state," he said. "One is feeble with a feeble head" (here he was referring to the oligarchy). "The other is strong but headless. While I live this strong body shall never lack a head while it deserves one." This boast might have come from any turbulent leader of the cause of the oppressed in recent times — from John Brown of Osawatomie, for instance.

A speech of Catiline to his followers, quoted by

Sallust, shows the underlying bitterness among the people, to which he was appealing. "Everything," he says, "is monopolized by a proud and insolent oligarchy; power, riches, honours are in the hands of the few, or scantily dealt out among their creatures, at their will and pleasure. To us they have left nothing but disgrace, contempt, and danger, the terror of prosecutions, and the pangs of gripping poverty. . . . We have beggary at home, a load of debts abroad; desolation before our eyes, and not the smallest hope of relief to assuage our misery. In a word, the breath we draw is all that is left for us."

A case may be made for Catiline on the assumption that he turned to conspiracy and violence only after he had lost hope for reform through political action as he became convinced that he never could win a consulship.

In his campaign for consul in the summer of 63 B.C. his formal program is not clear, and it is quite possible he had none. It has been suggested that he urged the stock left-wing proposal of the time — cancellation of the general indebtedness, which Cicero mentioned, called in Rome the "clean-slate" policy. But this would not have reached the mass of the people. It seems more likely that he was appealing to all the discontented elements while pledging himself to nothing in particular. But if he did not declare openly for the clean-slate policy, he soon was sus-

pected of intending this and perhaps even more violent measures.

In any event his campaign was disturbing enough to frighten business men and precipitate the panic of 63 B.C. The foundation for it had been laid by the speculation in land and the widespread indebtedness just mentioned. Loans were generally called and there was a flight of gold from Italy. The discontent from the depression had given Catiline his chance. The panic caused his defeat. It rallied all the conservatives against him. The government acted vigorously to stop the flight of gold, as the United States government acted under similar circumstances in March 1933. An embargo was put on gold exports. At the same time the help of Q. Considius, one of the leading financiers of Rome, was enlisted. He held a position in the financial world very like that of the first J. P. Morgan in Wall Street. His outstanding loans at this time were in the neighbourhood of three-quarters of a million dollars. An announcement from him that he would extend credit at easy rates was important enough to receive a vote of thanks from the Senate. The combined action of government and financier allayed the panic.

The parallel to what happened in the United States in the panic of 1907 is close. Frenzied speculation had led to a severe financial strain. In October of that year when the Knickerbocker Trust Company of

New York failed and the National Bank of America went down, a wave of fear swept the country. In the New York Stock Exchange there was a day of terror and nobody would lend. The interest rate shot up to 150 per cent. President Theodore Roosevelt sent his Secretary of the Treasury to confer with the leading New York bankers. J. Pierpont Morgan sat at the head of the table. While we have no record, we may guess that the same thing happened in the Roman Forum in 63 B.C., with Considius taking charge. Under Morgan's direction a pool of twenty-five million dollars was raised to be lent at 10 per cent. Gradually the situation was worked out and the panic subsided.

Doubtless the disappearance of Catiline contributed to the reassurance of business. Defeated in the consular election, he had planned an armed revolt. Evidence was difficult to obtain. His followers were held by a strange magnetism. A reward of ten thousand dollars offered by the government failed to produce a traitor who would betray the plot. But the net was closing around the conspirators. Catiline left Rome and joined a band that had rallied to his standard north of Florence. It was made up of evicted farmers and distressed ex-service men; some three thousand under arms. Here early in 62 B.C. he fell in a battle with government troops sent to quell the insurrection. So desperate were his men that not a sin-

gle free Roman among them survived. "A fine man wasted," is the verdict of a sober English historian, W. E. Heitland.

The panic left its aftermath of trouble. Presumably in Rome as in New York there were concerns that were too heavily involved to survive. But a few months later Roman conditions were greatly relieved by large additions to the gold reserve. Pompey came home with millions in precious metals that he had expropriated in his successful campaigns in Asia. As a result of the easy money now available the situation became normal.

Meanwhile a revolutionary change had been taking place in one arm of the government. Its significance nobody had understood, least of all its originator. It ended the Republic and brought in the Empire. The old citizen army was replaced by a semi-professional army on a new basis. At the close of the second century B.C., Italy was threatened with invasion from the north. Marius of North African fame was repeatedly elected consul to deal with the danger, which he did with complete success. As consul he was empowered to raise the necessary troops. He realized the difficulty of conscripting enough soldiers from the depleted farms of Italy and of whipping the raw farmers into a disciplined armed force. He called for volunteers. Veterans, unemployed, and unattached men flocked in, attracted by the prospect

of adventure and the rewards that a liberal general might offer from successful campaigns. Thus was created a volunteer army of mercenaries who looked to their commanders rather than to the state. Thereafter until the reorganization of the army under Augustus, the government bowed to the general who could control the soldiers.

In Rome's situation, large armies were required for the frontiers and no civil power could long stand against an ambitious commander of the legions. In the last years of the Republic the young Octavian, whom we know better by his later title of Augustus, insisted that the Senate authorize his election as consul while he was still under legal age. Objection was raised. But the officer who bore the commander's message threw off his soldier's jacket and showed the hilt of his sword. "This shall do the deed if you will not," he exclaimed. The Senate temporized and then yielded when it learned that Octavian was marching on Rome with eight legions. Nearly two thousand years later another Roman government was to capitulate before another march on Rome headed by the man who was to become the Duce, Leader, as Octavian was to become the Princeps, First Citizen.

For eighty years and more the business interests, except for short intervals, had more or less dominated the government. Under their direction Rome had been defended from fierce attacks from without, and

as a result of pressure from them its boundaries had been extended. They had proved much more successful in foreign affairs than in domestic. Today we may recognize, as contemporaries could not, two major defects in their administration. While the capital, in spite of outbursts of savagery in the civil wars, had become increasingly a centre of civilized living, this was confined to the well-to-do. The condition of the impoverished masses had been ignored except for the providing of relief and free amusements. Doubtless, and perhaps naturally, the average Roman business man felt that these provisions fulfilled the state's full duty to the less fortunate. The second defect proved speedily disastrous to the Republic. The problems involved in creating the new mercenary army were not appreciated. Even if they had been, the men in control lacked the statesmanship for their solution. With Marius and the succeeding holders of high commands, the supreme authority was passing to the master of the legions. Out of the conflicting ambitions of military leaders emerged a great soldier and administrator. It was the destiny of Julius Cæsar to bring western Europe into the orbit of civilization and to prepare the way for the Empire. On January 11, 49 B.C., when Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, the long history of the Republic was approaching the end.



## CHAPTER VIII

# THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

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IT was under the Republic that Rome marched farthest, although its expansion continued into the second century after Christ. When Cæsar came into power the little settlement of shepherds on the Tiber had extended its dominion around the basin of the Mediterranean and over western Europe from Gibraltar to the Rhine. A tremendous job it had been. "It was such a toil," wrote Virgil, "to found the Roman race."

This vast achievement that affected the whole future of the Western world had been carried out under the direction of a city that had gradually grown from a village to a great cosmopolitan centre. In the last years of the Republic, Rome was not yet the magnifi-

cent city it was to become under the Empire. But for the rich it was a centre of luxurious living. They had great mansions on the hills. A rich aristocratic demagogue paid \$740,000 for his estate on the Palatine. Much of the value probably was in the land, which had become expensive with the growth of the city. Cæsar later paid \$5,000,000 for land which he bought for the expansion of the Forum. It was fashionable to have country estates as well as town houses. Besides his establishment on the Palatine, Cicero had eight country villas to which he liked to retire from the bustling life of the city. The lovely bay of Naples, two days' journey from Rome, was a favourite resort. Its shores were studded with villas. The living in the great houses was on an extravagant scale. Anyone with the slightest pretensions to social standing must have at least ten slaves, and a well-to-do family might have two hundred. A skilful cook cost five thousand dollars.

The absence of modern transportation facilities caused a concentration of population. The poor lived in wretchedly built flats which often were swept by destructive fires. One of the big business men of the capital became notorious for the way in which he took advantage of the frequent fires for making money. At this time there was no fire department in Rome. When there was a fire he would appear on the scene with a large staff of trained slaves. He would

find the owners of the burning building and of buildings that were threatened, and make them distress offers which they were glad to accept. Then his private firemen would go to work to save the property.

Rentals for quarters in the slum districts were cheap. Young Sulla, who was to be heard from later, paid \$12.50 a month for his flat. The man who lived in the flat above him paid \$8.50. We read of one bachelor in comfortable circumstances who paid \$125 a month for his apartment. The poor, of course, had the dole, public baths open at a nominal fee, and the elaborate entertainments of races, wild beast hunts on a temporary platform built in the Forum, and the brutal gladiatorial combats. These last were a survival from the primitive religion of the Etruscans, Rome's immediate neighbours to the north. After a nobleman's death his retainers and slaves killed each other in fights at his funeral so he would have a proper escort in the lower world. The combats introduced into Rome in the middle of the third century B.C. were regarded as exciting spectacles, no more shocking to the spectators than a modern bull fight.

In the Roman world, trade followed the flag and Roman bankers and brokers were established in the provinces wherever business was to be transacted. Offices were set up in the Forum. Bankers accepted checquing accounts as well as accounts bearing interest. They were prepared to furnish bills of ex-

## THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

change and letters of credit. Luxuries imported from the provinces met the interest on foreign investments or were paid for out of the spoils of conquest.

Rome had been demoralized by its own success. Problems arising from the extension of slavery, the concentration of wealth, the farm problem in Italy, and the unemployment problem in the capital were threatening to wreck the Republic. Sudden wealth had gone to men's heads. We often see the effect in America today. The new rich frequently become arrogant. Their children as often are both snobbish and worthless. It was so in Rome of the first century. Cicero wrote that moral sense was depraved by wealth. As for the unemployed who flocked to the big city, their character was weakened by idleness. The Gracchus brothers saw clearly the evils. Tiberius tried to deal with the farm problem. When he failed, Gaius attempted to organize a democratic party as an instrument of public service. But the popular Assembly proved no more competent than the decadent Senate to govern a city that, in turn, governed a vast empire. The wretchedly poor people, who constituted the majority of the voters, were largely for sale. It is hard, as Benjamin Franklin observed, for an empty sack to stand upright.

The business crowd, whose political manœuvring was traced in the last chapter, was naturally concerned with Imperial defence. It was this group that,

against the protests of an unwilling and stupid aristocracy, forced the elevation of the competent son of a small Italian farmer to the supreme command. Marius has been described as "a peasant of genius, slow-witted, inelastic, a good soldier but a blundering politician." Organizing and drilling his volunteer army, he threw back invaders from the north so effectively that it was five hundred years before Rome was again threatened.

With no aptitude for political life, he might have retired at the end of the war, but he was forced into politics to make sure that his soldiers received the rewards he had promised them. As he had sprung from the people and had won his command over the opposition of the senatorial machine, he naturally became the leader of the democratic, or Popular, party. In this position he was surrounded by cleverer men who knew exactly what they wanted. They professed allegiance to the program of Gaius Gracchus. But they lacked the character and the ability of that great leader. Their turbulent regime alienated the powerful business group that naturally wanted law and order in Rome. It turned to the senatorial machine, and the coalition persuaded Marius to use his troops to crush his former friends.

Meanwhile, as Gracchus had foreseen, the Italian cities grew increasingly restive because of the denial to them of the advantage of Roman citizenship.

## THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

When a conservative reformer, who had become their champion, was assassinated, the discontent flamed into revolt. In the violent civil war that followed, a brilliant young aristocrat, a former lieutenant of Marius's, demonstrated again his military ability. Sulla, whose cheap bachelor quarters have been mentioned, came of a distinguished though impoverished family. His success as a soldier led to his election as consul. Another war had broken out in the East, and the Senate awarded him the Asiatic command. Marius was jealous of the younger man and a violent conflict followed in which civil government virtually disappeared in the clash of armed forces. Here was set the evil precedent of the purge of the opponents of the regime in power that was followed in the modern dictatorships. In Sulla's absence Marius took delirious vengeance on his aristocratic enemies. After the death of Marius, Sulla returned with his legions from his Asiatic assignment and carried out a massacre that left a lasting stigma on his memory.

The new dictator was a Tory aristocrat, genial and gay in his lighter moods, but ruthless in carrying out his policies. His biographer describes his blue eyes, keen and glaring, made the more forbidding by his complexion, white, covered with red blotches — "like a mulberry sprinkled with meal," a verse-writer said. His anger was directed chiefly at the rich busi-

ness men who had backed Marius. In spite of his energy he longed to retire from public life and become a gentleman sportsman. It has been surmised that his purge had a double purpose. He wanted to get rid of every individual who might be a menace to him in his retirement, and he was determined to collect enough money from the estates of those he proscribed to give satisfactory rewards to his soldiers. The story of the hunting down of those on his death list, as recorded by later writers, makes sickening reading.

In one of the fragments of his autobiography that has been preserved he gave his principle of action. "All my most happy resolutions," he wrote, "have been the result, not of reasoning, but of momentary inspiration." Statesmanship was hardly to be expected from such a source. A natural reactionary, he planned to revise the Constitution and set up a conservative government free from the menace of popular control. He did this and then retired. Upon his tombstone he had engraved an epitaph that set forth the rest of his philosophy of life. It ran: "No friend has ever served, no enemy has ever wronged me whom I have not repaid in full."

The Sullan Constitution gave the senatorial machine its last chance. It lacked the old capacity to make the machine work. Besides, the careers of Marius and Sulla had demonstrated that the control

of the government had passed to any able army commander who was ambitious enough to seize it. Such a man had been developing in this disturbed period in a rising young politician. Julius Cæsar, whose aunt, Julia, was the wife of Marius, founded his career on a famous remark of his uncle's. "The law," Marius had said, "speaks too softly to be heard amid the din of arms." This appealed to the realism of his brilliant nephew. In view of the record, he must have seen that he could not go far in politics without an army at his command. Meanwhile it was necessary to get popular support. All his affiliations were with the Marian Popular party. In the reaction against the excesses of Sulla, it was coming back to power and Cæsar naturally identified himself with it, although there is no reason to suppose he had the slightest confidence in any government dominated by the Assembly.

Cæsar was a dashing young aristocrat. His biographer describes him as tall and good-looking, with keen black eyes. He was fastidious in his dress and he hated growing bald. He used to comb his hair forward to cover the bald spot, and later he greatly valued the privilege of wearing a laurel wreath which the Senate voted him, because it hid his baldness. He combined a superb intelligence with the born executive's quickness of decision and action. Cicero thought him a most effective speaker and he became

a popular idol. His soldiers, whom he called "comrades," adored him. The spell he cast upon men was shown at the time when, as a young man, he was captured and held prisoner by pirates. Although his life was in danger for a month before he was ransomed, he used to joke with his captors. When he wanted to sleep he would send word to them with supreme nonchalance not to make so much noise. Occasionally he would call the pirates together to hear him recite verses he had written. Those that seemed bored he would denounce as illiterate barbarians and he would threaten to come back and crucify them. They took it as good clean fun. But after his release he kept his word. He got together some armed men on ships, surprised the pirates, and put them all to death.

The sort of exuberant conversation that charmed his friends, as well as the pirates, is illustrated in a remark he made when deeply in debt. He needed, he said, something more than a million dollars "in order to have nothing at all." The young man's debts were the talk of the town. But they were not the usual debts of the young spendthrifts of the time. They represented a coolly calculating investment in politics. When he was appointed Governor of Farther Spain he was so deeply involved that his creditors threatened to seize his baggage and refused to let him depart until he had arranged with his rich backer, Crassus, to satisfy them. In Spain he re-

couped himself from the proceeds of campaigns which resulted in confiscations and the sale of captives — all part of the unhappy game of conquest.

Cæsar returned from Spain to be elected consul. He was getting on in the world. He had a colleague, Bibulus, theoretically with equal authority. But where Macgregor sat, there was the head of the table. Bibulus was stubborn and stupid. Jokers began to sign legal documents: "Done in the consulship of Julius and Cæsar." In furtherance of his political ambition Cæsar had made an alliance with his former angel, Crassus, and with Pompey, now Rome's most distinguished general. Pompey had been disappointed in not being able to persuade the Senate to provide proper compensation for his veterans in the form of land allotments. He had too much respect for the Constitution to summon his ex-service men to intimidate the Senate, or perhaps he lacked the nerve until the new consul bucked him up. Cæsar had no scruples in meeting what he regarded as unscrupulous opposition and he had all the courage in the world. What followed is interesting not merely for what it shows of Cæsar's tendencies, but also for its disclosure of a Roman filibuster in operation. The record is confused, but it seems to have been essentially this:

Cæsar proposed a bill for the purchase of land to be distributed among Pompey's veterans and the

urban poor. The conservatives in the Senate did not especially object to the provisions of the measure. They did object, however, to any bill that might increase the popularity of Cæsar, whom they distrusted. Unwilling to reject the bill outright, they resorted to a filibuster. In the United States Senate a group of senators occasionally bands together to talk a bill to death. The Roman senators attempted to do the same thing to the land bill. They discussed the bill at such length that Cæsar found it impossible to bring it to a vote. However, in Rome the Senate's consent was not necessary to a law, and Cæsar finally took his bill direct to the Assembly, disregarding the Senate. In the Assembly Bibulus met the bill with a flat veto and constitutionally this should have ended the matter. Cæsar, however, had few constitutional scruples and he met obstruction with violence. Bibulus was driven from the Forum by the mob, which probably included many of Pompey's veterans. Then the bill was illegally passed. In theory the Senate had the right to declare it null and void, but prudence was so plainly the better part of valour that no action was taken.

After this experience the obstructionists took advantage of an old religious custom. If one of the magistrates announced that he had observed an unfavourable omen, the Assembly was automatically adjourned. The omens had long since come to be

used for political purposes. Bibulus had failed to stop Cæsar's land bill, but he had made its passage illegal. He was resolved to do the same for all other measures of Cæsar or his friends, but he did not care to face the mob again. So he shut himself up in his house and announced unfavourable omens on every day on which the Assembly could meet. At the moment the Senate was too frightened to do anything, but Bibulus doubtless hoped that its courage would revive in the future.

Having won the first round, Cæsar went rapidly ahead with his program, and a second land law was soon brought before the Assembly. There was still a considerable tract of public land in Campania which had survived the Gracchan legislation. Cæsar proposed to distribute this among the ex-service men and the fathers of families with at least three children. This was passed with no organized opposition. In the interim Cæsar had been voted a provincial governorship that carried with it authority to recruit three legions. He got busy at once. Frank Burr Marsh suggests that the fact that Cæsar's troops were camped outside the city may have had something to do with the fading of opposition to the second bill.

Then, animated by what one of his contemporaries called his "inbred decency," Cæsar drove through a law intended to end abuses in provincial administration. At the same time he won the support of a big

tax corporation which had overbid the possibilities of tax-collections and was asking for relief. He induced the Assembly to remit one third of the sum the syndicate had contracted to pay and advised it to be more careful in its bidding in the future.

During his consulship he had obtained the provincial command just referred to. It included northern Italy and the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Southern Gaul was afterward added. The command was for five years. Later this period was extended. Now his career was opening. It is needless to assume that Cæsar at this time had planned his future. He was a magnificent opportunist who would have sympathized with Theodore Roosevelt in saying: "I know what I want to do now, and I know what I want to do next, but after that I don't know." Cæsar appreciated the fact that the Roman Republic was only a shell; that it was at the mercy of any general at the head of an army that was loyal to him; that the Gallic command gave him the chance to create such an army. As a young magistrate on official duties in the West he had come in contact with the Gauls and may have learned of the divisions among them which made their conquest possible. Whether he appreciated the importance to the Empire of the province he was to conquer can be only surmised. His famous *Memoirs*, through which the American student is introduced to Latin literature, are so objectively written

## THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

that they give no clue to what was in his mind. In any event, in a long series of brilliant campaigns he laid the foundations of modern France and proved himself among the great captains of history.

Up to the last decades of the Republic the Roman world had been primarily a Mediterranean empire and civilization. Spain, indeed, had been taken over after the defeat of Carthage. But until the time of Cæsar, it has been said, Europe had not come into existence. The peoples of what are now France and southern Germany had been ignored by Roman statesmen except on those rare occasions when they had become a military menace and it was necessary to drive them back. But Julius Cæsar, as a recent writer, Christopher Dawson, puts it, by his personal initiative and military genius "dragged western Europe out of its barbaric isolation and united it with the civilized society of the Mediterranean world." His legacy has lasted to the present age.

During his long absence from Rome on these campaigns his enemies were busy. The aristocrats, now in alliance with the wealthy business men, regarded him as a dangerous radical. They feared a new Gracchan reform program if the successful commander were allowed to come back in an official capacity. He might propose a redistribution of wealth, the wiping out of mortgages, the cancellation of debts. As the time drew near when he proposed to return

and run again for consul, the Senate ordered him to disband his troops and declared martial law. Cæsar knew better than to trust himself undefended in a capital controlled by his enemies. He responded to the senatorial edict by crossing the Rubicon, the little stream a few miles south of Ravenna that separated the province under his command from Italy proper. He had with him a brigade of five thousand men. Four days later the news reached Rome, to the dismay of the dominant plutocracy. Pompey, the general upon whom the Senate had depended, had broken with Cæsar. His boast was that he had only to stamp his foot and all Italy would flock to his standard. To the dismay of the senators, the foot-stamping failed to work. Instead word came that the Italian towns were going over to his rival. Pompey fled to Greece with such troops as he could gather and a large number of raw recruits. In Greece he was later defeated by Cæsar. Escaping to Egypt, he was treacherously killed as he was landing from the boat.

In the financial panic that followed the news of the Rubicon there was a collapse in real-estate values and a flight of capital. The Appian Way was blocked by wealthy refugees, taking all their movable property with them. They had misjudged their man. Cæsar wanted prosperity for Rome and for the Empire. In the few months that he had for work in the capital in the intervals allowed him by civil and foreign

## THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

wars, he showed himself a statesman with an Imperial outlook, of the Gracchan breed. He began a drastic reform of provincial administration and the extension of Roman citizenship to the provinces. At home he met the crisis, not by confiscation, but by liberal bankruptcy laws. Debtors were allowed to turn in their property to their creditors at its pre-war value, with deduction for interest already paid. This amounted to scaling down debts by about twenty-five per cent.

To prevent hoarding, stop the export of capital to the provinces, and at the same time bolster the real-estate market, Cæsar limited holdings of cash to three thousand dollars and decreed that investors put at least two thirds of their funds into Italian real estate. I already have referred to his reducing the relief rolls from 320,000 to 150,000, and settling 80,000 veterans and urban poor in towns in the provinces. To help provide work on the farms he enacted a law under which one third of all ranch hands must be freemen. Further to relieve unemployment and at the same time to stimulate trade, he planned to improve the harbour of Ostia and to cut a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth. There also was a proposal to drain the Pontine marshes and Lake Fucinus in order to add to the farm land of Italy.

“His aims,” says an English historian, Rice Holmes, “were to reconcile partisans and induce them to co-

operate with him for the common weal, to improve the machinery of government, to ameliorate social conditions, to minimize crime, to purify the administration of justice, to invigorate the moral tone of the rich, to stimulate manufacture and trade, to execute public works, to promote self-education, to introduce municipal reform, to remove the evils of provincial taxation, and to make the provincials feel they shared in the greatness of Rome."

, Cæsar had grown with responsibility. The daring young political demagogue had developed into a statesman with a world conception for the Empire. He was familiar with the mismanagement of Italy and the provinces by the influence of pressure groups upon the government of the Republic. From his actions we may infer his reorganization plans. There was to be a strong central government combined with a large measure of local autonomy built on self-governing cities. He believed he was the only disinterested man in Rome with the vision and ability to provide such a central government. This had to take the shape of a military autocracy supervising an expert civil service. Without such a powerful central authority there would be nothing to prevent a continuance of civil wars.

In this great program he never was able to obtain the co-operation of the influential old families who still cherished the dream of an aristocratic republic

such as had built the Empire. The senators were proud of their dignity and position. They might have submitted sullenly to becoming rubber stamps of a dictator. But when they saw him flooding the Senate with new men they rebelled.

Cæsar was the first great Roman internationalist. His plans indicated a purpose to extend Roman citizenship throughout the provinces. Apparently it was his desire to make the Senate representative of the Empire. He began adding to it, not only rising new men from Italy, outside of the old families. He even brought "semi-barbarous Gauls," as the senators called them, into the exclusive circle. He was increasing the number of magistrates who eventually would become members of the Senate and thus be elevated to the nobility. The House of Lords was being swamped with new peers. It was intolerable!

In contrast to Sulla, Cæsar had shown mercy to his enemies. The Senate was crowded with them. "You never forget anything," said Cicero to Cæsar, "except injuries." These personal opponents were reinforced by honest conservatives who believed under the ethical standards of the day that they were justified in killing a tyrant. That Cæsar had become an autocrat no one could doubt. That he had exercised his power tyrannically was untrue. As a preliminary to carrying out his larger plans of Imperial organization he had made himself supreme

in Rome. His command of the legions was the basis of his authority. Using the familiar forms, he had had himself repeatedly elected consul. He was given the tribunician power. This carried certain privileges, including personal inviolability. Finally he was made dictator. The dictatorship was an ancient Roman office, but it was conferred only for an emergency not exceeding six months. Cæsar was made dictator for life. With these powers he had become the uncrowned absolute monarch of Rome and the Empire. He was in charge of finances, public works, and civil and criminal jurisdiction. He supervised municipal administration. He was commander of all land and sea forces.

His accumulation of personal authority made it easy to organize a coalition of opponents to get rid of him. More than sixty conspirators joined the plot. Assassination cut short the career of the greatest genius Rome so far had produced.

His genius had not saved him from blunders. In his last years Cæsar did not show his customary keen and balanced judgment in dealing with complex problems. His fine gift of lucid thought that no emergency could confuse was blurred by his long series of triumphs. It is often the fate of great men to fall victims to their own success. Events so long have marched at their command that they expect the march to continue. They forget that events marched

## THE REPUBLIC COULDN'T STAND PROSPERITY

only because the road had been cleared by rigorous planning, by taking account of human moods and motives, by careful timing. At the end Cæsar misjudged the temper and the power of the Roman oligarchy. In enlarging the Senate he made it a mob of unworkable size. He flouted the ancient sentiment against monarchy. Impatiently he drove for the ends which he believed essential, without realizing the necessity of carrying public opinion with him. Léon Homo, French historian, has grounds for the remark that "with his own hands Cæsar made the conspiracy that killed him."

I have said that the failure of the Republic was due to the creation of the new army that no longer was subject to the civil authorities. It is difficult to believe that this situation would have developed without the deterioration in character of leaders and people that resulted from the get-rich-quick era. At the top of the social scale were the snobbish and incompetent aristocrats, at the bottom were the slaves, former slaves, and people permanently on relief. Republican Rome was overwhelmed by the glittering prosperity that had abruptly swept over it.



## CHAPTER IX

### DRIFT TO DICTATORSHIP

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WITH the assassination of Cæsar the conspirators assumed that the Republic would be automatically restored and would function as of old. They were wrong. Their victim himself had predicted the consequences of his death. His biographer wrote that Cæsar had said that if anything happened to him the Republic would have no peace but would relapse into civil war under worse conditions than ever. The scene in the Forum immediately after the murder forecast the difficulties ahead. The plotters, Appian writes, hoped to bribe part of the people and to win the support of the rest "from love of liberty and longing for the Republic." But, he continues, there had been a great admixture of foreign blood from the slaves and their descendants, and the dole had

## DRIFT TO DICTATORSHIP

attracted to Rome "the lazy, the beggars, and the vagrants of all Italy." Besides, many of Cæsar's veterans were in the city waiting for their bonus in the shape of land allotments. The crowd listened silently to the defence of the assassination. So the conspirators hurriedly decided to make terms with Cæsar's lieutenant, Mark Antony, who was in a position to get military backing.

At this juncture Cicero came to the front. This great patriot was a sort of combination of Daniel Webster and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He came from the middle class, which he had called "the true Roman people." First as an eloquent advocate at the bar, and then as senator, he had been able in his day to sway men by his oratory. His essays on politics, philosophy, religion, and humane living have influenced civilization for two thousand years. But he was a moderate in an age of extremists, an academic liberal rather than a realist. He dreamed of uniting the best people of all classes to maintain the Republic to which he was deeply devoted. He had the outsider's curious respect for the closed circle of those aristocrats who looked down on him as an upstart. He did not appreciate their short-sighted selfishness as it was appreciated by Cæsar, who belonged to them by birth. Blinded by his prejudices, he did not understand why the most substantial men in Rome, to say nothing of the mass of the people, should have been

distressed by the assassination. A business friend had written him: "If Cæsar could not find a way out of our difficulties, who can?" The old republican was sure that he could. When it became apparent that Antony had no notion of restoring the Republic but was ambitious to become another Cæsar, Cicero led the fight against him in a series of denunciatory speeches that we may still read. But his eloquence, it has been said, could not prevail against swords.

Meanwhile a young man had come to Rome who was to be a far more formidable opponent to the plans of the republicans than Antony. The future Augustus, then called Octavius and later Octavian, grand-nephew of Cæsar, was a boy of eighteen at the time of the assassination. His grandfather had been an Italian banker, his father a Roman magistrate. His mother was a daughter of Julia, Cæsar's sister. After Cæsar had returned from his campaigns he was attracted by the keen mind of his young grand-nephew and kept him with him as much of the time as was convenient. Undoubtedly the boy heard discussions of the plans for imperial reorganization. He was finishing his education in a little sea-coast town across the Adriatic when news came of Cæsar's death. His mother wrote him that his grand-uncle had been killed by "his enemies." "The time has come," she added, "when you must play the man, decide, and act, for no one can tell what may happen."

When the young man reached Italy he found that under Cæsar's will he had been adopted as the dictator's son and had been made heir to three fourths of his huge fortune. Now came a great political game in which the boy cautiously felt his way. The cards seemed stacked against him. Antony was a distinguished soldier, a man twice his age, and he was already consul. But Octavian's cool intelligence proved more than a match for his bluff soldier antagonist. He saw, as Cæsar had seen, that the Republic could not stand against armed force. But for the moment he played in with Cicero and the republicans. As the situation developed he gradually jockeyed himself into the position of champion of the Senate against Antony, who had become Governor of northern Italy, a position that brought him command of an army. The disturbances that followed gave Octavian a chance to make a deal with Antony under which eventually the older man was assigned to rule the rich Eastern provinces while Octavian took charge of Rome and the West. Before this arrangement was carried out, however, the two leaders, with a third who was taken in for convenience, decided on a purge to rid themselves of possible trouble-makers. In making up the list Antony insisted on including his most formidable enemy, Cicero. Octavian after some objection acquiesced.

The man thus condemned is one of the most ap-

pealing figures of all time. After his death nearly eight hundred of his letters were published by his friend Atticus and his secretary Tiro. They were not intended for publication and were written informally in all sorts of moods. Today we may pick them up in the Loeb Library translation and read at random with delight. All his faults are laid before us — his lack of scruples in attacking an adversary at the bar or in politics, his indecision at critical times, his domestic difficulties, his little vanities. A pleasantly human letter is one he wrote to a historian who was expecting in due course to deal with Cicero's consulate. "Can't you play me up?" he asks. "I really think I deserve it. And now that I've gone so far I might as well go the limit. I wish you would lay it on a bit thick, even if you should have to stretch the truth a trifle."

Cicero was making a futile fight to bring back the past. But his essential humanity shines through his correspondence and at the last he knew he was risking his life for principles in which he believed. He met the final sword-stroke without flinching. Three quarters of a century after his death an old cavalry officer, Velleius Paterculus, sat down to write a history of Rome. He admired Augustus and exonerates him from responsibility for Cicero's death. He was outvoted, the writer says, by his two associates. Antony he holds chiefly responsible. Then he explodes. "You accomplished nothing, Mark Antony," he

writes, “ — for my indignation compels me to speak — you accomplished nothing by the murder of this great man who once had saved the state. You took from Marcus Cicero a few years of old age, but you did not rob him of his fame and the glory of his deeds and words. He lives and will continue to live in the memory of the ages, while your deed will be execrated.”

His acquiescence in the murder of Cicero is one of the conspicuous stains on the reputation of Octavian. It has been argued on his behalf that he felt deeply resentful toward Cicero for siding with the murderers of Cæsar, whom Octavian idolized; that in the manœuvring after Cæsar’s death Cicero had been willing to use Octavian’s popularity; but that their friendship was political only and that Cicero had let it be known that he intended to discard the young man as soon as he had served the purpose of helping the Senate re-establish itself. Another factor should be considered. At the time of the purge Antony was a hard-boiled and experienced soldier of forty. Octavian was an inexperienced youth of twenty. It seems doubtful whether the boy could have overridden the passionate hatred of the older man even had he earnestly desired to do so. Whether he so desired we do not know.

Writing more than a century later, Plutarch recounts a story that had been handed down about Oc-

tavian when, as Augustus, he had become the undisputed ruler of the world. "I have been told," he says, "that Augustus one day found one of his grandsons reading a book of Cicero's. The boy tried to hide it. But his grandfather took it from him and stood for some time looking over the pages. Then he handed it back saying: 'A great man, my boy, and one who loved his country.'" Whether a flicker of remorse stirred that iron soul as he said these words we do not know. Certainly they express the judgment of posterity.

With his passion for order Octavian made the most of his authority over the West. His rule was so enlightened and efficient that he won the solid support of business and the middle class, which, when aroused and united, was the dominant influence in Rome. He was fortunate in two of his boyhood friends who became his chief lieutenants. Mæcenas, known later as the great patron of literature, a born diplomat, became virtually prime minister. Agrippa developed into a brilliant commander and executive. His achievements in the improvement of the capital increased the popularity of the regime.

Meanwhile Antony, a true soldier of fortune, had been completely captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, a competent and designing young woman. Disturbing rumours reached Rome that she had been proclaimed "queen of kings," that Antony had as-

signed Roman provinces to her sons, and that she intended to "dispense justice on the Capitol." As indignation rose against Cleopatra's ambitious plans, Octavian with characteristic shrewdness took advantage of the public feeling to get rid of his one rival without attacking him. He had the Senate deprive Antony of his command and declare war against Cleopatra. The resulting conflict was regarded by the Romans not as a struggle for power between two rivals, but as a war of the West, and all that Western civilization had come to mean, against the alien civilization of the East. The war ended with the great naval victory of Actium in 31 B.C. It was like the English victory over the Spanish Armada. The towering ships of Antony were outmanœuvred and defeated by the light Roman cruisers under the dashing Agrippa. Cleopatra fled back to Egypt, followed by her lover. A few months later he died by his own hand and Cleopatra killed herself when she found her stern conqueror would not fall for her as Antony had.

The next two years Octavian spent in reorganizing the kingdom of Egypt as a Roman province, improving its vital irrigation system, and inspecting the eastern part of the Empire. When he returned to Rome, a new era had begun. A clue to his plans is given by the remark he made about the familiar story of Alexander the Great, who wept because there were no

more worlds for him to conquer. "I am surprised," he said, "that Alexander did not regard the right ordering of the empire he had won a heavier task than winning it." Under his new title of Augustus, "His Majesty" (literally, "The Revered"), voted by the Senate, he was to become the supreme organizer of ancient, and perhaps of modern, times.

The new ruler was a typical middle-class Italian. Already as Governor of the West he had proved his devotion to the material welfare of the city. If he had not been head of the state he might have been a wonderful president of the Chamber of Commerce or city manager. In fact eventually he became just that. A bigger and better Rome was his slogan. The aristocrats accepted him because he stood between them and the anarchy with which they had just had such long and costly experience. The commoners recognized in him one of themselves.

Augustus put up no front. His comfortable house on the Palatine did not compare in magnificence with some of the palaces of the nabobs. He had no elaborate offices. His workshop was on his top floor. While he had formal dress for state occasions, everybody knew he liked to go about carelessly dressed in common clothes that looked as if they had been made by the loved ones at home, as indeed they had been. He was a sports fan, a fact that endeared him to a sports-crazy city, and he loved to relax with games that cor-

responded to craps and poker. He writes a relative about playing all of one day in the March holidays and apologizes for coming out a thousand-dollar loser.

In modern presidential style he enjoyed fishing. He liked to have literary men about him, especially Virgil and Horace. Standing at the foot of the Palatine, I have imagined I could see Augustus, the fastidious Mæcenæ, millionaire politician, and the pudgy Horace coming down the steps in earnest conversation; Augustus in his famous broad-brimmed hat and shoes that were built up to increase his height. He used to joke Horace on his ample paunch. He tried his hand at writing, but he knew when the results were not happy. Someone once asked him what had become of "Ajax," a tragedy on which he had been working. "My Ajax fell on his sponge," he replied, with the surprise word "sponge" instead of sword, implying that the book had been wiped out. His health never was robust and he had to be careful with his diet. Before going to a state dinner, or after the dinner, he would eat a light supper so as not to have to touch the rich food on the table — a practice followed by American cabinet members today. His old-fashioned ideas appealed to the solid men and women of Rome. His daughter and granddaughters were taught to spin and weave. He insisted on chaperons for boys and girls who went out to entertainments at night.

Affectation in speech he detested. He used to say the flowery Mark Antony talked like a crazy man, and he wrote to a granddaughter admonishing her not to write or talk affectedly. His sententious remarks were widely quoted — “more haste, less speed”; “that is done quickly enough which is well done.” He was approachable. When someone timidly presented him a petition he said: “Come, come. You’re handing me this as if you were handing a penny to an elephant.” Yet he felt the immense dignity of his position. He was pleased that with his “clear bright eyes” he could stare a man into confusion.

An immensely complicated political situation confronted the new ruler. Events after the assassination of Cæsar had convinced Augustus, if he needed convincing, that his great-uncle was right in his belief that under the conditions of the time a strong central government was necessary to manage the Empire. Yet the Republican tradition was still powerful. The dazzling Julius had paid with his life for brusquely ignoring it. The problem was how to set up such a central government under constitutional forms. Here the patient far-sightedness of Augustus, his deep understanding of human nature, his indifference to the forms and show of power, his ability to work out successful compromises, served him better than more brilliant qualities had served his predecessor.

Augustus has been criticized for lack of originality.

But a recent writer, G. P. Baker, gives a just estimate of the man when he says: "His was the subtlest and rarest of talents — the ability to embody in practical measures the vague aspirations, the impatient wishes and the insistent hopes of other men. Mankind was enchanted with his gracious aspect. It did not realize that Augustus was a mirror in which it beheld its own features."

The city-republic of Rome, Augustus believed, was gone. The ancient world had experimented with representative government. But the long discipline required to make it work was lacking outside of Italy, and the results had not been impressive. Besides, the Empire was too vast, the population too diversified, communication too slow, current information without newspapers too deficient, to give representative institutions a chance. An empire on the British model, based on parliamentary institutions in the homeland, with self-governing dominions and crown colonies, would have been out of the question, even if by a miracle the pattern could have been invented. In Italy the displacement of the small farmers by absentee landlords operating big estates by slave labour would have made it difficult to develop parliamentary government on an Italian basis. In Rome itself the experience of the first century B.C. had shown that self-government in the capital no longer was possible. With the hard-working shopkeepers and artisans who

had to compete with slave labour was the horde of dispossessed farmers who had migrated to the capital to go on relief. Besides these, as Sallust says, "young men who had maintained a wretched existence by manual labour in the country, tempted by public and private doles, had come to prefer idleness in the city to a steady job." Continued idleness, of course, was corrupting. Many of the more enterprising Italian farmers had gone to the provinces where farming on new land was attractive. Ex-service men and business men had joined in the migration. Their places had been taken by a large slave population. It had become so numerous that the proposal to require slaves to wear a distinctive dress was defeated because, Seneca wrote, the Senate feared the slaves might become dangerous if they came to realize their great number. As the slaves became old, many of them were freed and put on relief so their masters should not be burdened by their support. Many others bought their freedom. The freeing of slaves became such a problem that the government repeatedly prohibited it by laws that were as repeatedly disregarded. The freed slaves and the descendants of slaves became another difficult element in the population of Rome and Italy. By an ingenious study of the names inscribed on tombstones and of other data, Professor Frank estimates that ninety per cent of the population permanently resident at Rome in the Im-

perial era was of foreign stock. It is not necessary to assume that one stock is superior to another. Certainly Romans of Asiatic origin had no tradition of self-government. Roman culture was foreign to them and to the large Greek element, and they had the cruel handicap of a slave background. In time they might have been assimilated. But time was lacking.

Rome was called the "inn of the world." Cicero had spoken of the common people as "the cesspool of Romulus." Juvenal added the equally bitter phrase: "the rabble of Remus," and wrote that the waters of the Orontes, a river in Syria, had poured into the Tiber. We need not accept at face value the sweeping and contemptuous expressions of the Roman Four Hundred to realize the problem. Modern Marxist writers with no bourgeois prejudice refer to a large section of the Roman people as the "Lumpenproletariat," a technical term defined as "that portion of the proletariat whose income, although of proletarian dimensions, is not the result of actual labour, but of charity and extortion." It was a demoralized population.

In the later days of the Republic candidates for elective office had been compelled to cater to this moronic underworld. The great Marcus Tullius Cicero had a younger brother, Quintus Tullius Cicero. When Marcus was running for the consulship his brother Quintus evidently thought he was not a prac-

tical politician. Accordingly Quintus wrote a *Handbook of Politics* which embodies principles and practices that are familiar to every politician in America today.

Quintus analysed his brother's situation as a candidate in an extremely modern way. Marcus was a small-town man who did not belong to the inner circle of the blue-blooded aristocrats and they resented his intrusion into politics. Quintus thought he might as well charge them off. But there were conservatives who did not belong to the old families. Marcus should set out to convince them that he shared their views, and while he was despised by the aristocrats, he was no left-winger. There were other large groups that he might win over. The Chamber of Commerce crowd could be counted on, for he was a member of it. As leader of the Roman bar he had had many clients who might be reminded of his services. Citizens in outlying communities could vote at the capital. No matter what the trouble and expense, Marcus had better make the circuit and shake hands with his country constituents. Of course he must not neglect the voters in Rome itself. He must go around and become acquainted with them. Every voter was entitled to the satisfaction of being personally solicited for his vote.

“One has great need,” Quintus wrote, “of a flattering manner, which, wrong and discreditable though

it may be in other walks of life, is indispensable in seeking office." He added this piece of practical advice: Marcus must not be overscrupulous. He must be lavish in his promises to people who asked him for favours that he could grant if elected. "Human nature being what it is," said Quintus, "all men prefer a false promise to a flat refusal. At the worst the man to whom you have lied may be angry. That risk, if you make a promise, is uncertain and deferred, and it affects only a few. But if you refuse you are sure to offend many, and that at once."

Quintus knew his brother's scruples. He wrote that the rival candidates, of course, would resort to bribery. Marcus's conscience and reputation would prevent his doing that. But there was another weapon that he hoped his brother would not be too pure to use, since it was customary in Roman campaigns. "Contrive, if possible," he said, "to get some new scandal started against your rivals for crime or immorality or corruption, according to their characters."

This last suggestion appealed to Marcus as quite practical. As his rival, Catiline, was resorting to bribery, Cicero came back at him in a speech in the Senate in which he charged him with murder, adultery, marriage with a daughter whom an adulterous mistress had borne him, attempted incest, and attempted massacre — in short, with every crime he could lay his sharp tongue to. As Catiline was regarded by all

the best people as a Bolshevist, Cicero's charges fell on hospitable ears and Catiline was defeated. Probably Cicero would have been surprised to know that his election charges would be taken seriously by posterity.

Large-scale bribery had become what a Missouri politician once called "a conventional crime." At about this same time Julius Cæsar ran for the highest state religious office. When he kissed his mother good-bye on election morning, he told her he had spent so much money that if defeated he could not face either her or his creditors. He won. Successful candidates spent beyond their means to carry elections because they expected to recoup themselves later by plundering the provinces.

In general the people had become indifferent to politics. When Cicero said of the mass of the voters: "They demand nothing, they desire nothing," he was speaking a devastating truth. Listlessness is fatal to self-government. Less than a century after the Republic had faded into the autocracy of the Empire, the people had lost all taste for democratic institutions. On the death of an emperor the Senate debated the question of restoring the Republic. But the commons preferred the rule of an extravagant despot who would continue the dole and furnish them free shows. The mob outside clamoured for "one ruler" of the world.

## DRIFT TO DICTATORSHIP

Augustus showed sympathy for the hard-working poor and those who were willing to work, and tried to improve their lot. But it was evidently impossible to build a decent and stable government on the votes of loafers who spent their time at the games. With a remarkable flair for political possibilities the new ruler worked out the famous Augustan compromise. Briefly, he restored the old Republican forms, with the Senate, popular Assembly, and magistrates. He accepted the consulship for a time, and the further power that had been won by the commons in the early days for their tribunes. He took the honorary title of "Princeps," First Citizen. "Emperor" has become the more familiar title. Technically the system he established was a principate, not an empire, although "empire" is the word commonly used. It was an experiment in government that Augustus was beginning. If the Senate should develop the old capacity to govern he was willing to see it succeed. If it failed he was prepared to take full charge. He still commanded the army although he reorganized and handled it in such a way that except for one brief interval it did not menace the civil government for many years. In effect, the regime that he created was a far-reaching central authority with a large degree of municipal home rule.

The general plan was not new. Pompey had had a dream of working out the scheme and had reached a

point where Cicero had written and spoken of him with the identical word, "Princeps," that was applied to Augustus. But Pompey had not the ability nor the Senate the lessons of bitter experience to develop the plan on a workable basis. Julius Cæsar had discarded the idea and had taken a short cut to monarchy that had ended in disaster. In the new ruler the man, the time, and the place had come together.

Augustus needed the services of experienced senators and business men for local and provincial administrators. His policy was conciliatory. He abandoned, if he had ever cherished, the internationalism of Julius Cæsar in his political organization. So far as possible he provided the provinces good and honest government, and he extended to them the great Roman justice. But he did not offend the sensitive feelings of the Senate by bringing in outsiders. Instead he purged it of unworthy members and treated it with the deference of which his impetuous predecessor was incapable.

Perhaps he was going a little far when he wrote near the end of his life that he had "handed over the Republic to the control of the Senate and the people of Rome." But certainly for the first half of his long reign the regime was a sort of partnership of Emperor and Senate, with the Emperor as senior partner. The Senate was given a free hand in running the dozen

older provinces, while the Emperor took charge of organizing the turbulent frontier.

As the plan worked out, the government of the provinces was put on an efficient and substantial basis. A great tradition was established of competent and upright provincial Roman governors, which was respected even by unworthy emperors. The general authority over a province was in the governor's hands. He was in charge of finances, public works, and civil and criminal jurisdiction. He supervised municipal administration. Finally, he was the chief military official of the district.

During the earlier part of the Augustan partnership the Republican forms were carefully observed. Some warm election contests are recorded. But Augustus increasingly had to draw on former magistrates for Empire service. This required him to take an interest in the selection of candidates. Gradually important departments of the government of the capital were turned over to the Imperial authority for more efficient operation. Before his death the Senate had become chiefly a consultative body. The real authority lay with the Emperor. Tacitus accurately described what happened when he wrote: "By degrees and almost imperceptibly he drew into his own hands the authority of the Senate, the functions of the magistrates, and the administration of the laws." But the

Senate remained a dignified chamber, linking the Empire to the Republic, and at intervals exercising many of its old powers. As for the Assembly, it continued to be in theory the fundamental authority of the state, although it became only a rubber stamp for the executive.

The successor of Augustus abolished most of its shadowy power. But it was still allowed to meet and ratify the choice of each succeeding emperor. The strength of Roman sentiment is shown in one practice that persisted for nearly a thousand years. In the earliest days of the Republic the Assembly was in the habit of meeting under an organization by "centuries," as they were called. The centuries included all the men of military age. During their meeting a watch was maintained on the Janiculum hill, beyond the Tiber, to see that no enemies approached while the men were busy voting. A red military flag was displayed from the hill so long as all was well. If the enemy were seen the flag was lowered as a call to arms to the men in the Assembly. This custom lasted far into the Imperial period. "The stately forms of the Republic were preserved," says Mr. Greenidge, "and when the Centuries assembled the red flag still flew from the Janiculum." Modern England has the same liking for ancient forms. In the House of Commons today notice of adjournment is carried through the halls by the old cry of the policemen: "Who goes

home?" In Washington adjournment is announced by an electric buzzer.

One deficiency, indeed, there was in the set-up arranged by Augustus. He saw no way to provide for the Imperial succession. Rome was still sensitive about forms. It was not ready for a king or a hereditary monarchy of any sort. Augustus had recognized this fact in refusing to become king or emperor and in calling himself merely "first citizen." He always emphatically insisted that he had accepted no office that was "contrary to the usage of our forefathers," and that it was only in his personal experience and dignity that he took precedence over his colleagues. Theoretically the succession was left to the free choice of the Senate and Assembly. In contrast to the British maxim that "the king never dies," it has been said that the Roman principate died with the death of each princeps. Augustus met the difficulty by associating with him in the latter years of his reign his able stepson, Tiberius. At his death Tiberius was at once accepted as his successor by the Senate and Assembly. Sentiment was strongly attached to the family of Julius Cæsar and Augustus. Any noble who sought the highest office, as was theoretically possible, would have encountered the jealousy of his colleagues. So the succession continued in the Cæsar line through Tiberius, an exceptional ruler, and the next three emperors, who were men of

mediocre ability and distressing personal character. When the last of these, Nero, finally killed himself to avoid death in a revolt against his excesses, there followed the "year of the four emperors" when it was revealed that emperors could be made by the legions elsewhere than in Rome. Late in the century the Senate had its first free choice of an emperor and selected Nerva, one of its own number. Thereafter for nearly a century each emperor adopted an able man as his son and successor. But the system finally degenerated into a series of military dictatorships. The results indicate that even if Augustus had devised some method of succession it would have been wrecked eventually by the clashes of mutinous soldiers. It was not, however, until near the end of the third century, under Diocletian, that all democratic forms were discarded and the ruler emerged as an Oriental despot. The hazards in the Roman system are evidenced by the fact that the competent Tiberius was followed by three rulers who have been described as "a madman, a pedant, and a monster." For intervals through a generation the Roman aristocracy lived under a Reign of Terror, although an efficient civil service carried on the business of the Empire, and probably life went on as usual with the mass of the people. The longest period in human history of an uninterrupted succession of benevolent and able dictators was the eighty-four years

from the accession of Nerva, A.D. 96, to the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180. In this period of the "five good emperors" the Empire reached its zenith in extent and well-being.

What Augustus did was to establish autocracy under Republican forms. In time this paralysed the human spirit. But it is difficult to see what else he could have done in the conditions that faced him. The fatal failure had come unrecognized after the second great war with Carthage two centuries before. It was the failure of Republican statesmanship, and especially the failure of the people, leaders and masses alike, to realize and meet new responsibilities. An economist has written of the United States that if it had not been for the importation of a great mass of cheap labour in the second half of the nineteenth century, "we would have had fewer millionaires and no slums." In Italy the same blindness to long-run welfare brought in cheap slave labour, increased the gulf between rich and poor, allowed the military to supersede the civil authorities, and helped create the situation that confronted Augustus. Perhaps the greatest evidence of the genius of the first Emperor is the fact that he so organized the government and made such a start on the Imperial civil service that the Empire was well managed even when incompetent and vicious men headed the state in Rome.



## CHAPTER X

### BOOM AND DEPRESSION

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THE GREAT achievement of the government that Augustus organized was the Roman peace. Under him and his successors for nearly four hundred years the Empire kept at bay the hordes that threatened to destroy Western civilization. During this time the Greco-Roman culture became so firmly established and so widespread that it was able to survive the disintegration of the Empire that had been its guardian. The legacy of Greece and Rome was thus handed down to become the foundation of the life of the modern world.

By his contemporaries the advent of Augustus was welcomed as something new and glorious that had happened to mankind. After a century of cruel turmoil humanity seemed to be awakening from a long

nightmare. The cynical Tacitus, who still cherished the Republican dream, says that the new ruler had "allured the minds of men by the blessings of peace." Velleius Paterculus, the defender of Cicero, tells what Augustus did "for the Republic, the Roman people, and the world." "The civil wars," he says, "were ended after twenty years, foreign wars suppressed, peace restored, the frenzy of arms everywhere lulled to rest. Validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, and dignity to the Senate. . . . Agriculture returned to the fields, respect to religion; to mankind freedom from anxiety, and to each citizen his property rights were now assured. Old laws were usefully amended and new laws passed for the general good."

This same feeling was given lasting poetic form by Horace and Virgil. Apparently the enthusiasm for the regime expressed in the city of Rome permeated the Empire, and with reason. A large degree of home rule was bestowed upon the provinces, crown colonies, and dependent kingdoms. "The great benefit," F. E. Adcock writes, "which the Principate had bestowed upon the Mediterranean world was freedom to live its own life, to retain its own variety of customs and institutions. . . . The keynote of the period [of the Imperial peace] was loyalty to Rome, not merely because this loyalty had no rival, but because Rome deserved to receive it." It is sim-

ple fact, in the words of John Buchan in his *Augustus*, that in many parts of the Mediterranean basin — in Syria and Palestine, in Asia Minor, in Thrace and Macedonia — there was a standard of comfort and security under Augustus which is not reached today. In the latter part of the era we have the tribute of the slave-born Epictetus: “Cæsar [Augustus] has won for us a profound peace. There are neither wars nor battles, robbers nor pirates, and we may travel at all hours and sail from east to west.” We may still read the inscription of a little town in Asia Minor celebrating Augustus as “ruler of land and sea; benefactor and saviour of the whole cosmos.” The gossip biographer Suetonius tells of the final voyage of Augustus down the coast to Capri. The old man was cheered by hearing the shouts from a ship just arriving from Alexandria that “by him they lived, by him they sailed, by him they enjoyed their freedom and all the riches they had.”

This enlightened reign lasted for forty-five years. It was as if Grover Cleveland, inaugurated in 1885, had continued in office with increasing power until the early part of the administration of Herbert Hoover in 1930. People assumed the Empire would last indefinitely. The poet Tibullus coined the enduring phrase: “the Eternal City.” A few years later Roman coins carried the motto: “*Æternitas*,” and an inscription found in Asia Minor speaks of a decree

guaranteed "by the eternity of the Empire of the Romans."

Here a qualification must be made. We speak of the Roman peace as dating from the reign of Augustus. Probably it did not seem peace to the responsible head of the government. Frequent military expeditions were required to subdue unruly peoples. There was frontier fighting in rounding out the Empire. A revolt in the Balkan peninsula a few years before his death proved so formidable that the weary ruler, now advanced in years, is reported to have contemplated suicide. This was followed by a disastrous campaign against the Germans beyond the Rhine in which the Roman general, Varus, lost three legions and took his own life. It was a terrible blow to the pride of Augustus, and his Roman biographer tells how for months thereafter he would walk back and forth crying out: "Varus, give me back my legions." The effect of the defeat was far-reaching. The army retired behind the Rhine, and the Emperor left a solemn warning to his successors not to advance beyond that river. There were reasons for this policy on grounds of economy and the Empire's need of peace to organize and absorb the turbulent provinces already acquired. These reasons appealed with especial force to a disillusioned old man who had lost both the taste and the energy for further adventure. But it is fascinating to speculate on what might have

happened if Rome had advanced to the Elbe at Hamburg and then to the Vistula at Danzig. It would have had to defend a frontier of only eight hundred miles from the Baltic to the Black Sea, instead of a boundary of twice that length from the mouth of the Rhine on the North Sea to the mouth of the Danube on the Black. Such an expansion to the east would have brought Prussia under the influence of the Roman civilization. Then Prussia might have been made European as south Germany and Austria were made European by Rome, with consequences reaching to the present day.

In spite of these outlying wars, Italy always was peaceful, along with most of the Empire. The world has not yet learned how to maintain peace with anything like the success of the early Roman emperors. The contentment of the people under Roman rule is an immense tribute to the justice and efficiency of the government set up by Augustus. In Gaul, for instance, with the extensive road system constructed in the time of the early Empire, commerce rapidly developed and the people became prosperous. The tribute paid to Rome was light in comparison with the cost of the old tribal wars. It is significant that after Britain had settled down in the second century as a Roman province, the only troops needed there were to protect it from invasion. The colonials were proud to be citizens of the Empire.

“Throughout the world,” writes a German scholar, Professor F. Oertel, in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, “there was an interpenetration, a smoothing out of differences to an extent undreamed of before. . . . If we contemplate the facts from the standpoint of the empire, our verdict must be that, in spite of all the dangers that an exaggerated capitalism has latent in it, industry, trade and commerce accomplished the task which Augustus set them, the task of welding the empire into a unity, thereby rendering possible its survival for centuries to come.”

The prosperity associated with Augustus naturally contributed to the prestige that invested his name. Business had been terribly handicapped by the general disorder of the last years of the Republic. With the establishment of a firm peace under honest and competent government, and with virtually free trade throughout the Empire — for small port dues were not protective duties — a business revival was bound to follow. But when Augustus returned to the capital after Actium he found Rome impoverished and its economic structure disorganized by the civil war. In order to relieve the situation he turned to a policy with which the United States became familiar in the 1920's. To meet somewhat similar conditions the Coolidge administration resorted to the expedient of easy money. Interest rates were kept artificially low to encourage borrowing and keep business on the

up-grade. This policy led to extravagant expansion of bank credits that made possible the wild boom that culminated in the panic of 1929 and the subsequent depression. On a more modest scale Augustus adopted an easy-money policy. The results were identical with those under Coolidge. The policy promoted an inflationary boom followed by deflationary hard times and the panic of A.D. 33. In both instances the boom started in one administration while its fruits appeared in another.

Any investigator of the economic history of Rome must resign himself to the baffling handicap of the absence of government reports and business statistics. Information has to be patiently collected from chance and often exasperatingly indefinite remarks of contemporary writers who had scant interest in economics. Even such an unpromising source as Cicero's treatise on *Moral Duties* has to be searched for incidental illustrations referring to some economic policy of the past. Fortunately the methodical Augustus left an exceedingly helpful record of his financial transactions. A few months before his death he prepared a summary account of his administration, a Farewell Address, which was read to the Senate, with the request that it be inscribed upon bronze tablets, to be set up before his mausoleum. These tablets have disappeared, but the document was copied on the walls of many temples throughout the Empire.

The best copy that has come down to us is known as the Ancyrean inscription — “queen of inscriptions,” Mommsen calls it. This was found in both Latin and Greek on the walls of a temple at Ancyra in Asia Minor, to which I have referred in describing the Augustan exposition. From it we may trace huge government expenditures that contributed temporarily to the prosperity in Rome that naturally followed the establishment of the Roman peace.

During his first twenty years Augustus spent lavishly. He had Cæsar’s fortune to draw on, and this was supplemented by the rich treasure confiscated in Egypt. As Suetonius puts it, “When he brought the royal treasures of Egypt to Rome, money became so abundant that the rate of interest fell and the value of real estate rose greatly.” From another authority, Dio, we learn that interest rates fell from twelve per cent to four, and “the price of goods rose” — the familiar effects of easy money.

Taxes in Italy were low. Augustus wanted a land tax, but the influential opposition of real-estate owners caused him to abandon the plan. He was able, however, to impose a one-per-cent tax on auction sales, a four-per-cent tax on the sale of slaves, a five-per-cent tax on the freeing of slaves, and a five-per-cent inheritance tax on indirect legacies above five thousand dollars.

His expenditures are given in detail in the An-

cyrean inscription. He paid thirty million dollars for land for his ex-service men. Repeatedly he made gifts of money to the poor, perhaps in the hope of tiding them over while they looked for jobs. In addition he instituted great public works, partly for work relief for the unemployed, partly because of his natural love of the magnificent. His public works repaired all the roads in Italy and the streets in Rome. He aided many cities by gifts of aqueducts, baths, temples, and public buildings. Work relief was taken so seriously that in the latter part of the first century the government refused to use a new invention to move large columns into Rome because it was feared the labour-saving device would throw men out of jobs.

In four years, Professor Frank estimates, fifty million dollars in new money flowed out to the public. All Italy shared in the prosperity. Extensive private as well as public building operations went on in the cities. "Doubtless many of the new fortunes of the period had their source in the increasing real-estate values and in the rapid expansion of cities due to easy credits, increased circulation, and the sense of security in property-holding that came with the re-establishment of peace." All this is curiously like what happened in the boom years in America.

A further parallel is found in the money policy of Augustus, which recalls the Coolidge policy of keeping bank credits abundant and cheap. The govern-

ment owned gold and silver mines. The product was available for coinage. During the first twenty years of the regime several mints were opened in Spain, a large one at Lyons in Gaul, and there was heavy coinage in the mint in Rome. Undoubtedly this policy contributed to the expansion of business and the boom.

One class of the population failed to share in the general prosperity. The Roman failure to make an adequate industrial development, and the presence in the city of a large number of slaves, left continuing unemployment. The condition of the unemployed and the unemployable was a pressing problem. They had to be taken care of if jobs could not be found on public works or in colonial settlements. Even during the civil wars it had proved necessary to continue the free grain-distribution. Indeed, the relief rolls had climbed after Caesar's death from the 150,000 which he had set, to the old figures of 320,000.

Augustus once more introduced a means test and reduced the number to 200,000. Suetonius tells of a crisis when the government, in order to reduce the expense of relief, expelled foreign residents, except physicians and teachers. So wise a statesman could not avoid realizing the pauperizing effects of the system. "He wrote," says his biographer, "that he was inclined to abolish forever the public distribution of grain, for the people had come to rely upon it and had

ceased to till the fields; but he had not proceeded further in the matter because he was sure that, from a desire to please the people, it would be revived at one time or another." In other words, the situation had got out of hand. Many persons preferred relief to wages. Thereafter during the Imperial prosperity the number on relief continued at about 200,000. Nearly three hundred years later the dole was extended and made hereditary. Two pounds of bread were issued daily to all registered citizens who applied. In addition pork, olive oil, and salt were distributed free at regular intervals. When Constantinople was founded, right to relief was attached to the new houses in order to encourage building.

The Augustan boom, as was said earlier, was partly the result of a heavy spending program. This had been made possible primarily by the spoils collected in Egypt. But eventually the money ran out. In his later years Augustus spent far less on public buildings and popular entertainments than in his earlier ones. The wars just referred to had proved a heavy financial drain. Large sums of money went back to the provinces to pay for luxuries imported by the rich. With the exhaustion of mines the flow of gold and silver to the mints was checked. Coinage, according to Professor Frank's estimate, fell to about five per cent of its former rate. This was deflation with a vengeance. Interest rose and prices fell. The next Emperor, Ti-

berius, by rigid economy succeeded eventually in balancing the budget without increasing taxes; in some cases he was able to reduce them. When his representative in Egypt turned in more money than was due from the regular Imperial taxes, the Emperor sent back word that he wished his sheep sheared but not shaved. A sternly conscientious man — in spite of scandalous stories circulated by his enemies — Tiberius risked unpopularity in the capital by cutting out the expensive public shows which his predecessor had thought necessary to keep the people in a good humour.

His thrifty attitude is indicated by an incident related by Tacitus. The aristocracy believed the old families ought to be subsidized, if necessary, in order to maintain a proper governing class. A spendthrift senator brought his four young sons to the Senate and delivered a public plea to the Emperor to make them a grant of money. The senators were sympathetic; it wasn't their money that was to be given away. Tiberius took a more responsible view. "If every poor man is to come to this chamber," he replied, "and ask for money for his children, there will be no satisfying the claimants, and the public exchequer will be emptied." However, in view of the generous mood of the Senate he weakened and made each boy a grant of ten thousand dollars. The affair gives a clue to the unpopularity of Tiberius in Rome

as contrasted with the popularity which his efficient administration won him in the provinces. The ungraciousness of his words spoiled the effect of his generosity. Tacitus thought them an indication of the Emperor's "sour temper." The tactful Augustus might have refused to make the gift, without arousing resentment. It used to be said of two American Presidents that Benjamin Harrison could make an enemy by the way he said yes, while William McKinley could make a friend by the way he said no.

But this essential policy of prudent spending by Tiberius, continuing as it did the Augustan deflation, brought on hard times which culminated in the panic of A.D. 33. We find the story in Tacitus. He says that Julius Cæsar's laws on usury and land holdings had been disregarded for a long time. In the year 33 distressed debtors, perhaps stirred up by shysters, began to prosecute their creditors for usury. There were so many cases that the government allowed a period of eighteen months in which offenders might adjust their affairs in accordance with the law. This precipitated a crisis because loans were called and land values collapsed. To bolster the market the Cæsar's law was revived and lenders were ordered to invest two thirds of their capital in Italian land. The effect of the edict was the direct opposite of what was intended. With a falling market, reinvestment in land was postponed for lower prices, and the collapse

continued. Thereupon the government set up a Home Owners' Loan Corporation, the modern H.O. L.C. Perhaps its operations were more like those of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the R.F.C., for its loans probably were only to the larger operators. It was authorized to lend distressed landowners five million dollars from the treasury, without interest for a period up to three years. This help stabilized the market and ended the crisis. It was not a complex industrial civilization. So the results of the panic were not so devastating and lasting as the result of the panic that ended the boom years in the United States.

Two more New Deal experiments come within this period. An Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the familiar A.A.A., was set up under Domitian, A.D. 91, and a Farm Credit Administration, the F.C.A., a few years later under Nerva and Trajan. Italian farmers, especially the big landowners, had found wine and oil more profitable than wheat. When vineyard cultivation was an infant industry the Italian farm bloc had been able to induce the government at various times to restrict the planting of vineyards in the provinces. Nevertheless provincial competition had continued. In the year 91 there was a bad wheat harvest and an overproduction of wine. To stimulate the production of wheat and at the same time to protect the vineyard interests, the Department of Agri-

culture provided an A.A.A. It decreed that no more vineyards be planted in Italy and that half the vineyards in the provinces be destroyed. America was following Roman precedent when it ploughed up the cotton in 1933. Enforcement was spotted. It is the judgment of Professor Rostovtzeff that the Italian wine industry was helped "at least to a certain extent." But the measures adopted "did not succeed in saving progressive agriculture in Italy in general."

The failure may be inferred from the further action by the government under Nerva and Trajan at the beginning of the second century. It sought to attract capital into farming and to help established farmers with cheap loans. Senators were compelled to invest at least one third of their capital in Italian land — the old panacea — and a Farm Credit Administration was set up. Under this F.C.A., farmers were allowed to borrow from the government on mortgage security at five per cent, which was less than half the rural commercial rate.

Trajan had conquered Dacia, the modern Rumania. The country had productive mines and large accumulated treasure. Professor Frank estimates the loot that Trajan obtained at a hundred million dollars. Under the spell of the Dacian windfall the government proceeded in the grand manner. The money was not needed in Rome. So it was used to establish

## BOOM AND DEPRESSION

the greatest philanthropic fund in history up to the time of the Rockefeller Foundation.

The size of poor families had fallen off because children could not be supported. The repercussions were being felt in Italian industry, which needed a larger domestic market. The government was desperately anxious to encourage the growth of population. It provided that the interest of the F.C.A. loans should go to town commissioners throughout Italy to be paid to poor families to help support their children. The records show what happened to this huge philanthropy. It gradually melted under the repeated devaluation of the denarius. The interest was sufficient to meet only the expenses of the administrative staff in the "bureau of roads and alimentation."



## CHAPTER XI

### PRELUDE TO CRISIS

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THE GREAT age of Rome lasted well into the third century. In spite of defects, a great age it had been. How the Empire seemed to a contemporary is told by the Christian writer Tertullian about A.D. 200:

“Surely a glance at the world shows that it is daily being more cultivated and better peopled than before. All places are now accessible, well known, open to commerce. Delightful farms have now blotted out every trace of the dreadful wastes; cultivated fields have supplanted woods; flocks and herds have driven out wild beasts; sandy spots are sown; rocks and stones have been cleared away; bogs have been drained. Large towns now occupy lands hardly tenanted before by cottages. Islands are no longer dreaded [as the abode of pirates]; houses, people, civil rule, civilization are everywhere.”

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

Yet the Roman world that seemed so fair carried within it the seeds of decay. The benign rule of the "five good emperors" degenerated into military despotisms. Then came fifty years of chaos in which one gangster ruler followed another in rapid succession. "In this tempest of anarchy during the third century," Professor Breasted writes, "the civilization of the ancient world suffered final collapse." From the anarchy at the end of the century emerged the totalitarian state of Diocletian, Constantine, and their successors. This was successful only in protecting remnants of culture for another hundred years. Then the Western world, already barbarized except in spots, was submerged under repeated waves of ignorance in the barbarian invasions.

Before following the course of government intervention in business in this period, culminating in the Price-and-Wage Act of Diocletian, at the beginning of the fourth century, we must return to the golden years of the Empire. In these years forces were at work that prepared the way for the debacle, just as in the lush 1920's in the United States we now recognize factors that led into the great depression.

The autocracy itself, inescapable as it may have been, gradually had a stiffing effect upon the human spirit. The Republican tradition was so strong that for many years liberty was only intermittently suppressed. In the latter part of the Republican era Ca-

tullus wrote a scurrilous attack upon Cæsar. The great man did not send his critic to a concentration camp. He invited him to call and talk it over. But a century and a half later an emperor had two authors of biographies put to death for cynical references to the government, which were interpreted as treasonable.

Under pressure the outlook and attitude of the people gradually changed. The servility of the Senate under Tiberius, as described by Tacitus, is in painful contrast to the dignity and character of that body when it was building the Empire. "O men, ready for slavery!" the disgusted Emperor once exclaimed.

After the first century there were only a few great writers. Livy thought that society had been demoralized by wealth, and the elder Pliny agreed that the lack of intellectual interests was due to the worship of money. But Tacitus wrote that "genius died by the same blow that ended public liberty." A similar view is presented by an anonymous author of the period. In his treatise, *On the Sublime*, this writer suggests that wealth, leading to indolence and a taste for luxurious living, accounts partly for the decline in Roman literature. But he puts this further explanation in the mouth of a philosopher: "In these days we seem to be schooled from childhood in utter servility; swaddled, I might say, from the tender infancy of our minds in servile ways and practice. We never drink from the fairest and most fertile source of literature,

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

which is freedom, and therefore we show a genius for nothing but flattery." This comment might have been written about conditions in the great modern dictatorships.

Perhaps the explanation given by contemporaries was too simple. The failure in literature may have reflected not merely loss of liberty but a mood of weariness from other causes. Under the enlightened rulers of the second century the pressure was relaxed. Tacitus tells us of the relief he felt in being able to write freely. But with the extreme paternalism of the government, the people had lost their old energy. The pleasant era that so appealed to Gibbon was not a heroic age in Rome.

As the autocracy became pervasive, it undertook, in the interest of efficiency, local as well as Imperial government. The natural leaders of the cities lost initiative and public spirit. "The chief object of economic activity," writes Professor Rostovtzeff, "was to secure for the individual or his family a placid and inactive life on a safe, if moderate, income."

Rome always had been overpractical. It never had shown the curiosity of the Greek world. "The incuriousness of the Roman rich and the Roman rulers," says H. G. Wells, "was more massive even than their architecture." There were no technical improvements in industry after the early part of the second century. A French historian, Eugène Albertini, re-

marks that Roman tools were poor. In quarries, mines, and construction work the toil of men was required to make up for the inadequacy of tools and the lack of explosives. In trucking and hauling the failure to devise a practical harness and to use horse-shoes made draught animals ineffective. The Roman collar pressed on the horse's windpipe and partly disabled him. Slaves had to supply the muscular effort that could not be obtained from horses. One of the reasons why the Romans did not develop heavy cavalry lay in their failure to invent such a simple device as the stirrup. This essential feature of horse equipment came eventually to western Europe from the horsemen of the south Russian plains.

In spite of the widespread prosperity of the upper classes that attended the Augustan peace, disquieting symptoms gradually appeared. Within a half-century after Augustus's death economic progress slowed down and finally stopped. In the latter part of the period every serious border war brought the Empire to the verge of ruin, and there were no accumulated reserves to meet the crisis of the next century. Temporary lifts had been given by the spoils of conquests. But Victor Chapot remarks with some reason that "the state became permanently insolvent on the day when all conquest ceased and all plunder with it; the last great spoil was taken by Trajan in Dacia" early in the second century.

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

It is worth while to examine the factors that blocked progress in both industry and agriculture. Rome was an agricultural state that for a time seemed likely to develop large-scale industries. The process never got far. Industrialization in Italy encountered several major obstacles. Public sentiment was opposed to the corporate form of doing business. The law permitted joint-stock companies to handle government contracts. It forbade the organizing of private corporations. Personal responsibility and personal liability were favoured by the Romans. One result was that banking was maintained on a relatively small scale. There were rich individuals in the banking business, but the big banking corporations that were needed to finance large-scale business activity were not allowed to develop. The same handicap was imposed on Roman industry and trade. The trust-busting spirit had unforeseen consequences.

Furthermore, industry had to make its way in a society dominated by a landed aristocracy. Under the Republic the "best people" thought it beneath them to engage in industry, although frequently they became silent partners of freedmen or business men in industrial or commercial enterprises. There was a strong hangover of this feeling, although under Augustus a change had come. Professions once frowned upon were now open to gentlemen. Indeed, in the next century Rome found in Marcus Aurelius an em-

peror who had inherited extensive brickworks from his mother in a business that had been established by his great-great-grandfather, Domitius Afer. It must be admitted, however, that brick-making had always been fairly respectable. After Marcus reached the throne the bricks from his Domitian works were stamped "Aug N." — "Our Augustus." If contractors of the second century after Christ were anything like those of the twentieth, they probably figured they would get along better with the city inspectors if they used the "Aug N." bricks.

Slavery was a brake on progress. Of industrial workmen it is estimated that eighty to eighty-five per cent were slaves or ex-slaves. The abundance of slaves checked the demand for free labour and for labour-saving devices. In modern industry the ingenious mechanic is responsible for many improvements in the machine which he operates. This incentive is lacking in the slave workman.

Professor Frank suggests an illustration. Italian ironworks failed to get into mass production at a time when a great advance seemed within reach, for lack of a simple device. "The invention of a valve in the bellows used in iron furnaces to create a continuous blast, an improvement that any intelligent and interested free workman might have conceived, would have revolutionized the iron industry by making smelting and casting possible on a large scale."

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

Progress requires competent industrial leadership as well as intelligent and industrious workmen. Here again Roman society proved deficient. For various reasons growing out of the Empire's social evolution industry did not attract able men. "Roman history," writes Professor Frank, "does not point to a single effective leader trained in business."

Finally, industrial development faced a failing farm market just at a time when it had to meet strong competition from new industries in the provinces. As we shall see in a moment, the Italian farm market for manufactured goods began to shrink with the disappearance of the independent small farmers and the consolidation of small farms into large estates. At the same time the export trade was hard hit by provincial competition. Fortis lamps from northern Italy, of which I spoke in a previous chapter, were replaced in the Gallic, German, and British markets by Fortis lamps made in Gaul. Carthage factories took the African market. The red pottery of Arretium was imitated in southern Gaul and later in Germany. Sales of Italian glassware were restricted when Cologne took up its manufacture. The demand for luxury goods fell off because the wealthy found they could have these produced by slaves in their own households. "Commerce decayed because customers disappeared."

The question of what happened to Italian farming

has evoked endless discussion. In the later years of the Republic and the earlier years of the Empire many demobilized soldiers had been settled on small farms. The free Italian farmer was a competent man. He practised crop rotation and summer fallowing, and used alfalfa, clover, and beans, as well as manure, to enrich his soil. Americans living in the farm belt would be interested in the enthusiasm for alfalfa of Columella, who wrote a treatise on farming in the middle of the first century. But that the farm industry in important areas — not everywhere — was in serious trouble in the second century there is no doubt. There is constant complaint from contemporary writers that the soil is not producing as much as in the old days.

The theory of a long period of deficient rainfall has been advanced. It is not supported by evidence. A clue to one phase of the trouble is found in the comment of the elder Pliny that big estates ruined Italy. Rich men from the provinces moved to Rome in large numbers under the Empire, as rich Frenchmen always have moved to Paris. Their favourite investment was in large estates, operated at first by slaves, later by tenant farmers. The most extensive use of slave labour, it is true, was in the latter part of the Republican era, in the age of Cicero. Under the Augustan peace the supply of war captives sold into slavery was sharply curtailed and by the middle of the

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

first century it was being recognized that slave labour was uneconomic. What happened to the big slave-operated estates may be inferred from what happened on the pre-war cotton plantations of our Southern states. Frederick Law Olmsted made several journeys on horseback through the slave states between 1850 and 1857. In his book *The Cotton Kingdom* he stresses the inefficiency of slave labour. He speaks of the listlessness of the slaves, of "their dogged action, the stupid plodding machine-like manner in which they worked." In his *Seaboard Slave States* Olmsted says he was told it would be impossible to furnish the slaves with good tools; "they would not last out a day in a Virginia cornfield." Mules, he says, were used instead of horses because horses "cannot bear the treatment they must always get from negroes." Under such conditions the fertility of the big Southern plantations was exhausted.

The slaves on Italian farms, often working in chains, were undoubtedly as inefficient as those seen by Olmsted. No wonder the estates produced badly and the soil deteriorated. As for the free tenant farmers who were replacing the slave gangs in the latter part of the first century, they were under the familiar compulsion to "mine the soil" in order to make quick returns. The same situation exists in America today. The report of the National Emergency Council on *Economic Conditions of the South* speaks of the ruin

of millions of acres of once fertile land by tenant farmers. Many of them, it says, "have little interest in preserving soil they do not own." It is true the small Roman farmer did not disappear and the broad farm belt of northern Italy, especially the valley of the Po, remained fertile. The modern traveller who crosses from Rome to Venice in the spring is impressed by the luxuriant growth of crops. There is no evidence of soil deterioration here after twenty-five hundred years of cultivation.

But Italian farming generally was hit by the agricultural development of the provinces, just as industry had been hit by their industrial development. Farm products were among the important exports of Italy, and the export market suffered from provincial competition. So the government was forced to adopt the extraordinary measures to help agriculture that already have been mentioned. By A.D. 200 there were many abandoned farms in key regions of the Empire that had escaped the notice of Tertullian.

Early in the second century, when agriculture and industry were both in difficulty, the government began what a writer in the *Cambridge Ancient History* calls "an orgy of spending." The civil service was expanded and made more expensive by being reorganized on a salary basis. Large sums were put into public buildings. Some of these were erected by wealthy citizens and local municipalities, others by

the Imperial government. The Emperor Hadrian's biographer says there was hardly a city in the Empire that was not beautified by this generous ruler. A few years ago I happened to be in Athens when the new water system designed by American engineers was about to be put in operation. It replaced the system begun by Hadrian eighteen hundred years ago and finished by his successor.

The name of Hadrian is familiar to visitors to Rome because it is identified with the impressive architecture of the Pantheon, the Castel Sant' Angelo, the bridge leading to it, and that elaborate town known as Hadrian's Villa, whose ruins still stand at Tivoli, a few miles outside the city. These remains are evidence of the work of a great builder. Because Hadrian really began the spending orgy, it is interesting to observe what sort of man he was. Born in Spain of an old Italian family which had migrated to that province, he was consumed with interests even more diversified than those of Julius Cæsar. He was a competent soldier and a great administrator. He thought himself an architect, art critic, painter, musician, and man of letters. A broken collar-bone testified to his devotion to hunting, as did a scar on the face that induced him to grow a beard, so that thereafter beards were the mode in Roman society. He was an inveterate traveller, largely because he desired personal knowledge of the Empire for reasons of public policy;

partly because of inborn curiosity. "He wished to see with his own eyes," his biographer wrote, "everything he had read about." He could build the great military wall in Britain and in tourist fashion climb Mount Etna to see a sunrise.

The outlying lands needed his attention. The wars of his ambitious predecessor, Trajan, under whom Roman rule reached its farthest limits, had overextended the Empire. Hadrian hauled down the flag in regions that were too difficult to hold, and provided adequate frontier defences, with especial attention to the discipline and efficiency of his troops. Wisely he depended chiefly on the spirit of the army rather than on any Maginot line. His address to the First Pannonian squadron after an inspection shows his attention to details. "Your javelin-throwing," he said, "was accurate and good. Your spear-throwing, too, was in many cases excellent, and the jumping was neat and lively. I should certainly have pointed out to you anything in which you fell short if I had noticed it — for example, if you had shown a tendency to overshoot your targets."

He seems to have realized that something was the matter with industry and commerce. As no new lands were being added to the Empire to bring more customers within the free-trade area, he attempted to stimulate the home market by founding new cities and encouraging public improvements in the old. It

was in these domestic policies that his passion for beauty and order carried him into expenditures that weakened the economic structure of Rome.

Public education profited from his munificence, and his love of art made his elaborate Tivoli villa a sort of world museum where he reproduced famous buildings that had pleased him on his travels, and accumulated pieces of sculpture. In cultural matters he had the amateurishness of the last German Kaiser, and like Wilhelm he did not recognize his limitations. When he sent his design for a temple to an architect, the professional was candid in his criticisms. The statues, he wrote, were out of proportion. "If the goddesses wish to rise and leave the temple they will not be able." And he caustically added: "You don't understand these matters." A scholar with whom the Emperor disputed the meaning of a word did not have the architect's nerve to stand up to him. The learned man's friends remonstrated. "The lord of thirty legions," he replied, "must be allowed to know his stuff." While a Greek historian wrote that "Hadrian was a pleasant man to meet and he possessed a certain charm," we can understand the comment of a contemporary: "I felt great reverence for him but I was not bold enough to entertain affection for him."

In his last illness, which was long and distressing, the Imperial artist wrote some half-mocking, half-wistful lines of verse that have been preserved

through the centuries. Their human appeal is shown by the many translations that have been made into several languages; so many that it was possible to publish a book of them in England more than seventeen hundred years after the author's death under the title: *The Dying Hadrian's Address to His Soul*. His stanza is so timeless it might have come from the twentieth century as readily as from the second. An unrhymed translation might run:

Dear soul of mine, so gay, so restless,  
Long my body's guest and comrade,  
To what far land art thou departing,  
Pale land, barren, sunless?  
All left behind, thy jests and laughter!

In the sweep of his great practical and cultural interests he might well be called Hadrian the Magnificent. But such magnificence as his the ancient world could not afford. In his lavish spending at home and abroad he set an example that was widely followed. It has been suggested that throughout the Empire the cities themselves began to spend a disproportionate part of their revenues on such amenities as games, theatres, baths, and banquets. Idlers were attracted by the dole, which many cities copied from Rome. The idle poor together with the idle rich were maintained by the hard-working masses. For the rich were

not producers. They notoriously lived on sweated incomes from farms and shops. "The creation of new cities," Professor Rostovtzeff says, "meant the creation of new hives of drones." The cities with their large unproductive spending became a heavy drain on the farming country upon which they had to depend for support.

As the spoils of conquest were exhausted, there were no reserves to draw upon. "Overspending," writes Professor Adcock, "so weakened the financial and economic resources of the Empire that the crises that were to come in the third century were in part the price that the world had to pay for the gilding of the Golden Age of the Antonines."

Under Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-Emperor, whose heart has been described as stronger than his head, the state came close to bankruptcy. When it was called upon to defend the Danubian frontiers, the treasury was exhausted and the Emperor was forced to sell the crown treasures at public auction. To the appeal of his soldiers for more pay he replied: "Anything that you receive over and above your regular pay must be exacted from the blood of your parents and relatives."

In this brief survey of conditions leading to the fatal third century, one further aspect of Roman life remains to be considered. A large element in the population failed to share in the prosperity of the Golden

Age. Its bitterness was reflected in the disastrous political and economic events that followed. A wretched proletariat lived in the slums of Rome. For those who worked, wages were kept close to the subsistence level by slave competition. Strikes would have been futile. There were plenty of slaves who could have taken the strikers' places. In all Roman history I have found only seven strikes recorded -- two of them sit-down strikes. The actual words "sit down" are used in a papyrus record of Roman Egypt in the second century after Christ. Labour trouble had developed in an alabaster quarry. The foreman had assigned a gang to a difficult part of the quarry. He reports to a superior that they refused to be transferred. "Some of the men," he writes, "came to me and said: 'We are going out to our old place and sit down until you bring us word'" -- presumably of the rescinding of the order. The threat was successful. The foreman recalled the men who had been assigned to the more favourable location, and the original gang went back to work.

In Italy the only recorded labour trouble was in the Roman mint in the latter part of the third century after Christ. The Emperor Aurelian had found evidence of graft in the issuing of sub-standard coins and had closed the mint. The workmen fortified themselves in the building in accordance with the familiar modern practice in sit-down strikes. The Em-

peror had to send troops to drive them out. In the fighting that followed, several thousand men were killed. But large numbers of the submerged class stolidly accepted their lot. For those who could not or would not find work the government made what provision it felt necessary. They got at least a living from the dole. There were free entertainments, including the brutal gladiatorial combats, and the extensive public baths furnished the facilities of modern athletic clubs for a nominal fee. This lazy living had its appeal. An ungrammatical scrawl of a street artist in Timgad has been preserved: " 'unting [that is, watching beast hunts], bathing, and gaming, these is the life!" Doubtless, says the English historian, M. Cary, these words " summed up the philosophy of many a townsman of the Roman Empire."

But the hard and insanitary living-conditions and extensive undernourishment took their toll. Tombstone inscriptions show the abnormal number of workers who died young. There is evidence of savage hatred of the well-to-do. This appears in the biting attacks of the satirists, especially Juvenal, upon the smart set in Rome. " In Juvenal," Sir Samuel Dill writes, " a great sunken class, whom we hardly know otherwise than from the inscriptions on their tombs, finds a powerful voice and a terrible avenger." He denounces ill treatment of provincials, cruelty shown to slaves, lust for revenge, and immorality in a soci-

ety that seemed to value only material success. Like other satirists he exaggerates, and he adores unwarranted generalizations. Juvenal was a fuzzy thinker. He hated the "new woman" of his day. He is just as severe with the women who attend public meetings, discuss the poets at dinner, are careful in their diction, and wear stylish high-heeled shoes, as he is with those who order their slaves flogged while they are in the beauty parlour, or even have them crucified. But, with all necessary allowances, the picture he draws of high society is terribly sordid. To be sure, the frivolous rich at whom his shafts are generally directed were only a fraction of the population. But riches were associated with slave-driving and tax-extortion. Embittered men living in crowded tenements were not likely to discriminate.

From another part of the Empire comes confirmatory evidence of class hatred. The authentic voice of the proletariat speaks in some of the early Christian writings. When these are read with the social background in mind, the bitterness of the poor toward the rich is appallingly evident. In the Gospel of St. Luke the rich man is sent to hell and the poor man to Abraham's bosom. The rich man is condemned not because he is wicked but because he is rich. Abraham calls to him: "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou are tor-

## PRELUDE TO CRISIS

mented." The author of the Epistle of St. James, writing to the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion in the second century, strikes at the ruthless money-lenders and tax-collectors. He reminds the poor that "rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats," and comes out with this blast: "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . . Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as though it were fire."

By the end of the second century of peace the Empire had developed problems which it did not understand and for whose solution it had no technique.



## CHAPTER XII

# THE TOTALITARIAN STATE

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THE DEADENING autocracy, the stagnation of industry and agriculture, and the class bitterness described in the preceding pages constitute the background for the social and economic events in the third century which culminated in the totalitarian state. These events centred in fifty years of military anarchy which wrought the unconscious revenge of the poor. But their revenge tore down their own lives as well as the lives of those they hated, and involved the civilization of the ancient world in ruin.

“The Roman army,” a commentator says, “both made and unmade the Roman Empire.” It was not the same army. Under the wise reorganization of Augustus the army was made a school for citizenship. Enlistment in the legions opened the way to a civil career. The recruits represented a cross-section of

the middle class from the most Romanized parts of the Empire. They were saturated with the Roman tradition. While on frontier duty they often were employed on public works. At the end of their service they received land or a bonus equivalent to thirteen years' pay and became respected business men or farmers in the communities where they settled. For generations the army was a civilizing agency.

But the time came when Italy and Gaul no longer could furnish recruits. The population had decreased or the men had become too soft. It became necessary to draw soldiers and officers from the less civilized regions. They took seriously their obligation to defend the frontiers. Repeatedly rude but energetic non-Italian emperors swept barbarian intruders out of the Mediterranean world. But the ignorant provincial soldiers had no feeling for Roman institutions. In the third century they finally realized they were the strongest force in the state. The successive military dictatorships that followed were not consciously dictatorships of the proletariat. But they were dictatorships of proletarian generals of proletarian armies. A great empire was ruled by a series of rough top- sergeants. "Make the soldiers rich," was the admonition of the dying Emperor Septimius Severus to his sons, "and do not trouble about the rest." The obvious sources of enrichment were ruinous taxes and plunder.

By modern standards, ordinary taxes had been low throughout the second century. There is indirect evidence of the comparative poverty of the ancient world in the reluctance of the emperors to sanction increases. But in the third century, to meet the military expenses, the demands of the soldiers, and the extravagances of the emperors, there were frequent confiscations of property and periodic exactions from the rich. In addition heavy burdens were imposed on provincial towns in the shape of compulsory services. The inhabitants were forced to provide food, lodging, and transport for the troops. Discipline was relaxed and the soldiers were allowed to loot the districts through which they passed. While farms as well as cities were plundered, the chief sufferers, of course, were the well-to-do. Business was interrupted, the rich and the middle class were impoverished, and the poverty of the poor was increased. A few wealthy owners of large estates were strong enough or influential enough to escape the heavy tax-exactions. Their immunity increased the burden on the rest. Graphic evidence of the shrinking of the cities throughout the Empire has been uncovered by the spade of the modern excavator.

A sidelight on the tax question is furnished by a Roman historian of the fourth century, Ammianus. Gaul, as usual, was being invaded by the Germans. The Emperor sent a relative, a brilliant young fellow

## THE TOTALITARIAN STATE

named Julian, afterwards known as Julian the Apostate, to take charge of the province. It was a tough assignment, but Julian made good. There was universal complaint about taxes. His assistant assured him in the customary way that existing taxes were not enough to meet expenses, and that more sources of taxation must be found. But Julian had studied the question and had the figures before him. He insisted that with proper governmental economies the taxes already levied would produce a surplus. The assistant, a real bureaucrat, was not so easily repulsed. Shortly afterwards he appeared with an edict drawn up for the Governor to sign, imposing the new taxes on which he had set his heart. Julian scandalized the entire civil service by throwing the edict unread into the wastebasket. At once reports went back to the Emperor that this brash young Governor was an "insufferable nanny-goat," "an ape in purple." But later when the jealous Emperor tried to weaken Julian by withdrawing some of his troops for service in the East, the young commander-Governor proved so popular that over his protests his soldiers proclaimed him Emperor and eventually he reached the throne.

Julian was exceptional in his devotion to economy. The expenses of running the Empire continued to increase. As taxes failed to produce the needed revenue, the government resorted to devaluation of the

currency. The denarius under Augustus was worth twenty cents, about the value of the old French franc. In two hundred years it had fallen to five cents. The fifty years of military anarchy brought it to half a cent. Prices shot up as they did in twentieth-century inflations in Europe.

Records are meagre, but we know that in the Roman province of Egypt wheat went to fifteen thousand times its pre-inflation price. In the simpler economic structure of the time inflation was not so disastrous as in the complex modern world. But flighty prices combined with the general disorder and heavy tax-exactions to undermine the middle class, which was the backbone of the Empire.

A pall settled over the population. People felt they were being swept downward by forces beyond their power to control. In the face of overwhelming evils they were helpless. Despairing of the present life, they turned to the other-world cults of the Orient. "The worship of Isis," writes Dean Inge, "was organized in a manner very like that of the Catholic church. There was a kind of Pope, with priests, monks, singers, and acolytes. . . . The priests were tonsured and wore white linen vestments." And Mr. Fisher adds: "Before Rome became Christian it had become clerical, a city of temples and images, of priests and religious processions, of cynic philosophers in cowls and coarse woollen gowns like the beg-

ging friars of the Middle Ages, of astrologers and magicians, such as always thrive amid public misfortunes." In this preoccupation over a future life public affairs were ignored. "The greatest political events," in the words of Professor Lot, "passed over the heads of the people like black or golden clouds. Later they were to watch even the ruin of the Empire and the coming of the barbarians with indifference."

Late in the third century after Christ the anarchy was ended by an energetic and able soldier and administrator. Diocletian, with army backing, became dictator, reorganized the administration, and stabilized the currency on what he believed was a sound basis. Unfortunately, like some modern rulers facing a similar problem, he overvalued his new monetary unit. Prices promptly responded with another violent rise. Diocletian recognized the suffering that resulted, but naturally did not understand the cause. The trouble, he thought, lay in greedy profiteering. In 301 he issued his famous edict setting maximum prices and wages. After denouncing the profiteers in the preamble, he announced maximum prices for between seven and eight hundred articles and types of work and service.

In its technical descriptions the edict reads like a modern tariff act. There is millet ground and millet unground; olive oil first quality and olive oil second quality; goose artificially fed and goose not artificially

fed; cabbages best and cabbages small; washed Tarentine wool and washed Laodicean wool. Maximum salaries are included for barbers, wagon-makers, elementary teachers, teachers of Latin and Greek, and many others.

The act had teeth. The penalty for evasion was death. The Emperor had so expanded the civil service that a contemporary wrote, with disgusted exaggeration, that half of the men of the Empire were on the government pay-roll. There were plenty of inspectors. But this early attempt at price-fixing failed. It is recorded that business men closed their shops, that many articles of commerce disappeared, and that food riots resulted. A dozen years later we read the obituary of the act: "For merest trifles blood was shed and, out of fear, nothing was offered for sale and the scarcity grew much worse until, after the death of many persons, the law was repealed from mere necessity."

The attempt of Diocletian and his successors to save an empire that was crumbling resulted in complete regimentation under a totalitarian state. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius many villages and towns had been virtually wiped out by a great plague, probably a malignant type of smallpox, that had swept the Empire from Persia to the Rhine. On a diminished population with greatly impaired resources taxes were increased to support the enlarged army and the

vast bureaucracy. Heavy contributions of grain were exacted from farmers to feed the soldiers and the population of the large cities. There were land taxes, property taxes, occupation taxes, poll taxes. It has been said of this period that "the penalty of wealth seemed to be ruin." The heart was taken out of the enterprising men. Finally the burden became so intolerable that to escape the Imperial levies tenants fled from the farms and business men and workmen from their occupations. The government intervened and bound the tenants to the soil — the beginning of serfdom — and the business men and workmen to their occupations and trades. Private enterprise was crushed and the state was forced to take over many kinds of business to keep the machine running.

As oppression by the central authority increased, many Romans in the frontier provinces escaped from its heavy hand to find refuge among the Germans and even the Huns. It is recorded that a refugee with the Huns told a Roman ambassador that "he considered his new life with the Huns better than his old life among the Romans." To the poor, it was said, the enemy was kinder than the tax-collector.

To repopulate the lands devastated by the plague in the latter part of the second century, Marcus Aurelius had "settled an infinite number of barbarians on Roman soil." By the fifth century the country was still further depopulated by the governmental oppres-

sion. At this time, under the whip of hunger, began what German historians have called "the wandering of the nations" in western Asia and northern Europe. This put pressure upon the barbarian neighbours of the Empire and they moved in on the lands from which the stricken inhabitants had fled. "As the Roman Empire gradually crumbled like a dilapidated house," J. W. Thompson writes, "the Germans filled the ruined provinces, which were as rooms in the vast edifice, and dwelt in them side by side with the native populace. The Romans grew more barbarized. The Germans became more civilized." But culture was overwhelmed by ignorance.

For our purposes the rest of the story is soon told. Under Diocletian, Rome had ceased to be the seat of government. His headquarters were at Nicomedia, a few miles southeast of the present Istanbul. Only once after he became Emperor did he visit Rome, and that was the year before his retirement, when he constructed the great baths whose ruins still impress us. Early in the fourth century Constantine built a new city on the site of the ancient Byzantium and in 330 he transferred the capital to "the new Rome which is Constantinople," as its official title ran. This was in a fine strategic position between the European and the Asiatic fronts. Latin remained the court language and the country was still regarded as one Roman Empire, but with increasing emphasis on "the eastern

parts," and "the western parts." Just before the close of the century the Western Empire was formally divided from the Eastern. In 476 the last of the Roman line, Romulus Augustulus, "laid down his Imperial dignity and the court of Constantinople was informed there was no longer an emperor of the West."

The city of Rome was never the capital of the Western Empire. An emperor went there to celebrate a triumph in 404 of our era. It was the third time in a century that Rome had entertained a sovereign. The Imperial court moved first to Milan and then to Ravenna, at that time a sea-coast town on the Adriatic, protected from attack by lagoons and marshes; now six miles inland. Ravenna was regarded as the capital of Italy until the middle of the eighth century.

In spite of the general intellectual stagnation, except in the new Christian theology, commerce still continued throughout the Mediterranean basin until it was interrupted by the conquests of Islam. By the beginning of the eighth century most of the western Mediterranean was dominated by Saracens. Italy and western Europe were now Christian and the great sea was controlled by their Moslem enemies. The Christians, a Mohammedan writer boasted, "can no longer float a plank on it." The economic equilibrium that had survived the Germanic invasions was destroyed. With the disappearance of the merchants, the urban life which they maintained went down in

collapse. Roman cities continued to exist, but only as ecclesiastical centres. There was general impoverishment. Western Europe sank back into a purely agricultural state. Movable wealth no longer existed. No central government could raise and pay for an army for its defence. Soldiers were recruited from the dependants of the great landlords. The feudal system of the Middle Ages, it has been said, represented the disintegration of public authority and its assumption by men who, because of their great estates, felt themselves independent. That system embodied the effects on the political structure of the return of society to a simple rural civilization.

As for Rome itself, at the end of the anarchy of the third century the great buildings still stood and splendid new ones were being added. Roman art began and ended with architecture. But when Constantine built a massive arch by the Colosseum to commemorate his victories, he could find no sculptors to decorate it. The pieces of fine sculpture that were used were taken from the arch of Trajan. Creative work in literature as well as the arts had ceased. The city's old life had been engulfed in the ignorance of a polyglot population. The spoken language had become a patois. In the fifth century, a historian says, the people spoke Latin, but what Latin!

“Rome partly succeeded in Romanizing the Mediterranean world,” writes Professor Lot, “but only the

## THE TOTALITARIAN STATE

upper classes had the Roman mentality." In the old city still lived some of the new rich who had managed to take advantage of the disorders to make fortunes through speculation or political influence. The society in which they moved, as described by a contemporary writer Ammianus was extravagant and ostentatious, but wholly without culture. These people showed none of the energy and courage that in earlier days had more than offset the faults of the old aristocracy. A crowd of soft and stupid economic royalists and a listless proletariat were left to maintain the great tradition in the ancient capital, while powerful feudal landlords dominated the countryside. Early Roman history has been described as the history of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. At the end "there were not Romans left to do the work of Rome."



## CHAPTER XIII

### WARNING SIGNALS

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As we survey the collapse of Roman civilization we see that the trouble was not the strength of the invaders. It was internal decay. The reasons for that decay have proved the nightmare of historians from Gibbon to the present time. When the inquirer fixes upon certain causes, he usually is brought up sharply by the reflection that these same causes existed in other eras without fatal results. The slave system was at its worst during the Republic, but Rome went vigorously forward. So long as the people kept their nerve, the capital and Italy seemed able to assimilate foreign stocks, at least to such a degree that civilization was not impaired. It was when conditions became pathological that assimilation stopped. For centuries education in England was as deficient as

education in Rome, and culture flourished in France under autocratic rule. A pertinent suggestion is furnished by a remark of Hugh Wilson's in his *Education of a Diplomat*. Discussing the pre-war mentality, Mr. Wilson says: "To us the Victorian era of stability was normal. We needed a lifetime to realize, and some of us have not yet realized, that the Victorian era was an historical phenomenon, so unusual that it will be cited with the age of Augustus as one of the two great periods of peace and security in the history of western civilization."

An unusual combination of circumstances made possible the Victorian stability and the stability of the Roman peace. When the balance was disturbed, the stability in both instances was lost. The civilization of the Roman world might have withstood some of the disintegrating influences. When they ganged up on it, Roman civilization could not withstand the mass attack. Perhaps if "the wandering of the nations" had been deferred a few centuries, Rome might have revived after a period of decay. In the course of history many nations have had their blank years in literature and the arts and have recovered. I have referred to sculpture in fourth-century Rome. It was as deficient in nineteenth-century America and England. In these countries it came back. In Rome it did not have the chance. The Eastern Empire, centred at Constantinople, suffered from many of the

same complaints that affected the Western Empire, but did not find them fatal. Apparently it escaped the precise combination of forces that caused the collapse in the West.

Without going into the general problem, I believe we may profit from certain parts of the Roman experience. It was a very different experience from our own. But, in spite of the differences, it carries warning signals for the present age.

As was said earlier, civilization involves collective action through government. Many of the instances of governmental intervention that we have just examined proved useful. Some of them mitigated distress. In times of crisis state loans were helpful. Cæsar was able to stop the flight of capital and restore confidence by government action. The panic of 33 was ended by Treasury loans provided by the Emperor Tiberius. Under the younger Gracchus and in the early period of the Empire public works cushioned the evils of unemployment. The problem was dealt with fairly effectively at times through Resettlement Administrations. On the other hand, the history of the dole carries a warning. Relief was necessary. But under the Republic it was so handled as to build up a powerful and unmanageable pressure group. No means test was applied until the dictatorship of Cæsar. Even under the Empire it became a permanently demoralizing factor in the social and economic life.

## WARNING SIGNALS

People were schooled to expect something for nothing. This failure of the old Roman virtues of self-reliance and initiative was conspicuously shown in that part of the population that was on relief. It had far wider aspects. Emergencies that would not have dismayed the men of the Republic were too much for the men of the later Empire.

Rome, as I remarked in a previous chapter, was demoralized by prosperity. The sharp social division that attended the get-rich-quick era was destructive first to the Republic and later to the Empire. The new rich lost initiative and self-reliance and became selfish, arrogant, uncompromising. The wretchedly poor were always liable to be preyed upon by designing politicians. The Roman people developed their great qualities under conditions that approximated those of the American frontier. They were energetic, hard-working, thrifty men and women, with a strong love of country and a high sense of justice. With sudden prosperity these virtues began to crumble.

Living became more interesting and in many ways more humane. The hard narrowness of frontier life gave way to a broader outlook. But there were other less happy effects on both sides of the social line. The rich refused to make even moderate concessions in the handling of privileges which they had been able to monopolize through their control of the government. The poor had sunk to a level where the selling

of votes was widespread and elections went to the highest bidder. "Rome is for sale," exclaimed a North African prince of the second century B.C. "It will perish when it finds a purchaser." The authenticity of the line has been challenged. But it carried bitter truth for the future.

We saw the effects of the boom years in America in breaking down standards and undermining character. Flaming youth got the idea that the highest aim in life was to have a good time. Many of its elders confused their moral values. The official scandals of the Harding administration had their counterpart in Rome under similar conditions.

As for elections, the *Handbook* written by Cicero's brother recommending bribery and lavish promises is not out of date in the modern world. A successful politician, the Governor of a state, remarked in conversation not long ago that he was "terrified" over the outlook for democratic institutions in this country. "In these days," he said, "we have to make promises that we know we can't carry out. We have to promise the old people pensions that would bankrupt the state if we paid them. We have to promise higher salaries to the school-teachers, higher wages to the working people, higher prices to the farmers, bigger allotments of public funds from the federal government. I am ashamed of what I have done. But I wanted to win." In the last days of the Republic

## WARNING SIGNALS

many Roman politicians could have made the same confession. The American Governor's remarks were cynical and extreme. Still, in view of what happened in Rome, we cannot dismiss them as simply fanciful.

The autocracy, reflecting as it did a deterioration in the character of the Roman people, contributed to a further undermining of their spirit. The process began under the liberal emperors of the second century after Christ, long before the advent of the totalitarian state. The central government undertook such far-reaching responsibility in affairs that the fibre of the citizens weakened. Evidently it is a fine question of statesmanship how far government can go without crossing the line between services that are wholesome, that strengthen character, and those that are demoralizing and weaken it.

The most disastrous policy in its immediate effects was extravagant spending by the government of the Empire. Part of the money went into the magnificence of the cities, part into the maintenance of the army and of the vast bureaucracy required by a centralized government. Gradually the soldiers and the civil servants became dominating pressure groups. The expense they entailed led to strangling taxation with repeated devaluations of the currency that fatally weakened the middle class and decimated its natural leaders. A sturdy middle class might have prevented the military anarchy that completed its

liquidation. The attempt to cure the resulting disorder with the complete regimentation of the totalitarian state merely gave a temporary check to the progressive decay. Disintegration followed the stifling of initiative.

The modern world has far greater resources than the Roman Empire. It is quite impossible to draw a safe inference from the Roman experience as to the limits of modern spending. There is merely the obvious warning that it is possible to go so far as to involve destructive taxation with the dangers of inflation. But certainly in Europe there are disquieting and spectacular analogies to the last years of Rome. To pass over the waste and devastation from war, there are uncertainties affecting the currencies of most countries with potentially disintegrating effects on the social structure. There is the spread of totalitarian systems in which Diocletian and his successors would have felt at home. The lives and activities of people are increasingly controlled by regimes that refuse to allow freedom of spirit.

It required a century or more for the destructive forces in Rome to work out their effects. The modern tempo is faster. The history of the later Roman Empire carries a warning to present-day authoritarians.

There is another aspect to the decline of Rome, the economic. The underlying economic trouble of the Roman system was its failure to provide opportuni-

## WARNING SIGNALS

ties for the people to find work through which they might maintain decent minimum standards of living. As Russia has demonstrated, no society is on a stable foundation when it is divided into a world of beggars and a world of the rich. We have seen the difficulties in which Rome repeatedly became involved because of this division, from which poverty and ignorance finally emerged triumphant. The disorders of the first century B.C. grew out of struggles between rich and poor. Prosperity sagged into the stagnation of the second century of the great peace partly from the same cause. The farms no longer furnished a market to the factories because the small independent farmer was absorbed by the great landlord. Industrial progress ceased because of the lethargy of slaves and undernourished free workmen and the failure of a sleek upper class to produce energetic and intelligent leadership.

It is true, as Professor Homo has remarked, that Roman culture was essentially aristocratic. It had been imposed on the world by superior groups which he calls "the general staff of civilization," and had failed to send its roots deep into the mass of the people. That was because the people virtually were excluded from the well-being of the general staff. They had no sense of partnership in the glittering life above them which they helped support. So when the staff of empire-builders and administrators disap-

peared in the anarchy of the third century, "Roman civilization suffered a mortal blow." The inhabitants felt a certain sense of solidarity. They valued the Roman peace as the source of all their blessings. But their feeling for the Empire was only passive. In the day of peril it could not be stirred to effective action.

Rome did a magnificent and lasting service to mankind. We may consider its final failure without attempting to pass moral judgments based on modern experiences and standards. In the same sense in which Metternich said that "indignation is not a political attitude," we may assume that neither is indignation a historical attitude. Short-sighted self-interest affected the mass of the people as it affected their leaders. The rich landowners were anxious to avail themselves of cheap slave labour, without regard to the effect on the free workers or on the future of farming and industry. The people deserted their champion, Gaius Gracchus, lured by appeals to their selfishness. Would modern men have been less short-sighted under similar conditions? Certainly the short-run selfish view often prevails today.

The fundamental modern social problem is the problem that Rome failed to solve. It is the problem of building a unified yet free society, with decent minimum standards of living. A society so intelligently and justly organized that there is no menacing submerged class. A society that provides reasonable

## WARNING SIGNALS

incentives for the free rise of a general staff of competent managers whose ranks are always open to fresh recruits. A society that develops a social pressure under which leaders accept an enlightened and far-sighted view of their responsibilities. This is the society which the long experience of Rome sets as a goal before the modern world.





## APPENDIX I

### CHRONOLOGY OF ROMAN NEW DEAL MEASURES AND OTHER ECONOMIC EXPERIMENTS

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- 367 B.C. — Licinius Stolo: moratorium on debts; Small Holdings Act; Farm-Labour Act.
- 357 B.C. — Maximum interest rate set at  $8\frac{1}{3}$  per cent.
- 352 B.C. — Government Land Bank; Farm Debt Conciliation Committee.
- 342 B.C. — Interest abolished to favour debtors; law soon ignored.
- 217 B.C. — Monetary devaluation to meet financial stringency in second war with Carthage.
- 133 B.C.—121 B.C. — The Gracchi: Resettlement Administration (R.A.); Public Works Administration (P.W.A.); Ever Normal Granary; two-price system for wheat, sold by the government at 32

## APPENDIX I

- cents a bushel, considerably below the market price, to those willing to stand in line. (For history of cheap wheat and wheat dole, see below.)
- 90 B.C.—86 B.C. — Frozen credits from civil war in Italy and war in Asia Minor; panic from collapse of Asiatic stocks and overspeculation; currency devalued and debts scaled down 75 per cent.
- 63 B.C.—61 B.C. — Severe stringency from indebtedness caused by wild speculation. Flight of gold, loans called. Relieved by embargo on gold exports and cheap credits offered by Rome's J. P. Morgan; followed by easy money made possible by gold and silver spoils from Asia.
- 49 B.C.—44 B.C. — Julius Cæsar; panic in Rome when Cæsar crosses Rubicon; flight of capital; collapse in real estate. Remedies: debts scaled down on basis of pre-war values; Resettlement Administration; 80,000 taken off relief and settled away from Rome; relief cut in half with means test (320,000 to 150,000); anti-hoarding measures, with compulsory investment in Italian land; P.W.A. work on roads, public buildings, reclamation projects.
- 29 B.C.—9 B.C. — Augustus: extensive P.W.A.; large soldier bonuses; easy-money policy from spoils of Egypt and large coinage of gold and silver from government mines; inflationary activity

## APPENDIX I

with high prices; relief rolls, which had expanded after Cæsar's death, cut from 320,000 to 200,000.

- 9 B.C.—A.D. 33 — Augustus and Tiberius: public spending cut, with funds exhausted and coinage reduced by 95 per cent; Tiberius attempts to balance budget without raising taxes; deflationary hard times culminating in panic of A.D. 33; collapse of land values; mortgages called. Home Owners' Loan Corporation (H.O.L.C.) set up with loans for three years without interest to real-estate owners.
- 91 — Domitian: Agricultural Adjustment Administration (A.A.A.), half of provincial vineyards destroyed to stop overproduction of wine.
- 97–106 — Nerva and Trajan: Farm Credit Administration (F.C.A.), with loans to farmers at half the market rate; government aid to children of poor families; senators required to invest one third of their property in Italian land.
- 117–211 — Hadrian and successors: extravagant spending on public works by central government and cities, followed later by heavy expenditures for wars, exhausting reserves and tax resources.
- 212–284 — Heavy spending continues on army, bureaucracy, and extension of dole; military anarchy combining with ruinous taxes and infla-

## APPENDIX I

tion to demoralize business and break down the middle class.

284-476 — Diocletian and successors: increasing taxation; inflation from overvalued currency with skyrocketing prices; price- and wage-control; totalitarian state; end of Western Empire.

### CHEAP WHEAT AND THE DOLE

- 123 B.C. — Wheat sold at 32 cents a bushel, considerably below the market price.
- 103 B.C. — Proposed reduction to 4 cents a bushel; probably annulled.
- 82 B.C. — Cheap wheat distribution abolished by Sulla.
- 78 B.C. — Wheat again sold at 32 cents a bushel.
- 58 B.C. — Wheat furnished free as a dole.
- 46 B.C. — Relief rolls reduced by Cæsar from 320,000 to 150,000, mounting again after his death.
- 2 B.C. — Rolls reduced by Augustus from 320,000 to 200,000.
- 274 A.D. — Aurelian: Relief extended, with bread substituted for wheat and addition of free pork, olive oil, and salt. Right to relief made hereditary.
- 327 — Right of relief attached to new houses by Constantine to encourage building in new capital of Constantinople.

## APPENDIX I

### DEVALUATION OF DENARIUS

(Approximate Dates)

Early first century (Augustus)	20 cents
Middle first century (Nero)	15 cents
End second century (Septimius Severus)	10 cents
Early third century (Caracalla)	6 cents
End third century (Diocletian)	.5 cent



## APPENDIX II

### IF YOU WISH TO READ FURTHER

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WITH the bewildering number of books on Roman history, any short list must represent rather arbitrary and personal selections. An excellent introduction to the whole field is the concise survey in the last 250 pages of James H. Breasted's remarkable textbook, *Ancient Times*, revised edition of 1935. The same material appears in the revised edition of his *The Conquest of Civilization*. Adequate single-volume histories are Tenney Frank's *A History of Rome*, with special attention to the economic side, and M. Cary's *A History of Rome*, which has interesting chapters summarizing social and economic conditions at the end of each century. H. F. Pelham's *Outline of Roman History*, pre-eminently political, is a marvel of lucid condensation.

## APPENDIX II

For the period of the Republic, Frank's *Roman Imperialism* traces the development of Roman expansion. A. H. J. Greenidge's *A History of Rome, B.C. 133-104*, is a beautiful book. The author's untimely death prevented the completion of the history he had planned. Rice Holmes's three-volume *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire* is especially full for the period of Julius Cæsar. Another standard work is W. E. Heitland's *The Roman Republic*, in three volumes. In Methuen's admirable series, *A History of the Greek and Roman World*, published in London, Howard H. Scullard treats of the period from 753 to 146 B.C. Frank Burr Marsh takes up the story in *A History of the Roman World from 146 to 30 B.C.* Professor Marsh's book presents a fresh point of view, as does his *The Founding of the Roman Empire*. His discussion of the senatorial machine suggested the treatment of my chapter, "Big Business in Politics." In two volumes on *The Architect of the Roman Empire*, Mr. Holmes gives a vivid account of the death struggle of the Republic and of the work of Augustus.

*Primitive Italy and the Beginnings of Roman Imperialism*, by Léon Homo, is the work of an accomplished French scholar. It is a pity that his brilliant book *La Civilisation Romaine* has not been translated. *Primitive Italy* is one of a great series, "The History of Civilization," brought out in the United States by

Alfred A. Knopf. Most of the volumes are translations from the French. Those dealing with Rome, aside from the one just mentioned, are J. Declareuil's *Rome the Law-Giver*, Homo's *Roman Political Institutions*, Albert Grenier's *The Roman Spirit*, Paul Louis's *Ancient Rome at Work*, Victor Chapot's *The Roman World*, and Ferdinand Lot's fascinating book: *The End of the Ancient World*. Another volume in the series that I have found useful is A. R. Burn's *Money and Monetary Policy in Ancient Times*.

G. Ferrero's *The Greatness and Decline of Rome* covers in five attractively written volumes the history to the close of the reign of Augustus. Some historians, I believe, regard Ferrero as more brilliant than sound. The second volume of M. Rostovtzeff's *A History of the Ancient World*, dealing with Rome, is by one of the most eminent modern authorities. Mommsen's *A History of the Roman Republic* shows that a learned German historian may be interesting. His history has flashing passages.

The Imperial period is briefly but well described in *A Short History of the Roman Empire to the Death of Marcus Aurelius*, by Wells and Barrow. A valuable discussion of the latter part of the Empire is H. M. D. Parker's *A History of the Roman World from A.D. 137 to 337*. This is in the Methuen series already referred to. It covers rather briefly the field of the more elaborate last two volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient His-*

## APPENDIX II

*tory*. The early chapters of J. W. Thompson's *The Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages* contain material on the barbarian invasions. The later years of the Western Empire are described in the first volume of J. B. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*. The first half of Christopher Dawson's fascinating book: *The Making of Europe* deals with this period. So do Parts One and Two of Henri Pirenne's *Economic and Social History of Mediæval Europe*, stressing the destruction of urban life by the Moslem conquests. A fine and scholarly history of the Empire not yet translated is Eugène Albertini's *L'Empire Romain*. Gibbon's monumental *Decline and Fall*, Bury edition, I suspect is discouragingly long and detailed for the average reader. Besides, the great additions to the knowledge of Roman history since he wrote it cannot be taken care of in notes, even by so accomplished a scholar as Professor Bury.

The economic history of the Mediterranean world has received adequate attention only in fairly recent years. For the general reader the best single book is perhaps Tenney Frank's *Economic History of Rome*, revised edition of 1927, unfortunately out of print, but to be found in libraries. The farm problem is elaborately discussed by W. E. Heitland in his *Agricola* — "The Farmer." M. P. Charlesworth's *Trade Routes of the Roman Empire* presents a valuable survey of commercial development. The classic eco-

## APPENDIX II

nomic history of the Empire is Rostovtzeff's monumental volume: *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. An interesting point is raised by Tenney Frank's criticism of Rostovtzeff in his Martin Lectures. Professor Frank was born on a Kansas farm and is familiar with American farm life. He believes the continental historians are misled by their European background into supposing that the Roman farmers were essentially European peasants. Instead, in Frank's opinion, they were much like the independent American farmers. Louis's *Ancient Rome at Work* already has been mentioned.

The most extensive collection of material bearing on the economic life of Rome and the Empire is the elaborate series edited by Frank: "An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome." Its five volumes by specialists cover Italy of the Republic and Empire and the Roman provinces. It is an amazing work. Supplementing Frank and Rostovtzeff on the economic side are the volumes on Rome of the great *Cambridge Ancient History*. This co-operative history is rather preoccupied with politics and wars, but it has fine chapters on social and economic conditions, literature, art, and religion. It is indispensable for reference.

Among the significant magazine articles dealing with economic aspects of Roman history are those by W. L. Westermann, *American Historical Review*, July 1915 and January 1938; and by V. G. Simkho-

## APPENDIX II

vitch, *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1916, discussing the farm problem under the Empire. Ellsworth Huntington in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February 1917, attributes Rome's decline largely to changes in climate, with very sketchy evidence. A summary of the majority opinion against this view is given by Ellen Churchill Semple in *The Geography of the Mediterranean Region*. The best account of the panic of A.D. 33 is Tenney Frank's in the *American Journal of Philology*, 1935, pages 336-41. With these should be mentioned two pamphlets by W. E. Heitland: *The Roman Fate* and *Iterum*, stimulating essays on the Roman decline by an eminent scholar.

Various aspects of Roman history are dealt with in many volumes that combine sound scholarship with delightful reading. Frank's *Social Behavior in Ancient Rome*, Martin Classical Lectures, Volume II, just mentioned, has chapters on family life, religious change, and social reform. W. Warde Fowler's *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero* gives a vivid picture of everyday life. The same subject a century later is covered by L. Friedländer's *Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, in four volumes, and T. G. Tucker's *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*. Grant Showerman's *Monuments and Men of Ancient Rome* tells of the recent excavations, with enthusiastic chapters on travel and biography. F. F. Abbott's *The Common People of Ancient Rome* re-

## APPENDIX II

views in some detail Diocletian's famous wage-price edict. Herbert S. Hadley's *Rome and the World Today* is useful especially for its discussion of Roman law from the point of view of a practising attorney. Pictures of the Empire in its glory and decay are given in Sir Samuel Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, and *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*. *The Legacy of Rome*, edited by Cyril Bailey, includes chapters by specialists on such subjects as "Communications and Commerce," "Literature," and "The Science of Law." Numerous topics are interestingly treated in Sir H. Stuart Jones's *Companion to Roman History*. J. C. Stobart's *The Grandeur that was Rome*, revised edition, is a popular account of the Roman civilization. Government is dealt with in Greenidge's *Roman Public Life*, Abbott's and Johnson's *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire*, which is out of print, and Homo's *Roman Political Institutions*. The standard discussion of slavery is R. H. Barrow's *Slavery in the Roman Empire*. Jack Lindsay's *Marc Antony* gives a modern Marxist view of the conspiracy of Catiline. Two biographies of especial interest are Gaston Boissier's *Cicero and His Friends*, and John Buchan's *Augustus*. His *Julius Cæsar*, while interesting, is much slighter. *The Reign of Tiberius*, by Frank Burr Marsh, is a stimulating history and character study. The successor of Augustus

## APPENDIX II

was maligned by malicious tradition as a cruel and sensual monster. Rehabilitated by modern historians, he emerges from Professor Marsh's analysis as a real statesman.

While Latin literature does not come within the field here surveyed, attention should be called to Professor J. W. Mackail's *Latin Literature* and his *Classical Studies*, and to J. Wright Duff's *A History of Latin Literature in the Golden Age* and *A History of Latin Literature in the Silver Age* — all very pleasant as well as enlightening.

Space limitations of this book prevented discussion of the Roman occupation of Britain; but I am sure many American readers would find stimulating material in Haverfield and Macdonald's *The Roman Occupation of Britain*, in R. G. Collingwood's slender volume: *Roman Britain*, and in the more elaborate study by Collingwood and Myres: *Roman Britain and the English Settlement*.

Unfortunately Smith's great two-volume *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* is long out of print. A small English substitute for this is the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. Sandys's *A Companion to Latin Studies* is elaborate, but its usefulness is impaired by the absence of a comprehensive general index.

Anyone with even moderate curiosity will be repaid for looking into the translations of Livy, Tacitus,

## APPENDIX II

and Plutarch. These may be inexpensively obtained in Everyman's Library, as well as in the Loeb Classical Library. The Loeb Library includes several hundred volumes of Greek and Latin writers, the original text on one page, a good translation on the page opposite. It is a superb project with one blemish: the indexes are terrible! But one may pick up almost any volume dealing with the Roman period, Cicero's *Letters*, his *De Officiis*, the *Tusculan Disputations*, Pliny's *Letters*, Strabo, Polybius, Appian, Dio, Sallust, Cato, Vitruvius (on architecture), Ammianus, and be amazed and delighted by the keen observations on human nature there shown. J. W. Mackail suggests the fascination of these ancient books when he writes of *The Lives of the Cæsars* by Suetonius, "who tells us the colour of Cæsar's eyes, who quotes from a dozen letters of Augustus, who shows us (the mad) Caligula shouting to the moon from the palace roof, and Nero lecturing on the construction of the organ." For those who wish their classics in small packages there are two useful compendiums: *Greek Literature in Translation* and *Latin Literature in Translation*, by Howe and Harrer.



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## INDEX

---

- Actium, battle of, 161  
Adam, Robert, Diocletian's influence on, 11  
Adcock, F. E.: on loyalty of provinces, 179; on gilding Golden Age, 209  
Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 191-2  
Agriculture, *see* Farm problem  
Albertini, Eugène, on Roman tools, 197  
Alexander the Great, quoted, 161  
Alfalfa, 202  
Ammianus, 216-17  
Ancyrean inscription, 185-6  
Antony, Mark: after Cæsar's assassination, 155-7; proscribes Cicero, 157; defeat at Actium and death, 161  
Appian: on aims of T. Gracchus, 98; on Senate's loss of power, 117; on assassination of Cæsar, 154  
Aqueducts, 14  
Arènes de Lutèce, 10  
Army: destroyed Republic, 46; reorganized by Marius, 131-2; by Augustus, 171; civilizing agency, 214-15; becomes proletarian force controlling government, 215; plunders, 216  
Assembly: early power, 55-7; authority confirmed, 70; developed by T. Gracchus, 103; by C. Gracchus, 117; used by Cæsar, 144; authority abolished, 174  
Augustan exposition, 15-16  
Augustus (Octavian): intimidates Senate, 132;

## INDEX

- after Cæsar's assassination, 156-7; struggle with Antony, 157; Cicero's murder, 157-9; Actium, 161; traits, 162-4; comment on Alexander, 162; political problems, 164-5; dislikes grain relief, 187; new form of government, 171-3; problem of succession, 175-6; popularity, 178-80; failure to conquer northern Germany, 181-2; welding Empire, 183; easy-money policy, 183-5; farewell address, 185-6; tax system, 185; boom years, 186-7; deflationary hard times, 188, 190
- Aurelian, Emperor, uses troops against strikers, 210
- Aurelius, Marcus: brick-yards, 200; sells crown treasures, 209; plague, 220; invites barbarians into Empire, 221
- Baalbek, 12
- Baker, G. P., on Augustus, 165
- Baldwin, Stanley, quoted, 37
- Barbarians: overwhelm Britain, 8; France, 35; Empire, 49; filter in, 221-2
- Bibulus, consul, 143-5
- Books, 31-2
- Booms: first century, B.C., 123-4; under Augustus, 184-7
- Breasted, J. H.: on ancient New Deals, 4; on Egyptian recruit, 25; on anarchy of third century, 195
- Bribery, 46, 137; Cæsar, 142, 170; "Rome for sale," 230
- Bridges, Roman, 13-14
- Britain, *see* Roman Britain
- Brutus, M. Junius, extortion, 120
- Buchan, John, quoted, 180
- Budget-balancing, by Sulla, 113; by Tiberius, 188-9
- Business: in politics, 105; in North African war, 121; Pompey and pirates, 121; in Asia, 122; summary, 132-3
- Cæsar, C. Julius: traits, 141-3; consul, 143-6; conquest of Gaul, 146-7; crosses Rubicon, 133,

## INDEX

- 148; measures to check panic, 149; Imperial organization, 150-1; powers, 152; assassination, 152; blunders, 152-3; bribery, 170
- Cannæ, battle of, 75
- Carthage, second war with, 74-6
- Cary, M., quoted, 211
- Casson, Stanley, quoted, 34
- Catiline, character and conspiracy of, 124-31
- Cato: on farming, 91; on old slaves, 92
- Catullus, attack on Cæsar, 196
- Chapot, V., on war spoils, 198
- Charity Ball (Festival of Goddess of Chastity), 65
- Chronology: main dates of Roman history, 36; of New Deal, 238-40; of wheat relief, 240; of devaluation, 241
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius: on money market, 18; compares Greeks with Romans, 42; on law, 44; as Governor of Cilicia, 77; on vulgar occupations, 95; on debts, 124; house on Palatine, 125; on Catiline, 127, 169; on effects of wealth, 137; character, 158-60; *Letters*, 158; death, 158; on public indifference, 170
- Cicero, Marcus (son), 27-8
- Cicero, Quintus (brother), *Handbook of Politics*, 168-9
- Cineas, pacifist, 71
- Cities: spending by, 208-9; disintegration of, 223-4
- Civil service, under Augustus, 173, 176-7; later, 197; top-heavy, 220
- Cleopatra, 160-1
- Clodius, runs on free-wheat platform, 113
- Considius, Q., financier, 129
- Constantine, transfers capital, 222
- Coriolanus, standpatter, 60-1
- Cornelia, mother of Gracchi, 116-17
- Corporations: public, 18, 109, 118-20; law of, 199
- Crop rotation, 202
- Dawson, Christopher, quoted, 147

## INDEX

- Dayton, Katharine, quoted, 4
- Debts, 58-9; Livy's story of centurion, 59-60; Coriolanus, 60-1; moratoriums, 63-4, 190-1; imprisonment for, abolished, 68-9; scaling down, 124; Cæsar's treatment of, 149
- Democracy, victory in Hortensian law, 70
- Depressions: early, 62; in first century B.C., 123; under Augustus, 184, 188; under Tiberius, 190
- Devaluation: traditional, 83; in second war with Carthage, 83; in first century, 124; in Empire, 218; table of, 241
- Dictatorships: of Marius, 138-9; of Sulla, 139-40; of Cæsar, 152; development under Augustus, 173; longest period of benevolent dictatorships, 176-7; development and effect, 195-7; of Diocletian and successors, 219-20
- Dill, Sir S., quoted, 211
- Dio Cassius: on Seneca, 39; on Egyptian treasure, 185
- Diocletian: palace, 11; Oriental despot, 176; price-and-wage edict, 219-20; abandons Rome for Nicomedia, 222
- Doctors, 33-4
- Dole, *see* Relief
- Easy money: first century, B.C., induces speculation, 123-4, 129; under Augustus, 183-7
- Education, 27; slave teachers, 93
- Eternal City (Tibullus), 180
- Ever Normal Granary, 109
- Farm Credit Administration, 191
- Farm Debt Conciliation Committee, 67-8
- Farm legislation: Small Holdings Act, 64, 98, 108; Farm Labour Act, 66; revived by Cæsar, 149; compulsory investment in land under Cæsar, 149; under Tiberius, 190; under Trajan, 192; A.A.A., 191-2

## INDEX

- Farm problem: early, 59; similarities to American, 86; effect of Sicilian wheat, 88; of wars, 89; of slavery under Republic, 91; wheat-growing displaced, 91; Cato on farming, 91; soil depleted by slave labour and tenant farmers, 202-4
- Farm-to-market roads, 109
- Feudalism, 224
- Filibuster in Senate, 143-4
- Fisher, H. A. L.: on Augustus, 28; on Empire-building, 76; on education, 93
- France, *see* Gaul
- Frank, Tenney: on coupon-cutters, 39; on imperialism, 78; on aliens in Rome, 166-7; on flow of new money, 186; on failure to invent valve, 200; on industrial leadership, 201
- Frontinus, Julius, on aqueducts, 14
- Gaul: roads in, 24; Cæsar's conquest of, 146-7; prosperity under Rome, 182; under Julian, 217
- General Staff of Civilization, 233
- Germany, northern, escapes Romanization, 181-2
- Gibbon, Edward, on Age of Antonines, 19
- Gladiatorial combats, origin of, 136
- Government spending: orgy, 204; Hadrian's, 205, 208; "Gilding Golden Age," 209; under Marcus Aurelius, 209; ruins Empire, 231
- Gracchus, Gaius: traits, 106-7; organizes democratic coalition, 108-9; cheap wheat, P.W.A., R.A., and social legislation, 108-12; proposes citizenship for Italian towns, 114; death, 115; estimate of, 115
- Gracchus, Tiberius: family and engagement of, 96; speech, 97; legislation, 98; veto by tribune, 99; "recall," 100; Pergamum treasure, 100; death, 101
- Greeks: contrasted with Romans, 41-2; influence on Romans, 81-2

## INDEX

- Greenidge, A. H. J.,  
 quoted: on Gracchi, 115;  
 on Assembly, 174
- Hadrian: extravagant  
 spending by, 205; traits,  
 205-8; poem to his soul,  
 208
- Hadrian's Wall, 6  
*Handbook of Politics*,  
 168-9
- Hannibal, 74-5
- Hanno, pacifist, 74-5
- Heating, central, 8, 34
- Heitland, W. E., on Cati-  
 line, 131
- Holmes, T. Rice, on Julius  
 Cæsar; 149
- Home Owners' Loan Cor-  
 poration, 191
- Homo, Léon: on Cæsar's  
 blunders, 152-3; Gen-  
 eral Staff of Civilization,  
 233
- Horace: on Rome, 29; on  
 Greek influence, 81
- Hortensian Law, 70
- Inflation in third century,  
 218
- Interest, rate, 69; high  
 rates in provinces, 120;  
 fall under Augustus,  
 185; F.C.A., 192
- Iron industry, 30
- Italy, unification of, 40,  
 70, 71, 73; civil war in,  
 114, 124, 139
- Julian, holds down taxes  
 in Gaul, 217
- Juvenal: "bread and cir-  
 cuses," 19; social satires,  
 211-12
- Kipling, Rudyard: *Puck  
 of Pook's Hill*, 6; com-  
 pared with Virgil, 22
- Land investment, compul-  
 sory, *see* Farm legisla-  
 tion
- Latin: used in Britain, 9;  
 becomes patois, 224
- Lawyers, 32-3
- Libraries, 31
- Licinius Stolo, 62-4; fined,  
 65
- Livy: on Roman origins  
 and decline, 51-3; story  
 of bankrupt soldier, 59;  
 new nobility, 66; on  
 debt conciliation, 68; on  
 plunder, 78; on farm  
 speculation, 90; on pub-  
 licans, 119; on demoral-  
 ization by wealth, 196
- Lot, Ferdinand: on Dark  
 Ages, 16; Romans bar-  
 barized, 49; only upper  
 classes civilized, 224

## INDEX

- Louis, Paul, on exploitation, 80
- Lumpenproletariat, 167
- Manufacturing: in Rome, 29; in Italy, 29-30; difficulties, 199-200; effect of slavery on, 200; provincial competition, 201
- Marius: given command in Africa, 121; army reorganization by, 131-2; victories of, 138; in civil life, 138; proscriptions, 139
- Marsh, Frank Burr: on Cæsar's troops, 145; on senatorial machine, 243
- Military anarchy, 195, 216-19
- Mithridates, war with, 122
- Mommsen, "world of beggars," 81
- Monarchy, revolt against, 52, 55; institutions carried into Republic, 55
- Money, 82-5
- Moratorium on debts: fourth century B.C., 63-4; in panic, A.D. 33, 190-1
- Morgan, J. P., in panic of 1907, 130
- Moslems, control of Mediterranean, 223
- Murray, Gilbert, on failure of nerve, 40
- New Deal Measures, 5; appraisal of, 228-32; chronology, 237-9; *and see individual measures*
- Newspapers, 31
- New Testament, denunciation of rich, 212-13
- Oertel, F., quoted, 183
- Olmsted, F. L., on slavery in America, 203
- Orange, France, Roman remains in, 10
- Pacifists: Cineas, 71; Hanno, 74-5
- Panics: 86 B.C., 123-4; 63 B.C., 129-30; 49 B.C., 148; A.D. 33, 190-1
- Paris, Roman remains in, 10
- Peel, Sir Robert, journey of, 25
- Philanthropic foundation, 192-3
- Piso, protests cheap wheat, 111
- Plague, under Marcus Aurelius, 220-21
- Pliny, Elder: on Roman peace, 20; on general

## INDEX

- prosperity, 30; on wine-making, 30; on money-worship, 196; on big estates, 202
- Pliny, Younger: correspondence with Trajan, 23; seaside villa, 34
- Plutarch: on Coriolanus, 60; on Pyrrhus, 71-2; protests plunder, 79; on Cæsar and pirates, 142; on Augustus and Cicero, 159-60
- Pola, Roman stadium in, 11
- Polybius: on speculation, 18; on Roman imperialism, 22; on Roman constitution, 53; on fear of gods, 82
- Pompey: command against pirates, 121; in Asia, 122; alliance with Cæsar, 143; leads senatorial opposition to Cæsar, 148; death, 148; called Princeps, 172
- Pont du Gard, 3
- Postumius, works soldiers on estate, 69
- Price-Wage edict of Diocletian, 219-20
- Provinces: extortion in, 118-19; administration under Augustus, 172-3; welfare increased, 80, 179-80
- Public Works Administration: under Gracchus, 109; under Cæsar, 149; under Augustus, 186
- Puck of Pook's Hill*, 6
- Puteoli, iron centre, 30
- Pyrrhus, ambitions of, 71
- Rainfall, theory of deficient, 202, 247
- Rascoe, Burton, on plunderbund, 22
- Recall of elective officials, 100, 122
- Relief: low-price wheat, 110-11; further legislation under Republic, 112-13; under Empire, 187-8; chronology, 240
- Resettlement Administration: under Tiberius Gracchus, 98-101; under Gaius Gracchus, 101; under Cæsar, 143-5, 149; in general, 202
- Roads, 24-5
- Roman Britain, 5-10; satisfied with Roman rule, 182
- Roman Egypt: reorganized by Augustus, 161;

## INDEX

- loot from, 185; sit-down strike in, 210
- Roman Empire: population, 20; area, 76; accidental growth, 76; economic incentive in growth, 77-8; division and end of Empire, 223; court removed to Milan and Ravenna, 223; reasons for decline of, 226-34
- Roman law: foreigners' court, 44; Twelve Tables, 62
- Roman Peace: majesty of, 20; under Augustus, 178-82
- Roman remains, 3-14
- Roman Republic, 38; individualism in, 39; monarchy and revolution, 54-5; army control of, 46, 130-2; failure of, 153; self-government impossible, 165; alien population, 166-7; indifference of people, 170
- Romans: characteristics of, 41; readiness to compromise, 53; social differences of, 49-51, 57-8; hardened by conquests, 78; demoralized by Greek influence and by wealth, 81-2, 137; lack of inventiveness, 197-8; loss of nerve, 218-19; language becomes a patois, 224; "not Romans left," 225
- Rome: population of, 16; government under Republic, 55-7; number of slaves in, 93; price of real estate, and rents, 135-6; alien population, 166; government under Empire, 171-7; *and see* Assembly and Senate
- Romulus and Remus, 51
- Roosevelt, Theodore: in convention of 1912, 127; as opportunist, 146
- Rostovtzeff, M.: on magnificence of Roman buildings, 12; appraisal of A.A.A., 192; aim of economic activity, 197; cities as hives of drones, 209
- Sallust, quoted on relief, 166
- Segovia, Roman aqueduct in, 10
- Senate: early days, 55-7; admits new members,

## INDEX

- 66; opposes expansion, 76-7; attack on prerogatives by T. Gracchus, 100-1; defeated by business interests, 117, 121-3; quarrel with Cæsar, 144-5, 148, 151-2; relations with Augustus, 171-2; authority fades, 173-4; chooses Nerva as Emperor, 176
- Senatorial machine, 104-5; Sulla gives it last chance, 140
- Senators, forbidden to engage in foreign trade, 90
- Severus, Septimius, 215
- Shipping, 26
- Sicily, wheat production in, 88; civil war in, 95
- Sidonius, quoted, 34-5
- Slaves and slavery: brutal treatment, 92; war captives, 92-3; number in Rome, 93; effect on agriculture, 93, 202-3; slave revolts, 95; effect on progress, 200
- Small Holding Acts, *see* Farm legislation
- Social bitterness: throughout Roman history, 49; first century B.C., 95-6; speech by T. Gracchus, 97; by Catiline, 128; slum-dwellers, 210; Juvenal's tirades, 211-12; New Testament writers, 212-13; produces public indifference, 218-19
- Spalato, Diocletian's palace, 11
- Strabo, on Britain and Ireland, 8-9
- Strikes, general: for tribunes, 60-1; for recognizing Assembly, 70
- Strikes, sit-down, in Roman Egypt and in Roman mint, 210
- Sublime*, treatise on the, 196
- Suetonius: on Cæsar, 141-3; on Augustus, 162-4, 180; on relief, 187
- Sulla, character and career of, 139-40
- Tacitus: on Britain, 9; on imperialism, 79; on growth of Imperial power, 173; on Augustus, 179; on Tiberius, 189-90; on autocracy, 196
- Tax contracts: general trading in, 18; abuses of, 119
- Taxes: abolished in Italy

## INDEX

- in second century B.C., 91; under Augustus, 185; become heavy, 216; in later Empire, 220-1  
 Tertullian, description of Empire, 194  
 Tiberius: economy of, 189-90; deals with panic of A.D. 33, 191; denounces senators, 196  
 Tibullus, 180  
 Timgad, remains of, 11  
 Trajan: correspondence with Pliny, 23; deals with farm problem, 192; philanthropic foundation, 193  
 Tribunes: origin of, 61; veto power, 99  
 Twentieth Legion, 9  
 Two-price system for wheat, 111  
 Unification of Italy, *see* Italy  
 Velleius Paterculus: on Cicero, 158; on Augustus, 179  
 Virgil: on Rome's mission, 21-2; "such a toil to found," 134  
 War: profitable, 106, 118, 122, 131; spoils from Egypt, 185; from Dacia, 192, 198  
 Wells, H. G., on "*Væ victis*," 63; on incuriousness of Romans, 197  
 Wheat: competition with new lands, 87-9; prices, 110  
 Wilson, Hugh, *Education of a Diplomat*, quoted, 227  
 Wine: exports, 30-1; legislation on, 191-2  
 "Woe to the vanquished," 63



## A NOTE ON THE TYPE

*This is the first book to be set in Caledonia, a new Linotype face designed by W. A. Dwiggins. Caledonia belongs to the family of printing types called "modern face" by printers — a term used to mark the change in style of type-letters that occurred about 1800. Caledonia is in the general neighborhood of Scotch Modern in design, but is more freely drawn than that letter.*

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On a more modest scale Augustus adopted an easy-money policy. The results were identical with those under Coolidge. The policy promoted an inflationary boom followed by deflationary hard times and the panic of A.D. 33. In both instances the boom started in one administration while its fruits appeared in another.

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