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TACITUS

THE HISTORIES

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

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TO

D. H. F.

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

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

SIR HENRY SAVILE (A.D. 1591).

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INTRODUCTION

TACITUS held the consulship under Nerva in the year 97. At this point he closed his public career. He had reached the goal of a politician's ambition and had become known as one of the best speakers of his time, but he seems to have realized that under the Principate politics was a dull farce, and that oratory was of little value in a time of peace and strong government. The rest of his life was to be spent in writing history. In the year of his consulship or immediately after it, he published the *Agricola* and *Germania*, short monographs in which he practised the transition from the style of the speaker to that of the writer. In the preface to the *Agricola* he foreshadows the larger work on which he is engaged. 'I shall find it a pleasant task to put together, though in rough and unfinished style, a memorial of our former slavery and a record of our present happiness.' His intention was to write a history of the Principate from Augustus to Trajan. He began with his own times, and wrote in twelve or fourteen books a full account of the period from Nero's death in 68 A.D. to the death of Domitian in 96 A.D. These were published, probably in successive books, between 106 and 109 A.D. Only the first four and a half books survive to us. They deal with the years 69 and 70, and are known as *The Histories*. *The*

Annals, which soon followed, dealt with the Julian dynasty after the death of Augustus. Of Augustus' constitution of the principate and of Rome's 'present happiness' under Trajan, Tacitus did not live to write.

The Histories, as they survive to us, describe in a style that has made them immortal one of the most terrible and crucial moments of Roman history. The deadly struggle for the throne demonstrated finally the real nature of the Principate—based not on constitutional fictions but on armed force—and the supple inefficiency of the senatorial class. The revolt on the Rhine foreshadowed the debacle of the fifth century. Tacitus was peculiarly well qualified to write the history of this period. He had been the eye-witness of some of the most terrible scenes: he was acquainted with all the distinguished survivors: his political experience gave him a statesman's point of view, and his rhetorical training a style which mirrored both the terror of the times and his own emotion. More than any other Roman historian he desired to tell the truth and was not fatally biassed by prejudice. It is wrong to regard Tacitus as an 'embittered rhetorician', an 'enemy of the Empire', a 'détracteur de l'humanité'.¹ He was none of these. As a member of a noble, though not an ancient, family, and as one who had completed the republican *cursus honorum*, his sympathies were naturally senatorial. He regretted that the days were passed when oratory was a real power and the consuls were the twin towers of the world. But he never hoped

¹ Napoleon's phrase.

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

Those who decry Tacitus for prejudice against the Empire forget that he is describing emperors who were indubitably bad. We have lost his account of Vespasian's reign. His praise of Augustus and of Trajan was never written. The emperors whom he depicts for us were all either tyrannical or contemptible, or both : no floods of modern biography can wash them white. They seemed to him to have degraded Roman life and left no room for *virtus* in the world. The verdict of Rome had gone against them. So he devotes to their portraiture the venom which the fifteen years of Domitian's reign of terror had engendered in his heart. He was inevitably a pessimist ; his ideals lay

in the past; yet he clearly shows that he had some hope of the future. Without sharing Pliny's faith that the millennium had dawned, he admits that Nerva and Trajan have inaugurated 'happier times' and combined monarchy with some degree of personal freedom.

There are other reasons for the 'dark shadows' in Tacitus' work. History to a Roman was *opus oratorium*, a work of literary art. Truth is a great but not a sufficient merit. The historian must be not only *narrator* but *ornator rerum*. He must carefully select and arrange the incidents, compose them into an effective group, and by the power of language make them memorable and alive. In these books Tacitus has little but horrors to describe: his art makes them unforgettably horrible. The same art is ready to display the beauty of courage and self-sacrifice. But these were rarer phenomena than cowardice and greed. It was not Tacitus, but the age, which showed a preference for vice. Moreover, the historian's art was not to be used solely for its own sake. All ancient history was written with a moral object; the ethical interest predominates almost to the exclusion of all others. Tacitus is never merely literary. The *σεμνότης*, which Pliny notes as the characteristic of his oratory, never lets him sparkle to no purpose. All his pictures have a moral object 'to rescue virtue from oblivion and restrain vice by the terror of posthumous infamy'.¹ His prime interest is character: and when he has

¹ *Ann.* iii. 65.

conducted some skilful piece of moral diagnosis there attaches to his verdict some of the severity of a sermon. If you want to make men better you must uncover and scarify their sins.

Few Christian moralists deal much in eulogy, and Tacitus' diatribes are the more frequent and the more fierce because his was the morality not of Christ but of Rome. 'The Poor' are as dirt to him: he can stoop to immortalize some gleam of goodness in low life, but even then his main object is by scorn of contrast to galvanize the aristocracy into better ways. Only in them can true *virtus* grow. Their degradation seems the death of goodness. Tacitus had little sympathy with the social revolution that was rapidly completing itself, not so much because those who rose from the masses lacked 'blood', but because they had not been trained in the right traditions. In the decay of Education he finds a prime cause of evil. And being a Roman—wherever he may have been born—he inevitably feels that the decay of Roman life must rot the world. His eyes are not really open to the Empire. He never seems to think that in the spacious provinces to which the old Roman virtues had taken flight, men were leading happy, useful lives, because the strong hand of the imperial government had come to save them from the inefficiency of aristocratic governors. This narrowness of view accounts for much of Tacitus' pessimism.

Recognition of the atmosphere in which Tacitus wrote and the objects at which his history aimed helps

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

conspiracy. 'He withdrew his attention and thought about Tom Thumb.'

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

The supreme distinction of Tacitus is, of course, his style. That is lost in a translation. 'Hard' though his Latin is, it is not obscure. Careful attention can always detect his exact thought. Like Meredith he is 'hard' because he does so much with words. Neither writer leaves any doubt about his meaning. It is therefore a translator's first duty to be lucid, and not until that duty is done may he try by faint flushes of epigram to reflect something of the brilliance of

Tacitus' Latin. Very faint indeed that reflection must always be : probably no audience could be found to listen to a translation of Tacitus, yet one feels that his Latin would challenge and hold the attention of any audience that was not stone-deaf. But it is because Tacitus is never a mere stylist that some of us continue in the failure to translate him. His historical deductions and his revelations of character have their value for every age. 'This form of history,' says Montaigne, 'is by much the most useful . . . there are in it more precepts than stories : it is not a book to read, 'tis a book to study and learn : 'tis full of sententious opinions, right or wrong : 'tis a nursery of ethic and politic discourses, for the use and ornament of those who have any place in the government of the world. . . . His pen seems most proper for a troubled and sick state, as ours at present is ; you would often say it is us he paints and pinches.' Sir Henry Savile, Warden of Merton and Provost of Eton, who translated the *Histories* into racy Elizabethan English at a time when the state was neither 'troubled' nor 'sick' is as convinced as Montaigne or the theorists of the French Revolution that Tacitus had lessons for his age. 'In Galba thou maiest learne, that a Good Prince gouerned by evill ministers is as dangerous as if he were evill himselfe. By Otho, that the fortune of a rash man is *Torrenti similis*, which rises at an instant, and falles in a moment. By Vitellius, that he that hath no vertue can neuer be happie : for by his own baseness he will loose all, which either fortune, or other mens labours

have cast upon him. By Vespasian, that in civill tumults an advised patience, and opportunitie well taken are the onely weapons of advantage. In them all, and in the state of Rome under them thou maiest see the calamities that follow civill warres, where lawes lie asleepe, and all things are iudged by the sword. If thou mislike their warres be thankfull for thine owne peace ; if thou dost abhor their tyrannies, love and reverence thine owne wise, iust and excellent Prince.' So whatever guise our age may assume, there are lessons to be drawn from Tacitus either directly or *per contra*, and his translators may be acquitted at a time when Latin scholarship is no longer an essential of political eminence.

SUMMARY OF CHIEF EVENTS

I. THE FIGHT FOR THE THRONE.

A.D. 68.

- June* 9. Death of Nero.
16. Galba, Governor of Nearer Spain, declared Emperor at Clunia.
Fonteius Capito, Governor of Lower Germany, Clodius Macer, Governor of Africa, and Nymphidius Sabinus, Prefect of the Guard, murdered as possible rivals. Verginius Rufus, Governor of Upper Germany, refuses to compete.
- October* Galba enters Rome. Massacre of Marines at Mulvian Bridge.
His government controlled by Laco, Vinus, and Icelus.

A.D. 69.

- January* 1. News of mutiny in Upper Germany, now governed by Hordeonius Flaccus.
3. The armies of Upper Germany (under Caecina) and of Lower Germany (under Valens) salute Vitellius, Governor of Lower Germany, as Emperor.
10. Galba adopts Piso Licinianus as his successor.
15. Otho declared Emperor in Rome and recognized by Praetorian Guard.
Murder of Galba, Vinus, and Piso.
Otho recognized by the Senate.
- February* The Vitellian armies are now marching on Italy: Caecina through Switzerland and

A.D. 69.

February

over the Great St. Bernard with Legio XXI Rapax and detachments of IV Macedonica and XXII Primigenia: Valens through Gaul and over Mount Genève with Legio V Alaudae and detachments of I Italica, XV Primigenia, and XVI.

March

Caecina crosses the Alps.
Otho dispatches an advance-guard under Annius Gallus and Spurinna.
Otho starts for the Po with Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Proculus.
Titianus left in charge of Rome.
Otho sends fleet to Narbonese Gaul, and orders Illyric Legions ¹ to concentrate at Aquileia.
Spurinna repulses Caecina from Placentia.
Otho's main army joins Gallus at Bedriacum.
Titianus summoned to take nominal command.

April

6. Battle of Locus Castorum. Caecina defeated. Valens joins Caecina at Cremona.
15. Battle of Bedriacum. Othonian defeat.
17. Otho commits suicide at Brixellum.
19. Vitellius recognized by the Senate.

May

- Vitellius greeted by his own and Otho's generals at Lyons.
24. Vitellius visits the battle-field of Bedriacum.

June

Vitellius moves slowly towards Rome with a huge retinue.

July

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

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

A. D. 69.

July 3. At Caesarea.

15. At Antioch.

The Eastern princes and the Illyric Legions¹ declare for Vespasian. His chief supporters are Mucianus, Governor of Syria, Antonius Primus commanding Leg. VII Galbiana, and Cornelius Fuscus, Procurator of Pannonia.

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

Vespasian holds Egypt, Rome's granary.

Titus takes command in Judaea.

Antonius Primus with Arrius Varus hurries forward into Italy.

August Vitellius vegetates in Rome.

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

¹ See note above.

NOTE

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

BOOK I

PREFACE

[A.D. 69.] I PROPOSE to begin my narrative with I the second consulship of Servius Galba, in which Titus Vinius was his colleague. Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the Battle of Actium, when the interests of peace were served by the centralization of all authority in the hands of one man, there followed a dearth of literary ability, and at the same time truth suffered more and more, partly from ignorance of politics, which were no longer a citizen's concern, partly from the growing taste for flattery or from hatred of the ruling house. So between malice on one side and servility on the other the interests of posterity were neglected. But historians find that a tone of flattery soon incurs the stigma of servility and earns for them the contempt of their readers, whereas people readily open their ears to the criticisms of envy, since malice makes a show of independence. Of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, I have known nothing either to my advantage or my hurt. I cannot deny that I originally owed my position to Vespasian, or that I was advanced by Titus and still

further promoted by Domitian ;¹ but professing, as I do, unbiassed honesty, I must speak of no man either with hatred or affection. I have reserved for my old age, if life is spared to me, the reigns of the sainted Nerva and of the Emperor Trajan, which afford a richer and withal a safer theme :² for it is the rare fortune of these days that a man may think what he likes and say what he thinks.

- 2 The story I now commence is rich in vicissitudes, grim with warfare, torn by civil strife, a tale of horror even during times of peace. It tells of four emperors slain by the sword, three several civil wars, an even larger number of foreign wars and some that were both at once : successes in the East, disaster in the West, disturbance in Illyricum, disaffection in the provinces of Gaul, the conquest of Britain and its immediate loss, the rising of the Sarmatian and Suebic tribes. It tells how Dacia had the privilege of exchanging blows with Rome, and how a pretender claiming to be Nero almost deluded the Parthians into declaring war. Now too Italy was smitten with new disasters, or disasters it had not witnessed for a long period of years. Towns along the rich coast of Campania were

¹ To Vespasian Tacitus probably owed his quaestorship and a seat in the senate ; to Titus his tribunate of the people ; to Domitian the praetorship and a 'fellowship' of one of the great priestly colleges, whose special function was the supervision of foreign cults. This last accounts for Tacitus' interest in strange religions.

² This project, also foreshadowed in *Agricola* iii, was never completed.

submerged or buried. The city was devastated by fires, ancient temples were destroyed, and the Capitol itself was fired by Roman hands. Sacred rites were grossly profaned, and there were scandals in high places.¹ The sea swarmed with exiles and the island cliffs² were red with blood. Worse horrors reigned in the city. To be rich or well-born was a crime: men were prosecuted for holding or for refusing office: merit of any kind meant certain ruin. Nor were the Informers more hated for their crimes than for their prizes: some carried off a priesthood or the consulship as their spoil, others won offices and influence in the imperial household: the hatred and fear they inspired worked universal havoc. Slaves were bribed against their masters, freedmen against their patrons, and, if a man had no enemies, he was ruined by his friends.

However, the period was not so utterly barren³ as to yield no examples of heroism. There were mothers who followed their sons, and wives their husbands into exile: one saw here a kinsman's courage and there a son-in-law's devotion: slaves obstinately faithful even on the rack: distinguished men bravely facing the utmost straits and matching in their end the famous deaths of older times. Besides these manifold disasters to mankind there were portents in the sky and on the earth, thunderbolts and other

¹ Referring in particular to the scandals among the Vestal Virgins and to Domitian's relations with his niece Julia.

² i. e. the Aegean islands, such as Seriphus, Gyarus, Amorgus, where those in disfavour were banished and often murdered.

premonitions of good and of evil, some doubtful, some obvious. Indeed never has it been proved by such terrible disasters to Rome or by such clear evidence that Providence is concerned not with our peace of mind but rather with vengeance for our sin.

THE STATE OF THE EMPIRE

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

The death of Nero, after the first outburst of joy with which it was greeted, soon aroused conflicting feelings not only among the senators, the people, and the soldiers in the city, but also among the generals and their troops abroad. It had divulged a secret of state : an emperor could be made elsewhere than at Rome. Still the senate was satisfied. They had immediately taken advantage of their liberty and were naturally emboldened against a prince who was new to the throne and, moreover, absent. The highest class of the knights¹ seconded the senate's satisfaction. Respectable citizens, who were attached as clients or freedmen to the great families, and had seen their

¹ Probably those who owned one million sesterces, the property qualification for admission to the senate.

patrons condemned or exiled, now revived their hopes. The lowest classes, who had grown familiar with the pleasures of the theatre and the circus, the most degraded of the slaves, and Nero's favourites who had squandered their property and lived on his discreditable bounty, all showed signs of depression and an eager greed for news.

The troops in the city¹ had long been inured 5 to the allegiance of the Caesars, and it was more by the pressure of intrigue than of their own inclination that they came to desert Nero. They soon realized that the donation promised in Galba's name was not to be paid to them, and that peace would not, like war, offer opportunity for great services and rich rewards. Since they also saw that the new emperor's favour had been forestalled by the army which proclaimed him, they were ripe for revolution and were further instigated by their rascally Praefect Nymphidius Sabinus, who was plotting to be emperor himself. His design was as a matter of fact detected and quashed, but, though the ringleader was removed, many of the troops still felt conscious of their treason and could be heard commenting on Galba's senility and avarice. His austerity—a quality once admired and set high in soldiers' estimation—only annoyed troops whose contempt for the old methods of discipline had been fostered by fourteen years of service

¹ This includes 'The Guards' (*cohortes praetoriae*) and 'The City Garrison' (*cohortes urbanae*), and possibly also the *cohortes vigillum*, who were a sort of police corps and fire brigade.

under Nero. They had come to love the emperors' vices as much as they once revered their virtues in older days. Moreover Galba had let fall a remark, which augured well for Rome, though it spelt danger to himself. 'I do not buy my soldiers,' he said, 'I select them.' And indeed, as things then stood, his words sounded incongruous.

GALBA'S POSITION

6 Galba was old and ill. Of his two lieutenants Titus Vinius was the vilest of men and Cornelius Laco the laziest. Hated as he was for Vinius' crimes and despised for Laco's inefficiency, between them Galba soon came to ruin. His march from Spain was slow and stained with bloodshed. He executed Cingonius Varro, the consul-elect, and Petronius Turpilianus, an ex-consul, the former as an accomplice of Nymphidius, the latter as one of Nero's generals. They were both denied any opportunity of a hearing or defence—and might as well have been innocent. On his arrival at Rome the butchery of thousands of unarmed soldiers¹ gave an ill omen to his entry, and alarmed even the men who did the slaughter. The city was filled with strange troops. A legion had been brought from Spain,² and the regiment of marines enrolled by Nero still remained.¹ Moreover there were several detach-

¹ i.e. the marines, whom Nero had formed into a reserve force (Legio I Adiutrix). They had met Galba at the Mulvian Bridge, probably with a petition for service in the Line.

² Legio VII Galbiana, sent later to Pannonia.

ments from Germany, Britain, and Illyricum,¹ which had been selected by Nero, dispatched to the Caspian Pass² for the projected war against the Albanians, and subsequently recalled to aid in crushing the revolt of Vindex.³ These were all fine fuel for a revolution, and, although their favour centred on nobody in particular, there they were at the disposal of any one who had enterprise.

It happened by chance that the news of the death ⁷ of Clodius Macer and of Fonteius Capito arrived in Rome simultaneously. Macer,⁴ who was undoubtedly raising a disturbance in Africa, was put to death by the imperial agent Trebonius Garrutianus, acting under Galba's orders: Capito⁵ had made a similar attempt in Germany and was killed by two officers, Cornelius Aquinus and Fabius Valens, without waiting for instructions. While Capito had a foul reputation for extortion and loose living, some people yet believed

¹ Illyricum included all the Danube provinces.

² The Pass of Dariel over the centre of the Caucasus. The Albanians lay to the east of its southern end, on the south-west coast of the Caspian.

³ Vindex, Pro-praetor in the Lyons division of Gaul, had revolted against Nero early in the year 68 and offered his support to Galba, then governor of the Tarragona division of Spain. He was defeated by Verginius Rufus, commanding the forces in Upper Germany, and committed suicide. Verginius afterwards declared for Galba, though his troops wanted to make him emperor. Cp. chap. 8.

⁴ Clodius Macer commanded Legio III Augusta and governed Numidia, which Tiberius at the end of his reign had detached from the pro-consulate of Africa.

⁵ Governor of Lower Germany. See chap. 58 and iii. 62.

that he had withheld his hand from treason. His officers, they supposed, had urged him to declare war, and, when they could not persuade him, had gone on to charge him falsely with their own offence,¹ while Galba from weakness of character, or perhaps because he was afraid to inquire too far, approved what had happened for good or for ill, since it was past alteration. At any rate both executions were unpopular. Now that Galba was disliked, everything he did, whether right or wrong, made him more unpopular. His freedmen were all-powerful: money could do anything: the slaves were thirsting for an upheaval, and with so elderly an emperor were naturally expecting to see one soon. The evils of the new court were those of the old, and while equally oppressive were not so easily excused. Even Galba's age seemed comic and despicable to a populace that was used to the young Nero and compared the emperors, as such people will, in point of looks and personal attraction.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF FORCES

- 8 Such then at Rome was the variety of feeling natural in so vast a population. To turn to the provinces abroad: Spain was under the command of Cluvius Rufus, a man of great eloquence, and more skilled in the arts of peace than of war.² The Gallic provinces had not forgotten Vindex: moreover, they

¹ Cp. chap. 58.

² He wrote a history of his own time, which was one of Tacitus' chief authorities.

were bound to Galba by his recent grant of Roman citizenship and his rebate of their tribute for the future. The tribes, however, which lay nearest to the armies stationed in Germany had not received these honours : some even had lost part of their territory and were equally aggrieved at the magnitude of their own injuries and of their neighbours' benefits. The troops in Germany were proud of their recent victory, indignant at their treatment and perplexed by a nervous consciousness that they had supported the wrong side : a very dangerous state for so strong a force to be in. They had been slow to desert Nero, and Verginius¹ did not immediately declare for Galba. Whether he really did not want the throne is doubtful : without question his soldiers made him the offer. The death of Fonteius Capito aroused the indignation even of those who had no right to complain. However, they still lacked a leader : Galba had sent for Verginius under a pretence of friendship, and, when he was not allowed to return and was even charged with treachery, the soldiers considered his case their own.

The army of Upper Germany felt no respect for their commander, Hordeonius Flaccus.² Weakened by age and an affection of the feet he was without resolution or authority, and could not have controlled the mildest troops. These fiery spirits were only the further inflamed when they felt such a weak hand on the reins. The legions of Lower Germany had been

¹ See note on p. 23.

² Verginius' successor.

for some time without a commander,¹ until Aulus Vitellius appeared. He was the son of the Lucius Vitellius who had been censor and thrice consul,² and Galba thought this sufficient to impress the troops. The army in Britain showed no bad feeling. All through the disturbance of the civil wars no troops kept cleaner hands. This may have been because they were so far away and severed by the sea, or perhaps frequent engagements had taught them to keep their rancour for the enemy. Quiet ruled in Illyricum also, although the legions, which had been summoned by Nero,³ while lingering in Italy had made overtures to Verginius. But the armies lay far apart, always a sound assistance to the maintenance of military discipline, since the men could neither share vices nor join forces.

IO The East was still untroubled. Licinius Mucianus held Syria with four legions.⁴ He was a man who was always famous, whether in good fortune or in bad. As a youth he was ambitious and cultivated the friendship of the great. Later he found himself in straitened circumstances and a very ambiguous position, and, suspecting Claudius' displeasure, he withdrew into the wilds of Asia, where he came as near to being an exile as afterwards to being an emperor. He was

¹ Since Capito's death, chap. 7.

² He died in A.D. 54. In the censorship and in two of his consulships he had been Claudius' colleague.

³ For the war with Vindex.

⁴ See p. 92, note 2. The fourth legion is III Gallica, afterwards moved into Moesia.

a strange mixture of good and bad, of luxury and industry, courtesy and arrogance. In leisure he was self-indulgent, but full of vigour on service. His outward behaviour was praiseworthy, though ill was spoken of his private life. However, with those who were under him or near him, and with his colleagues he gained great influence by various devices, and seems to have been the sort of man who would more readily make an emperor than be one.

The Jewish war was being conducted by Flavius Vespasianus—appointed by Nero—with three legions.¹ He had no ill-will against Galba, and nothing to hope from his fall. Indeed he had sent his son Titus to carry his compliments and offer allegiance, an incident we must reserve for its proper place.² It was only after Vespasian's rise that Roman society came to believe in the mysterious movings of Providence, and supposed that portents and oracles had predestined the throne for him and his family.

Of Egypt and its garrison, ever since the days II of the sainted Augustus, the knights of Rome have been uncrowned kings.³ The province being difficult to reach, rich in crops, torn and tossed by fanaticism and sedition, ignorant of law, unused to bureaucratic government, it seemed wiser to keep it in the control

¹ See p. 92, note 1.

² ii. 1.

³ Cp. *Ann.*, ii. 59. 'Amongst other secret principles of his imperial policy, Augustus had put Egypt in a position by itself, forbidding all senators and knights of the highest class to enter that country without his permission. For Egypt holds the key, as it were, both of sea and land' (tr. Ramsay). Cp. iii. 8.

of the Household.¹ The governor at that date was Tiberius Alexander, himself a native of Egypt.² Africa and its legions, now that Clodius Macer had been executed,³ were ready to put up with any ruler after their experience of a petty master. The two Mauretanias, Raetia, Noricum, Thrace, and the other provinces governed by procurators had their sympathies determined by the neighbourhood of troops, and always caught their likes or dislikes from the strongest army. The ungarrisoned provinces, and chief amongst these Italy, were destined to be the prize of war, and lay at the mercy of any master. Such was the state of the Roman world when Servius Galba, consul for the second time, and Titus Vinius his colleague, inaugurated the year which was to be their last, and almost the last for the commonwealth of Rome.

THE GERMAN REVOLT AND THE ADOPTION OF PISO

- 12 A few days after the first of January a dispatch arrived from Belgica, in which Pompeius Propinquus,⁴ the imperial agent, announced that the legions of

¹ i.e. to govern it by the emperor's private agents. The province was regarded as part of the emperor's estate (patrimonium). This post was the highest in the imperial service.

² A member of a Jewish family settled in Alexandria and thus entitled to Roman citizenship. He was a nephew of the historian Philo; had been Procurator of Judaea and chief of Corbulo's staff in Armenia.

³ See chap. 7.

⁴ i.e. the emperor's finance agent in the province of Belgica.

Upper Germany had broken their oath of allegiance and were clamouring for a new emperor, but that by way of tempering their treason they referred the final choice to the Senate and People of Rome. Galba had already been deliberating and seeking advice as to the adoption of a successor, and this occurrence hastened his plans. During all these months this question formed the current subject of gossip throughout the country ; Galba was far spent in years and the general propensity for such a topic knew no check. Few people showed sound judgement or any spirit of patriotism. Many were influenced by foolish hopes and spread self-interested rumours pointing to some friend or patron, thereby also gratifying their hatred for Titus Vinius,¹ whose unpopularity waxed daily with his power. Galba's affability only served to strengthen the gaping ambition of his newly powerful friends, for his weakness and credulity halved the risk and doubled the reward of treason.

The real power of the throne was divided between 13 the consul, Titus Vinius, and Cornelius Laco, the prefect of the Guards ; and an influence as great was enjoyed by Icelus, one of Galba's freedmen, who had been given the gold ring² and was now greeted by the name of Marcianus. These three ordinarily disagreed, and followed each his own interest in smaller

¹ Cp. chap. 6.

² A gold signet-ring was the sign of a free-born Roman knight. Its grant to freedmen was an innovation of which Tacitus disapproved.

matters : on the question of the succession they fell into two camps. Vinius was for Marcus Otho. Laco and Icelus were agreed not so much on any one as on any other. Galba was aware of the friendship between Otho and Vinius. Otho was a bachelor and Vinius had an unmarried daughter : so gossip, never reticent, pointed to them as father and son-in-law. Galba, one may suppose, felt some concern for his country, too. Why take the throne from Nero, if it was to be left to Otho ? Otho had led a careless boyhood and a dissolute youth, and endeared himself to Nero by aping his vices. Thus it was to Otho, as being already in the secret, that Nero entrusted his favourite mistress, Poppaea Sabina,¹ until he could get rid of Octavia. Later he grew jealous and removed Otho to the province of Lusitania under cover of a governorship. Otho had been popular in his administration of the province, and was one of the first to join Galba's party. Being a man of action and one of the most distinguished of Galba's officers in the war, when once he had conceived the hope of succeeding him, he eagerly indulged it. Most of the soldiers were on his side and the Court supported him as Nero's double.

14 After receiving the news of the German revolt, although Galba knew nothing for certain of Vitellius'

¹ Tacitus here follows the story told by Suetonius in his life of Otho. In the *Annals*, xiii. 45, 46, Tacitus gives in detail a more probable version. It is more likely that Poppaea used Otho as a stepping-stone to Nero's favour than that Otho, as Suetonius quotes, 'committed adultery with his own wife.'

plans, he was fearful to what lengths the outbreak of the troops might go ; so, being unable to trust the troops in the city,¹ he had recourse to what seemed his sole remedy and held an Imperial Election. Besides Vinius and Laco he summoned Marius Celsus, consul-elect, and the City-Prefect Ducenius Geminus.² After prefacing a few words about his own advanced age he ordered Piso Licinianus³ to be sent for, either on his own initiative, or, as some believed, at the instance of Laco. Laco had met Piso at Rubellius Plautus' house and they had formed a friendship, but he cunningly pretended that he was supporting a stranger, and Piso's good repute gave colour to this policy. Piso was a noble on both sides, being the son of Marcus Crassus and Scribonia. There was an old-world austerity in his face and bearing, and just critics spoke of his strict morality : people who took a less favourable view thought him soured. But while those who disliked this side of his character carped at it, it was a recommendation in the eyes of the emperor who intended to adopt him.

Galba is said to have taken Piso's hand and 15 addressed him as follows : ' Were I a private citizen, and were I to adopt you in the presence of the Priests

¹ See chap. 5, note 1.

² One of the three Commissioners of Public Revenue appointed by Nero in A.D. 62 (*Ann.*, xv. 18).

³ Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi Licinianus was the son of M. Licinius Crassus Frugi, and adopted son of L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi. His mother, Scribonia, was a descendant of Pompey.

by the usual formality of a curial statute,¹ it would be an honour for me to introduce into my family a descendant of Cnaeus Pompeius and of Marcus Crassus, and for you it would be a distinction to add to your noble ancestry the glories of the Sulpician and Lutatian houses.² As it is, I have been called by the consent of gods and men to be an emperor. Your distinguished qualities and your patriotism have persuaded me to offer to you peacefully and quietly the throne for which our ancestors fought on the field of battle,³ and which I too won by war. In so doing I am following the precedent set by the sainted Augustus, who raised to the rank next himself first his nephew Marcellus, then his son-in-law Agrippa, then his daughter's sons,⁴ and finally his stepson Tiberius Nero. However, while Augustus looked for a successor in his own family, I have searched throughout the country. Not that I lack either kinsmen or supporters, but it was by no favour of birth that I myself came to the throne, and, to prove my policy in this matter, consider how I have passed over not only my own relatives but yours.

¹ Adoption from one family into another needed in old days the sanction of the *Comitia Curiata*. When that assembly became obsolete, the priests summoned a formal meeting of thirty lictors, and their sanction of an act of adoption was still called *lex curiata*. Galba was now *Pontifex maximus*.

² Galba belonged to the *Gens Sulpicia*, and was connected through his mother, Mummia, with Q. Lutatius Catulus, who had led the senatorial party in the first half of the last century.

³ i.e. Galba's great-grandfather had fought for Caesar against Piso's ancestor, Pompey.

⁴ The children of Julia and Agrippa.

You have an elder brother,¹ as noble as yourself. He would have been worthy of this position, but you are worthier. You are old enough to have outlived youthful passions. Your life has been such that you have nothing in your past to excuse. So far you have only experienced misfortune. Prosperity probes the heart with a keener touch; misery only calls for patience, but there is corruption in success. Honesty, candour, and affection are the best of human qualities, and doubtless you yourself have enough character to retain them. But the complaisance of others will weaken your character. Flattery and servile compliments will break down its defences and self-interest too, the bane of all sincerity. What though you and I can talk plainly with each other to-day? Others will address themselves not to us but to our fortunes. To persuade an emperor what he ought to do is a laborious task: any one can flatter him without a spark of sincerity.

‘If the vast bulk of this empire could stand and 16
keep its balance without a guiding hand, the Republic might well have dated its birth from me. As it is, things have long ago come to such a pass that neither I in my old age can give the Roman people any better gift than a good successor, nor you in your prime anything better than a good emperor. Under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, Rome was the heirloom of a single family. There is a kind of liberty in the free choice we have begun to exercise. Now that the

¹ Crassus Scribonianus, cp. chap. 47, and iv. 39.

Julian and Claudian houses are extinct, by the plan of adoption the best man will always be discovered. Royal birth is the gift of fortune, and is but valued as such. In adoption we can use a free judgement, and if we wish to choose well, the voice of the country points the way. Think of Nero, swollen with the pride of his long line of royal ancestry. It was not Vindex with a powerless province at his back, nor I with a single legion that freed Rome's shoulders of that burden: it was his own cruelty and profligacy. And that was before there was any precedent for the conviction of an emperor.

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

‘A longer sermon would ill befit the time and I have fulfilled my purpose, if I have done right in choosing you. The soundest and easiest criterion of right and wrong policy is to consider what you would have approved or condemned in another emperor. For Rome is not like the nations which are ruled by kings,

where one house is supreme and the rest are slaves. Your future subjects are men who cannot endure the extremes either of bondage or of freedom.'

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

The tenth of January was a dreary wet day, and an 18 extraordinary storm of thunder and lightning showed the displeasure of Providence. Such phenomena were regarded in old days as a sign for the suspension of public business, but they did not deter Galba from proceeding to the camp. Either he disregarded such

things as the result of pure chance or else he felt that the blows of fate may be foretold but not forestalled. He addressed a crowded assembly of the soldiers with true imperial brevity, stating simply that in adopting Piso he was following the example of the sainted Augustus, and the old military custom whereby each man chose another.¹ He was afraid that by suppressing the news of the German rebellion he might only seem to exaggerate the danger, so he voluntarily declared that the Fourth and Twenty-second legions had been led by a few traitors into seditious murmurings but no further, and would soon return to their allegiance. He made no attempt to enhance his words either by eloquence or largess. However, the tribunes and centurions and those of the soldiers who stood nearest to him gave well-sounding answers. The rest were sorry and silent, for the war seemed to have lost them the largess that had always been usual even in peace. Everybody agrees that they could have been won over had the parsimonious old emperor made the least display of generosity. He was ruined by his strict old-fashioned inflexibility, which seems too rigorous for these degenerate days.

- 19 From the camp they proceeded to the senate, and Galba's speech to its members was no fuller or finer than to the soldiers. Piso spoke graciously, and there was no lack of support in the senate. Many wished him well. Those who did not were the more effusive.

¹ i.e. co-optation, employed in former days to raise a special contingent for emergencies.

The majority were indifferent, but displayed a ready affability, intent on their private speculations without thought of the country's good. No other public action is reported of Piso during the four days which intervened between his adoption and assassination.

GALBA'S MEASURES OF PRECAUTION

Reports of the German rebellion grew daily more insistent and the public was always ready to believe any news, provided it was bad. Accordingly the senate decided that a commission must be sent to the army in Germany. It was discussed in private whether Piso should go himself to add dignity to the commission, since he could carry the authority of the emperor, while the others represented the senate. It was also proposed to send Laco, the prefect of the Guards, but he objected. The senate had allowed Galba to nominate the commissioners and he showed the most miserable indecision, now nominating members, now excusing them, now making exchanges, yielding always to pressure from people who wanted to go or to stay at home according as they were determined by their hopes or their fears. The next question was one 20 of finance. After investigating all possible sources it seemed most reasonable to recover the revenue from those quarters where the cause of the deficit lay. Nero had squandered in lavish presents two thousand two hundred million sesterces.¹ Galba gave instructions that these monies should be recovered from

¹ About twenty-three million sterling of our money.

the individual recipients, leaving each a tithe of their original gift. However, in each case there was scarcely a tenth part left, for these worthless spendthrifts had run through Nero's money as freely as they had squandered their own: they had no real property or capital left, nothing but the apparatus of their luxury. Thirty of the knights were entrusted with the duty of recovering the money. This commission, for which there was no precedent, proved vastly unpopular owing to the scope of its authority, and the large number of the victims. Every quarter seemed beset with sales and brokers and lawsuits. And yet lively satisfaction was caused by the discovery that the beneficiaries of Nero's bounty were as poor as the victims of his greed.

At this time several officers were cashiered, Antonius Taurus and Antonius Naso of the Guards, Aemilius Pacensis of the City Garrison, and Julius Fronto of the Police.¹ However, this proved no remedy. The others only began to feel alarmed, thinking that Galba's craft and timidity had sacrificed a few, while his suspicions rested on them all.

THE RISE OF OTHO

- 21 Meanwhile Otho had nothing to hope from a peaceful settlement: all his plans demanded a disturbance. Many motives spurred him on: his extravagance would have ruined a prince, and his poverty have perplexed a private person: he was angry with Galba and jealous

¹ i.e. of the cohorts which formed the police and fire-brigade of the city. See chap. 5, note 1.

of Piso. He also alleged fears for his safety, by way of whetting his ambition. 'I proved a nuisance to Nero,' he would say, 'and can scarcely expect the compliment of a second exile to Lusitania.¹ Besides, monarchs always hate and suspect the man who is mentioned as "next to the throne". This was what did me harm with the old emperor, and it will weigh still more with the youthful Piso, who is naturally savage and has been exasperated by a long period of exile. It would be easy to kill me. I must do and dare while Galba's authority is on the wane and Piso's not yet established. These times of change suit big enterprises; inaction is more deadly than daring; there is no call for delay. Death is the natural end for all alike, and the only difference is between fame and oblivion afterwards. Seeing that the same end awaits the innocent and the guilty, a man of spirit should at least deserve his fate.'

Otho's character was by no means so effeminate as 22 his person. His intimate freedmen and slaves, who were allowed a licence unusual in private households, dangled before him the baits for which he was greedy: the luxuries of Nero's Court, the marriages he could make, the adulteries he could commit, and all the other imperial pleasures. They were his, they pointed out, if he would bestir himself; it was shameful to lie quiet and leave them to others. He was also incited by the astrologers, who declared that their study of the stars pointed to great changes and a year

¹ Cp. chap. 13.

of glory for Otho. Creatures of this class always deceive the ambitious, though those in power distrust them. Probably we shall go on for ever proscribing them and keeping them by us.¹ Poppaea² had always had her boudoir full of these astrologers, the worst kind of outfit for a royal ménage. One of them, called Ptolemy, had gone with Otho to Spain³ and foretold that he would outlive Nero. This came true and Otho believed in him. He now based his vague conjectures on the computations of Galba's age and Otho's youth, and persuaded him that he would ascend the throne. But, though the man had no real skill, Otho accepted the prophecy as if it was the finger of fate. Human nature always likes to believe what it cannot understand.

- 23 Nor was Ptolemy himself slow to incite his master to crime, to which it is only a short step from such ambitions. But whether his criminal designs were deliberate or suddenly conceived, it is impossible to say. He had long been courting the goodwill of the soldiers either in the hope of being adopted by Galba or to prepare the way for treason. On the road from Spain, while the men were marching or on outpost duty, he would address the veterans by name, reminding them how he and they had served together under Nero, and calling them his comrades. He renewed acquaint-

¹ Decrees excluding astrologers from Italy had been passed in B.C. 33, A.D. 16, and again in A.D. 52. Vitellius passed another. See ii. 62.

² Nero's wife. Cp. chap. 13.

³ i.e. to Lusitania. See chap. 13.

tance with some, asked after others and helped them with money or influence, frequently letting fall complaints and ambiguous remarks about Galba, using all the arts which work upon uneducated minds. The soldiers grumbled bitterly at the exertions of the march, the shortage of provisions, and the strict discipline. What they were used to was a journey to the Campanian Lakes or Greek seaports on board ship;¹ they found it hard to struggle over the Pyrenees and Alps, and march immense distances under arms.

While the soldiers were thus already fired with discontent, Maevius Pudens, one of Tigellinus'² intimates, added fuel to their feelings by luring on all who were naturally unstable or in need of money, or rashly eager for a change. Eventually, whenever Galba dined with him, Otho went the length of presenting a hundred sesterces to each of the soldiers on guard, on the pretext that this was instead of entertaining them.³ This system of public largess Otho extended by making presents in confidence to individuals, and such spirit did he show in bribery that when a member of the Body Guard, Cocceius Proculus, brought an action to

¹ They were 'Guards' who had escorted Nero on his singing tours through Greece. Perhaps some of them came to meet Galba on his way from Spain. Otherwise they could not have shared the toils of this march.

² See chap. 72.

³ The public dinner given in older days by patrons to their clients had long ago been commuted for a 'tip' (*sportula*). Pudens, instead of providing dinner for Galba's guard, sought their favour by giving them about 17*s.* apiece.

claim part of his neighbour's farm, Otho bought the whole property out of his own pocket and gave it to him. He was enabled to do this by the inefficiency of the Prefect Laco, who was no less blind to notorious than to secret scandals.

- 25 Otho then put Onomastus, one of his freedmen, in charge of the projected crime, and Onomastus took into his confidence Barbius Proculus, an aide-de-camp, and a subaltern named Veturius, both in the Body Guard.¹ Having assured himself by many interviews that they were both bold and cunning, Otho proceeded to load them with bribes and promises, providing them with funds to enable them to test the feelings of the others. And so a couple of common soldiers took it upon them to transfer the Roman Empire: and they did it. A very few were admitted as accomplices. These, by various devices, worked on the indecision of the others. The non-commissioned officers who had been promoted by Nymphidius felt themselves under suspicion; the private soldiers were indignant and in despair at the constant postponement of Galba's largess; some few were fired by the recollection of Nero's régime and longed for the days of licence; all in common shared the fear of being drafted out of the Praetorian Guards.
- 26 The infection of treason soon spread to the legions

¹ The English terms do not of course represent the exact position of these soldiers. The former was one of the emperor's personal body-guard (*speculatores*), who received the watchword (*tessera*) and passed it round: the latter was one to whom a centurion had delegated some part of his work.

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

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

upon as the signal that the troops were assembling and the conspiracy was ripe. On being asked where he was going, Otho pretended that he was buying an old property, but suspected its condition and so had to inspect it first. Thus, leaning on his freedman's shoulder, he passed through Tiberius' house into the Velabrum and thence to the Golden Milestone at the foot of the Temple of Saturn.¹ There thirty-three soldiers of the Body Guard saluted him as emperor. When he showed alarm at the smallness of their number they put him hastily into a litter, and, drawing their swords, hurried him away. About the same number of soldiers joined them on the way, some accomplices, others merely curious. Some marched along shouting and flourishing swords; others kept silent, intending to take their cue from subsequent events.

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

¹ Plutarch explains this. 'He passed through Tiberius' house, as it is called, and walked down to the Forum, where stands the golden pillar to which all the high-roads of Italy lead.' The Velabrum lies between the Forum, the Tiber, and the Aventine.

THE FALL OF GALBA

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

‘Fellow soldiers, it is now five days since I was made a Caesar. I knew nothing of the future nor whether the name was more to be desired or feared. It now lies with you to decide whether or no my adoption is to prove a calamity for my house and for my country. In saying this, I do not dread disaster on my own account. I have known misfortune, and I am now discovering to the full that prosperity is just as dangerous. But for the sake of my adoptive father, of the senate, and of the whole empire, I deplore the thought that we may have to-day either to die or—what for good men is as wretched—to kill. In the recent revolution our comfort was that Rome was spared the sight of blood, and the transfer was effected

without disturbance. We thought that my adoption would be a safeguard against an outbreak of civil war even after Galba's death.

- 30 'I will make no claims to rank or respectability. To compare myself with Otho, I need not recite my virtues. His vices are all he has to be proud of. They ruined the empire, even when he was only playing the part of an emperor's friend. Why should he deserve to be emperor? For his swaggering demeanour? For his effeminate costume? Extravagance imposes on some people. They take it for liberality. They are wrong. He will know how to squander money, but not how to give it away. His mind is full of lechery and debauchery and intrigues with women. These are in his eyes the prerogatives of the throne. And the pleasure of his vices would be all his, the blushes of shame would be ours. No man has ever ruled well who won the throne by bad means.

'The whole Roman world agreed to give Galba the title of Caesar. Galba with your approval gave that title to me. Even if the "country", the "senate", the "people", are empty terms, it is to your interest, my fellow soldiers, to see that it is not the rascals who create an emperor. From time to time one hears of the legionaries being in mutiny against their generals. But your good faith and your good name have stood to this day unimpaired. It was not you who deserted Nero: he deserted you. Are you going to allow less than thirty deserters and renegades to bestow the crown? Why! no one would tolerate their choosing

so much as a centurion or a tribune for themselves. Are you going to allow this precedent, and by your acquiescence make their crime your own? You will soon see this lawless spirit spreading to the troops abroad, and in time the treason will recoil on us and the war on you. Besides, innocence wins you as much as the murder of your emperor: you will get from us as large a bounty for your loyalty as you would from others for your crime.'

The members of the Body Guard dispersed. The 31 rest of the cohort paid some heed to his speech. Aimlessly, as happens in moments of confusion, they seized their standards, without as yet any fixed plan, and not, as was afterwards believed, to cloak their treachery. Marius Celsus had been dispatched to the picked detachments of the Illyrian army, which were quartered in the Vipsanian arcade,¹ while instructions had been given to two senior centurions,² Amullius Serenus and Domitius Sabinus, to summon the German troops from the Hall of Liberty. They distrusted the legion of marines, who had been alienated by Galba's

¹ These troops, having no head-quarters in Rome, were put up in a piazza built by M. Vipsanius Agrippa, and decorated with paintings of Neptune and of the Argonauts. Cp. ii. 93, where troops are quartered in collonades or temples.

² The term *primipilaris* denotes one who had been the centurion commanding the first maniples (*pilani*) of the first cohort of a legion. He was an officer of great importance, highly paid, and often admitted to the general's council. Otho's expedition to Narbonese Gaul (chap. 87) was commanded by two such 'senior centurions'.

butchery of their comrades on his entry into Rome.¹ Three officers of the guards, Cetrius Severus, Subrius Dexter, and Pompeius Longinus, also hurried to the camp in the hope that the mutiny was still in its early stages and might be averted by good advice before it came to a head. The soldiers attacked Subrius and Cetrius with threats and forcibly seizing Longinus disarmed him, because he had not come in virtue of his military rank, but simply as one of Galba's private friends; and for his loyalty to his master the rebels disliked him all the more. The marines without any hesitation joined the guards. The Illyrian draft² drove Celsus away at the point of their javelins. The German detachments² wavered for some time. They were still in poor condition physically, and inclined to be passive. Nero had dispatched them as an advance-guard to Alexandria; ³ the long voyage back again had damaged their health, and Galba had spared no expense in looking after them.

- 32 The whole populace of Rome was now crowding into the palace together with a good sprinkling of slaves. With discordant shouts they demanded the death of Otho and the doom of the conspirators. They might have been in the circus or the theatre, clamouring for entertainment. There was neither sense nor sincerity in their behaviour. They were quite ready on the same day to clamour for the opposite with equal zeal.

¹ See chap. 6, note 1.

² See chap. 6.

³ Nero was meditating an Ethiopian campaign when the revolt of Vindex broke out. Cp. chap. 6.

But it is an established custom to flatter any emperor with unbridled cheering and meaningless enthusiasm. Meanwhile Galba was torn between two opinions. Titus Vinius maintained that they ought to remain within the palace, employ the slaves to offer resistance and block up all the doors, instead of going out to face the angry troops. 'This will give time,' he urged, 'for the disloyal to repent and the loyal to unite their forces. Crimes demand haste, good counsels profit by delay. Besides, if need be, we shall have the same chance of leaving the palace later: if we leave and repent of it, it will not be in our power to return.'

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

When Vinius resisted this proposal, Laco, prompted by Icelus, assailed him with threats, persisting in his
34 private quarrel to the ruin of his country. Galba without further delays supported those whose plan would look best. However, Piso was first dispatched to the camp. The young man had a great name, his popularity was still fresh, and moreover, he disliked Titus Vinius, or, if he did not, Vinius' enemies hoped he did: it is so easy to believe in hatred. Scarcely had Piso departed, when there arrived a rumour that Otho had been killed in the camp. At first it was vague and uncertain, but eventually, as so often happens with daring lies, people began to assert that they had been present and seen the deed. Some were glad and some indifferent, so the news gained easy credence. Many, however, thought that the report had been concocted and disseminated by friends of Otho, who now mingled in the crowd and tried to lure Galba out by spreading this
35 agreeable falsehood. At this point not only the populace and the inexperienced mob but many of the knights and senators as well broke out into applause and unbridled enthusiasm. With their fear they had lost their caution. Breaking open the palace gates they rushed in and presented themselves before Galba, complaining that they had been forestalled in the task of revenge. All the cowards who, as events proved, could show no pluck in action, indulged in excessive heroics and lip-courage. Nobody knew, everybody talked. At last, for lack of the truth, Galba yielded to the consensus of error. When he had put on his

breastplate he was lifted into a chair, for he was too old and infirm to stand against the crowds that kept flocking in. In the palace he was met by Julius Atticus, of the Body Guard, who displayed a dripping sword and shouted out that he had killed Otho. 'Comrade,' said Galba, 'who bade you?' Galba had a remarkable power of curbing soldiers' presumption, for he was not afraid of threats nor moved by flattery.

Meanwhile in Otho's camp there was no longer any ³⁶ doubt of the soldiers' unanimity. Such was their enthusiasm that they were not content with carrying Otho shoulder-high in procession; they placed him among the standards on the platform, where shortly before a gilt statue of Galba had stood, and made a ring round him with their colours.¹ Tribunes and centurions were allowed no approach: the common soldiers even called out, 'Beware of the officers.' The whole camp resounded with confused shouts of mutual encouragement. It was quite unlike the wavering and spiritless flattery of a civil mob. As new adherents streamed in, directly a soldier caught sight of one of them, he grasped him by the hand, flung his arms round him, kept him at his side, and dictated the oath of allegiance. Some commended their general to his soldiers, and some the soldiers to their general. Otho, for his part, was not slow to greet the crowd with outstretched hand and throw kisses to them. In every way he played the slave to gain a throne. When

¹ Probably the colours of the different maniples as distinct from the standards of the cohorts.

the whole legion of the marines had sworn allegiance, he gained confidence in his strength, and, considering that those whom he had incited individually needed a few words of general encouragement, he stood out
37 on the rampart and began as follows:—"In what guise I come forward to address you, Fellow Soldiers, I cannot tell. Dubbed emperor by you, I dare not call myself a private citizen: yet "emperor" I cannot say with another on the throne. And what am I to call you? That too will remain in doubt until it is decided whether you have here in your camp an enemy or an emperor of Rome. You hear how they clamour at once for my death and your punishment. So clear is it that we must fall or stand together. Doubtless Galba—such is his clemency—has already promised our destruction. Is he not the man who without the least excuse butchered thousands of utterly innocent soldiers? ¹ I shudder whenever I recall his ghastly entry into the city, when before the face of Rome he ordered the decimation of the troops whom at their humble petition he had taken under his protection. That is Galba's only "victory". These were the auspices under which he made his entry; and what glory has he brought to the throne he occupies, save the murder of Obultronius Sabinus and Cornelius Marcellus in Spain, of Betuus Cilo in Gaul, of Fonteius Capito in Germany, of Clodius Macer in Africa, of Cingonius on his march to Rome, of Turpilianus in the city, and of Nymphidius in the camp? What

¹ Cp. chap. 6.

province is there in the empire that has not been polluted with massacre? He calls it "salutary correction". For his "remedies" are what other people call crimes: his cruelty is disguised as "austerity", his avarice as "economy", while by "discipline" he means punishing and insulting you. It is but seven months since Nero's death, and already Icelus alone has embezzled more than all the depredations of Polyclitus and Vatinius and Aegialus¹ put together. Why, Vinius would have been less greedy and lawless had he been emperor himself. As it is, he treats us as his own subjects and despises us as Galba's. His own fortune alone could provide the largess which they daily cast in your teeth but never pay into your pocket.

'Nor in Galba's successor either is there any hope 38 for you. Galba has seen to that. He has recalled from exile the man whose avarice and sour temper he judged most like his own. You witnessed for yourselves, my comrades, the extraordinary storm which signified Heaven's abhorrence at that ill-starred adoption. The Senate and People of Rome feel the same. They are counting on your courage. You alone can give strength to the right policy: it is powerless without you, however good it be. It is

¹ Freedmen who had curried favour with Nero. Polyclitus was sent to inquire into Suetonius Paulinus' administration of Britain after the revolt of Boadicea in A.D. 61. Vatinius was a deformed cobbler from Beneventum who became a sort of court buffoon, and acquired great wealth and bad influence.

not to war and danger that I call you. All the troops are with us. That single plain-clothes cohort¹ is no longer a defence to Galba, but a hindrance. When once they have caught sight of you, when once they come to take their orders from me, the only quarrel between you will be who can do most to put me in their debt. There is no room for delay in plans which cannot be commended until they are put into action.'

Otho then gave orders to open the arsenal. The soldiers immediately seized their arms in such haste that all the ordinary distinctions of the service were neglected: neither Guards nor Legionaries carried their own arms:² in the confusion they took the helmets and shields of the auxiliaries. There were no tribunes or centurions to encourage them: each man followed his own lead, and the rascals found their chief incentive
39 in the consternation of the loyal. As the riot increased, Piso, alarmed by the din of their shouts, which could be heard even in the city, had overtaken Galba, who had meanwhile left the palace and was approaching the Forum. Marius Celsus had also brought back no good news. Some were for returning to the palace, others for seeking the shelter of the Capitol, many for seizing the Rostra. The majority merely disagreed with other people's proposals, and, as so often happens

¹ The cohort on guard seem to have been in mufti, without helmets and shields or their military cloaks, but armed with swords and javelins.

² The legionaries armed themselves with lances (*hastae*), and the auxiliaries with javelins (*pila*).

in these disasters, the best course always seemed the one for which it was now too late. It is said that Laco, without Galba's knowledge, proposed the assassination of Titus Vinius, either with the idea that his execution would be a sop to the soldiers, or because he believed him Otho's accomplice, or, as a last alternative, hatred may have been his motive. However, the time and the place both bred scruples; when killing once begins it is difficult to set a limit: besides, their plans were upset by the arrival of terrified messengers, by the continual desertion of their supporters, and by a general waning of enthusiasm even among those who at first had been the keenest to display their loyalty and courage.

Galba was driven hither and thither by the tide of ⁴⁰ the surging mob. The temples and public buildings¹ were crowded with spectators, who viewed a sorry scene. No shouts came from the crowd: astonishment was on their faces, and their ears open to every sound. There was neither uproar nor quiet, but the silence of strong emotion and alarm. However, a report reached Otho that the populace was arming. He bade his men fly headlong to forestall the danger. Off went the Roman soldiers as if they were going to drag Vologaesius or Pacorus from the ancestral throne of the Arsacids²—and not to butcher their own emperor,

¹ The word *basilica* refers to the buildings round the Forum, used for legal, financial, and commercial purposes. Most of them had cloisters.

² The Parthian royal family: Vologaesius was king of Parthia, and his brother Pacorus viceroy of Media Atropatene.

a helpless old man. Armed to the teeth, they broke at a full gallop into the Forum, scattering the populace and trampling senators under foot. Neither the sight of the Capitol nor the sanctity of the temples towering above them, nor the thought of Roman emperors past and to come, could avail to deter them from committing that crime which the next successor always avenges.

- 41 Seeing the armed ranks now close at hand, the standard-bearer of the cohort on guard over Galba ¹—tradition says his name was Atilius Vergilio—tore off the medallion of Galba ² and flung it to the ground. This signal clearly showed that all the troops were for Otho: the people fled from the deserted Forum and swords were drawn against any who lingered. Near ‘Lake Curtius’ ³ Galba was precipitated from his chair by the panic-stricken haste of the bearers and flung to the ground. The accounts of his last words vary according as they are prompted by hatred or admiration. Some say that he whined and asked what harm he had deserved, begging for a few days’ respite to pay the troops their largess. The majority say that he offered his neck to the blow and bade them, ‘Come, strike, if it serves the country’s need.’ Whatever he said mattered little to his assassins. As to the actual

¹ Cp. chap. 29.

² Attached to the pole of the standard.

³ An enclosed pond in the middle of the Forum, supposed to be the spot where Curtius leapt on horseback into the chasm, or by others the spot where a Sabine chieftain was engulfed in the days of Romulus.

murderer there is a difference of opinion. Some say it was Terentius, a reservist,¹ others that his name was Laecanius. The most common account is that a soldier of the Fifteenth legion, by name Camurius, pierced his throat with a sword-thrust. The others foully mangled his arms and legs (his breast was covered) and with bestial savagery continued to stab the headless corpse. Then they made for Titus Vinus. Here, too; 42 there is a doubt whether the fear of imminent death strangled his voice, or whether he called out that they had no mandate from Otho to kill him. He may have invented this in his terror, or it may have been a confession of his complicity in the plot. His whole life and reputation give reason to suppose that he was an accomplice in the crime of which he was the cause. He was brought to the ground in front of the temple of Julius by a blow on the knee, and afterwards a common soldier named Julius Carus ran him through with a sword.

However, Rome found one hero that day. This was 43 Sempronius Densus, a centurion of the Guards, who had been told off by Galba to protect Piso. Drawing his dagger he faced the armed assassins, flinging their treason in their teeth, and by his shouts and gestures turned their attention upon himself, thus enabling

¹ The word here used usually means a veteran re-enlisted in a special corps after his term had expired. It was also applied at this time in a special sense to a corps of young knights, who, without losing their status, acted as Galba's special body-guard in the imperial palace. One of these may have been the murderer.

Piso to escape despite his wounds. Piso, reaching the temple of Vesta, was mercifully sheltered by the verger, who hid him in his lodging. There, no reverence for this sanctuary but merely his concealment postponed his immediate death. Eventually, Otho, who was burning to have him killed,¹ dispatched as special agents, Sulpicius Florus of the British cohorts, a man whom Galba had recently enfranchised, and Statius Murcus of the Body Guard. They dragged Piso forth and butchered him on the threshold of the temple.

OTHO ON THE THRONE

- 44 None of his murders pleased Otho so much as this. On Piso's head, as on no other, they say, he gazed with insatiable eyes. This was possibly the first moment at which he felt relieved of all anxiety, and free to indulge his glee; or perhaps, in the case of Galba and of Vinus, the recollection of his treason to the one and of his former friendship with the other troubled even his unfeeling heart with gloomy thoughts, whereas, Piso being an enemy and a rival, he considered it a pious duty to gloat over his murder. Their heads were fixed on poles and carried along with the standards of the cohorts side by side with the eagle of the legion.² Those who had done the deed and those who had witnessed it vied with each other in displaying their bloody hands, all boasting of their share—some falsely,

¹ According to Plutarch, when they brought Otho Galba's head, he said, 'That's nothing: show me Piso's.'

² i.e. the legion of marines—Prima Adiutrix. Cp. chap. 6, &c.

some truly—as if it were a fine and memorable exploit. Vitellius subsequently discovered more than 120 petitions demanding rewards for distinguished services rendered on that day. He gave orders to search out all the petitioners and put them to death. This was from no respect for Galba : he merely followed the traditional custom by which princes secure their present safety and posthumous vengeance.

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

The will of the soldiers was now henceforward 46
supreme. The Praetorian Guards chose their own

- prefects, Plotius Firmus, a man who had risen from the ranks to the post of Chief of Police,¹ and joined Otho's side before Galba's fall, and Licinius Proculus, an intimate friend of Otho, and therefore suspected of furthering his plans. They made Flavius Sabinus² prefect of the city, therein following Nero's choice, under whom Sabinus had held that post ; besides, most of them had an eye to the fact that he was Vespasian's brother. An urgent demand arose that the customary fees to centurions for granting furlough should be abolished, for they constituted a sort of annual tax upon the common soldier. The result had been that a quarter of each company could go off on leave or lounge idly about the barracks, so long as they paid the centurion his fee, nor was there any one to control either the amount of this impost or the means by which the soldiers raised the money : highway robbery or menial service was the usual resort whereby they purchased leisure. Then, again, a soldier who had money was savagely burdened with work until he should buy exemption. Thus he soon became impoverished and enervated by idleness, and returned to his company no longer a man of means and energy but penniless and lazy. So the process went on. One after another they became deteriorated by poverty and lax discipline, rushing blindly into quarrels and

¹ i.e. in command of the *cohortes vigilum*. Cp. chap. 5, note 1.

² Vespasian's elder brother. He continued to hold the office under Vitellius (ii. 63).

mutiny, and, as a last resource, into civil war. Otho was afraid of alienating the centurions by his concessions to the rank and file, and promised to pay the annual furlough-fees out of his private purse. This was indubitably a sound reform, which good emperors have since established as a regular custom in the army. The prefect Laco he pretended to banish to an island, but on his arrival he was stabbed by . . . a reservist¹ whom Otho had previously dispatched for that purpose. Marcianus Icelus, as being one of his own freedmen,² he sentenced to public execution.

Thus the day was spent in crimes, and worst of all 47 was the joy they caused. The senate was summoned by the urban praetor.³ The other magistrates all vied in flattery. The senators arrived post-haste. They decreed to Otho the powers of the tribunate, the title of Augustus, and all the imperial prerogatives. Their unanimous object was to blot out all recollection of former insults ; but, as these had been hurled equally from all sides, they did not, as far as any one could see, stick in his memory. Whether he had forgotten them or only postponed punishment, his reign was too short to show. He was then carried through the still reeking Forum among the piles of dead bodies to the Capitol, and thence to the palace. He granted permission to burn and bury the bodies of his victims.

¹ See chap. 42, note 1.

² As a *libertus Caesaris* he passed into Otho's hands with the rest of the palace furniture.

³ The consuls, Galba and Vinius (chap. 1), were both dead.

Piso's wife Verania and his brother Scribonianus laid out his body, and this was done for Vinius by his daughter Crispina. They had to search for the heads and buy them back from the murderers, who had preserved them for sale.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- 48 Piso was in his thirty-first year. His reputation was better than his fortune. His brothers had been executed, Magnus by Claudius, Crassus by Nero.¹ He himself after being long in exile was a Caesar for four days. Hastily adopted in preference to his elder brother,² the only advantage he reaped was to be killed first.

Titus Vinius in his fifty-seven years had displayed strange contrasts of character. His father belonged to a family of praetorian rank; his mother's father was one of the proscribed.³ A scandal marked his first military service under the general Calvisius Sabinus.⁴ The general's wife suffered from a suspicious desire to inspect the arrangements of the camp, which she entered by night disguised in soldier's uniform. There she brazenly interfered with the guard and the soldiers on duty, and eventually had the effrontery

¹ Cn. Pompeius Magnus was Claudius' son-in-law, and executed by him 'on a vague charge'. M. Licinius Crassus Frugi was accused of treason to Nero by Aquilius Regulus, an informer, whom one of Pliny's friends calls 'the vilest of bipeds'. Regulus' brother was Vipstanus Messala. Cp. iv. 42.

² Scribonianus. Cp. chap. 15

³ Under the second triumvirate.

⁴ He was governor of Pannonia under Caligula.

to commit adultery in the general's own quarters. The man convicted of implication in this scandal was Titus Vinus. He was therefore put in irons by order of Caligula.¹ However, the fortunes of the time soon changed and he was set at liberty. After mounting the ladder of office without check, he was as an ex-praetor given the command of a legion, and proved successful. But soon again he soiled his reputation, and laid himself under the charge of having been mean enough to steal a gold cup from Claudius' dinner-table. Claudius gave orders that on the next day Vinus alone of all his guests should be served on earthenware. However, as pro-consul, Vinus' government of Narbonese Gaul was strict and honest. Subsequently his friendship with Galba brought him into danger. He was bold, cunning, and efficient, with great power for good or for evil, according to his mood. Vinus' will was annulled because of his great wealth. Piso was poor, so his last wishes were respected.

Galba's body lay long neglected, and under cover of 49 darkness was subjected to various insults. Eventually his steward Argius, one of his former slaves, gave it a humble burial in his private garden. His head, which the camp-followers and servants had mangled and carried on a pole, was found next day in front of the tomb of Patrobius (one of Nero's freedmen whom Galba had executed) and buried with the body which had already been cremated. Such was the end of

¹ Sabinus and his wife were prosecuted, and both committed suicide.

Servius Galba, who for seventy-three years had enjoyed prosperity under five different emperors, happier in their reign than his own. He came of an old and noble family and possessed great wealth. His own character was mediocre, rather free from vices than rich in virtues. Though not indifferent to fame, he did not court it by advertisement. Not greedy of other people's money, he was careful of his own, and a miser with public funds. His attitude towards friends and freedmen, if they were honest, was one of kindly complaisance ; when they were not, he was culpably blind. But his distinguished origin and the peculiar perils of the time disguised his apathy, which passed as prudence.¹ In the flower of his youth he served with distinction in Germany. As pro-consul he governed Africa wisely, and in later years showed the same equity in Nearer Spain.² When he was a commoner he seemed too big for his station, and had he never been emperor, no one would have doubted his ability to reign.

THE RISE OF VITELLIUS

50 The city was in a panic. The alarm aroused by the recent atrocious crime and by Otho's well-known proclivities was further increased by the fresh news

¹ Under Nero, says Tacitus in his *Life of Agricola*, 'the wisest man was he who did least.'

² He had governed the upper province of Germany under Caligula ; Africa under Claudius ; the Tarragona division of Spain under Nero. In Germany he defeated the Chatti A.D. 41.

about Vitellius.¹ This news had been suppressed before Galba's murder, and it was believed that only the army of Upper Germany had revolted. Now when they saw that the two men in the world who were most notorious for immorality, indolence, and extravagance had been, as it were, appointed by Providence to ruin the empire, not only the senators and knights who had some stake and interest in the country, but the masses as well, openly deplored their fate. Their talk was no longer of the horrors of the recent bloody peace: they reverted to the records of the civil wars, the taking and retaking of Rome by her own troops, the devastation of Italy, the pillage of the provinces, the battles of Pharsalia, Philippi, Perusia, and Mutina,² those bywords of national disaster. 'The world was turned upside down,' they mused, 'even when good men fought for the throne: yet the Roman Empire survived the victories of Julius Caesar and of Augustus, as the Republic would have survived had Pompey and Brutus been victorious. But now—are we to go and pray for Otho or for Vitellius? To pray for either would be impious. It would be wicked to offer vows for the success of either in a war of which we can only be sure that the winner will prove the worse.' Some cherished hopes of Vespasian and the armies of the

¹ Cp. chap. 14.

² At Pharsalia Caesar defeated Pompey, 48 B.C.; at Mutina the consul Hirtius defeated Antony, 43 B.C.; at Philippi Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, 42 B.C.; at Perusia Octavian defeated Antony's brother Lucius, 40 B.C.

East : he was preferable to either of the others ; still they shuddered at the thought of a fresh war and fresh bloodshed. Besides, Vespasian's reputation was doubtful. He was the first emperor who ever changed for the better.

- 51 I must now explain the origin and causes of the rising of Vitellius. After the slaughter of Julius Vindex¹ and his whole force, the troops were in high spirits at the fame and booty they had acquired. Without toil or danger they had won a most profitable victory. So they were all for marching against the enemy : plunder seemed better than pay. They had endured a long and unprofitable service, rendered the more irksome by the country and climate and by the strict discipline observed. But discipline, however stern in time of peace, is always relaxed in civil wars, when temptation stands on either hand and treachery goes unpunished. Men, armour, and horses they had in abundance for use and for show. But, whereas before the war the soldiers only knew the men of their own company or troop, and the provincial frontier² separated the armies, now, having once joined forces against Vindex, they had gained a knowledge of their own strength and the state of the province, and were looking for more fighting and fresh quarrels, calling the Gauls no longer allies, as before, but 'our enemies' or 'the vanquished'. They had also the support of the Gallic tribes on the banks of the Rhine, who had

¹ See note, p. 23.

² Between the provinces of Upper and Lower Germany.

espoused their cause and were now the most eager to rouse them against 'the Galbians',¹ as they now called them, despising the name of Vindex. So, cherishing hostility against the Sequani and Aedui,² and against all the other communities in proportion to their wealth, they drank in dreams of sacking towns and pillaging fields and looting houses, inspired partly by the peculiar failings of the strong, greed and vanity, and partly also by a feeling of irritation at the insolence of the Gauls, who boasted, to the chagrin of the army, that Galba had remitted a quarter of their tribute and given the franchise and grants of land to their community.³ Further fuel was added by a rumour, cunningly circulated and rashly credited, that there was a project on foot to decimate the legions and discharge all the most enterprising centurions. From every side came alarming news and sinister reports from the city. The colony of Lugdunum⁴ was up in arms, and its stubborn attachment to Nero made it a hotbed of rumour. But in the camp itself the passions and fears of the soldiers, and, when once they had realized their strength, their feeling of security, furnished the richest material for lies and won them easy credence.

In the preceding year,⁵ shortly after the beginning 52 of December, Aulus Vitellius had entered the province

¹ In the Gallic tongue this signified 'pot-belly'.

² The Sequani had their capital at Vesontio (Besançon), the Aedui at Augustodunum (Autun).

³ Cp. chap. 8. The land was that taken from the Treviri chap. 53).

⁴ Lyons.

⁵ A.D. 68.

of Lower Germany and held a careful inspection of the winter quarters of the legions. He restored many to their rank, remitted degrading penalties, and relieved those who had suffered disgrace, acting mainly from ambitious motives, but partly also upon sound judgement. Amongst other things he showed impartiality in remedying the injustices due to the mean and dishonest way in which Fonteius Capito had issued promotions and reductions. The soldiers did not judge Vitellius' actions as those of a mere *ex-consul*: they took him for something more, and, while serious critics found him undignified,¹ his supporters spoke of his affability and beneficence, because he showed neither moderation nor judgement in making presents out of his own money and squandering other people's. Besides, they were so greedy for power that they took even his vices for virtues. In both armies there were plenty of quiet, law-abiding men as well as many who were unprincipled and disorderly. But for sheer reckless cupidity none could match two of the legionary legates, Alienus Caecina and Fabius Valens.² Valens was hostile to Galba, because, after unmasking Verginius's hesitation³ and thwarting Capito's designs, he considered that he had been treated with ingratitude: so he incited

¹ According to Suetonius he used to kiss the soldiers he met in the road; make friends with ostlers and travellers at wayside inns; and go about in the morning asking everybody 'Have you had breakfast yet?' demonstrating by his hiccoughs that he had done so himself.

² Cp. chap. 7. Caecina was in Upper Germany, Valens in Lower.

³ Cp. chap. 8.

Vitellius by pointing out to him the enthusiasm of the troops. 'You,' he would say to him, 'are famous everywhere, and you need find no obstacle in Hordeonius Flaccus.¹ Britain will join and the German auxiliaries will flock to your standard. Galba cannot trust the provinces ; the poor old man holds the empire on sufferance ; the transfer can be soon effected, if only you will clap on full sail and meet your good fortune half-way. Verginius was quite right to hesitate. He came of a family of knights, and his father was a nobody. He would have failed, had he accepted the empire : his refusal saved him. Your father was thrice consul, and he was censor with an emperor for his colleague.² That gives you imperial dignity to start with, and makes it unsafe for you to remain a private citizen.'

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

Caecina, on the other hand, in Upper Germany, was 53 a handsome youth, whose big build, imperious spirit, clever tongue, and upright carriage had completely won the hearts of the soldiers. While quaestor in Baetica³ he had promptly joined Galba's party, and in spite of his youth had been given command of a legion. Later he was convicted of misappropriating public funds, and, on Galba's orders, prosecuted for

¹ He commanded the army of the Upper Province (chap. 9).

² He was Claudius' colleague twice in the consulship, and once in the censorship.

³ Andalusia and Granada.

peculation. Highly indignant, Caecina determined to embroil the world and bury his own disgrace in the ruins of his country. Nor were the seeds of dissension lacking in the army. The entire force had taken part in the war against Vindex, nor was it until after Nero's death that they joined Galba's side, and even then they had been forestalled in swearing allegiance by the detachments of Lower Germany. Then again the Treviri and Lingones¹ and the other communities which Galba had punished by issuing harsh edicts and confiscating part of their territory, were in close communication with the winter quarters of the legions. They began to talk treason: the soldiers degenerated in civilian society: it only wanted some one to avail himself of the offer they had made to Verginius.

- 54 Following an ancient custom, the tribe of the Lingones had made a present of a pair of silver hands² to the legions as a symbol of hospitality. Assuming an appearance of squalid misery, their envoys made the round of the officers' quarters and the soldiers' tents complaining of their own wrongs and of the rewards lavished on neighbouring tribes. Finding the soldiers ready to listen, they made inflammatory allusions to the army itself, its dangers and humiliation. Mutiny was almost ripe, when Hordeonius Flaccus ordered the envoys to withdraw, and, in order to secure the secrecy of their departure, gave instructions to them to leave the camp

¹ The Treviri have given their name to Trier (Trèves), the Lingones to Langres.

² i. e. two right hands locked in friendship.

by night. This gave rise to an alarming rumour. Many declared that the envoys had been killed, and that, if they did not look out for themselves, the leading spirits among the soldiers, who had complained of the present state of things, would be murdered in the dark, while their comrades knew nothing about it. So the legions formed a secret compact. The auxiliaries were also taken into the plot, although at first they had been distrusted, because their infantry and cavalry had been posted in camp all round the legion's quarters as though an attack on them were meditated. However, they soon showed themselves the keener conspirators. Disloyalty is a better bond for war than it ever proves in peace.

In Lower Germany, however, the legions on the 55 first of January swore the usual oath of allegiance to Galba, though with much hesitation. Few voices were heard even in the front ranks; the rest were silent, each waiting for his neighbour to take some bold step. Human nature is always ready to follow where it hates to lead. However, the feelings of the legions varied. The First and Fifth¹ were already mutinous enough to throw a few stones at Galba's statue. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth² dared not venture beyond muttered threats, but they were watching to see the outbreak begin. In Upper Germany, on the other hand, on the very same day, the Fourth and the Twenty-second legions, who were quartered together,³ smashed their

¹ At Bonn and at Vetera.

² At Vetera and at Neuss.

³ At Mainz.

statues of Galba to atoms. The Fourth took the lead, the Twenty-second at first holding back, but eventually making common cause with them. They did not want it to be thought that they were shaking off their allegiance to the empire, so in taking the oath they invoked the long obsolete names of the Senate and People of Rome. None of the officers made any movement for Galba, and indeed some of them, as happens in such outbreaks, headed the rebellion. However, nobody made any kind of set speech or mounted the platform, for there was no one as yet with whom to curry favour.

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

On the night of the first of January a standard-bearer of the Fourth legion came to Cologne,¹ and brought the news to Vitellius at his dinner that the

¹ The Ubii had been allowed by Agrippa to move their chief town from the right to the left bank of the Rhine. Ten or twelve years later (A.D. 50) a colony of Roman veterans was

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

The quarters of the First legion were nearest at 57 hand, and Fabius Valens was the most enterprising of the generals. On the following day he entered Cologne with the cavalry of his legion and auxiliaries, and saluted Vitellius as emperor. The other legions of the province followed suit, vying with each other in enthusiasm; and the army of the Upper Province, dropping the fine-sounding titles of the Senate and People of Rome, joined Vitellius on the third of January, which clearly showed that on the two previous days they were not really at the disposal of a republican government. The inhabitants of Cologne and the Treviri and Lingones, rivalling the zeal of the troops, made offers of assistance, or of horses or arms or money, each according to the measure of their strength, wealth,

planted there and called *Colonia Claudia Augusta Agrippinensium*, because Agrippina, the mother of Nero, had been born there.

or enterprise. And these offers came not only from the civil and military authorities, men who had plenty of money to spare and much to hope from victory, but whole companies or individual soldiers handed over their savings, or, instead of money, their belts, or the silver ornaments¹ on their uniforms, some carried away by a wave of enthusiasm, some acting from motives of self-interest.

58 Vitellius accordingly commended the zeal of the troops. He distributed among Roman knights the court-offices which had been usually held by freedmen,² paid the centurions their furlough-fees out of the imperial purse,³ and for the most part conceded the soldiers' savage demands for one execution after another, though he occasionally cheated them by pretending to imprison their victims. Thus Pompeius Propinquus,⁴ the imperial agent in Belgica, was promptly executed, while Julius Burdo, who commanded the fleet on the Rhine, was adroitly rescued. The indignation of the army had broken out against him, because he was supposed to have intrigued against Fonteius Capito, and to have accused him falsely.⁵ Capito's memory was dear to the army, and when

¹ These were thin bosses of silver, gold, or bronze, chased in relief, and worn as medals are.

² This important innovation was established as the rule by Hadrian. These officials—nominally the private servants of the emperor, and hitherto imperial freedmen—formed an important branch of the civil service. (Cp. p. 92, note 3)

³ Cp. chap. 46.

⁴ Cp. chap. 12.

⁵ Cp. chap. 7.

violence reigns murder may show its face, but pardon must be stealthy. So Burdo was kept in confinement and only released after victory had allayed the soldiers' rancour. Meanwhile a centurion, named Crispinus, was offered as a scape-goat. He had actually stained his hands with Capito's blood, so his guilt seemed more obvious to those who clamoured for his punishment, and Vitellius felt he was a cheaper sacrifice.

Julius Civilis¹ was the next to be rescued from 59 danger. He was all-powerful among the Batavi,² and Vitellius did not want to alienate so spirited a people by punishing him. Besides, eight cohorts of Batavian troops were stationed among the Lingones. They had been an auxiliary force attached to the Fourteenth, and in the general disturbance had deserted the legion. Their decision for one side or the other would be of the first importance. Nonius, Donatius, Romilius, and Calpurnius, the centurions mentioned above,³ were executed by order of Vitellius. They had been convicted of loyalty, a heinous offence among deserters. His party soon gained the accession of Valerius Asiaticus, governor of Belgica, who subsequently married Vitellius' daughter, and of Junius Blaesus,⁴ governor of the Lyons division of Gaul, who

¹ The leader of the great revolt on the Rhine, described in Book IV.

² The ancestors of the Dutch who lived on the island formed by the Lek and the Waal between Arnhem and Rotterdam; its eastern part is still called Betuwe.

³ Chap. 56.

⁴ His supposed murder by Vitellius is described, iii. 38, 39.

brought with him the Italian legion¹ and a regiment of cavalry known as 'Taurus' Horse',² which had been quartered at Lugdunum. The forces in Raetia lost no time in joining his standard, and even the troops in
60 Britain showed no hesitation. Trebellius Maximus, the governor of Britain, had earned by his meanness and cupidity the contempt and hatred of the army,³ which was further inflamed by the action of his old enemy Roscius Coelius, who commanded the Twentieth legion, and they now seized the opportunity of the civil war to break out into a fierce quarrel. Trebellius blamed Coelius for the mutinous temper and insubordination of the army: Coelius complained that Trebellius had robbed his men and impaired their efficiency. Meanwhile their unseemly quarrel ruined the discipline of the forces, whose insubordination soon came to a head. The auxiliary horse and foot joined in the attacks on the governor, and rallied round Coelius. Trebellius, thus hunted out and abandoned, took refuge with Vitellius. The province remained quiet, despite the removal of the ex-consul. The government was carried on by the commanding officers of the legions, who were equal in authority, though Coelius' audacity gave him an advantage over the rest.
61 Thus reinforced by the army from Britain,⁴ Vitellius,

¹ Legio Prima Italica, formed by Nero.

² Called after Statilius Taurus, who first enlisted it. He was Pro-consul of Africa under Nero. Cp. p. 85, note 3.

³ Their mutiny in A.D. 69 is described by Tacitus, *Agr.* 16.

⁴ i.e. by detachments from it.

who now had an immense force and vast resources at his disposal, decided on an invasion by two routes under two separate generals. Fabius Valens was to lure the Gauls to his standard, or, if they refused, to devastate their country, and then invade Italy by way of the Cottian Alps.¹ Caecina was to follow the shorter route and descend into Italy over the Pennine Pass.² Valens' column comprised the Fifth legion with its 'eagle',³ and some picked detachments from the army of Lower Germany, together with auxiliary horse and foot, amounting in all to 40,000 men. Caecina's troops from Upper Germany numbered 30,000, their main strength consisting in the Twenty-first legion.⁴ Both columns were reinforced by German auxiliaries, whom Vitellius also recruited to fill up his own army, intending to follow with the main force of the attack.

Strange was the contrast between Vitellius and his 62 army. The soldiers were all eagerness, clamouring for battle at once, while Gaul was still frightened and Spain still undecided. Winter was no obstacle to them; peace and delay were for cowards: they must invade Italy and seize Rome: haste was the safest course in civil war, where action is better than deliberation. Vitellius was dully apathetic, anticipating

¹ Mt. Cenis.

² Great St. Bernard.

³ i.e. he had the main body of the Legion V, known as 'The Larks', and only detachments from the other legions.

⁴ Known as 'Rapax', and stationed at Windisch (Windonissa), east of the point where the Rhine turns to flow north.

his high station by indulging in idle luxury and lavish entertainments. At midday he would be drunk and drowsy with over-eating. However, such was the zeal of the soldiers that they even did the general's duties, and behaved exactly as if he had been present to encourage the alert and threaten the laggards. They promptly fell in and began to clamour for the signal to start. The title of Germanicus was then and there conferred on Vitellius: Caesar he would never be called, even after his victory.

THE MARCH OF VALENS' COLUMN

On the very day of departure a happy omen greeted Fabius Valens and the army under his command. As the column advanced, an eagle flew steadily ahead and seemed to lead the way. Loudly though the soldiers cheered, hour after hour the bird flew undismayed, and was taken for a sure omen of success.

- 63 They passed peaceably through the country of the Treviri, who were allies. At Divodurum,¹ the chief town of the Mediomatrici, although they were welcomed with all courtesy, the troops fell into a sudden panic. Hastily seizing their arms, they began to massacre the innocent citizens. Their object was not plunder. They were seized by a mad frenzy, which was the harder to allay as its cause was a mystery. Eventually the general's entreaties prevailed, and they refrained from destroying the town. However, nearly

¹ Metz.

4,000 men had already been killed. This spread such alarm throughout Gaul, that, as the army approached, whole towns flocked out with their magistrates at their head and prayers for mercy in their mouths. Women and boys prostrated themselves along the roads, and they resorted to every possible means by which an enemy's anger may be appeased,¹ petitioning for peace, though war there was none.

It was in the country of the Leuci² that Valens heard 64 the news of Galba's murder and Otho's elevation. The soldiers showed no emotion, neither joy nor fear : their thoughts were all for war. The Gauls' doubts were now decided. They hated Otho and Vitellius equally, but Vitellius they also feared. They next reached the Lingones, faithful adherents of their party. There the courtesy of the citizens was only equalled by the good behaviour of the troops. But this did not last for long, thanks to the disorderly conduct of the Batavian auxiliaries, who, as narrated above,³ had detached themselves from the Fourteenth legion and been drafted into Valens' column. A quarrel between some Batavians and legionaries led to blows : the other soldiers quickly took sides, and a fierce battle would have ensued, had not Valens punished a few of the Batavians to remind them of the discipline they seemed to have forgotten.

¹ They would wear veils and fillets, as suppliants. Cp. chap. 66 and iii. 31.

² Living round Toul between the Marne and the Moselle.

³ Chap. 59.

Coming to the Aedui,¹ they in vain sought an excuse for fighting. For when the natives were ordered to contribute money and arms, they brought a gratuitous present of provisions as well. Lugdunum did gladly what the Aedui had done from fear. But the town was deprived of the Italian legion and Taurus' Horse.² Valens decided to leave the Eighteenth cohort³ there in its old winter quarters as a garrison. Manlius Valens, who was in command of the Italian legion, never received any distinction from Vitellius, although he deserved well of the party, the reason being that Fabius slandered him behind his back, while to avert his suspicions he praised him to his face.

- 65 The recent war⁴ had served to inflame the long-standing quarrel between Lugdunum and Vienne.⁵ Much damage was done on both sides, and the frequency and animosity of their conflicts proved that they were not merely fighting for Nero and Galba. Galba had made his displeasure an excuse for confiscating to the Treasury the revenues of Lugdunum, while on Vienne he had conferred various distinctions. The result was a bitter rivalry between the towns, and the Rhone between them only formed a bond of

¹ Cp. chap. 51.

² Cp. chap. 59.

³ This was probably one of the *cohortes civium Romanorum*, volunteer corps raised in Italy on lighter terms of service than prevailed in the legions.

⁴ With Vindex.

⁵ The chief town of the Allobroges, and the capital of Narbonese Gaul.

hatred. Consequently the inhabitants of Lugdunum began to work on the feelings of individual Roman soldiers, and to urge them to crush Vienne. They reminded them how the Viennese had laid siege to Lugdunum, a Roman colony, had assisted the efforts of Vindex, and had lately raised troops to defend Galba. Having supplied a pretext for bad feeling, they went on to point out the rich opportunity for plunder. Not content with private persuasion, they presented a formal petition that the army would march to avenge them, and destroy the head-quarters of the Gallic war. Vienne, they urged, was thoroughly un-Roman and hostile, while Lugdunum was a Roman colony,¹ contributing men to the army and sharing in its victories and reverses. They besought them in the event of adverse fortune not to leave their city to the fury of its enemies.

By these arguments and others of the same nature 66 they brought matters to such a pass, that even the generals and party leaders despaired of cooling the army's indignation. However, the Viennese realized their danger. Arrayed in veils and fillets,² they met the approaching column and, seizing their hands and knees and the soles of their feet in supplication, succeeded in appeasing the troops. Valens made each

¹ So was Vienne ; but the status had been conferred on the Gauls of this town as lately as Caligula's reign, whereas Lugdunum had been colonized in B.C. 43 by Roman citizens expelled from Vienne.

² Cf. iii. 31.

of the soldiers a present of three hundred sesterces.¹ They were thus persuaded to respect the antiquity and high standing of the colony, and to listen with patience to their general's speech, in which he commended to them the lives and property of the Viennese. However, the town was disarmed, and private individuals had to assist the army with various kinds of provisions. There was, however, a persistent rumour that Valens himself had been bought with a heavy bribe. He had long been in mean circumstances and ill concealed his sudden accession of wealth. Prolonged poverty had whetted his inordinate desires, and the needy youth grew into an extravagant old man.

He next led the army by slow stages through the country of the Allobroges and Vocontii,² bribes to the general determining the length of each day's march and the choice of a camp. For Valens struck disgraceful bargains with the landowners and municipal authorities, often applying violent threats, as, for instance, at Lucas,³ a township of the Vocontii, which he threatened to burn, until he was appeased with money. Where it was impossible to get money, he was mollified by appeals to his lust. And so it went on until the Alps were reached.

¹ Nearly fifty shillings.

² Part of Dauphiné and Provence, with a capital town at Vaison.

³ Luc-en-Diois.

THE MARCH OF CAECINA'S COLUMN

There was even more looting and bloodshed on 67 Caecina's march. The Helvetii, a Gallic tribe¹ once famous as fighting men and still distinguished by the memory of their past, having heard nothing of Galba's murder, refused to acknowledge the authority of Vitellius. This exasperated Caecina's headstrong nature. Hostilities broke out owing to the greed and impatience of the Twenty-first legion, who had seized a sum of money which was being sent to pay the garrison of a fort in which the Helvetii used to keep native troops at their own expense.² The Helvetii, highly indignant at this, intercepted a dispatch from the German army to the Pannonian legions, and kept a centurion and some men in custody. Greedy for battle, Caecina hastened to take immediate vengeance without giving them time for second thoughts. Promptly breaking up his camp, he proceeded to harry the country, and sacked a charming and much-frequented watering-place,³ which had grown during the long peace into the size and importance of a town. Instructions were sent to the Raetian auxiliaries to attack the Helvetii in the rear, while their attention was occupied with the legion.

¹ In Western Switzerland. Caesar had finally subdued them in 58 B. C.

² This had happened before Caecina's arrival. Vindonissa, their head-quarters (chap. 61, note 5), was on the borders of the Helvetii.

³ *Aquae Helvetiorum* or *Vicus Aquensis*, about 16 miles NW. of Zurich.

68 Full of spirit beforehand, the Helvetii were terrified in the face of danger. At the first alarm they had chosen Claudius Severus general, but they knew nothing of fighting or discipline and were incapable of combined action. An engagement with the Roman veterans would be disastrous; and the walls, dilapidated by time, could not stand a siege. They found themselves between Caecina and his powerful army on the one side, and on the other the Raetian auxiliaries, both horse and foot, and the whole fighting force of Raetia as well, trained soldiers well used to fighting.¹ Their country was given over to plunder and massacre. Flinging away their arms, they wandered miserably between two fires. Wounded and scattered, most of them took refuge on the Bötzbeg.² But some Thracian auxiliaries were promptly sent to dislodge them. The German army, aided by the Raetians, pursued them through the woods, and cut them to pieces in their hiding-places. Many thousands were killed and many sold as slaves. Having completed the work of destruction, the army advanced in hostile array against Aventicum,³ their capital town, and were met by envoys offering surrender. The offer was accepted. Caecina executed Julius Alpinus, one of their chief men, as the prime instigator of the revolt. The rest he left to experience the clemency or cruelty of Vitellius.

It is hard to say whether these envoys found Vitellius or the army the more implacable. The soldiers

¹ Volunteers, not conscripts.

² Mount Vocetius.

³ Avenches.

clamoured for the destruction of the town,¹ and shook their fists and weapons in the envoys' faces: even Vitellius indulged in threatening language. Ultimately, however, Claudius Cossus, one of the envoys, a noted speaker who greatly enhanced the effect of his eloquence by concealing his skill under a well-timed affectation of nervousness, succeeded in softening the hearts of the soldiers. A mob is always liable to sudden changes of feeling, and the men were as sensible to pity as they had been extravagant in their brutality. Thus with streams of tears and importunate prayers for a better answer the envoys procured a free pardon for Aventicum.²

Caecina halted for a few days in Helvetian territory 70 until he could get news of Vitellius' decision. Meantime, while carrying on his preparations for crossing the Alps, he received from Italy the joyful news that 'Silius' Horse',³ stationed at Padua, had come over to Vitellius. The members of this troop had served under Vitellius when pro-consul in Africa. They had subsequently been detached under orders from Nero to precede him to Egypt, and had then been recalled, owing to the outbreak of the war with Vindex. They were now in Italy. Their officers, who knew nothing

¹ Avenches.

² Vespasian made it a Latin colony.

³ Probably raised by C. Silius, who was Governor of Upper Germany under Tiberius. Troops of auxiliary horse were usually named either after the governor of the province who first organized the troop or after the country where it had first been stationed, or where it had won fame.

of Otho and were attached to Vitellius, extolled the strength of the approaching column and the fame of the German army. So the troop went over to Vitellius, bringing their new emperor a gift of the four strongest towns of the Transpadane district, Milan, Novara, Eporedia,¹ and Vercelli. Of this they informed Caecina themselves. But one troop of horse could not garrison the whole of the widest part of Italy. Caecina accordingly hurried forward the Gallic, Lusitanian, and British auxiliaries, and some German detachments, together with 'Petra's Horse',² while he himself hesitated whether he should not cross the Raetian Alps³ into Noricum and attack the governor, Petronius Urbicus, who, having raised a force of irregulars and broken down the bridges, was supposed to be a faithful adherent of Otho. However, he was afraid of losing the auxiliaries whom he had sent on ahead, and at the same time he considered that there was more glory in holding Italy, and that, wherever the theatre of the war might be, Noricum was sure to be among the spoils of victory. So he chose the Penine route⁴ and led his legionaries and the heavy marching column across the Alps, although they were still deep in snow.⁵

¹ Ivrea.

² Petra occurs as the name of two Roman knights in *Ann.* xi. 4. One of these or a relative was probably the original leader of the troop.

³ The Arlberg.

⁴ Great St. Bernard.

⁵ Early in March.

OTHO'S GOVERNMENT AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF
FORCES

Meanwhile, contrary to all expectation, Otho was ⁷¹no prey to idle luxury. He postponed his pleasures and disguised his extravagance, suiting all his behaviour to the dignity of his position. But people knew they had not seen the last of his vices, and his virtuous hypocrisy only increased their alarm. He gave orders to summon Marius Celsus to the Capitol. This was the consul-elect whom he had rescued from the savage clutches of the soldiers by pretending to put him in prison.¹ Otho now wanted to earn a name for clemency by pardoning a well-known man, who had fought against his party. Celsus was firm. Pleading guilty to the charge of fidelity to Galba, he went on to show that he had set an example which was all to Otho's advantage. Otho treated him as if there was nothing to pardon. Calling on heaven to witness their reconciliation, he then and there admitted him to the circle of his intimate friends, and subsequently gave him an appointment as one of his generals. Celsus remained faithful to Otho too, doomed apparently to the losing side. His acquittal, which delighted the upper classes and was popular with the mass of the people, even earned the approval of the soldiers, who now admired the qualities which had previously aroused their indignation.

Equal rejoicing, though for different reasons, ⁷²

¹ Chap. 45.

followed the long-looked-for downfall of Ofonius Tigellinus. Born of obscure parentage, he had grown from an immoral youth into a vicious old man. He rose to the command first of the Police,¹ and then of the Praetorian Guards, finding that vice was a short cut to such rewards of virtue. In these and other high offices he developed the vices of maturity, first cruelty, then greed. He corrupted Nero and introduced him to every kind of depravity; then ventured on some villainies behind his back, and finally deserted and betrayed him. Thus in his case, as in no other, those who hated Nero and those who wished him back agreed, though from different motives, in calling loudly for his execution. During Galba's reign he had been protected by the influence of Titus Vinius, on the plea that he had saved his daughter. Saved her he had, not from any feelings of pity (he had killed too many for that), but to secure a refuge for the future. For all such rascals, distrusting the present and fearing a change of fortune, always prepare for themselves a shelter against public indignation by obtaining the favour of private persons. So they rely to escape punishment not on their innocence but on a system of mutual insurance. People were all the more incensed against Tigellinus, since the recent feeling against Vinius was added to their old hatred for him. From all quarters of Rome they flocked to the palace and the squares; and above all, in the circus and the theatre, where the mob enjoys complete licence, they

¹ Cp. p. 38, note 1.

assembled in crowds and broke out into riotous uproar. Eventually Tigellinus at Sinuessa Spa¹ received the news that his last hour was inevitably come. There after a cowardly delay in the foul embraces of his prostitutes he cut his throat with a razor, and blackened the infamy of his life by a hesitating and shameful death.

About the same time there arose a demand for the 73 punishment of Calvia Crispinilla. But she was saved by various prevarications, and Otho's connivence cost him some discredit. This woman had tutored Nero in vice, and afterwards crossed to Africa to incite Clodius Macer² to civil war. While there she openly schemed to start a famine in Rome. However, she secured herself by marrying an ex-consul, and lived to enjoy a wide popularity in Rome. She escaped harm under Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and eventually wielded a great influence due to her being both rich and childless, considerations of the first importance in any state of society.

During this time Otho wrote constantly to Vitellius, 74 holding out various effeminate inducements, making him offers of money or an influential position, or any retreat he liked to select for a life of luxury.³ Vitellius made similar offers. At first both wrote in the mildest tone, though the affectation on either side was stupid

¹ A much-frequented watering-place on the borders of Latium and Campania. The hot baths were considered good for hysteria.

² Cp. chap. 7.

³ Dio and Suetonius both say that Otho offered to share the empire with Vitellius, and the latter adds that he proposed for the hand of Vitellius' daughter. Tacitus here follows Plutarch.

and inappropriate. But they soon struck a quarrelsome note, and reproached each other with immorality and crime, both with a good deal of truth. Otho recalled the commission which Galba had sent out to Germany,¹ and, using the pretext of senatorial authority, sent fresh commissioners to both the armies in Germany, and also to the Italian legion, and the troops quartered at Lugdunum. However, the commissioners remained with Vitellius with a readiness which showed they were under no compulsion; and the guards who had been attached to them, ostensibly as a mark of honour, were sent back at once before they had time to mix with the legionary soldiers. Further than this, Fabius Valens sent letters in the name of the German army to the Guards and the City Garrison, extolling the strength of his own side and offering to join forces. He even went so far as to reproach them with having transferred to Otho the title which had long before² 75 been conferred on Vitellius. Thus they were assailed with threats as well as promises, and told that they were not strong enough to fight, and had nothing to lose by making peace. But, in spite of all, the fidelity of the Guards remained unchanged. However, Otho dispatched assassins to Germany, Vitellius to Rome. Neither met with success. Vitellius' assassins were lost

¹ Chap. 19.

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

in the crowds of Rome, where nobody knows anybody, and thus escaped detection: Otho's were betrayed by their strange faces, since the troops all knew each other by sight. Vitellius then composed a letter to Otho's brother Titianus,¹ threatening that his life and his son's should answer for the safety of Vitellius' mother and children. As it happened neither household suffered. Fear was perhaps the reason in Otho's time, but Vitellius, after his victory, could certainly claim credit for clemency.

The first news which gave Otho any degree of confidence was the announcement from Illyricum that the 76 legions of Dalmatia and Pannonia and Moesia² had sworn allegiance to him. Similar news arrived from Spain, and Cluvius Rufus³ was commended in a special decree, but it was found out immediately afterwards that Spain had gone over to Vitellius. Even Aquitania soon fell away, although Julius Cordus had sworn in the province for Otho. Loyalty and affection seemed dead: men changed from one side to the other under the stress of fear or compulsion. It was fear which gave Vitellius the Province of Narbonese Gaul,⁴ for it is easy to go over when the big battalions are so near. The distant provinces and the troops across the sea all remained at Otho's disposal, but not from any enthusiasm for

¹ L. Salvius Otho Titianus, Otho's elder brother.

² There were two legions in Dalmatia, two in Pannonia, three in Moesia, and two in Spain (see Summary; p. 15).

³ Cp. chap. 8.

⁴ This included Savoy, Dauphiné, part of Provence or Languedoc.

his cause ; what weighed with them was the name of Rome and the title of the senate. Besides, Otho had got the first hearing. Vespasian swore in the Jewish army¹ for Otho, and Mucianus the legions in Syria ;² Egypt too and all the provinces towards the East were held for him. He also received the submission of Africa, where Carthage had taken the lead, without waiting for the sanction of the governor, Vipstanus Apronianus. Crescens, one of Nero's freedmen—in evil days these creatures play a part in politics³—had given the common people of the town a gala dinner in honour of the new emperor, with the result that the inhabitants hurried into various excesses. The other African communities followed the example of Carthage.

77 The provinces and their armies being thus divided, Vitellius could only win the throne by fighting. Otho meanwhile was carrying on the government as if the time were one of profound peace. Sometimes he consulted the country's dignity, though more often the exigencies of the moment forced him into unseemly haste. He held the consulship himself with his brother Titianus as colleague until the first of March. For the next two months he appointed Verginius, as a sort of sop to the army in Germany.⁴ As colleague he gave

¹ Legs. V Macedonica, X Fretensis, XV Apollinaris.

² IV Scythica, VI Ferrata, XII Fulminata, and III Gallica.

³ Since Claudius the great imperial bureaux, the posts of private secretary, patronage-secretary, financial secretary, &c., had all been held by freedmen. Cp. chap. 58.

⁴ Otho and Titianus would naturally have held it for four months.

him Pompeius Vopiscus, ostensibly because he was an old friend of his own, but it was generally understood as a compliment to Vienne.¹ For the rest of the year the appointments which Nero or Galba had made were allowed to stand. The brothers Caelius and Flavius Sabinus² were consuls for June and July, Arrius Antoninus³ and Marius Celsus for August and September; even Vitellius after his victory did not cancel their appointment. To the pontifical and augural colleges Otho either nominated old ex-magistrates, as the final crown of their career, or else, when young aristocrats returned from exile, he instated them by way of recompense in the pontifical posts which their fathers or grandfathers had held. He restored Cadius Rufus, Pedius Blaesus, and *Saevinus Proculus*⁴ to their seats in the senate. They had been convicted during Claudius' and Nero's reigns of extortion in the provinces. In pardoning them the name of their offence was changed, and their greed appeared as 'treason'. For so unpopular was the law of treason that it sapped the force of better statutes.⁵

Otho next tried to win over the municipalities and 78 provincial towns by similar bribes. At the colonies

¹ Vopiscus presumably came from Vienne, which had espoused the cause first of Vindex, then of Galba. Cp. chap. 65.

² Not to be confused with Vespasian's brother.

³ Grandfather of the Emperor Antoninus Pius.

⁴ Name uncertain in MS.

⁵ i. e. to be accused of 'treason' was in these days to win public sympathy, even though the defendant were guilty of offences under other more useful statutes.

of Hispalis and Emerita¹ he enrolled new families of settlers, granted the franchise to the whole community of the Lingones,² and made over certain Moorish towns as a gift to the province of Baetica. Cappadocia and Africa were also granted new privileges, as showy as they were short-lived. All these grants are excused by the exigences of the moment and the impending crisis, but he even found time to remember his old amours and passed a measure through the senate restoring Poppaea's statues.³ He is believed also to have thought of celebrating Nero's memory as a means of attracting public sympathy. Some persons actually erected statues of Nero, and there were times when the populace and the soldiers, by way of enhancing his fame and dignity, saluted him as Nero Otho. However, he refused to commit himself. He was ashamed to accept the title, yet afraid to forbid its use.

79 While the whole of Rome was intent upon the civil war, foreign affairs were neglected. Consequently a Sarmatian tribe called the Rhoxolani,⁴ who had cut up two cohorts of auxiliaries in the previous winter,

¹ Seville and Merida.

² As the rest of this sentence refers to Spain and Portugal it has been proposed to read for *Lingones Lusones*, a Celtiberian tribe round the sources of the Tagus. The Lingones were devoted to the cause of Vitellius. (See chap. 53, &c.)

³ They had been thrown down by the populace, when Nero, after divorcing Antonia, was shamed—or frightened—into taking her back. (Cp. chap. 13.)

⁴ They lived between the Dnieper and the Don, to the north of the Sea of Azov.

now formed the still more daring scheme of invading Moesia. Inspired by success, they assembled nearly 9,000 mounted men, all more intent on plunder than on fighting. While they were riding about aimlessly without any suspicion of danger, they were suddenly attacked by the Third legion¹ and its native auxiliaries. On the Roman side everything was ready for a battle : the Sarmatians were scattered over the country ; some in their greed for plunder were heavily laden, and their horses could scarcely move on the slippery roads. They were caught in a trap and cut to pieces. It is quite extraordinary how all a Sarmatian's courage is, so to speak, outside himself. Fighting on foot, no one is more cowardly ; but their cavalry charge would break almost any troops. On this occasion it was raining and the ground was greasy with thaw ; their pikes and their long swords, needing both hands to wield, were useless ; their horses slipped and they were encumbered by the heavy coat of mail which all their chiefs and nobles wear. Being made of iron plates and a very hard kind of leather, it is impenetrable to blows, but most inconvenient for any one who is knocked down by a charge of the enemy and tries to get up. Besides, they sank into the deep, soft snow. The Roman soldiers in their neat leather jerkins, armed with javelin and lance, and using, if need be, their light swords, sprang on the unarmed Sarmatians (they never carry shields) and stabbed them at close quarters. A few, surviving the battle, hid

Gallica.

themselves in the marshes, and there perished miserably from the severity of the winter and their wounds. When the news of this reached Rome, Marcus Aponius, the governor of Moesia, was granted a triumphal statue,¹ while the commanding officers of the legions, Fulvius Aurelius, Tettius Julianus, and Numisius Lupus, received the insignia of consular rank. Otho was delighted and took all the credit to himself, as if he had been the successful general, and had himself employed his officers and armies to enlarge the empire.

80 In the meantime a riot broke out in an unexpected quarter, and, though trivial at first, nearly ended in the destruction of Rome. Otho had given orders that the Seventeenth cohort² should be summoned from the colony of Ostia to the city, and Varius Crispinus, a tribune of the guards, was instructed to provide them with arms. Anxious to carry out his instructions undisturbed while the camp was quiet, he arranged that the arsenal was to be opened and the cohort's wagons loaded after nightfall. The hour aroused suspicion; the motive was questioned; his choice of a quiet moment resulted in an uproar. The mere sight of swords made the drunken soldiers long to use them. They began to murmur and accuse their officers of treachery, suggesting that the senators' slaves were going to be armed against Otho. Some of

¹ This would depict him in full triumphal garb. But only the emperor could actually hold a triumph, since it was under his auspices that his generals fought.

² *Cohors civium Romanorum*. See p. 80, note 3.

them were too fuddled to know what they were saying : the rascals saw a chance of plunder : the mass of them, as usual, were simply eager for a change : and such as were loyal could not carry out their orders in the darkness. When Crispinus tried to check them, the mutineers killed him together with the most determined of the centurions, seized their armour, bared their swords, and mounting the horses, made off at full speed for Rome and the palace.

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

The soldiers' onrush could not be stopped at the 82 gates of the palace. They demanded to see Otho and

invaded the banquet-hall. Julius Martialis, a tribune of the Guards, and Vitellius Saturninus, the camp-prefect¹ of the legion, were wounded while endeavouring to bar their progress. On every side they brandished swords and hurled threats, now against their officers, now against the whole senate; and since they could not select any one victim for their wrath, in a blind frenzy of panic they clamoured for a free hand against all the senators. At last Otho, sacrificing his dignity, stood up on a couch and with great difficulty restrained them by means of prayers and tears. They returned to their camp unwillingly, and with a guilty conscience.

The next day Rome was like a captured city. The houses were all shut, the streets almost deserted, and everybody looked depressed. The soldiers, too, hung their heads, though they were more sulky than sorry for what they had done. Their prefects, Licinius Proculus and Plotius Firmus, harangued them by companies, the one mildly, the other harshly, for they were men of different natures. They concluded by announcing that the men were to receive five thousand

¹ The meaning of the title *praefectus legionis* is doubtful. It seems most likely to mean the same as *praefectus castrorum*, an officer who superintended the camp and sometimes acted as second-in-command (cp. ii. 89). The post was one to which senior centurions could rise. At this period they were not attached to a legion, but to a camp, where more than one legion might be quartered. That makes the phrase here used curious. The legion is that of the marines now stationed in Rome (cp. chaps. 6 and 9). They appear to have joined the mutinous Seventeenth cohort when they reached the city.

sesterces¹ apiece. After that Otho ventured to enter the camp. The tribunes and centurions each flinging away the insignia of his rank,² crowded round him begging for a safe discharge. Stung by the disgrace of this, the troops soon quieted down, and even went the length of demanding that the ringleaders should be punished. In the general disturbance Otho's⁸³ position was difficult. The soldiers were by no means unanimous. The better sort wanted him to put a stop to the prevalent insubordination, but the great bulk of them liked faction-fighting and emperors who had to court their favour, and with the prospect of rioting and plunder were ready enough for civil war. He realized, also, that one who wins a throne by violence cannot keep it by suddenly trying to enforce the rigid discipline of earlier days. However, the danger of the crisis both for the city and the senate seriously alarmed him, so he finally delivered himself as follows :—

‘ Fellow soldiers, I have not come to fan the fire of your affection for me, or to instil courage into your hearts : in both those qualities you are more than rich. No, I have come to ask you to moderate your courage and to set some bounds to your affection. These recent disturbances did not originate in those passions of greed or violence, which so often cause

¹ About £40.

² The insignia of a tribune were a tunic with a broad or narrow stripe (accordingly as they were of senatorial or equestrian rank), and a gold ring. A centurion carried a staff made of a vine-branch, for disciplinary purposes.

dissension in an army ; nor was it that you feared some danger and tried to shirk it. The sole cause was your excessive loyalty, which you displayed with more ardour than judgement. For with the best of motives, indiscretion often lands men in disaster. We are preparing for war. Do you imagine that we could publish all our dispatches, and discuss our plans in the presence of the whole army, when we have to devise a systematic campaign and keep up with the rapid changes of the situation ? There are things a soldier ought to know, but there is much of which he must be ignorant. It is necessary for the maintenance of strict discipline and of the general's authority that even his tribunes and centurions should often obey blindly. If every one is going to inquire into his motives, discipline is done for, and his authority falls to the ground. Suppose in actual warfare you are called to arms at dead of night : shall a few drunken blackguards—for I cannot believe that many lost their heads in the recent panic—go and stain their hands with their officers' blood, and then break into the general's tent ?

84 ' Now I know you did it to protect me, but the riot and the darkness and the general confusion might easily have provided an opportunity to kill me. Suppose Vitellius and his satellites had their choice of the state of mind they would pray to find us in ; what more could they desire than mutiny and dissension, the men insubordinate to the centurions, and the centurions to their superior officers, and the whole force, horse and foot alike, rushing in headlong confusion to

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

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

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

turn and twist their sentences. Vitellius they called enemy and traitor, the more prudent confining themselves to such vague generalities. A few ventured to fling the truth at him, but they always chose a moment of uproar when a great many people were all shouting at once, or else they talked so loud and fast as to drown their own words.

Another cause of alarm was the various portents 86
vouched for by many witnesses. In the Capitoline Square, it was said, the figure of Victory had let the reins of her chariot slip from her hands : a ghost of superhuman size had suddenly burst out of the chapel of Juno :¹ a statue of the sainted Julius on the island in the Tiber had, on a fine, still day, turned round from the west and faced the east : an ox had spoken in Etruria : animals had given birth to strange monsters. Many were the stories of these occurrences, which in primitive ages are observed even in time of peace, though now we only hear of them in time of panic. But the greatest damage at the moment, and the greatest alarm for the future, was caused by a sudden rising of the Tiber. Immensely swollen, it carried away the bridge on piles,² and, its current being stemmed by the heavy ruins, it flooded not only the flat, low-lying portions of the city, but also districts

¹ One of the three chapels in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline.

² The pons Sublicius which led from the Velabrum to Janiculum. It was the bridge which Horatius Cocles defended, and a certain sanctity attached to it.

that seemed safe from inundation. Many people were swept away in the streets, still more were overtaken by the flood in shops or in their beds at home. The result was a famine, since food was scarce,¹ and the poor were deprived of their means of livelihood. Blocks of flats, the foundations of which had rotted in the standing water, collapsed when the river sank. No sooner had the panic caused by the flood subsided than it was found that, whereas Otho was preparing an expedition, its route over the Martian Plain and up the Flaminian Road was blocked. Though probably caused by chance, or the course of Nature, this mishap was turned into a miraculous omen of impending disaster.

OTHO'S PLANS

- 87 Otho had held a purification of the city² and meditated his plans for the war. Recognizing that the Pennine and Cottian Alps and all the other passes into Gaul were held by Vitellius, he decided to invade Narbonese Gaul by sea. His fleet was now a strong and reliable arm, devoted to his cause. For he had formed the full strength of a legion out of the survivors of the Mulvian Bridge massacre,³ whom Galba's cruelty had

¹ Plutarch mentions that the quarter which suffered most was that which contained the retail provision-shops.

² He would lead the victim, before sacrificing it, round the ancient boundary of the city, and thus avert the disasters threatened by the alarming omens detailed in the last chapter.

³ Cp. chaps. 6 and 37.

kept in prison, and to all the marines he had held out hopes of honourable service.¹ To the fleet he attached the cohorts of the City Garrison and a large force of Guards. These were the flower of the army and its chief strength, well able to advise their own generals and to take good care of them. The command of the expedition was entrusted to Antonius Novellus and Suedius Clemens, both senior centurions,² and to Aemilius Pacensis, to whom Otho had restored his commission,³ of which Galba had deprived him. In charge of the fleet he still retained the freedman Moschus⁴ to keep an eye on his betters. In command of the cavalry and infantry he placed Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Annius Gallus, but the man in whom he put most faith was the Prefect of the Guards, Licinius Proculus. This officer had shown himself efficient in garrison service, but was without any experience of warfare. He maligned the characteristic virtues of his colleagues, Paulinus' power of influence, Celsus' energy, Gallus' ripe judgement, and being a knave and no fool, he easily got the better of men who were both honest and loyal.

It was about this time that Cornelius Dolabella⁵ 88 was banished to the colony of Aquinum,⁶ though not

¹ i. e. of becoming eventually a legion or praetorian cohort.

² Cp. p. 47, note 2.

³ The command of a cohort in the City Garrison.

⁴ He had held this post under Nero and Galba. His functions were those of steward and spy combined.

⁵ He had been a rival candidate for adoption by Galba. Vitellius had him killed (ii. 63).

⁶ Aquino.

kept in close or dishonourable confinement. There was no charge against him : the stigma upon him was his ancient name and kinship¹ to Galba. Otho issued orders that several of the magistrates and a large number of ex-consuls were to join the expedition, not to take part in the campaign or to assist in any way, but simply as a friendly escort. Among these was Lucius Vitellius, whom he treated neither as an emperor's brother nor as the brother of an enemy, but just like anybody else. Much anxiety was aroused for the safety of the city, where all classes feared danger. The leading members of the senate were old and infirm, and enervated by a long period of peace : the aristocracy were inefficient and had forgotten how to fight : the knights knew nothing of military service. The more they all tried to conceal their alarm, the more obvious it became. Some of them, on the other hand, went in for senseless display, and purchased beautiful armour and fine horses : others procured as provisions of war elaborate dinner-services or some other contrivance to stimulate a jaded taste. Prudent men were concerned for the country's peace : the frivolous, without a thought for the future, were inflated by empty hopes : a good many, whose loss of credit made peace unwelcome, were delighted at the general
89 unrest, feeling safer among uncertainties. Though the cares of state were too vast to arouse any interest in the masses, yet as the price of food rose, and the whole revenue was devoted to military purposes, the common

¹ It is not known what this was.

people gradually began to realize the evils of war. During the revolt of Vindex they had not suffered so much. Being carried on in the provinces between the legionaries and the natives of Gaul it was to all intents a foreign war, and the city had not been affected. For from the time when the sainted Augustus organized the rule of the Caesars the wars of the Roman people had been fought in distant countries : all the anxiety and all the glory fell to the emperor alone. Under Tiberius and Caligula the country only suffered from the evils of peace.¹ Scribonianus' rising against Claudius was no sooner heard of than crushed.² Nero had been dethroned more by rumours and dispatches than by force of arms. But now not only the legions and the fleet, but, as had seldom happened before, the Guards and the City Garrison were called out for the campaign. Behind them were the East and the West and all the forces of the empire, material for a long war under any other generals. An attempt was made to delay Otho's departure by pointing out the impiety of his not having replaced the sacred shields in the temple of Mars.³ But delay had ruined Nero : Otho would have none of it. And the knowledge that Caecina

¹ Mainly connected with the elaborate system of espionage.

² Furius Camillus Scribonianus, governor of Dalmatia, rebelled against Claudius, A.D. 42, and was crushed within five days.

³ They would be taken out on the 1st of March to be used in the sacred dances of the Salii (the 'Dancing Priests'). Their festival lasted the whole month, and Otho started on the 14th.

had already crossed the Alps¹ acted as a further stimulus.

- 90 Accordingly, on the fourteenth of March he commended the government of the country to the senate, and granted to the restored exiles all the rest of the property confiscated by Nero which had not yet been sold for the imperial treasury.² The gift was a just one, and made a very good impression, but as a matter of fact it was nullified by the haste with which the work of collecting the money had been conducted.³ He then summoned a public meeting, and, after extolling the majesty of Rome and praising the whole-hearted adherence of the senate and people to his cause, he used very moderate language against the Vitellian party, criticizing the legions more for folly than treason, and making no mention of Vitellius himself. This may have been due to his own moderation, or it may be that the writer of the speech felt some qualms for his own safety, and therefore refrained from insulting Vitellius. For it was generally believed that as in strategy he took the advice of Suetonius Paulinus and Marius Celsus, so too in political matters he employed the talents of Galerius Trachalus.⁴ Some

¹ See chap. 70.

² Cp. chap. 20.

³ Nero had put the confiscated property of political exiles up to auction. His treasury officials had been so prompt in selling it all off and getting the money in, that there was very little left for Otho to restore, since he could only give back those lots which had not been paid for.

⁴ Cp. ii. 60. Quintilian alludes several times to the extreme beauty of his voice and his commanding delivery—better, he

people even thought they could recognize Trachalus' style of oratory, fluent and sonorous, well adapted to tickle the ears of the crowd : and as he was a popular pleader his style was well known. The crowd's loud shouts of applause were in the best style of flattery, excessive and insincere. Men vied with each other in their enthusiasm and prayers for his success, much as though they were sending off the dictator Caesar or the emperor Augustus. Their motive was neither fear nor affection, but a sheer passion for servility. One can see the same in households of slaves, where each obeys his own interest and the common welfare counts for nothing. On his departure Otho entrusted the peace of the city and the interests of the empire to his brother Salvius Titianus.

thinks, than that of any tragedian he had ever seen. To read, his speeches were less effective.

BOOK II

VESPASIAN AND THE EAST

I MEANWHILE, on the other side of Europe, Fortune was already sowing the seeds of a dynasty, the varying fortunes of which were destined to bring at one time happiness to the country and success to its rulers, at another misery to the country and to the rulers destruction.¹ Before Galba's fall Titus Vespasianus had been dispatched by his father from Judaea to Rome.² The ostensible reason of his journey was to show respect to the new emperor, and to solicit some post for which his years now fitted him.³ However, the popular passion for invention suggested that he had been summoned to be adopted. This rumour was based on the fact that Galba was old and childless : the public never wearies of appointing successors until the choice is made. The character of Titus gave still more colour to it. He seemed capable of filling any position. His appearance lacked neither charm nor dignity. Vespasian's successes also and the utterances of certain oracles further endorsed the rumour, to say nothing of the chance occurrences which pass for omens where the wish is father to the thought. It

¹ The Flavian dynasty. Vespasian and Titus brought the happiness, Domitian the misery.

² Cp. i. 10.

³ He was 30.

was at Corinth in Achaia that Titus received the news of Galba's murder, and was assured by people in the town that Vitellius had declared war. In great perplexity he summoned a few of his friends and discussed all the possibilities of the situation. If he continued his journey to Rome he would earn no gratitude for compliments addressed to another sovereign,¹ and would be held as a hostage either for Vitellius or for Otho : on the other hand, if he returned to Judaea he would inevitably offend the victor. However, the struggle was still undecided, and the father's adherence to the successful party would excuse the conduct of the son. Or if Vespasian himself assumed sovereignty, they would have to plan war and forget all about giving offence

Such considerations held him balanced between hope ² and fear ; but ultimately hope prevailed. Some people believed that his longing to get back to Queen Berenice² fired him to return. True, the young man's fancy was attracted by Berenice, but he did not allow this to interfere with business. Still his youth was a time of gay self-indulgence, and he showed more restraint in his own reign than in his father's. Accordingly he sailed along the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor,

¹ i.e. to Galba.

² She was the granddaughter of Herod the Great, and lived with her brother, Herod Agrippa (cp. chap. 81), ruler of Peraea. They heard St. Paul at Caesarea. She had married first her uncle, Herod Agrippa, prince of Chalcis ; then Polemo II, king of Pontus, whom she left. She was known to have visited Titus in Rome, and he was said to have promised her marriage.

and, skirting the seas which lay upon his left, reached the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus, whence he made a bolder crossing to Syria.¹ On his way he conceived a desire to visit the temple of Venus at Paphos,² which is famous among all the inhabitants and visitors. It may not be tedious to give here a short account of the origin of this worship, the ritual of the cult, and the shape—unparalleled elsewhere—in which the goddess is depicted.

- 3 According to an old tradition the temple was founded by King Aerias, and some people maintain that the goddess bears the same name. A more modern version states that the temple was consecrated by Cinyras,³ on the spot where the goddess landed when the sea gave her birth. The method of divination,⁴ however, according to this account, was imported from elsewhere by the Cilician Tamiras, and an arrangement was made that the descendants of both families should preside over the rites. Later, however, it seemed wrong that the royal line should have no prerogative, so the descendants of the foreigner⁵ resigned the practice of the art which they had themselves introduced, and now the priest whom you consult is always of the line of Cinyras. They accept any victim that is offered, but males are preferred. They put most faith

¹ i.e. across the open sea.

² In Cyprus.

³ Another mythical king of Cyprus. Hesychius calls him a son of Apollo, and Ovid makes him the father of Adonis.

⁴ From the flight and cries of birds.

⁵ i.e. the Tamiradae.

in kids' entrails. Blood must not be poured on the altar, at which they offer only prayers and fire untainted by smoke. Although the altars stand in the open air they are never wetted by rain. The goddess is not represented in human form; the idol is a sort of circular pyramid,¹ rising from a broad base to a small round top, like a turning-post. The reason of this is unknown.

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

Vespasian had already broken the back of the Jewish war.² Only the siege of Jerusalem remained. That this proved a difficult and laborious task was due rather to the high situation of the town and the

¹ i. e. a conical stone.

² Cp. v. 10.

stubborn superstition of its inhabitants than to any adequate provision enabling them to endure the hardships of the siege. Vespasian had, as we have already stated,¹ three legions well tried in war. Four others were under Mucianus' command.¹ Although these had never seen war, yet their envy of the neighbouring army's fame had banished sloth. Indeed, as the former were hardened by work and danger, so the latter owed their ardour to their unbroken inaction, and their shame at having no share in the war.² Both generals had, besides auxiliary infantry and cavalry, foreign fleets³ and allied princes,⁴ and a fame that
5 rested on widely differing claims. Vespasian was an indefatigable campaigner. He headed the column, chose the camping-ground, never ceasing by night or day to use strategy, and, if need be, the sword to thwart the enemy. He eat what he could get, and dressed almost like a common soldier. Indeed, save for his avarice, he matched the generals of old days. Mucianus, on the other hand, was distinguished by his wealth and luxury, and his general superiority to the standards of a private person. He was the better speaker, and a skilful administrator and statesman. Their combined qualities would have made a fine

¹ See i. 10 and 76.

² Reading *inexpertis belli rubor* (Andresen).

³ Of Pontus, Syria, and Egypt.

⁴ Antiochus of Commagene (between Syria and Cappadocia), Agrippa of Peraea (east of Jordan), and Sohaemus of Sophene (on the Upper Euphrates, round the sources of the Tigris). See chap. 81.

emperor, if one could have blended their virtues and omitted their vices. Governing as they did the neighbouring provinces of Judaea and Syria, jealousy at first led to quarrels. However, on the death of Nero, they forgot their dislike and joined hands. It was their friends who first brought them together, and subsequently Titus became the chief bond of union and for the common good suppressed their ignoble jealousy. Both by nature and training he had charm to fascinate even such a man as Mucianus. The tribunes and centurions and the common soldiers were attracted, each according to his character, either by Titus' meritorious industry or by his gay indulgence in pleasure.

Before the arrival of Titus both armies had sworn 6 allegiance to Otho. News travels fast in such cases, but civil war is a slow and serious undertaking, and the East, after its long repose, was now for the first time beginning to arm for it. In earlier times all the fiercest civil wars broke out in Italy or Cisalpine Gaul among the forces of the West. Pompey, Cassius, Brutus, and Antony all courted disaster by carrying the war oversea. Syria and Judaea often heard of Caesars, but seldom saw one. There were no mutinies among the soldiers. They merely made demonstrations against Parthia with varying success. Even in the last civil war ¹ the peace of these provinces had been untroubled by the general confusion. Later they were loyal to Galba. But when they heard that Otho and Vitellius were engaged in a wicked contest for the possession

¹ Which dethroned Nero.

of the Roman world, the troops began to chafe at the thought that the prizes of empire should fall to others, while their own lot was mere compulsory submission. They began to take stock of their strength. Syria and Judaea had seven legions on the spot with a vast force of auxiliaries. Next came Egypt with two legions :¹ beyond lay Cappadocia and Pontus, and all the forts along the Armenian frontier. Asia and the remaining provinces were rich and thickly populated. As for the islands, their girdle of sea was safe from the enemy and aided the prosecution of the war.

- 7 The generals were well aware of the soldiers' feelings, but decided to await the issue between Vitellius and Otho. 'In civil war,' they reckoned, 'there are no sure ties to unite victor and vanquished. It matters little which survives : even good generals are corrupted by success : as for Otho and Vitellius, their troops are quarrelsome, lazy, and luxurious, and they are both the victims of their own vices. One will fall on the field and the other succumb to his success.' So Vespasian and Mucianus postponed their attack for the present. They were themselves recent converts to the project of war, which the others² had long fostered from various motives. The better sort were animated by patriotism, many by mere love of plunder, some by the uncertainty of their own fortunes. Thus, though their motives differed, all, good and bad alike, agreed in their eager desire for war.

¹ III Cyrenaica, XXII Deiotariana.

² Titus and their officers and friends.

About this time Achaia and Asia were thrown into 8 a groundless panic by a rumour that 'Nero was at hand'. The accounts of his death being many and various, people were all the more inclined to allege and to believe that he was still alive. We shall mention in the course of this work the attempts and the fate of the other pretenders.¹ This time it was a slave from Pontus, or, according to other traditions, a freed-man from Italy. His skill as a singer and harpist, combined with his facial resemblance to Nero, gave him some credentials for imposture. He bribed some penniless and vagabond deserters by dazzling promises to join him, and they all set out to sea. A storm drove them on to the island of Cythnus,² where he found some troops homeward bound on leave from the East. Some of these he enrolled, killing all who resisted, and then proceeded to plunder the local merchants and arm all the sturdiest of the slaves. Finding a centurion named Sisenna carrying home a pair of silver hands³ as a token of alliance from the army in Syria to the Household Guards, he tried by various devices to seduce him, until Sisenna took fright and escaped secretly from the island in fear of violence. Thus the panic spread. The great name of Nero attracted many who pined for revolution and hated the existing state of things. The rumours

¹ These accounts are lost. There was one such attempt under Domitian and another under Titus. The Christians expected him to re-appear as Antichrist.

² Thermya.

³ See i. 54.

9 waxed daily, until a chance dispelled them. Galba had entrusted the government of Galatia and Pamphylia¹ to Calpurnius Asprenas, who had been granted an escort of two triremes from the fleet at Misenum. It so happened that with these he touched at Cythnus. The rebels lost no time in appealing to the ship's captains in the name of Nero. The pretender, assuming an air of melancholy, appealed to 'the loyalty of his former soldiers', and begged them to establish him in Syria or Egypt. The captains either from sympathy or guile alleged that they must talk to their men, and would come back when they had prepared all their minds. However, they faithfully made a full report to Asprenas, on whose instructions they boarded the ship and killed the impostor, whoever he was. The man's eyes and hair and ferocious look were so remarkable that the body was carried into Asia and thence to Rome.

THE TRIAL OF ANNIUS FAUSTUS

10 In a country so divided and tossed by frequent change of rulers between liberty and licence even small events caused serious disturbance. It happened that Vibius Crispus,² a man whose wealth, influence, and ability had won him a reputation that was great rather than good, had impeached before the senate a man of equestrian rank, called Annius Faustus, who

¹ These with Lycia at this date formed a single imperial province.

² A close friend of Vespasian, who was supposed to ply the trade of informer (cp. iv. 41 and 43).

had been a professional informer under Nero. The senate had recently in Galba's principate passed a resolution authorizing the prosecution of informers. This resolution had been variously applied from time to time, and interpreted rigorously or leniently according as the defendant was helpless or influential. But it still retained some terrors. Crispus, moreover, had exerted all his powers to secure the conviction of the man who had informed against his brother.¹ He had, in fact, induced a large proportion of the senate to demand that Faustus should be sent to execution undefended and unheard. However, with others, the defendant gained a great advantage from his prosecutor's undue influence. 'We must give him time,' they argued, 'the charges must be published: however hateful the criminal his case must be properly heard.' At first this advice prevailed. The trial was postponed for a few days. At length came the conviction of Faustus, which aroused in the country less satisfaction than his vile character warranted. People recalled the fact that Crispus himself had turned informer with pecuniary profit. It was not the penalty but the prosecutor that was unpopular.

OTHO'S MEASURES OF DEFENCE

Meanwhile the war opened successfully for Otho. II At his order the armies of Dalmatia and Pannonia started from their base. They comprised four legions,²

¹ Vibius Secundus, banished for extortion in Mauretania.

² See p. 15, note 1.

each of which had sent forward detachments two thousand strong. The rest followed at a short interval: the Seventh legion raised by Galba,¹ the Eleventh and Thirteenth, both composed of veteran troops, and the Fourteenth, which had won great distinction by crushing the rebellion in Britain.² Nero had further increased their glory by choosing them for special service,³ which accounts for their lasting loyalty to Nero and their keen support of Otho. But the stronger their numbers the greater their self-confidence and the slower their march. The cavalry and auxiliaries preceded the main body of the legions. From Rome itself came no mean force, five regiments of Guards with some detachments of cavalry and the First legion.⁴ To these were added an irregular force of 2,000 gladiators,⁵ a shameful assistance of which during the civil wars even strict generals availed themselves. Annius Gallus was placed in command of these forces with Vestricius Spurinna,⁶ and they were sent forward to hold the line of the Po. Their first plans had failed,

¹ The legion brought from Spain, mentioned in i. 6.

² The revolt of Boadicea crushed by Suetonius Paulinus; described by Tacitus in his life of Agricola and in Book XIV of the *Annals*.

³ i.e. for his projected war against the Albanians (cp. i. 6). Probably they stopped in Dalmatia on hearing of Nero's fall.

⁴ The quondam marines (cp. i. 6, 9, &c.).

⁵ They were commanded by Martius Macer (see chaps. 23, 35, &c.).

⁶ The defender of Placentia. He earned further laurels under Trajan in Germany. He was a friend of Tacitus and the younger Pliny, and is suspected of writing some bad verse.

Caecina, whom Otho had hoped to hold within the Gallic provinces, having already crossed the Alps.¹ Under Otho's personal command marched picked detachments of his Body Guard and the rest of the Household troops, together with reservists of the Guard and a large force of marines.² He let no luxury either delay or disgrace his march. In an iron breast-plate he marched on foot at the head of his troops, looking rough and dishevelled, quite unlike his reputation.

Fortune smiled on his first efforts. By sea his fleet 12 held most of the Italian coast right up to the foot of the Maritime Alps. To secure these mountains and attack the province of Narbonese Gaul he had placed in command Suedius Clemens, Antonius Novellus, and Aemilius Pacensis.³ Pacensis, however, was made a prisoner by his mutinous troops: Novellus had no authority: Clemens' command rested on popularity, and he was as greedy of battle as he was criminally blind to insubordination. No one could have imagined they were in Italy, on the soil of their native land. As though on foreign shores and among an enemy's towns, they burnt, ravaged, plundered, with results all the more horrible since no precautions had been taken against danger. The fields were full, the houses open. The inhabitants came to meet them with their wives and children, and were lured by the security

¹ Early in March (cp. i. 70).

² Not regularly formed into a legion: those to whom 'he held out hopes of honourable service' (cp. i. 87). ³ Cp. i. 87.

of peace into all the horrors of war. The Governor of the Maritime Alps¹ at that time was Marius Maturus. He summoned the inhabitants, whose fighting strength was ample, and proposed to resist at the frontier the Othonians' invasion of the province. But at the first engagement the mountaineers were cut down and dispersed. They had assembled in random haste; they knew nothing of military service or discipline, nothing of the glory of victory or the disgrace of flight.

- 13 Enraged by this engagement, Otho's troops visited their indignation on the town of Albintimilium.² The battle had brought them no booty, for the peasants were poor and their armour worthless, and being swift of foot, with a good knowledge of the country, they had escaped capture. However, the soldiers sated their greed at the expense of the innocent town. A Ligurian woman afforded a fine example of courage which made their conduct the more odious. She had concealed her son, and when the soldiers, who believed that she had hidden some money as well, demanded from her under torture where she was keeping him concealed, she pointed to her belly and replied, 'He is in hiding.' No subsequent tortures nor even death itself could bring her to change that brave and noble answer.

¹ The mountainous district north of the Italian frontier on the Var.

² Ventimiglia, the modern frontier town between France and Italy on the Riviera.

Panic-stricken couriers brought to Fabius Valens the 14
news that Otho's fleet was threatening the province
of Narbonese Gaul, which had sworn allegiance to
Vitellius. Representatives from the Roman colonies
also arrived beseeching his aid. He dispatched two
cohorts of the Tungri¹ and four troops of horse,
together with the entire cavalry regiment of the
Treviri.² This force was put under the command of
Julius Classicus,³ and part of it was detained in the
colony of Forum Julii,⁴ since if the whole force
marched inland and the sea-board were left un-
protected Otho's fleet would swoop down at once.
Twelve troops of cavalry and a picked body of
auxiliaries marched against the enemy: these were
reinforced by a Ligurian cohort which had long
garrisoned this district, and a draft of five hundred
Pannonian recruits who had not yet joined their
legion.⁵ The engagement began promptly. Their line
was so arranged that some of the marines, reinforced
by the peasants, held the rising ground by the sea,
while the Guards filled the level space between the
hills and the shore. The fleet, acting in conjunction
with the land force, was ready to play its part in the
battle, and extended a threatening front facing the
coast. The Vitellians, weaker in infantry, put their

¹ A Gallic tribe living round Tongres and Spa.

² Living round Trier.

³ Afterwards one of the leaders in the rebellion on the Rhine (cp. iv. 55).

⁴ Fréjus.

⁵ i. e. either the VII Galbian or XIII Gemina, both of which were on Otho's side.

trust in their horse. The mountaineers¹ were posted on the neighbouring heights, and the auxiliaries massed in close order behind the cavalry. The Treviran cavalry rashly charged the enemy, and meeting Otho's guards in front were simultaneously assailed in the flank by the peasants, flinging stones. This they could do well enough; and, drafted among the regulars, they all, bold and timid alike, showed the same courage in the hour of victory. Panic struck the defeated Vitellians when the fleet began to harass their rear. They were now surrounded, and would have been entirely destroyed had not darkness arrested the victors
15 and sheltered their flight. But though beaten the Vitellians were not cowed. Calling up reinforcements, they suddenly attacked while the unsuspecting enemy were taking their ease after the victory. They killed the pickets, broke into the camp and terrified the sailors. In time the panic subsided. The Othonians seized a hill, defended their position, and eventually assumed the offensive. The slaughter was frightful. The officers commanding the Tungri, after a long defence of their position, fell beneath a shower of weapons. The victory also cost the Othonians heavy loss, for the enemy's cavalry rallied and cut off all who rashly ventured too far in pursuit. So they agreed to a sort of armistice. As a safeguard against sudden raids either by the fleet on the one side or the cavalry on the other, the Vitellians retired to Antipolis,² a

¹ i. e. the Ligurian cohort, mentioned above.

² Antibes.

town of the Narbonese province, and the Othonians to Albingaunum¹ in the interior of Liguria.

The fame of this naval victory kept Corsica and 16 Sardinia and the adjacent islands faithful to Otho's cause. However, Decumus Pacarius, the procurator,² nearly ruined Corsica by an act of indiscretion, which in a war of such dimensions could not possibly have affected the issue, and only ended in his own destruction. He hated Otho and determined to aid Vitellius with all the forces of Corsica; a useless assistance, even if it had been forthcoming. He summoned the chief men of the island and disclosed his project. Claudius Pyrrhicus, who commanded the Liburnian cruisers³ stationed there, and a Roman knight named

¹ Albenga.

² Sardinia and Corsica were an imperial province A.D. 6-67. Then Nero gave it back to the senate to compensate for his declaration of the independence of Achaia. Vespasian once more transferred it to imperial government. If *procurator* is correct here, Pacarius must have been a subordinate imperial functionary in a senatorial province. As the province changed hands so often and was so soon after this placed under imperial control, it is possible that Tacitus made a mistake and that Pacarius was an ex-praetor. Those who feel that Tacitus is unlikely to have made this error, and that Pacarius can hardly have been anything but governor, adopt the suggestion that Corsica did not share the fate of Sardinia in A.D. 67, but remained under the control of an imperial procurator. There is no clear evidence of this, but under Diocletian Corsica was certainly separate.

³ These cruisers were of a peculiarly light build, called after the Liburni, an Illyrian tribe, who fought for Octavian in the battle of Actium. He introduced similar craft into the Roman navy. They were very fast; and worked with a triangular, instead of the usual square sail.

Quintius Certus ventured to oppose him. He ordered their execution. This overawed the others who were present. So they swore allegiance to Vitellius, as did also the general mass of ignorant people, who blindly shared a fear they did not feel. However, when Pacarius began to enlist them and to harass his undisciplined men with military duties, their loathing for the unwonted labour set them thinking of their weakness. 'They lived in an island: Vitellius' legions were in Germany, a long way off: Otho's fleet had already sacked and plundered districts that had even horse and foot to protect them.' The revulsion was sudden, but did not issue in overt resistance. They chose a suitable moment for their treachery. Waiting till Pacarius' visitors¹ were gone, they murdered him, stripped and helpless, in his bath, and killed his comrades too. The heads they bore themselves to Otho, like enemies' scalps. Neither did Otho reward nor Vitellius punish them. In the general confusion their deed was overshadowed by more heinous crimes.

- 17 We have already described² how 'Silius' Horse' had admitted the war into the heart of Italy. No one there either supported Otho or preferred Vitellius. But prolonged peace had broken their spirits to utter servility. They were an easy prey to the first comer and cared little who was the better man. All the fields and cities between the Alps and the Po, the most fertile district in Italy, were held by the Vitellian forces, the cohorts sent forward by Caecina²

¹ i.e. his Corsican and Roman clients.

² i. 70.

having already arrived. One of the Pannonian cohorts had been captured at Cremona: a hundred cavalry and a thousand marines had been cut off between Placentia and Ticinum.¹ After this success the river and its steep banks were no barrier to the Vitellian troops: indeed the Batavians and other Germans found the Po a positive temptation. Crossing suddenly opposite Placentia, they captured a handful of scouts and created such a panic that the others in terror spread the false report that Caecina's whole army was upon them.

Spurinna, who was holding Placentia, had made up ¹⁸ his mind that Caecina had not yet arrived, and that, if he should, his troops must be kept within their lines: he could not pit three cohorts of guards with one detachment a thousand strong,² and a few cavalry, against Caecina's veteran army. But his men were unruly and ignorant of war.³ Seizing the standards and colours⁴ they broke out, threatening to kill the general who tried to check them and paying no heed to their superior officers. They even clamoured that Otho was being betrayed, and Caecina had been summoned.⁵ Spurinna yielded unwillingly to their folly, at first under compulsion, later with a show of

¹ Piacenza and Pavia.

² i.e. one of the two detachments sent forward by the armies of Dalmatia and Pannonia (cp. chap. 11).

³ Otho's Praetorian Guards were the weakest point in his army.

⁴ Cp. i. 36 note.

⁵ i.e. that Spurinna was in league with Caecina, and meant to hand them over to him.

sympathy. He was anxious to gain weight for his advice, should the mutiny cool.

- 19 At nightfall, with the Po in sight, Spurinna decided to entrench his camp.¹ The unaccustomed hard work soon blunted the enthusiasm of his town-bred troops. The older men began to curse their credulity, and to point out the fearful danger to their small force of being surrounded by Caecina's army in the open country. Soon a more sober spirit pervaded the camp. The tribunes and centurions mingled with the men, and every one talked with admiration of Spurinna's foresight in selecting a powerful and wealthy colony as a strong base for their operations. Finally Spurinna himself rather explained his plans than reproached their faults, and, leaving patrols behind, succeeded eventually in leading the rest of the men back to Placentia in a quieter and more submissive frame of mind. There the walls were repaired, outworks built, and the turrets increased in height and number, while Spurinna provided not only for arms and ammunition but also for obedience and discipline. This was all his party lacked, for their courage was unimpeachable.
- 20 Caecina, on the other hand, seemed to have left

¹ He was making 'a reconnaissance in force westwards along the river bank to discover, if he could, the strength and intentions of the enemy' (B. W. Henderson, *Civil War*, &c.). But Mr. E. G. Hardy points out that, as he had only 4,000 men and Caecina's 30,000 were in the immediate neighbourhood, this would have been foolish. It seems better to believe Tacitus' suggestion that his insubordinate troops forced Spurinna to march out.

his cruelty and profligacy on the other side of the Alps. He marched through Italy with a well-disciplined force. The people in the country-towns and colonies took offence at his costume as showing arrogance. While they wore the plain toga, Caecina addressed them attired in a parti-coloured plaid and trousers.¹ Moreover, his wife Salonina rode on a fine horse with purple trappings, and though this did no one any harm, they grumbled and seemed hurt. It is an ineradicable human trait to turn critical eyes on new-found fortune, and to insist upon moderation most of all in those who used to be our equals. Crossing the Po, Caecina tried to undermine the loyalty of the Othonians by negotiations and promises. They retaliated with the same weapons, and when they had finished bandying empty and fine-sounding phrases about Peace and Union, Caecina devoted all his attention and plans to an assault on Placentia in terrific force. He knew that his future reputation rested on the issue of his first engagements.²

But the first day's work savoured more of impatience **21** than of a veteran army's methods. The men ventured under the walls without cover or precaution, drunk and overfed. Meanwhile the amphitheatre, a fine

¹ Considered Gallic and effeminate.

² Mr. Henderson (*Civil War*, &c.) argues that it was imperative for Caecina to take the fortress at Placentia, since it threatened his sole line of communication with Valens' column. Tacitus, as usual, gives a practical rather than a strategic motive. His interests are purely human.

building outside the walls, was burnt down. It was set on fire either by the attacking force hurling torches and heated shot and fire-brands, or by the besieged in returning their fire. The common people of the town harboured a suspicion that fuel for the fire had been surreptitiously introduced from one of the neighbouring colonies, and that the motive was jealousy, since no building in Italy could hold so many people. However it happened, they thought little of it, while worse disasters threatened: safety assured, they bewailed it as the worst calamity they could have suffered. To return, however, to Caecina: he was repulsed with heavy losses, and the night was spent in preparations. The Vitellians provided mantlets, fascines, and penthouses,¹ to protect the assailants while undermining the walls: the Othonians procured stakes and huge masses of stone or lead or brass, to break through the enemy's formation and crush them to pieces. Both parties were actuated by feelings of pride and ambition. Various encouragements were used, one side praising the strength of the legions and the German army, the other the reputation of the Guards and the City Garrison. The Vitellians decried their enemy as lazy effeminate demoralized by the circus and the theatre: to which they replied that the Vitellians were a pack of foreigners and barbarians.

¹ Familiar devices for sheltering troops against missiles from a town wall. They were generally made of hurdles covered with raw hides. The *vinea* was a shelter on poles, so named from its resemblance to a pergola of vines.

Meanwhile, Otho and Vitellius were held up to praise or blame, insult providing the more fruitful stimulus.

Hardly had day dawned before the walls of Placentia 22 bristled with defenders, and the fields glittered with the soldiers' armour. The Vitellian legions¹ advancing in close order with their auxiliaries in scattered bands assailed the higher portions of the walls with stones and arrows: where the walls were in disrepair or crumbling from age they came close up to them. The Othonians above, poising and aiming their weapons with surer effect, rained them down on the Germans, who came rashly charging under the walls with the wild songs and scanty dress of their country, brandishing their shields over their heads. Meanwhile, the legionaries under cover of their mantlets and fascines set to work to undermine the walls, build up a mound, and assail the gates, while Otho's Guards rolled on to them with terrific crashes huge millstones, which they had arranged for this purpose along the walls. Of those beneath, some were crushed by the stones; others, wounded by darts, were left mangled and bleeding to death. Panic redoubled the slaughter, and the rain of missiles came all the fiercer from the walls. At last they sacrificed the honour of their party and beat a retreat. Caecina, ashamed of his rash attempt at assault, was afraid of looking ridiculous and useless if he sat still in the same camp. So he crossed the Po

¹ In i. 61 only legion XXI is mentioned. But Caecina may have formed the detachments into another legion.

and made for Cremona. As he was retiring, Turullius Cerialis with a large force of marines, and Julius Briganticus¹ with a few cavalry, came over to his side. The latter, a Batavian born, had held a cavalry command: the former was a senior centurion, who was known to Caecina, as he had served in that capacity in Germany.

- 23 Spurinna, learning the enemy's route, informed Annius Gallus² by letter of all that had happened, the defence of Placentia and Caecina's plans. Gallus was leading the First legion to the relief of Placentia, for he doubted the ability of the weak force of Guards to resist a long siege and the full strength of the German army. Hearing that Caecina was defeated and making for Cremona, he halted at Bedriacum, though he found it hard to restrain the ardour of his troops, whose zeal for battle nearly broke into mutiny. The village of Bedriacum lies between Verona and Cremona,³ and two Roman disasters have now given it a sinister notoriety.

In the same week Martius Macer⁴ gained a victory in the neighbourhood of Cremona. With great enterprise he had transported his gladiators across the Po, and suddenly flung them on to the opposite bank. There

¹ Civilis' nephew and bitter enemy. See iv. 70, v. 21.

² Spurinna's colleague in the command of the advanced guard from Rome. He was now probably at Mantua.

³ At the meeting of two high roads leading to Cremona, the one from Hostilia and the other from Mantua. It was near here that Vitellius defeated Otho, and here that his power fell before Vespasian (cp. iii. 15 f.).

⁴ See p. 120. note 5.

they routed the Vitellian auxiliaries and killed all who offered resistance, the rest taking flight to Cremona. But Macer checked their victorious ardour, for fear that the enemy might be reinforced and reverse the fortune of the battle. This aroused suspicion among the Othonians, who put a bad construction on all that their generals did. All the least courageous and most impudent of the troops vied incessantly with each other in bringing various charges against Annius Gallus, Suetonius Paulinus, and Marius Celsus, for the two latter had also been placed in command by Otho.¹ The most energetic in promoting mutiny and dissension were Galba's murderers, who, maddened by their feelings of fear and of guilt, created endless disorder, sometimes talking open sedition, sometimes sending anonymous letters to Otho. As he always believed men of the meaner sort and distrusted patriots, he now wavered nervously, being always irresolute in success and firmer in the face of danger. He therefore sent for his brother Titianus² and gave him the chief command.

Meanwhile success attended the generalship of 24 Paulinus and Celsus.³ Caecina was tortured by his constant failure and the waning reputation of his

¹ This was stated in i. 87. The reminder is inserted because they were not mentioned with Gallus in ii. 11—unless, indeed, Mr. Onions is right in suggesting that *quoque* is an error for *duces*.

² He had left him in charge of Rome. See i. 90.

³ We learn in chap. 33 that Gallus was disabled and took no part in this engagement: hence the omission of his name.

army. Repulsed from Placentia, he had lately seen his auxiliaries defeated, and his patrols constantly worsted in skirmishes more frequent than memorable. Now that Fabius Valens was close at hand, he determined not to let all the glory of the war fall to him, and hastened with more zeal than prudence to retrieve his reputation. About twelve miles¹ distant from Cremona, at a place called *Twin Brethren*,² he carefully concealed the bravest of his auxiliaries in a wood overlooking the road. The cavalry were ordered to ride forward down the road and provoke an engagement. They were then to feign flight and lure the pursuers on in hot haste until they fell into the ambush. This plan was betrayed to Otho's generals. Paulinus took charge of the infantry, Celsus of the horse. A detachment of the Thirteenth legion,³ four auxiliary cohorts of foot, and five hundred cavalry were stationed on the left flank. Three cohorts of the Guards in column occupied the raised high-road.⁴ On the right flank marched the First legion, two auxiliary cohorts of foot, and five hundred cavalry. Besides these they moved out a thousand cavalry—Guards and auxiliaries—as a reserve to crown their success, or assist them in difficulties.

25 Before they came to close quarters, the Vitellians began to retire. Celsus, forewarned of the ruse,

¹ About 10½ English miles.

² Locus Castorum.

³ See chap. 11.

⁴ The Via Postumia, built up on a causeway high above the fields on either side.

halted his men. Whereupon the Vitellians impatiently rose from their ambush and, while Celsus slowly retired, followed him further and further until they plunged headlong into an ambush themselves. The auxiliaries were on their flanks ; the legions faced them in front ; and the cavalry by a sudden manœuvre had closed in on their rear. However, Suetonius Paulinus did not immediately give the signal for his infantry to charge. He was by nature dilatory, and preferred cautiously reasoned measures to accidental success. He kept on issuing orders about filling up the ditches, clearing the fields and extending the line, convinced that it was soon enough to play for victory when he had taken every precaution against defeat. This delay gave the Vitellians time to take refuge in the vineyards, where the interlaced vine-stems made it hard to follow. Adjoining these was a little wood, from under cover of which they ventured another sally and killed the foremost of the Guards' cavalry. There Prince Epiphanes¹ was wounded, while making vigorous efforts to rally Otho's forces.

At this point Otho's infantry charged, crushed the 26 opposing line, and even routed the troops who were hurrying up in support. For Caecina had brought up his reinforcements not all at once but in separate detachments. These, arriving in scattered units, and never in sufficient force, only added to the confusion, since the panic of the rout infected them as well.

¹ Son of Antiochus, king of Commagene (see p. 114, note 4). He was in Rome probably as a hostage, and accompanied Otho.

Mutiny, too, broke out in the camp, because the troops were not all taken into battle. Julius Gratus, the camp-prefect, was put in irons on a charge of plotting with his brother, who was fighting on Otho's side. It was known that the Othonians had arrested the brother, Julius Fronto, on the same charge. For the rest, such was the universal panic among pursuers and pursued, on the field and in the camp, that it was commonly said on both sides that, if Suetonius Paulinus had not sounded the retreat, Caecina's whole army might have been destroyed. Paulinus maintained that he avoided any excessive strain of work or marching, for fear of exposing his exhausted troops to a counter-attack from the Vitellians in the camp, who were still fresh for battle: besides, he had no reserves to fall back on in case of defeat. A few approved of the general's strategy, but the common opinion was adverse.¹

THE DECISIVE STRUGGLE

- 27 This reverse reduced the Vitellians not to despair but to discipline. Not only was this the case in Caecina's camp, who blamed his men as being readier for mutiny than for battle, but the troops under Fabius Valens, who had now reached Ticinum,² lost their contempt for the enemy, conceived a desire to

¹ An eminent critic has called Tacitus' account of this battle an 'historical nightmare', but those who do not suffer from a surfeit of military knowledge may find that it lies easy upon them. It is written for the plain man with an eye for situations and an ear for phrases.

² Pavia.

retrieve their glory, and offered their general a more respectful and steady obedience. There had, indeed, been a serious outbreak of mutiny, the account of which I may now resume from an earlier chapter,¹ where it seemed wrong to break the narrative of Caecina's operations. The Batavian auxiliaries, who had left the Fourteenth legion during the war against Vindex, heard of Vitellius' rising while on their way to Britain, and, as I have already described,² joined Fabius Valens in the country of the Lingones. There they grew insolent. Whenever they passed the tents of the Roman soldiers, they boasted loudly that they had coerced the Fourteenth, had deprived Nero of Italy, and held the whole issue of the war in the hollow of their hand. This insulted the soldiers and annoyed the general; brawls and quarrels ruined good discipline. Ultimately Valens began to suspect that their insubordination meant treachery. Accordingly, on receiving the 28 news that Otho's fleet had defeated the Treviran cavalry³ and the Tungri, and was now blockading Narbonese Gaul, he determined at the same time to assist his allies, and by a stroke of generalship to separate contingents that were so insubordinate and, if united, so strong. He therefore ordered the Batavians to march to the support of Narbo. Immediately this order became generally known, the auxiliaries began to complain and the legionaries to chafe. 'They were being deprived of their strongest support: here were these invincible veterans promptly withdrawn

¹ i. 66.² i. 59 and 64.³ See chap. 14.

directly the enemy came in sight: if the province was more important than the safety of Rome and the empire, why not all go there? but if Italy was the corner-stone of their success, he ought not as it were
29 to amputate their strongest limb.’¹ In answer to this presumptuous criticism, Valens loosed his lictors upon them and set to work to check the mutiny. They attacked their general, stoned him, and chased him out of the camp, shouting that he was concealing the spoils of Gaul and the gold from Vienne,² the due reward of their labours. They looted the baggage, ransacked the general’s quarters, and even rummaged in the ground with javelins and lances. Valens, in slave’s dress, took refuge with a cavalry officer. Gradually the disorder began to die down. Alfenus Varus, the camp-prefect, then hit upon the plan of forbidding the centurions to go the rounds or to have the bugle sounded to summon the men to their duties. No one had anything to do: they eyed each other in astonishment, dismayed above all at having no one to command them. At first by silent submission, at last with tearful prayers, they sought pardon. Valens appeared, haggard and in tears, but above all expectation safe and sound,—joy, sympathy, cheers! With a wild revulsion of feeling—mobs are always extravagant—they made a ring round him with the eagles and standards, and carried him to the Tribunal with loud praises and congratulations. With wise moderation he demanded

¹ It is Tacitus who has mixed the metaphors.

² See i. 66.

no punishment, but, to disarm suspicion of his good faith, he criticized one or two of them severely.¹ He was well aware that in civil war the men are allowed more licence than their officers.

While they were entrenching themselves at Ticinum 30 they heard the news of Caecina's defeat, and the mutiny nearly broke out afresh: Valens, they thought, had treacherously delayed in order to keep them out of the battle. They refused rest, would not wait for the general, marched on in front of the standards, hurrying on the bearers, and by a forced march joined Caecina. Valens had a bad name with Caecina's army. They complained that despite their greatly inferior numbers he had exposed them to the full force of the enemy. At the same time, for fear of being despised as defeated cowards, they excused themselves by exaggerating the strength of the new arrivals. In fact, though Valens' numbers were larger, and he had almost twice as many legionaries and auxiliaries as Caecina,² yet it was Caecina who enjoyed the confidence of the men. Apart from his kindness, in which he seemed much readier than Valens, they admired him for his youthful vigour and commanding stature,³ and liked him too without exactly knowing why. So there was rivalry between the generals. Caecina mocked at Valens for

¹ i.e. he pretended that not all but only a few were to blame (cp. i. 84).

² Valens had by now Legion V, I Italica, detachments from I, XV, XVI, and Taurus' Horse: Caecina had Legion XXI and detachments from IV and VII.

³ Cp. i. 53.

his dirty and dishonest ways :¹ Valens at Caecina's pompous vanity. But they smothered their dislike and worked together for a common end, writing frequent letters in which they sacrificed all hope of pardon and heaped abuse on Otho. Otho's generals refrained from retaliating upon Vitellius, though his
31 character offered richer scope. In death Otho earned a noble name and Vitellius infamy, yet at this time people were more afraid of Otho's burning passions than of Vitellius' listless luxury. The murder of Galba had made Otho feared and hated, while no one attributed to Vitellius the outbreak of the war. It was felt that Vitellius' gluttony was a personal disgrace : Otho's excesses, his cruelty and his daring, spelt more danger to the country.

Now that Caecina and Valens had joined forces, the Vitellians had no longer any reason to avoid a decisive battle. Otho accordingly held a council to decide whether they should prolong the war or put
32 their fortune to the test. Suetonius Paulinus, who was considered the most experienced general of his day,² now felt it was due to his reputation to deliver his views on the general conduct of the war. His contention was that the enemy's interests were best served by haste, Otho's by delay. He argued thus : 'The whole of Vitellius' force has now arrived and he has

¹ Cp. i. 66.

² He had made his name in a Moorish war (A.D. 42), when he had penetrated as far as Mount Atlas, and increased his reputation by suppressing the rebellion of Boadicea when he was governor of Britain (A.D. 59).

few reinforcements in his rear, for the Gallic provinces are in a ferment, and it would be fatal to abandon the Rhine with all those hostile tribes ready to swarm across it. The troops in Britain are busy with their own foes and cut off by the sea : the Spanish provinces can scarcely spare any troops : the Narbonese are seriously alarmed by their recent reverse and the inroads of our fleet. The country across the Po is shut in by the Alps and denied all supplies by sea,¹ and, besides, its resources have been already exhausted by the passage of their army. Nowhere can they get supplies, and without commissariat no army can be kept together. The German troops are their strongest fighting arm, but their constitutions will not be strong enough to stand the change of weather, if we protract the war into the summer. It has often happened that a force, which seemed irresistible at first, has dwindled to nothing through the tedium of forced inaction.

‘On the other hand, our resources are rich and reliable. We have on our side Pannonia, Moesia, Dalmatia, and the East ; the armies there are fresh and strong : we have Italy and Rome, the Queen of the World, and the Roman Senate and People : those titles always mean something, though their glory may sometimes be obscured. We have large public and private resources, and in civil war a vast quantity of money is stronger than the sword. Our soldiers are inured to the Italian climate or, at any rate, to heat. We are

¹ Otho held the fleets.

entrenched behind the Po :¹ its cities are protected by strong walls and willing hands, and the defence of Placentia has shown that none of them will yield to the enemy.' Therefore Otho must remain on the defensive. In a few days the Fourteenth legion would arrive : its fame alone was great, and the Moesian forces² would be with it. He should, at any rate, postpone his deliberations until then, and fight, if fight he must, with augmented strength.

- 33 Marius Celsus supported Paulinus. Annius Gallus had been hurt a few days before by a fall from his horse, but messengers were sent to inquire his views, and they reported that he too agreed. Otho inclined to a decisive engagement. His brother Titianus and Proculus, the prefect of the Guard, with all the impatience of inexperience, stoutly maintained that fortune and Providence, and Otho's own good genius inspired his policy, and would inspire its performance. They had descended to flattery by way of checking opposition. When it was decided to take the offensive, the question arose whether Otho in person should take part in the battle or hold himself in reserve. His evil counsellors again carried their point. Otho was to retire to Brixellum,³ and, by withdrawing from the

¹ He means that they would be, if they took his advice and retired across the Po to the south bank.

² According to the rumours quoted in chap. 46 they were already at Aquileia, near Venice, but Suetonius, whose father was at this time a tribune in the Thirteenth, says that they heard of Otho's death before arriving at Aquileia.

³ Brescello.

hazards of the field, reserve himself for the supreme control of the campaign and of the empire. To this Paulinus and Celsus offered no further opposition, for fear of seeming to endanger the person of their prince. From this day dates the decline of Otho's party. Not only did he take with him a considerable force of the Guards, Body Guard, and cavalry, but the spirit of the troops who remained behind was broken. The men trusted no one but Otho, and Otho no one but the men. His generals were under suspicion and their authority left in doubt.¹

None of these arrangements failed to reach the ears 34 of the Vitellians. Desertions were frequent, as they always are in civil war, and the scouts in their eagerness to discover the enemy's plans always failed to conceal their own. Caecina and Valens, counting on the fatal impatience of the enemy, remained quietly on their guard to see what they would do: for it is always wisdom to profit by another's folly. Feigning an intention of crossing the Po, they began to construct a bridge, partly as a demonstration against the gladiators² on the opposite bank, partly to find something for their idle troops to do. Boats were placed at equal intervals with their heads up stream and fastened together by strong wooden planks. They also cast anchors from them to ensure the solidity of the

¹ No one knew for certain who was in command. We are told in chap. 39 that he left Titianus in nominal command, though the real authority lay with Proculus.

² Macer's, see chap. 23.

bridge, but they allowed the hawsers to drift slack, so that when the river rose the boats might all rise with it without the line being broken. To guard the bridge a high tower was built out on the end boat, from which they could repulse the enemy with various artillery. Meanwhile the Othonians had built a tower on the bank and kept up a steady shower of stones and torches.

- 35 In midstream there was an island, to which the gladiators tried to make their way in boats, but the Germans swam over and got there first. When a good number of them had swam across, Macer manned some Liburnian cruisers¹ and attacked them with the bravest of his gladiators. But they fought with less courage than soldiers, and from their unsteady boats they could not shoot so well as the others, who had a firm footing on the bank. Swaying this way and that in their alarm, the sailors and the marines were beginning to get in each other's way, when the Germans actually leapt into the shallows, caught hold of the boats by the stern, and either clambered up by the gangways or sunk them bodily with their own hands. All this took place before the eyes of both armies,² and the higher rose the spirits of the Vitellians, the greater became the indignation of the Othonians against
- 36 Macer, the author and cause of their disaster. The

¹ See p. 125, note 3.

² i.e. of Macer's gladiators on one bank and the detachment employed by Caecina for bridge-building, &c., on the other. The main armies were Otho's at Bedriacum and Vitellius' at Cremona.

remainder of the boats were eventually dragged off,¹ and the battle ended in flight. The army demanded Macer's execution. He had been actually wounded by a lance that had been flung at him, and the soldiers were rushing on him with drawn swords when some tribunes and centurions intervened and rescued him.

Soon after this, Vestricius Spurinna, on Otho's orders, brought up a reinforcement of the Guards, leaving behind a small garrison at Placentia, and before long, Otho sent the consul-elect, Flavius Sabinus,² to take command of Macer's force. This change pleased the soldiers, but the frequent mutinies made the generals unwilling to assume such a perilous command.

In some of my authorities³ I find a statement that **37** either a growing fear of war or dislike of the two emperors, whose discreditable misconduct grew daily more notorious, led the armies to hesitate whether they should not give up the struggle and either themselves combine to choose an emperor or refer the choice to the senate. This, it is suggested, was the motive of Otho's generals in advising delay, and Paulinus in particular had high hopes, since he was the senior ex-consul, and a distinguished general who

¹ i.e. from the Germans who were trying to board or sink them.

² See i. 77.

³ Plutarch, in his *Life of Otho*, after quoting the view of the emperor's secretary, Secundus, that Otho was over-strained and desperate, goes on to give the explanation of 'others'. This agrees exactly with the story given here. Plutarch and Tacitus are apparently quoting from the same authority, unknown to us, perhaps Cluvius Rufus.

had earned a brilliant reputation by his operations in Britain. For my own part, while I am ready to admit that a few people may have tacitly wished for peace instead of civil war, or for a good and virtuous emperor instead of two who were the worst of criminals, yet I imagine that Paulinus was much too wise to hope that in a time of universal corruption the people would show such moderation. Those who had sacrificed peace in a passion for war were not likely to stop the war from any affection for peace. Nor was it possible that armies whose language and characteristics differed so widely should ever come to such an agreement. As for the officers, nearly all of them were extravagant, bankrupt, and guilty of some crime: they had not a good enough conscience to put up with any emperor who was not as vicious as themselves and under an obligation for their services.

- 38 The old ingrained human passion for power matured and burst into prominence with the growth of the empire. With straiter resources equality was easily preserved. But when once we had brought the world to our feet and exterminated every rival state or king, we were left free to covet power without fear of interruption. It was then that strife first broke out between patricians and plebeians: at one time arose seditious tribunes,¹ at another tyrannous consuls:²

¹ e.g. the brothers Gracchus, Saturninus, and Drusus.

² e.g. Appius Claudius and L. Opimius, of whom Plutarch says that in suppressing C. Gracchus he used his consular authority like that of a dictator.

in the Forum at Rome were sown the first seeds of civil war. Before long, Marius, rising from the lowest ranks of the people, and Sulla, the most cruel of all the nobles, crushed our liberty by force of arms and substituted a despotism. Then came Pompey, whose aims, though less patent, were no better than theirs. From that time onwards the one end sought was supreme power in the state. Even at Pharsalia and Philippi the citizen armies did not lay down their arms. How then can we suppose that the troops of Otho and Vitellius would have willingly stopped the war? The same anger of heaven, the same human passions, the same criminal motives drove them into discord. True these wars were each settled by a single battle, but that was due to the generals' cowardice. However, my reflections on the ancient and the modern character have carried me too far: I must now resume the thread of our narrative.

When Otho started for Brixellum, he left his 39 brother Titianus in nominal command, though the real power lay with the prefect Proculus. As for Celsus and Paulinus, no use was made of their experience, and their empty titles were used as a screen for other people's blunders. The tribunes and centurions felt themselves in an ambiguous position, seeing the better generals sacrificed and the worst in command. The men were full of spirit, but preferred criticizing to carrying out their officers' orders. It was decided to advance and encamp four miles west of Bedriacum.

Though it was spring, and rivers abounded, the men were very foolishly allowed to suffer from want of water. Here a council of war was held, for Otho kept sending dispatches urging haste, and the soldiers kept clamouring for their emperor to lead them. Many demanded that the troops stationed across the Po¹ should be brought up. It is not so easy to decide what was the best thing they could have done as to be sure that
 40 what they did do was the worst. They were in marching order, not fighting trim, and their objective was the confluence of the Po and the Arda,² sixteen

¹ At Brixellum.

² About seven miles below Cremona. The Medicean MS. has Adua, but as the mouth of the Adua is seven miles west of Cremona and Bedriacum twenty-two miles east of Cremona, the figures given do not suit. For Tacitus says that they marched first four miles and then sixteen. Mr. Henderson proposes to solve the difficulty by reading *quartum declinum* for *quartum* in chap. 39. But his reasons are purely *a priori*. If the confluence was that of the Arda with the Po, Tacitus' *quartum* is still unsatisfactory, but the distances given in Plutarch's Life of Otho would suit the facts. He makes the first march a little over six miles. From the camp then pitched to the mouth of the Arda would be by road about sixteen miles. Thus Tacitus' first figure may be a slight underestimate and his second figure correct. The second day's march, according to Plutarch, was rather more than twelve miles, so we may suppose that the armies met about four miles short of the confluence, which was the Othonians' objective. This suits Paulinus' suggestion a few lines lower that the Vitellians need only march four miles to catch them in marching column. The whole question is fully discussed by Mr. Henderson (op. cit.) and by Mr. E. G. Hardy in the *Journal of Philology*, vol. xxxi, no. 61.

miles away. Celsus and Paulinus refused to expose their troops, fatigued by the march and under heavy kit, to the assault of an enemy who, while still fresh after covering barely four miles, would certainly attack them, either while they were in the disorder of a marching column, or when they had broken up to dig trenches. However, Titianus and Proculus, worsted in argument, appealed to their authority: and there arrived post-haste a Numidian orderly with a peremptory dispatch from Otho, criticizing his generals' inaction, and ordering them to bring matters to a head. He was sick of delay and too impatient to live on hope.

On that same day, while Caecina was busy with the 41 bridge-building operations,¹ two officers of the Guards came and demanded an interview. He was preparing to hear and answer their proposals, when some scouts burst in with the news that the enemy were close at hand. The officers' conversation was thus interrupted, and it was left uncertain whether they were broaching a hostile plot or a piece of treachery, or some honest plan. Caecina, dismissing the officers, rode back to the camp, where he found that Valens had given orders to sound for battle, and the troops were already under arms. While the legions were balloting for the order in which they were to take the field, the cavalry rode out and charged. Strange to say, they would have been hurtled back upon the trenches by a smaller force of Othonians, had not the Italian legion bravely

¹ See 34 and 35.

stopped them by drawing their swords and forcing them to go back and resume the fight. The Vitellian legions formed without any disorder, for though the enemy were close at hand, thick plantations hid the approaching force. In the Othonian army the generals were nervous and the men ill-disposed towards them : their march was hindered by carts and camp-followers; and the high road,¹ with its deep ditches on either side, was too narrow even for a peaceful march. Some of the men formed round their standards, others went searching for their place : on every side there was an uproar as men ran about shouting to each other : the boldest kept pressing on to the front, while the tide of the timid ebbed to the rear.

- 42 Amid the confusion of this sudden panic somebody invented a story that Vitellius' army had abandoned his cause, whereupon an unwarrantable glee relaxed their efforts. It was never fully known whether this report was spread by Vitellian scouts or whether it was started on Otho's side, either by treachery or chance. Losing all their thirst for battle the Othonians actually broke into a cheer. The enemy answered with angry shouts, and most of Otho's soldiers, having no idea what caused the cheering, feared treachery. At this point the Vitellian line charged. They were fresh, and in good order, stronger and more numerous. However, the Othonians, despite their disorder, fewer numbers, and fatigue, offered a stubborn resistance. The ground was encumbered with orchards and vine-

¹ Via Postumia.

yards, and the character of the battle varied accordingly. They fought now from a distance, now at close quarters, and charged sometimes in detachment, sometimes in column.¹ On the raised high-road they fought hand to hand, using the weight of their bodies and their shields. They gave up throwing their javelins and cut through helmet and breastplate with sword and axe. Each man knew his foe; they were in view of the other troops;² and they fought as if the whole issue of the war depended on them.

It happened that two legions met in the open fields 43 between the high road and the Po. These were: for Vitellius the Twenty-first, commonly called Rapax,³ a regiment of old renown; and for Otho the First Adiutrix,⁴ which had never been in battle before, but was full of spirit and eager to win its first laurels. Their charge overthrew the front ranks of the Twenty-first, and they carried off its eagle. Fired with indignation, the Twenty-first rallied and charged the front of the enemy, killing the commanding officer, Orfidius Benignus, and capturing many of their colours.

On the other flank the Fifth⁵ drove the Thirteenth⁶

¹ The word here used, *cuneus* (a wedge), should mean strictly a V-shaped formation, which the troops also called 'pig's-head'. But it is also used more generally of any attacking column advancing to pierce the enemy's line, or indeed of any body of men in close order.

² Because they were on the raised Postumian road.

³ i.e. The Irresistibles.

⁴ The quondam marines (cp. i. 6, &c.).

⁵ From Lower Germany (cp. i. 55 and 61).

⁶ From Pannonia (cp. chap. 24).

off the field. The Fourteenth¹ were surrounded by the numbers that attacked them. Otho's generals had long ago fled. Caecina and Valens began to bring up the reserves to the support of their men, and, as a fresh reinforcement, there arrived Varus Alfenus² with his Batavians. They had routed the gladiators³ by confronting them and cutting them to pieces in the river before their transports could land, and flushed by their victory came charging in upon the flank of the enemy.

44 Their centre broken, the Othonians fled in disorder, making for Bedriacum. The distance was immense;⁴ the road encumbered with heaps of dead. This made the slaughter all the greater, for in civil war captives cannot be turned to profit.⁵ Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus avoided the camp at Bedriacum by diverse routes. Vedius Aquila, who commanded the Thirteenth legion, was so paralysed by fear that he allowed himself to fall into the hands of the indignant troops. It was still broad daylight when he entered

¹ Only a detachment of the Fourteenth was present at this battle, as is explained below, chap. 66.

² The camp-prefect (chap. 29). The Batavians are the detachment which had left the Fourteenth (chap. 27).

³ This is not an allusion to the fight described in chap. 35. The gladiators, now under Sabinus (ch. 36) seem to have suffered a second defeat.

⁴ The fixing of this distance rests on the doubtful figures in chap. 39. In any case it must have been between fourteen and twenty miles.

⁵ Plutarch in describing this rout makes the same rather cynical comment. Dio puts the total loss on both sides at 40,000.

the camp. Immediately a crowd of mutinous fugitives came clamouring round him. They spared neither abuse nor violence, assailing him as a deserter and a traitor. They could bring no special charge against him, but the mob always lay their own disgrace on some one else. Night came to the aid of Titianus and Celsus, for Annius Gallus¹ had already placed sentinels on guard and got the men under control. Using remonstrances, prayers, and commands, he had induced them not to add to the disaster of their defeat by murdering their own friends. Whether the war was over, or whether they wanted to fight again, in defeat, he told them, union was the one thing that could help them. All the other troops² were crushed by the blow. The Guards complained that they had been beaten, not by the enemy's valour, but by sheer treachery. 'Why,' they said, 'even the Vitellians have won no bloodless victory. We beat their cavalry and captured a standard from one of their legions. We still have Otho left and all the troops with him on the other side of the Po. The Moesian legions³ are on their way. There is a large force left at Bedriacum. These, at any rate, have not been defeated yet. Better fall, if need be, on the field.' Now exasperated, now depressed by these reflections, they were in a state of blank despair, which more often aroused their anger than their fear.

The Vitellian army halted at the fifth mile-stone on 45

¹ He had remained behind in camp (cp. chap. 33).

² i.e. other than the Guards.

³ See chap. 32.

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

- 46 Otho¹ was awaiting news of the battle with perfect confidence and firm resolve. First came a disquieting rumour. Soon fugitives from the field revealed the ruin of his cause. But the soldiers in their zeal did

¹ At Brixellum.

not wait to hear their emperor speak. 'Keep a good heart,' they said, 'you still have fresh forces left, and, as for us, we are ready to risk everything and suffer everything.' Nor was this flattery. In a wild passion of enthusiasm they urged him to march to the field and restore the fortunes of his party. Those who were near him clasped his knees, while those who stood further off stretched out their arms to him.¹ The most eager of all was Plotius Firmus, the Prefect of the Guard, who besought Otho again and again not to desert a supremely faithful army, men who had done him such great service. He told him that it showed more courage to bear misfortune than to give in: that men of vigour and courage cling to their hopes even in the face of disaster: it is only cowards who let their terror hurry them into despair. Amid all these appeals the soldiers now cheered, now groaned, according as Otho's expression showed signs of yielding or seemed to harden. Nor were these feelings confined to Otho's own Guards. The first arrivals from Moesia assured him that the spirit of the advancing force was just as firm, and that they had already entered Aquileia.² There is no room for doubt that it was still possible to revive this cruel and pitiable war, so full of uncertainty to both parties.³

¹ Plutarch adds a picturesque detail: 'One of the common soldiers held up his sword and saying, "See, Caesar, we are all prepared to do *this* for you," he stabbed himself.'

² See p. 142, note 2.

³ According to Plutarch, Otho's generals, Celsus, Gallus, and Titianus, capitulated at once and admitted Caecina to the

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

camp. Tacitus would doubtless have condemned Plutarch's story for its lack of tragic pathos. The facts, however, are against Tacitus. Now that his main force had capitulated at Bedriacum, Otho had no sufficient army to fight with, since the Vitellians lay between him and his Danube army at Aquileia.

After some such speech as this he urged them⁴⁸ courteously to hurry away and not to exasperate the victor by their hesitation. To each man's age and position he paid due regard, using his authority with the young and persuasion with his elders, while his quiet looks and firm speech helped to control their ill-timed tears. He gave orders for boats and carriages to be provided for their departure. All petitions and letters containing any compliments to himself, or marked insults to Vitellius, he destroyed, and distributed his money carefully, not like a man at the point of death. He then actually tried to comfort the sorrowful fears of his nephew, Salvius Cocceianus,¹ by praising his attachment and chiding his alarm. 'Do you imagine,' he said, 'that Vitellius will be so hard-hearted as not to show me some gratitude for saving his whole household? By promptly putting an end to myself, I deserve to earn some mercy for my family. For it is not in blank despair, but with my army clamouring for battle, that I determine to save my country from the last calamities. I have won enough fame for myself and ennoblement for my posterity; for, after the line of the Julians, Claudians, Servians,² I have been the first to bring the principate into a new family. So rouse yourself and go on with your life. Never forget that Otho was your uncle, yet keep your remembrance within bounds.'

¹ Titianus' son. He was eventually executed by Domitian for keeping Otho's birthday.

² *Servtus* Sulpicius Galba.

49 After this he made them all retire and rested for a while. But his last reflections were interrupted by a sudden disturbance and the news of a mutinous outbreak among the troops. They were threatening to kill all those who were leaving, and turned with especial violence against Verginius,¹ whose house was in a state of siege. Otho rebuked the ringleaders and returned, consenting to receive the adieux of those who were going, until it was time for them to depart in safety. As the day deepened into evening he quenched his thirst with a drink of iced water. Two daggers were brought to him and, after trying them both, he put one under his pillow. Being assured on inquiry that his friends had started, he spent a peaceful night, not, it is said, without sleep. At break of day² he fell upon his dagger. Hearing his dying groan, his slaves and freedmen entered with Plotius Firmus, the Prefect of the Guards, and found a single wound in his breast. The funeral was hurried forward out of respect for his own earnest entreaties, for he had been afraid his head might be cut off and subjected to outrage. The Guard carried the body, sounding his praises with tears in their eyes, and covering his hands and wounded breast with kisses. Some of the soldiers killed themselves beside the pyre, not because they had harmed Vitellius or feared reprisals, but from love of their emperor, and to follow his noble example. Similar suicides became common afterwards at Bedria-

¹ The conqueror of Vindex, now consul-elect (cp. i. 77).

² April 17.

cum and Placentia, and in other encampments.¹ An inconspicuous tomb was built for Otho, as being less likely to be disturbed : and thus he ended his life in his thirty-seventh year.

Otho came originally from the borough of 50 Ferentium.² His father had been consul and his grandfather praetor. His mother's family was inferior, but not without distinction.³ His boyhood and youth were such as we have seen. By his two great acts,⁴ one most criminal and the other heroic, he earned in equal measure the praise and the reprobation of posterity. It would certainly be beneath the dignity of my task to collect fabulous rumours for the amusement of my readers, but there are certain popular traditions which I cannot venture to contradict. On the day of the battle of Bedriacum, according to the account of the local peasants, a strange bird appeared in a much-frequented grove near Regium Lepidum.⁵ There it sat, unterrified and unmoved, either by the crowds of people or by the birds which fluttered round it, until the moment at which Otho killed himself. Then it vanished. A calculation of the time showed that the prodigy's appearance and disappearance coincided with the beginning of the battle⁶ and Otho's death.

¹ Cp. p. 155, note 1.

² Ferento in Etruria.

³ Albia Terentia was the daughter of a knight who had not risen to office.

⁴ Galba's murder and his own suicide. ⁵ Reggio.

⁶ Accepting Meiser's suggestion *cum initio pugnae et cum Othonis exitu*.

- 51 At his funeral the rage and grief of the soldiers broke out into another mutiny. This time there was no one to control them. They turned to Verginius and begged him with threats now to accept the principate, now to head a deputation to Caecina and Valens. However, Verginius escaped them, slipping out by the back door of his house just as they broke in at the front. Rubrius Gallus carried a petition from the Guards at Brixellum, and obtained immediate pardon. Simultaneously Flavius Sabinus surrendered to the victor the troops under his command.¹

VITELLIUS' PRINCIPATE

- 52 Now that the war was everywhere ended, a large number of senators, who had quitted Rome with Otho and been left behind at Mutina,² found themselves in a critical position. When the news of the defeat reached Mutina, the soldiers paid no heed to what they took for a baseless rumour, and, believing the senators to be hostile to Otho, they treasured up their conversation and put the worst interpretation on their looks and behaviour. In time they broke into abusive reproaches, seeking a pretext for starting a general massacre, while the senators suffered at the same time from another source of alarm, for they were afraid of seeming to be slow in welcoming the victory of the now predominant Vitellian party. Terrified at their double danger, they held a meeting. For no one

¹ i.e. the gladiators (cp. chap. 36).

² Modena.

dared to form any policy for himself; each felt safer in sharing his guilt with others. The town-council of Mutina, too, kept adding to their anxiety by offering them arms and money, styling them with ill-timed respect 'Conscript Fathers'. A remarkable quarrel⁵³ arose at this meeting. Licinius Caecina attacked Eprius Marcellus¹ for the ambiguity of his language. Not that the others disclosed their sentiments, but Caecina, who was still a nobody, recently raised to the senate, sought to distinguish himself by quarrelling with some one of importance, and selected Marcellus, because the memory of his career as an informer made him an object of loathing. They were parted by the prudent intervention of their betters, and all then retired to Bononia,² intending to continue the discussion there, and hoping for more news in the meantime. At Bononia they dispatched men along the roads in every direction to question all new-comers. From one of Otho's freedmen they inquired why he had come away, and were told he was carrying his master's last instructions: the man said that when he had left, Otho was still indeed alive, but had renounced the pleasures of life and was devoting all his thoughts to posterity. This filled them with admiration. They felt ashamed to ask any more questions—and declared unanimously for Vitellius.

¹ A famous orator and informer, who from small beginnings acquired great wealth and influence under Nero. Best known as the prosecutor of Thræsea (cp. iv. 6, &c.). He eventually conspired against Vespasian and was forced to commit suicide.

² Bologna.

54 Vitellius' brother Lucius was present at their discussion, and now displayed his willingness to receive their flattery, but one of Nero's freedmen, called Coenus, suddenly startled them all by inventing the atrocious falsehood that the Fourteenth legion had joined forces with the troops at Brixellum, and that their sudden arrival had turned the fortune of the day : the victorious army had been cut to pieces. He hoped by inventing this good news to regain some authority for Otho's passports,¹ which were beginning to be disregarded. He did, indeed, thus insure for himself a quick journey to Rome, but was executed by order of Vitellius a few days later. However, the senate's danger was augmented because the soldiers believed the news. Their fears were the more acute, because it looked as if their departure from Mutina was an official move of the Council of State, which thus seemed to have deserted the party. So they refrained from holding any more meetings, and each shifted for himself, until a letter arrived from Fabius Valens which quieted their fears. Besides, the news of Otho's death travelled all the more quickly because it excited admiration.

55 At Rome, however, there was no sign of panic. The festival of Ceres² was celebrated by the usual crowds. When it was reported in the theatre on reliable authority that Otho had renounced his claim,³ and

¹ They would entitle him to the use of post-horses, &c., as for public business.

² April 12-19.

³ From this phrase it is not clear whether the actual news of his suicide had arrived. It took place on April 17.

that Flavius Sabinus,¹ the City Prefect, had made all the troops in Rome swear allegiance to Vitellius, the audience cheered Vitellius. The populace decked all the busts of Galba with laurel-leaves and flowers, and carried them round from temple to temple. The garlands were eventually piled up into a sort of tomb near Lake Curtius,² on the spot which Galba had stained with his life-blood. In the senate the distinctions devised during the long reigns of other emperors were all conferred on Vitellius at once.³ To these was added a vote of thanks and congratulation to the German army, and a deputation was dispatched to express the senate's satisfaction. Letters were read which Fabius Valens had addressed to the consuls in very moderate terms. But Caecina's moderation was still more gratifying: he had not written at all.⁴

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

¹ Vespasian's brother (see i. 46).

² See p. 56, note 3.

³ Cp. i. 47.

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

selves, knowing the countryside well, marked down the richest fields and wealthiest houses for plunder, determined to murder any one who offered resistance. Their generals were too much in their debt to venture any opposition. Of the two Caecina showed less greed and more ambition. Valens had earned a bad name by his own ill-gotten gains, and was therefore bound to shut his eyes to others' shortcomings.¹ The resources of Italy had long been exhausted; all these thousands of infantry and cavalry, all this violence and damage and outrage was almost more than the country could bear.

- 57 Meanwhile Vitellius knew nothing of his victory. With the remainder of his German army he continued to advance as though the war had just begun. A few of the veterans were left in winter quarters, and troops were hurriedly enlisted in the Gallic provinces, to fill up the vacancies in what were now mere skeleton legions.² Leaving Hordeonius Flaccus to guard the line of the Rhine, Vitellius advanced with a picked detachment from the army in Britain, eight thousand strong. After a few days' march he received news of the victory of Bedriacum and the collapse of the war on the death of Otho. He summoned a meeting and heaped praise on the courage of the troops. When the

¹ The meaning seems to be that Caecina indulged the men in order to win popularity, Valens in order to obtain licence for his own dishonesty.

² He had depleted them by sending detachments forward with Valens and Caecina (see i. 61).

army demanded that he should confer equestrian rank on his freedman Asiaticus, he checked their shameful flattery. Then with characteristic instability he granted at a private banquet what he had refused in public. This Asiaticus, who was thus decorated with the gold ring, was an infamous menial who rose by his vices.¹

During these same days news arrived that Albinus, 58 the Governor of Mauretania, had been murdered, and both provinces² had declared for Vitellius. Appointed by Nero to the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, Lucceius Albinus had further received from Galba the governorship of Tingitana, and thus commanded a very considerable force, consisting of nineteen cohorts of infantry, five regiments of horse, and an immense horde of Moors, well trained for war by their practice in plunder. After Galba's murder he inclined to Otho's side and, not contented with the province of Africa, began to threaten Spain on the other side of the narrow strait. Cluvius Rufus,³ alarmed at this, moved the Tenth legion⁴ down to the coast as though for transport. He also sent some centurions ahead to gain the sympathies of the Moors for Vitellius. The great reputation of the German army throughout the provinces facilitated this task, and they also spread a

¹ One of the vilest and most hated of imperial menials (see chap. 95, and iv. 11). The gold ring was a token of equestrian rank (cp. i. 13).

² Caesariensis (Fez) and Tingitana (Morocco). They had been imperial provinces since A.D. 40.

³ See i. 8.

⁴ Gemina.

rumour that Albinus was not contented with the title of 'Governor', and wanted to adopt a regal style under the name of Juba. So the sympathies of the 59 army shifted. Asinius Pollio, who commanded the local cavalry, one of Albinus' most loyal friends, was assassinated. The same fate befell Festus and Scipio, who were in command of the infantry.¹ Albinus himself embarked from Tingitana for Caesariensis, and was murdered as he landed. His wife confronted the assassins and was murdered too. How all this happened Vitellius never inquired. He passed by events of the highest importance after a few moments' attention, being quite unable to cope with serious matters.

On reaching the Arar,² Vitellius ordered his army to march overland while he sailed down the river. Travelling with no imperial state, he had nothing but his original poverty³ to make him conspicuous, until Junius Blaesus, Governor of the Lyons division of Gaul, a member of an eminent family, whose liberality matched his wealth, provided the emperor

¹ The military titles here used have a technical meaning which translation cannot convey. A senior centurion (cp. p. 47, note 2) could rise to the command of an auxiliary cohort, like the Festus and Scipio here mentioned (*praefecti cohortium*). The next step would be to *tribunus legionis*, and from that again to *praefectus alae*. This was Pollio's position, the highest open to any but soldiers of senatorial rank.

² Saône.

³ He was so poor, says Suetonius, that he had no money to take him out to Germany, when appointed to that province. He had to let his house and hire a garret for his wife and family, and to pawn one of his mother's pearl ear-rings.

with a staff and escorted him in person with great courtesy, an attention which proved most unwelcome to Vitellius, although he concealed his annoyance under the grossest flattery. At Lugdunum he found the generals of both parties awaiting him. Valens and Caecina were openly commended at a public meeting, and given places on either side of the emperor's throne. He then sent the whole army to fetch his infant son,¹ and when they brought him wearing a general's uniform, Vitellius took him up in his arms and named him Germanicus,² at the same time decorating him with all the insignia of his imperial position. The exaggerated honours of these days proved the child's only consolation for the evil times which followed.³

The most energetic of Otho's centurions were now 60 executed, which did more than anything else to alienate the armies of Illyricum. The other legions also caught the infection, and their dislike of the German troops made them harbour thoughts of war. Suetonius Paulinus and Licinius Proculus were kept in mourning⁴ and suspense, disheartened by delay. When at last their case was heard, their pleas savoured more of necessity than honour. They positively claimed credit for treachery, alleging that the long march before the battle, the fatigue of their troops, and the confusion

¹ Aged 6.

² Cp. i. 62.

³ He was executed by Mucianus (iv. 80).

⁴ He postponed the hearing of their case, and thus, as accused persons, they had by custom to wear mourning.

created by the wagons in their lines were all due not to chance, but to their own treachery. Vitellius believed their protestations of treason, and acquitted them of all suspicion of loyalty.

Otho's brother, Salvius Titianus, was in no danger. His affection for his brother and his personal inefficiency excused him. Marius Celsus was allowed to hold his consulship.¹ But rumour gave rise to a belief which led to an attack being made in the senate against Caecilius Simplex, who was charged with trying to purchase the consulship and to secure Celsus' destruction. Vitellius, however, refused this, and afterwards allowed Simplex to hold the consulship without detriment to his conscience or his purse. Trachalus was protected against his accusers by Galeria, Vitellius' wife.²

61 With so many of the great in danger of their lives, an obscure creature called Mariccus, of the tribe of the Boii³—it is a sordid incident⁴—endeavoured to thrust himself into greatness and to challenge the armies of Rome, pretending to be a minister of Heaven. This divine champion of the Gauls, as he had entitled himself, had already gathered a force of eight thousand men, and began making overtures⁵ to the neighbouring

¹ Cp. i. 77.

² Cp. i. 90. As Trachalus' gentile name was Galerius, she was presumably a relative.

³ Between the Loire and the Allier.

⁴ Mariccus being a provincial 'of no family', Tacitus hardly likes to mention him.

⁵ The word *trahebat* may here mean 'began to plunder', but this seems less likely.

Aeduan villages. But the chief community of the Aedui wisely sent out a picked force, with some Vitellian troops in support, and scattered the mob of fanatics. Mariccus was captured in the engagement, and later thrown to wild beasts.¹ As they refused to devour him, the common people stupidly believed him invulnerable, until he was executed in the presence of Vitellius.

No further measures were taken against the life or 62 property of the rebels.² The estates of those who had fallen fighting for Otho were allowed to devolve by will or else by the law of intestate succession. Indeed, if Vitellius had set limits to his luxury, there was no need to fear his greed for money. It was his foul and insatiable gluttony. Rome and Italy were scoured for dainties to tickle his palate: from shore to shore the high roads rang with the traffic. The leading provincials were ruined by having to provide for his table. The very towns were impoverished. Meanwhile the soldiers were acquiring luxurious habits, learning to despise their general, and gradually losing their former efficiency and courage.

Vitellius sent a manifesto on to Rome in which he declined the title of Caesar, and postponed calling himself Augustus without giving up any portion of

¹ This punishment seems to have been reserved, appropriately enough, for those who stirred up popular sedition.

² From Vitellius' point of view the Othonians were rebels, since he had been declared emperor before Otho: or else as rebels against Galba.

his power. All astrologers¹ were exiled from Italy, and rigorous provision was made to restrain Roman knights from the disgrace of appearing at the games in the arena.² Former emperors had paid, or more often compelled them to do this, and many of the provincial towns vied together in hiring the most profligate young aristocrats.

- 63 The arrival of his brother and the growing influence of his tutors in tyranny made Vitellius daily more haughty and cruel. He gave orders for the execution of Dolabella, whom Otho, as we have seen,³ had relegated to the colonial town of Aquinum. On hearing of Otho's death, he had ventured back to Rome. Whereupon an ex-praetor, named Plancius Varus, one of Dolabella's closest friends, laid information before the city prefect, Flavius Sabinus, maintaining that he had broken from custody to put himself at the head of the defeated party. He added that Dolabella had tried to tamper with the cohort stationed at Ostia.⁴ Having no proof of these very serious charges, he repented and begged for his friend's forgiveness. But it was too late. The crime was committed. While Flavius Sabinus was hesitating what to do in such a serious matter, Lucius Vitellius' wife,

¹ Cp. i. 22.

² i.e. as gladiators. Juvenal says this is what the spend-thrifts come to: and also that they would do it for money, without any Nero to compel them. On the whole the bankrupt rich preferred 'knock-about comedy' to the very real dangers of a combat.

³ i. 88.

⁴ Cp. i. 80.

Triaria, whose cruelty was altogether unwomanly, terrified him by suggesting that he was trying to get a reputation for mercy at the expense of his emperor's safety. Sabinus was naturally of a kindly disposition, but easily changed under the influence of fear. Though it was not he who was in danger, he was full of alarms, and hastened Dolabella's impending ruin for fear of being supposed to have helped him. Vitellius, accordingly, from motives both of suspicion and of hatred (Dolabella had married his divorced wife Petronia), summoned Dolabella by letter to avoid the crowded thoroughfare of the Flaminian road and to turn off to Interamnium,¹ where he gave orders for his murder. The assassin found the journey tedious; discovered his victim sleeping on the floor at a wayside inn, and cut his throat. This gave the new government a very bad name. People took it as a specimen of what to expect. Triaria's shameless behaviour was further emphasized by the exemplary behaviour of her relative Galeria, the emperor's wife, who kept clear of these dreadful doings. Equally admirable was the character of his mother, Sextilia, a woman of the old school. It was even on record that when her son's first letters were read to her, she said, 'It was no Germanicus,² but a Vitellius that I brought into the world.' From that time neither the attractions of her high station nor the unanimous flattery of Rome could win her over to complacency. She only shared the sorrows of her house.

When Vitellius left Lugdunum, Cluvius Rufus³ 65

¹ Terni.

² Cp. i. 62.

³ See chap. 58.

relinquished his Spanish province and followed him. He knew that serious charges had been made against him, and his smiling congratulations hid an anxious heart. A freedman of the imperial court,¹ Hilarus by name, had given evidence against him, alleging that, when Cluvius heard of the rival claims of Otho and Vitellius, he had endeavoured to set up an independent authority of his own in Spain, and to this end had issued passports with no emperor's name at the head.² Certain phrases in his speeches were also construed as damaging to Vitellius and as a bid for his own popularity. However, Cluvius' influence carried the day, and Vitellius even had his own freedman punished. Cluvius was given a place at court, while still retaining Spain, of which he was absentee governor, following the precedent of Lucius Arruntius. In his case, however, Tiberius' motive had been suspicion, whereas Vitellius detained Cluvius without any such qualms.³ Trebellius Maximus⁴ was not allowed the same privilege. He had fled from Britain to escape the fury of his troops. Vettius Bolanus, who was then about the court, was sent out to take his place.

¹ i.e. the property, not of Vitellius personally, but of the imperial household.

² He would entertain some natural doubt as to who *was* emperor. The incriminating suggestion is that he meant to insert his own name.

³ In the *Annals* Tacitus mentions Tiberius' habit of appointing provincial governors without any intention of allowing them to leave Rome. See *Ann.* i. 80, vi. 27.

⁴ See i. 60.

The soldiers of the defeated legions still gave Vitellius 66 a good deal of anxiety. Their spirit was by no means broken. They distributed themselves all over Italy, mingling with the victors and talking treason. The most uncompromising of all were the Fourteenth, who refused to acknowledge their defeat. At Bedriacum, they argued, it was only a detachment that had been beaten, the main strength of the legion was not present.¹ It was decided to send them back to Britain, whence Nero had summoned them, and meanwhile they were to share their quarters with the Batavian irregulars, because of the long-standing feud between them.² Quartered as they were under arms, their mutual hatred soon broke out into disorder.

At Turin³ one of the Batavians was cursing a workman for having cheated him, when a legionary, who lodged with the workman, took his part. Each quickly gathered his fellow soldiers round him, and from abuse they came to bloodshed. Indeed, a fierce battle would have broken out, unless two regiments of Guards had sided with the Fourteenth, thus giving them confidence and frightening the Batavians. Vitellius gave orders that the Batavians should be drafted into his army, while the legion was to be marched over the Graian Alps⁴ by a détour which would avoid Vienne.⁵ Its inhabitants were another

¹ See chap. 43.

² See i. 59, 64, ii. 27.

³ *Augusta Taurinorum*.

⁴ Little St. Bernard.

⁵ See i. 65. The legions there might make common cause with them.

cause for alarm.¹ On the night on which the legion started they left fires burning all over Turin, and part of the town was burnt down. This disaster, like so many others in the civil war, has been obliterated by the greater calamities which befell other cities. No sooner were the Fourteenth across the Alps than the most mutinous spirits started off to march for Vienne, but they were stopped by the unanimous interference of the better men, and the legion was shipped across to Britain.

- 67 Vitellius' next cause of anxiety was the Guards. At first they were quartered apart, and then, appeased by an honourable discharge,² they gave up their arms to their officers. But when the news went round of the war with Vespasian, they enlisted again and formed the main strength of the Flavian party.

The First legion of marines was sent to Spain to cultivate docility in peace and quiet. The Eleventh and the Seventh were sent back to their winter quarters.³ The Thirteenth were set to work to build amphitheatres. For Caecina at Cremona and Valens at Bononia were each preparing to give a gladiatorial show. Vitellius never let his anxieties interfere with his pleasures.

- 68 The losing party being thus dispersed by peaceful means, disorder broke out in the victorious camp.

¹ They had suffered once already (see i. 65, 66).

² This meant about £200 to every man who had done sixteen years' service.

³ i.e. the Eleventh to Dalmatia, the Seventh to Pannonia.

It originated in sport, but the number of deaths increased the feeling against Vitellius. He had invited Verginius to dine with him at Ticinum, and they had just sat down to table. The conduct of officers is always determined by the behaviour of their generals; it depends on that whether they adopt the simple life or indulge their taste for riotous living;¹ this again determines whether the troops are smart or disorderly. In Vitellius' army disorder and drunkenness were universal: it was more like a midnight orgy² than a properly disciplined camp. So it happened that two of the soldiers, one belonging to the Fifth legion, the other to the Gallic auxiliaries, in a drunken frolic challenged each other to wrestle. The legionary fell; and when the Gaul began to exult over him, the soldiers who had gathered round took sides, and the legionaries, breaking out against the auxiliaries with murderous intent, actually cut to pieces a couple of cohorts. This commotion was only cured by another. A cloud of dust and the glitter of arms appeared on the horizon. Suddenly a cry arose that the Fourteenth had turned back and were marching on them. However, it was their own rear-guard bringing up the stragglers. This discovery quieted their alarm. Meanwhile, coming across one of Verginius' slaves, they

¹ Literally, enjoy dinner-parties beginning at an early hour, i.e. before two o'clock. This was considered 'fast'.

² The word here used by Tacitus, *pervigilia*, properly denotes all-night religious festivals. But—like Irish wakes—such festivals tended to deteriorate, and the word acquired a sinister sense.

charged him with intending to assassinate Vitellius, and rushed off to the banquet clamouring for Verginius' head. No one really doubted his innocence, not even Vitellius, who always quailed at a breath of suspicion. Yet, though it was the death of an ex-consul, their own former general, which they demanded, it was with difficulty that they were quieted. No one was a target for these outbreaks so often as Verginius. He still retained the admiration and esteem of the men, but they hated him for disdaining their offer.¹

- 69 On the next day Vitellius granted an audience to the deputation of the senate, which he had told to await him at Ticinum. He then entered the camp and spontaneously complimented the troops on their devotion to him.² This made the auxiliaries grumble at the growing licence and impunity allowed to the legions. So the Batavians, for fear of some desperate outbreak, were sent back to Germany, where Fortune was contriving for us a war that was at once both civil and foreign.³ The Gallic auxiliaries were also sent home. Their numbers were very large, and had been used at the first outbreak of the rebellion for an empty parade of force. Indeed, the imperial finances were already embarrassed by the distribution of largess, to meet the expenses of which Vitellius gave orders for

¹ See i. 6 and 8.

² Because they had seized one of Verginius' slaves, as described in the last chapter.

³ The revolt of Civilis described in Book IV. His force included Roman legionaries as well as Batavians, Gauls, and Germans.

depleting the strength of the legions and auxiliaries. Recruiting was forbidden, and discharges offered without restriction. This policy was disastrous for the country and unpopular among the soldiers, who found that their turn for work and danger came round all the more frequently, now that there were so few to share the duties. Besides, their efficiency was demoralized by luxury. Nothing was left of the old-fashioned discipline and the good rules of our ancestors, who preferred to base the security of Rome on character and not on money.

Leaving Ticinum Vitellius turned off to Cremona.⁷⁰ There he witnessed Caecina's games and conceived a wish to stand upon the field of Bedriacum, and to see the traces of the recent victory with his own eyes. Within six weeks of the battle, it was a disgusting and horrible sight; mangled bodies, mutilated limbs, rotting carcasses of men and horses, the ground foul with clotted blood. Trees and crops all trampled down: the country-side a miserable waste. No less revolting to all human feeling was the stretch of road which the people of Cremona had strewn with laurel-leaves and roses, erecting altars and sacrificing victims as if in honour of an Oriental despot.¹ The rejoicings of the moment soon turned to their destruction.² Valens and Caecina were in attendance and showed Vitellius over the battle-field: this was where their

¹ The word 'rex' had still an 'unroman' sound.

² Cremona was sacked and burnt in the following October (cp. iii. 32 f.).

legions had charged : the cavalry took the field from here : this was where the auxiliaries were outflanked. The various officers¹ each praised their own exploits, adding a few false or, at any rate, exaggerated touches. The common soldiers, too, turned gaily shouting from the high road to inspect the scene of their great struggle, gazing with wonder at the huge pile of arms and heaps of bodies.² There were a few who reflected with tears of pity on the shifting chances of life. But Vitellius never took his eyes off the field : never shuddered at the sight of all these thousands of Roman citizens lying unburied.³ On the contrary, he was very well pleased, and, unconscious of his own impending doom, he offered a sacrifice to the local deities.

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

¹ Literally, the tribunes of the legions and the prefects of the auxiliaries.

² A friend told Plutarch that he had seen on this battle-field a pile of corpses so high that they reached the pediment of an ancient temple which stood there.

³ Suetonius attributes to him the remark, 'A dead enemy smells good, a dead Roman better.'

man suffered that fate—but because he was the slave of his stomach, and had sold himself to luxury.

To secure a few months of office for Valens and Caecina, the other consuls of the year¹ had their terms shortened, while Martius Macer's claim was ignored as belonging to Otho's party. Valerius Marinus, who had been nominated by Galba, had his term postponed, not for any offence, but because he was a mild creature and too lazy to resent an injury. The name of Pedanius Costa was omitted altogether. Vitellius had never forgiven him for rising against Nero and instigating Verginius. However, he alleged other reasons. They all had to observe the servile custom of the time, and offer their thanks to Vitellius.

An imposture, received at first with great excitement, failed to last more than a few days. A man had appeared who gave out that he was Scribonianus Camerinus,² and that during Nero's reign he had taken refuge in Histria, where the Crassi still had their old connexions and estates, and their name was much respected. He accordingly took all the rascals he could find and cast them for parts. The credulous mob and some of the soldiers, who were either victims of the imposture or anxious for a riot, eagerly flocked to join him. However, he was taken before Vitellius and his

¹ Their names are given i. 77.

² Dio tells us that he and his father were murdered by Nero's slave Helios. He was probably related to M. Licinius Crassus Frugi, who was convicted of treason against Nero (see p. 62, note 1), and to Piso, Galba's adopted successor.

identity examined. When it was found that there was no truth in his pretensions, and that his master recognized him as a runaway called Geta, he suffered the execution of a slave.¹

THE REVOLT OF VESPASIAN

- 73 When once his couriers brought news from Syria and Judaea that the East had sworn allegiance to him, Vitellius' vanity and indolence reached a pitch which is almost incredible. For already, though the rumours were still vague and unreliable, Vespasian's name was in everybody's mouth, and the mention of him often roused Vitellius to alarm. Still, he and his army seemed to reckon of no rival: they at once broke out into the unbridled cruelty, debauchery and oppression of some outlandish court.
- 74 Vespasian, on the other hand, was meditating war and reckoning all his forces both distant and near at hand. He had so much attached his troops to himself, that when he dictated to them the oath of allegiance and prayed that 'all might be well' with Vitellius, they listened in silence. Mucianus' feelings were not hostile to him, and were strongly sympathetic to Titus. Tiberius Alexander,² the Governor of Egypt, had made common cause with him. The Third legion,³ since it had crossed from Syria into Moesia, he could reckon as his own, and there was good hope that the other legions of Illyria would follow its lead.⁴ The whole

¹ i. e. he was crucified.

² See p. 28, note 2.

³ Cp. i. 79.

⁴ This hope was fulfilled (chap. 85).

army, indeed, was incensed at the arrogance of Vitellius' soldiers : truculent in appearance and rough of tongue, they scoffed at all the other troops as their inferiors. But a war of such magnitude demands delay. High as were his hopes, Vespasian often calculated his risks. He realized that it would be a critical day for him when he committed his sixty summers and his two young sons to the chances of war. In his private ambitions a man may feel his way and take less or more from fortune's hands according as he feels inclined, but when one covets a throne there is no alternative between the zenith of success and headlong ruin. Moreover, he always kept in view 75 the strength of the German army, which, as a soldier, he realized. His own legions, he knew, had no experience of civil war, while Vitellius' troops were fresh from victory : and the defeated party were richer in grievances than in troops. Civil strife had undermined the loyalty of the troops : there was danger in each single man. What would be the good of all his horse and foot, if one or two traitors should seek the reward the enemy offered and assassinate him then and there ? It was thus that Scribonianus¹ had been killed in Claudius' reign, and his murderer, Volaginius, raised from a common soldier to the highest rank. It is easier to move men in the mass than to take precautions against them singly.

These anxieties made Vespasian hesitate. Mean-76 while the other generals and his friends continued to

¹ See i. 89.

encourage him. At last Mucianus after several private interviews went so far as to address him in public. 'Everybody,' he said, 'who plans some great exploit is bound to consider whether his enterprise serves both the public interest and his own reputation, and whether it is easily practicable or, at any rate, not impossible. He must also weigh the advice which he gets. Are those who offer it ready to run the risk themselves? And, if fortune favours, who gains the glory? I myself, Vespasian, call you to the throne. How much that may benefit the country and make you famous it lies with you—under Providence—to decide. You need not be afraid that I may seem to flatter you. It is more of an insult than a compliment to be chosen to succeed Vitellius. It is not against the powerful intellect of the sainted Augustus that we are in revolt; not against the cautious prudence of the old Tiberius; nor even against a long-established imperial family like that of Caligula, Claudius or Nero. You even gave way to Galba's ancient lineage. To remain inactive any longer, to leave your country to ruin and disgrace, that would be sheer sloth and cowardice, even if such slavery were as safe for you as it would be dishonourable. The time is long past when you could be merely *suspected* of ambition: the throne is now your only refuge. Have you forgotten Corbulo's murder? ¹ He was a man of better family than we, I admit, but so

¹ Under Nero, after brilliant service in Armenia and Parthia. Nero was jealous and afraid of him. So is Vitellius envious of Vespasian.

was Nero more nobly born than Vitellius. A man who is feared always seems illustrious enough to those who fear him. That an army can make an emperor Vitellius himself has proved. He had neither experience nor military reputation, but merely rose on Galba's unpopularity. Even Otho fell not by the strategy or strength of his opponent, but by his own precipitate despair. And to-day he seems a great and desirable emperor, when Vitellius is disbanding his legions, disarming his Guards, and daily sowing fresh seeds of civil war. Why, any spirit or enthusiasm which his army had is being dissipated in drunken debauches: for they imitate their master. But you, in Judaea, in Syria, in Egypt, you have nine fresh legions. War has not weakened nor mutiny demoralized them. The men are trained to discipline and have already won a foreign war.¹ Besides these, you can rely on the strength of your fleet,² and of your auxiliaries both horse and foot, on the faithful allegiance of foreign princes,³ and on your own unparalleled experience.

‘For ourselves I make but one claim. Let us not 77
rank below Valens and Caecina. Nor must you despise my help because you do not encounter my rivalry. I prefer myself to Vitellius and you to myself. Your house has received the insignia of a triumph.⁴ You

¹ Against the Jews.

² From the Pontus. Cp. ii. 83.

³ See p. 114, note 4; and cp. chap. 81.

⁴ For his victories in Britain under the auspices of Claudius, who nominally shared with him the command of the expedition, A.D. 43.

have two young sons, one of whom is already old enough to fill the throne, and in his first years of service made a name for himself in the German army.¹ It would be absurd for me not to give way to one whose son I should adopt, were I emperor myself. Apart from this, we shall stand on a different footing in success and in failure, for if we succeed I shall have such honour as you grant me : of the risk and the dangers we shall share the burden equally. Or rather, do what is better still. Dispose your armies yourself and leave me the conduct of the war, and the uncertainties of battle.

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

78 At the end of Mucianus’ speech the others all pressed round with new confidence, offering their encouragement and quoting the answers of soothsayers and the movements of the stars. Nor was Vespasian uninfluenced by superstition. In later days, when he

¹ Titus, who was now thirty, had served as *Tribunus militum* under his father in Germany and in Britain.

was master of the world, he made no secret of keeping a soothsayer called Seleucus to help him by his advice and prophecy. Early omens began to recur to his memory. A tall and conspicuous cypress on his estate had once suddenly collapsed : on the next day it had risen again on the same spot to grow taller and broader than ever. The soothsayers had agreed that this was an omen of great success, and augured the height of fame for the still youthful Vespasian. At first his triumphal honours, his consulship, and the name he won by his Jewish victory seemed to have fulfilled the promise of this omen. But having achieved all this, he began to believe that it portended his rise to the throne.

On the frontier of Judaea and Syria¹ lies a hill called Carmel. A god of the same name is there worshipped according to ancient ritual. There is no image or temple : only an altar where they reverently worship. Once when Vespasian was sacrificing on this altar, brooding on his secret ambition, the priest, Basilides, after a minute inspection of the omens said to him : 'Whatever it is which you have in mind, Vespasian, whether it is to build a house or to enlarge your estate, or to increase the number of your slaves, there is granted to you a great habitation, vast acres, and a multitude of men.' Rumour had immediately seized on this riddle and now began to solve it. Nothing was more talked of, especially in Vespasian's presence : such conversation is the food of hope.

¹ More exactly of Galilee and Phoenicia.

Having come to a definite decision they departed, Mucianus to Antioch, Vespasian to Caesarea. The former is the capital of Syria, the latter of Judaea.¹

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

What happened was all due to the impulse of the soldiers : there was no set speech, no formal assembly
80 of the troops. They were still discussing the time and the place, and trying to decide the hardest point of all, who should speak first, and while their minds were still busy with hopes and fears, reasons and chances, Vespasian happened to come out of his quarters. A few of the soldiers, forming up in the usual way to salute their general, saluted him as emperor. The others promptly rushed up calling him Caesar and Augustus, and heaping on him all the imperial titles. Their fears at once gave way to confidence. Vespasian himself, unchanged by the change of fortune, showed

¹ This is of course from the Roman point of view. Caesarea was the seat of the procurator. That Jerusalem was the national capital Tacitus recognizes in Book V.

no sign of vanity or arrogance. As soon as he had recovered from the dazzling shock of his sudden elevation, he addressed them in simple soldier fashion, and received a shower of congratulations from every quarter. Mucianus, who had been waiting for this, administered the oath of allegiance to his eager troops, and then entered the theatre at Antioch, where the Greeks ordinarily hold their debates. There, as the fawning crowd came flocking in, he addressed them in their own tongue. For he could speak elegant Greek, and had the art of making the most of all he said or did. What most served to inflame the excitement of the province and of the army, was his statement that Vitellius had determined to transfer the German legions to peaceful service in the rich province of Syria, and to send the Syrian legions to endure the toil and rigours of a winter in Germany. The provincials were accustomed to the soldiers' company and liked to have them quartered there, and many were bound to them by ties of intimacy and kinship, while the soldiers in their long term of service had come to know and love their old camp like a home.

Before the 15th of July the whole of Syria had sworn 81 allegiance. The party also gained the support of Sohaemus,¹ with all the resources of his kingdom and a considerable force, and of Antiochus,¹ the richest of the subject princes, who owed his importance to his ancestral treasures. Before long Agrippa, too, received a secret summons from his friends at home, and leaving

¹ See p. 11 note 4.

Rome¹ without the knowledge of Vitellius, sailed as fast as he could to join Vespasian. His sister Berenice² showed equal enthusiasm for the cause. She was then in the flower of her youth and beauty, and her munificent gifts to Vespasian quite won the old man's heart. Indeed, every province on the seaboard as far as Asia and Achaia, and inland to Pontus and Armenia swore allegiance to Vespasian, but their governors were without troops, for as yet no legions had been assigned to Cappadocia.³

A meeting was held at Berytus⁴ to discuss the general situation. To this came Mucianus with all his officers and the most distinguished of his centurions and soldiers, besides the élite of the Jewish army in full uniform. All these cavalry and infantry, and the pageant of the subject princes, vying with each other in splendour, gave the meeting an air of imperial grandeur.

- 82 The first step was to levy new troops and to recall the veterans to the standards. Some of the strongest towns were told off to manufacture arms. New gold and silver were coined at Antioch. All these works were promptly carried out, each in the proper place, by competent officials. Vespasian came and inspected them himself, encouraging good work by his praises

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

² See p. 111, note 2.

³ Cappadocia was under a procurator of equestrian rank until Vespasian some years later was forced to send out troops and a military governor.

⁴ Beyrut.

and rousing the inefficient rather by example than compulsion, always more ready to see the merits than the faults of his friends. Many were rewarded by receiving commands in the auxiliary forces or posts as imperial agents.¹ Still more were raised to senatorial rank. They were mostly men of distinction who soon rose high, and with others success atoned for any lack of merit. A donation for the troops had been mentioned by Mucianus in his first speech, but in very guarded terms. Even Vespasian offered for the civil war a lower figure than others gave in time of peace, for he had set his face with admirable firmness against largess to the soldiers, and his army was none the worse for it. Envoys were dispatched to Parthia and Armenia to secure that the legions, while engaged in the civil war, should not be exposed to attack in the rear.² It was arranged that Titus should carry on the war in Judaea, while Vespasian held the keys of Egypt.³ Against Vitellius it seemed sufficient to send a part of their forces under the command of Mucianus. He would have Vespasian's name behind him and the

¹ *Procuratio* covers the governorship of an imperial province such as Judaea, the post of financial agent in an imperial province where there was a military governor (*legatus Caesaris*), and the position of collector of imperial taxes in a senatorial province. *Praefectura* may mean either a command in the auxiliary infantry or the governorship of certain imperial provinces. Here the former seems the more probable sense.

² They would treat with Vologaeses, king of Parthia, and Tiridates of Armenia, and keep an eye on them. This they did with such success that Vologaeses offered Vespasian 40,000 cavalry.

³ Alexandria and Pelusium.

irresistible force of destiny. Letters were written to all the armies and their generals with instructions that they should try to win over those of the Guards who were hostile to Vitellius by promising them renewal of service.

- 83 Meanwhile, Mucianus, who acted the part more of a partner than a subordinate, moved forward without the encumbrance of baggage, neither marching so slowly as to look like holding back, nor so rapidly as not to allow time for rumours to spread. He realized that his force was small, and that the less people saw the more they would believe of it. However, he had a solid column following in support, composed of the Sixth legion and some picked detachments numbering 13,000 men.¹ He had ordered the fleet to move from Pontus to Byzantium, for he was half-minded to leave Moesia and with his whole force to hold Dyrrachium, at the same time using his fleet to dominate the Italian sea. He would thus secure Greece and Asia in his rear, which would otherwise be at the mercy of Vitellius, unless furnished with troops. Vitellius also would himself be in doubt what points of the Italian coast to defend, if Mucianus with his ships threatened both Brundisium and Tarentum and the whole coastline of Calabria and Lucania.

- 84 Thus the provinces rang from end to end with the preparations for ships, soldiers and arms. But the

¹ i. e. besides the Sixth Ferrata he had detachments from the other two legions in Syria, and from the three in Judaea. Cp. p. 92, notes 1 and 2.

heaviest burden was the raising of money. 'Funds,' said Mucianus, 'are the sinews of war,'¹ and in his investigations he cared for neither justice nor equity, but solely for the amount of the sum. Informers abounded, and pounced on every rich man as their prey. This intolerable oppression, excused by the necessities of war, was allowed to continue even in peace. It was not so much that Vespasian at the beginning of his reign had made up his mind to maintain unjust decisions, but fortune spoilt him; he had learnt in a bad school and made a bold use of his lessons. Mucianus also contributed from his private means, of which he was generous, as he hoped to get a high rate of interest out of the country. Others followed his example, but very few had his opportunity of recovering their money.

In the meantime Vespasian's progress was accelerated ⁸⁵ by the enthusiasm with which the Illyrian army² espoused his cause. The Third set the example to the other legions of Moesia, the Eighth and the Seventh Claudian, both strongly attached to Otho, although they had not been present at the battle. On their arrival at Aquileia³ they had mobbed the couriers who brought the news of Otho's fall, and torn to pieces the standards bearing Vitellius' name, finally looting the camp-chest and dividing the money among them-

¹ Borrowing this platitude from Cicero, who got it from the Greek.

² i.e. the legions in Moesia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia (cp. p. 15 note).

³ Cp. p. 142, note 2.

selves. These were hostile acts. Alarmed at what they had done they began to reflect that, while their conduct needed excuse before Vitellius, they could make a merit of it with Vespasian. Accordingly, the three Moesian legions addressed letters to the Pannonian army,¹ inviting their co-operation, and meanwhile prepared to meet refusal with force.

Aponius Saturninus, the Governor of Moesia, took this opportunity to attempt an abominable crime. He sent a centurion to murder Tettius Julianus,² who commanded the Seventh legion, alleging the interests of his party as a cloak for a personal quarrel. Julianus heard of his danger and, taking some guides who knew the country, escaped into the wilds of Moesia and got as far as Mount Haemus.³ After that he meddled no more in civil war. Starting to join Vespasian, he prolonged his journey by various expedients, retarding or hastening his pace according to the nature of the news he received.

- 86 In Pannonia the Thirteenth legion and the Seventh Galbian had not forgotten their feelings after the battle of Bedriacum. They lost no time in joining Vespasian's cause, being chiefly instigated by Antonius Primus. This man was a criminal who had been convicted of fraud⁴ during Nero's reign. Among the many evils of the war was his recovery of senatorial

¹ XIII Gemina and VII Galbiana (see below).

² See i. 79.

³ The Balkan range.

⁴ He was concerned in the forgery of a will: see *Ann.* xiv. 40, where he is called 'a man of ready daring'.

rank. Galba gave him command of the Seventh legion, and he was believed to have written repeatedly to Otho offering his services as general to the party. But, as Otho took no notice of him, he was without employment in the war. When Vitellius' cause began to decline, he joined Vespasian and proved an acquisition. He was a man of great physical energy and a ready tongue; an artist in calumny, invaluable in riots and sedition. Light-fingered and free-handed, he was intolerable in peace, but by no means contemptible in war. The union of the Moesian and Pannonian armies soon attracted the troops in Dalmatia to the cause. Tampius Flavianus and Pompeius Silvanus, the two ex-consuls who governed respectively Pannonia and Dalmatia,¹ were wealthy old gentlemen who had no thought of rising. But the imperial agent in Pannonia, Cornelius Fuscus, was a vigorous young man of good family. In his early youth a desire to make money² had led him to resign his senatorial rank. He

¹ These were imperial provinces, each governed by a *legatus Caesaris* and a *procurator*, the former a military, the latter a financial officer.

² Reading *quaestus cupidine* (Grotius). The reading of the Medicean manuscript is *quietis cupidine*. But Fuscus, as the sequel shows, had little taste for a quiet life. It is more likely that his motives were mercenary, since both law and custom still imposed some restrictions upon a senator's participation in 'business'. In the *Annals* (xvi. 17) Tacitus says that Annaeus Mela abstained from seeking public office, because he 'hoped to find a shorter road to wealth' by entering, as Fuscus did, the imperial civil service. The statement that Fuscus loved danger better than money does not imply any rooted antipathy to the latter.

had headed the townsmen of his colony in declaring for Galba, and his services had won him a position as imperial agent.¹ Then he joined Vespasian's party, giving a keen stimulus to the war ; for, being attracted more by danger itself than by its prizes, he always disliked what was certain and long established, preferring everything that was new and dangerous and doubtful. So the Vespasian party used all their efforts to fan every spark of discontent throughout the empire. Letters were sent to the Fourteenth in Britain and to the First in Spain,² since both these legions had stood for Otho against Vitellius. In Gaul, too, letters were scattered broadcast. All in an instant the war was in full flame. The armies of Illyricum openly revolted, and all the others were ready to follow the first sign of success.

VITELLIUS IN ROME

- 87 While ³ Vespasian and his generals were showing such activity in the provinces, Vitellius grew more contemptible and indolent every day. Halting at every town or country house that offered any attractions, he made his way to Rome with a heavy marching column of sixty thousand troops, demoralized by loose discipline, and an even greater number of menials as well as those camp-followers who are more troublesome than any slaves. Besides these he had the vast retinue of his generals and friends, which not even the strictest discipline could have kept under control. This mob

¹ i. e. in Pannonia.

² Cp. chaps. 66 and 67.

³ The narrative is here resumed from chap. 72.

was further encumbered by senators and knights, who came from Rome to meet him, some from fear, some from servility; and gradually all the others followed, so as not to be left behind by themselves. There flocked in, too, a crowd of low-bred buffoons, actors and chariot-drivers, who had gained Vitellius' acquaintance by various dishonest services. He delighted in such discreditable connexions. To furnish supplies for this host not only were the colonies and country towns laid under contribution, but the farmers as well. The crops were just ripe and the fields were ravaged like an enemy's country.

Many murderous affrays took place among the 88 soldiers, for after the mutiny at Ticinum¹ there were ceaseless quarrels between the legions and the auxiliaries. They only united to harry the villagers. The worst bloodshed took place at the seventh milestone from Rome. Here Vitellius had ready-cooked food served to each of the soldiers, as is done with gladiators in training, and the common people flocked out from Rome and wandered all over the camp. Some of these visitors indulged in a cockney practical joke,² and stole some of the soldiers' swords, quietly cutting their belts while their attention was diverted. Then they kept asking them, 'Have you got your sword

¹ See chap. 68.

² The word 'cockney' may perhaps be admitted here to express that which is characteristic of the metropolitan masses. Similarly Petronius speaks of a man as 'a fountain of cockney humour' (*urbanitatis vernaculae fontem*).

on?' The troops were not used to being laughed at, and refused to tolerate it. They charged the defenceless crowd. Amongst others the father of one of the soldiers was killed while in his son's company. When it was discovered who he was, and the news spread, they shed no more innocent blood. Still there was some panic in the city as the first soldiers arrived and began to roam the streets. They mostly made for the Forum, anxious to see the spot where Galba had fallen.¹ They themselves were a sufficiently alarming sight with their rough skin coats and long pikes. Unused to towns, they failed to pick their way in the crowd: or they would slip on the greasy streets, or collide with some one and tumble down, whereupon they took to abuse and before long to violence. Their officers, too, terrified the city by sweeping along the streets with their bands of armed men.

- 89 After crossing the Mulvian bridge, Vitellius himself had been riding on a conspicuous horse, wearing his sword and general's uniform, with the senate and people trooping in front of him. However, as this looked too much like an entry into a captured city, his friends persuaded him to change into civilian dress and walk on foot. At the head of his column were carried the eagles of four legions, surrounded by the colours belonging to the detachments of four other legions.² Next came the standards of twelve regiments of

¹ They were cast for the part of Galba's avengers.

² Only detachments of these latter four were present, so they had not got their eagles.

auxiliary horse, then the files of infantry and the cavalry behind them. Then came thirty-four cohorts of auxiliaries, arranged according to their nationality or the nature of their weapons. In front of the eagles came the camp prefects and tribunes, and the senior centurions,¹ all dressed in white. The other centurions marched each at the head of his company, glittering with their armour and decorations. Gaily, too, shone the soldiers' medals² and their chains of honour. It was a noble spectacle, an army worthy of a better emperor. Thus Vitellius entered the Capitol, where he embraced his mother and conferred on her the title of Augusta.

On the following day Vitellius delivered a grandiloquent eulogy on his own merits. He might have been addressing the senate and people of some other state, for he extolled his own industry and self-control, although each member of his audience had seen his infamy for himself, and the whole of Italy had witnessed during his march the shameful spectacle of his sloth and luxury. However, the thoughtless crowd could not discriminate between truth and falsehood. They had learnt the usual flatteries by heart and chimed in with loud shouts of applause. They insisted in the face of his protests that he should take the title of

¹ Under the empire there were six tribunes to each legion, and they took command on the march and on the field, acting under the orders of the *legatus legionis*. The ten centurions of the *pilant* or front rank each commanded his cohort.

² See p. 74, note 1.

Augustus. But neither his refusal nor their insistence made much difference.¹

- 91 In Rome nothing passes without comment, and it was regarded as a fatal omen that Vitellius took office as high priest, and issued his encyclical on public worship on the 18th of July, which, as the anniversary of the disasters on the Cremera and the Allia,² had long been considered an unlucky day. But his ignorance of all civil and religious precedent was only equalled by the incapacity of his freedmen and friends. He seemed to live in a society of drunkards. However, at the consular elections he canvassed for his candidates like a common citizen.³ In everything he courted the favour of the lowest classes, attending performances in the theatre and backing his favourite at the races. This would undoubtedly have made him popular had his motives been good, but the memory of his former life made his conduct seem cheap and discreditable. He constantly attended the senate, even when the debates were on trivial matters. It once happened that Helvidius Priscus,⁴ then praetor-elect, opposed Vitellius' policy. At first the emperor showed annoy-

¹ The end was so near.

² At Cremera, near Veii, the Fabii died like heroes, 477 B.C., and on the Allia the Gauls won their victory over Rome, 390 B.C. The day was called Alliensis, and no work was to be done on it (Livy, vi. 1).

³ See chap. 71. At this time the emperor had in theory only the right of nominating candidates for the consulships, but it was obviously unnecessary for him to do more. The alliteration in this sentence is Tacitus'. ⁴ See iv. 4 f.

ance, but was content to appeal to the tribunes of the people to come to the rescue of his slighted authority. Afterwards, when his friends, fearing that his resentment might be deep-seated, tried to smooth matters, he replied that there was nothing strange in two senators disagreeing on a question of public policy: he himself had often opposed even such a man as Thrasea. Most people laughed at the impudence of this comparison; others were gratified that he had selected Thrasea, and not some court favourite, as an example of real distinction.¹

Vitellius had given the command of the Guards to 92
Publilius Sabinus, who had commanded an auxiliary cohort,² and Julius Priscus, hitherto only a centurion. Priscus owed his rise to Valens' support, Sabinus to that of Caecina. The rivalry between Valens and Caecina left Vitellius no authority at all. They managed the government between them. They had long felt the strain of mutual dislike. During the war they had concealed it. Lately it had been fanned by dishonest friends and by life in the city, which so easily breeds quarrels. They were constant rivals, comparing their respective popularity, the number of their retinue, the size of the crowds that came to wait upon them.

¹ Thrasea, Helvidius' father-in-law, was an honoured member of the Stoic opposition who had been executed by Nero A.D. 66. Here Vitellius is posing as an ordinary senator. If he had opposed so distinguished a man as Thrasea, why should not Helvidius oppose him? Thrasea's end gives the remark a slightly sinister tone.

² See p. 166, note 1.

Meanwhile Vitellius let his favour alternate between them, for personal influence is not to be trusted beyond a certain limit. Meanwhile, they both feared and despised the emperor himself, who thus veered between sudden brusqueness and unseasonable flattery. However, they were not in the least deterred from seizing on the houses, gardens, and funds in the emperor's patronage, while the crowd of miserable and needy nobles, whom Galba had recalled from exile with their children, derived no assistance from the emperor's liberality. He earned the approval both of the upper classes and of the people by granting to the restored full rights over their freedmen.¹ But the freed slaves with characteristic meanness did all they could to invalidate the edict. They would hide their money with some obscure friend or in a rich patron's safe. Some, indeed, had passed into the imperial household and become more influential than their masters.

93 As for the soldiers, the Guards' barracks were crowded, and the overflow spread through the city, finding shelter in colonnades and temples. They ceased to recognize any head-quarters, to go on guard, or to keep themselves in training, but fell victims to the attractions of city life and its unmentionable vices, until they deteriorated both physically and morally through idleness and debauchery. A number of them

¹ A patron apparently could claim support from his freedmen if he was in want, as these restored exiles certainly were, since their property had been confiscated and was irrecoverable. In exile they had of course lost their rights.

even imperilled their lives by settling in the pestilent Vatican quarter, thus increasing the rate of mortality. They were close to the Tiber, and the Germans and Gauls, who were peculiarly liable to disease and could ill stand the heat, ruined their constitutions by their immoderate use of the river.¹ Moreover, the generals, either for bribes or to earn popularity, tampered with the rules of the service, enrolling sixteen regiments of Guards² and four for the city garrison, each composed of a thousand men. In enlisting these troops Valens put himself forward as superior to Caecina, whose life he claimed to have saved. It is true, indeed, that his arrival had consolidated the party, and by his successful engagement he had silenced the current criticism of their slow marching. Besides which the whole of the army of Lower Germany was attached to Valens, and this is said to be the reason why Caecina's loyalty first wavered.

Whatever indulgence Vitellius showed to his generals, 94 he allowed still more licence to the troops. Each man chose his service. However unfit, he might enlist in the Guards, if he preferred it. On the other hand, good soldiers were allowed, if they wished, to remain in the legions or the auxiliary cavalry. Many wished to do this who suffered from ill health and complained of the climate. However, the best soldiers were thus withdrawn from the legions and from the cavalry ;

¹ This probably includes bathing as well as drinking.

² Since Tiberius there had been only nine, and Vespasian restored that number.

and the Guards were robbed of their prestige when twenty thousand men were thus not so much selected for service with them as drafted at random from the whole army.

While Vitellius was addressing the troops, they demanded the execution of three Gallic chieftains, Asiaticus, Flavus, and Rufinus, on the ground that they had fought for Vindex.¹ Vitellius never checked these outcries. For, apart from the innate cowardice of his nature, he knew that his donation to the soldiers was nearly due, and that he had no money for it; so he freely granted all their other demands. The imperial freedmen were forced to contribute a sort of tax, proportionate to the number of their slaves. Meanwhile, his one serious occupation was extravagance. He built stables for chariot-drivers, filled the arena with gorgeous shows of gladiators and wild beasts, and fooled away his money as though he had more than he wanted.

- 95 Moreover, Valens and Caecina celebrated Vitellius' birthday² by holding gladiatorial shows in every quarter of Rome on a scale of magnificence hitherto unknown. Vitellius then gratified the rabble and scandalized all decent people by building altars in the Martian Plain, and holding a funeral service in honour of Nero. Victims were killed and burnt in public: the torch was applied by the Augustales, members of the college which Tiberius Caesar had founded in honour

¹ See i. 6.

² Probably September 24. He was 54.

of the Julian family, just as Romulus similarly commemorated King Tatius.

It was not yet four months since Vitellius' victory, and yet his freedman Asiaticus was as bad as a Polyclitus or a Patrobius,¹ or any of the favourites whose names were hated in earlier days. At this court no one strove to rise by honesty or capacity. There was only one road to power. By lavish banquets, costly profusion, and feats of gastronomy, you had to try and satisfy Vitellius' insatiable gluttony. He himself, without thought for the morrow, was well content to enjoy the present. It is believed that he squandered nine hundred million sesterces² in these brief months. Truly it shows Rome's greatness and misfortune, that she endured Otho and Vitellius both in the same year, and suffered humiliation of every kind at the hands of men like Vinus and Fabius,³ Icelus and Asiaticus, until at last they gave way to Mucianus and Marcellus—a change of men but not of manners.

The first news of rebellion which reached Vitellius⁹⁶ came from Aponius Saturninus,⁴ who, before himself going over to Vespasian's side, wrote to announce the desertion of the Third legion. But a sudden crisis makes a man nervous: Aponius did not tell the whole story. So the emperor's flattering friends began to explain it all away: what was the defection of a single legion, while the loyalty of the other armies remained

¹ Cp. i. 37, 49.

² About nine million pounds. Not to be taken too literally.

³ Valens.

⁴ Governor of Moesia (see chap. 85).

unshaken? Vitellius himself used the same language to the soldiers. He accused the men, who had been recently discharged from the Guards,¹ of spreading false rumours, and kept assuring them there was no fear of civil war. All mention of Vespasian was suppressed, and soldiers were sent round the city to frighten people into silence, which, of course, did more than anything else to make them talk.

- 97 Vitellius, nevertheless, sent for reinforcements from Germany, Britain, and the Spanish provinces, though with a lack of urgency which was intended to conceal his straits. The provinces and their governors showed the same want of enthusiasm. Hordeonius Flaccus,² who had suspicions of the Batavi, was distracted with a war of his own,³ while Vettius Bolanus⁴ never had Britain under complete control: nor was the loyalty of either beyond doubt. The Spanish provinces, where there was at the time no consular governor,⁵ were equally slow. The three officers in command of the legions held an equal authority, and if Vitellius' cause had prospered, would have each outbid the other for his favour: but they all shared the resolve to leave his misfortunes alone. In Africa the legion and auxiliaries enlisted by Clodius Macer, and subse-

¹ See chap. 67.

² He had been left to guard the Rhine.

³ See chap. 57. The revolt of Civilis was soon to break out.

⁴ See chap. 65.

⁵ Cluvius Rufus was governing the Tarragona division from Rome (chap. 65). Lusitania was under a praetorian legate. Bactica was a senatorial province with no troops.

quently disbanded by Galba,¹ took service again at Vitellius' orders, and at the same time all the young men of the province eagerly enlisted. Vitellius had been an honest and popular proconsul in Africa, while Vespasian had been distrusted and disliked. The provincials took this as an earnest of their reigns ; but experience proved them wrong.

The military legate Valerius Festus² at first loyally 98 seconded the enthusiasm of the province. After a while he began to waver. In his official letters and edicts he still acknowledged Vitellius, while in secret communication with Vespasian and ready to support whichever party proved successful. In Raetia and the Gallic provinces some centurions and men carrying letters and edicts from Vespasian were taken prisoners and sent to Vitellius, who had them executed. But most of these envoys escaped capture either by their own ingenuity or the loyal help of friends. Thus, while Vitellius' plans were known, Vespasian's were for the most part still a secret. This was partly due to Vitellius' negligence, but also to the fact that the garrisons on the Pannonian Alps stopped all messengers. By sea, too, the Etesian³ winds from the north-west favoured ships sailing eastward, but hindered the voyage from the East.

¹ See i. 7 and 11.

² He had succeeded Clodius Macer in command of the Third Augusta, and in virtue of that command governed Numidia (see i. 7).

³ These 'annual' winds blew steadily and gently from July 20 for a month.

99 Terrified at last by the imminence of invasion and the alarming news that reached him from all quarters, Vitellius instructed Caecina and Valens to prepare for war. Caecina was sent on ahead, Valens, who was just recovering from a serious illness, being delayed by his weak state of health. Great, indeed, was the change in the appearance of the German army as it marched out of Rome. There was neither energy in their muscles nor fire in their hearts. Slowly the column straggled on, their horses spiritless, their arms neglected. The men grumbled at the sun, the dust, the weather, and were as ready to quarrel as they were unwilling to work. To these disadvantages were added Caecina's inveterate self-seeking and his newly-acquired indolence. An overdose of success had made him slack and self-indulgent, or, if he was plotting treachery, this may have been one of his devices for demoralizing the army. It has often been believed that it was Flavius Sabinus¹ who, using Rubrius Gallus as his agent, tampered with Caecina's loyalty by promising that, if he came over, Vespasian would ratify any conditions. It may have occurred also to Caecina to remember his quarrels and rivalry with Valens, and to consider that, as he did not stand first with Vitellius, he had better acquire credit and influence with the new emperor.

100 After taking an affectionate and respectful farewell of Vitellius, Caecina dispatched a body of cavalry to occupy Cremona. He soon followed with the

¹ Vespasian's brother.

detachments of the First, Fourth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth legions in the van. The centre was composed of the Fifth and Twenty-second, and in the rear of the column came the Twenty-first Rapax and the First Italian legion, with detachments from the three legions of Britain and a select force of auxiliaries. When Caecina had started, Valens wrote instructions to the legions belonging to his old command¹ to await him on the march, saying that he and Caecina had arranged this. Caecina, however, took advantage of being on the spot, and pretended that this plan had been altered so as to enable them to meet the first outbreak of the war with their full strength. So some legions were hurried forward to Cremona² and part of the force was directed upon Hostilia.³ Caecina himself turned aside to Ravenna on the pretext of giving instructions to the fleet. Thence he proceeded to Patavium⁴ to secure secrecy for his treacherous designs. For Lucilius Bassus, whom Vitellius, from a prefect of auxiliary cavalry had raised to the supreme command of the two fleets at Ravenna and Misenum, felt aggrieved at not being immediately given the praefecture of the Guards, and sought in dastardly treachery the remedy for his unjustifiable annoyance. It can never be known whether he influenced Caecina or whether one was as dishonest as the other. There is seldom much to

¹ In Lower Germany.

² Only two legions went to Cremona (see iii. 14).

³ Ostiglia.

⁴ Padua.



IOI choose between rascals. The historians¹ who compiled the records of this war in the days of the Flavian dynasty were led by flattery into adducing as the causes of the rebellion patriotism and the interests of peace. We cannot think them right. Apart from the innate disloyalty of the rebels and the loss of character after Galba's betrayal, they seem to have been led by jealousy and rivalry into sacrificing Vitellius himself for fear that they might lose the first place in his favour. Thus when Caecina joined his army,² he used every device to undermine the staunch fidelity of the centurions and soldiers to Vitellius. Bassus found the same task less difficult, for the fleet remembered that they had lately been in Otho's service, and were therefore already on the brink of rebellion.

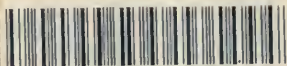
¹ e. g. Cluvius Rufus (cp. i. 8), the elder Pliny (cp. iii. 28), and Vipstanus Messala (cp. iii. 9, 25, 28).

² i. e. at Hostilia, coming back from Padua.

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