

Character of Tiberius

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The Character of Tiberius

The elements which go to make up a man's character are manifold; and the influences of heredity, and environment with their many complexities, are not easily analyzed. In determining the character of Tiberius, it would be well to take a brief view of his antecedents, the conditions into which he was born, and the circumstances in which he lived; and make due allowance for the forces which ennoble or degrade.

The great Roman revolution, which began in the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus and ended with the battle of Actium, resulted in centralizing supreme power in the hands of Augustus. To have the powers of government exercised by a master mind was the only hope of salvation for the Roman people. Augustus, profiting by the experience of Julius Caesar, rejected the position of dictator as well as the hateful name of king, and sought to veil his supremacy under the forms of the old Republic. He enlisted in his service the most restless spirits among the aristocracy, and subdued them by restraint of discipline, by the allurements of political honors, and by ideas of military devotion. To the fidelity of his legions, he entrusted the suppression of rebellion. He deceived the feeble senate and the enervated people with a show of liberty.

Although Augustus had practically seized control of all branches of government, he still preserved the appearance of the republic. He revised the list of senators; he ejected unworthy members; admitted worthy ones from the provinces; and henceforth ruled through the name and agency of the senate.

The most important matters were referred to the senate for adjudication. It retained jurisdiction in criminal cases, and before it many important civil cases were pleaded. The Emperor sat among the senators and voted as one of them. In order that he might cover their disgrace and, at the same time, have them always firmly within his grasp, Augustus heaped honors upon the senators, while taking away from them the liberty which the meanest citizen possessed,—no senator dared go outside the limits of Italy without special leave of absence from the Emperor.

From time to time, whether sincerely or not, Augustus professed a wish to be relieved of power; but nevertheless gathered the reins of government more firmly in his hands, and kept full control of all the troops. In B. C. 28, he received the title "princeps senatus"; and the next year the name by which he is generally known, "Augustus," was given him. Previous to this time he was known as Octavius.

To all outward appearances the Republic was fully restored; the senate met and transacted business with apparent freedom; the popular assemblies passed laws and elected magistrates; the whole machinery of the Republic was in operation. Augustus dressed as a plain senator; he avoided all pomp and show; to all he held out the prospect of honorable employment in the service of the state. He fostered a sense of unity and common dependence between Rome and the provinces. His long, prosperous, and comparatively peaceful reign was a blessing to the Roman people.

If, however, we turn from the ruler and consider

the man, we shall find nothing in him to command our love? He was cruel in cold blood, element by calculation; the assassin of Cicero, the protector of Cinna; affecting virtue, but himself vicious. Caesar and Alexander in their greatness were lovable; Napoleon was formidable; but Augustus, commanding neither sympathy nor admiration, must take his place far below these. If statesmanship is the art of ruling men by deceit, he was a model statesman. And yet, he will remain a great figure in history, because he gave to eighty millions of people a peaceful government through a period of forty-four years.

In his old age troubles came to him, — the defeat of Varus by Arminius in the Teutoburg forest, the death of his step-son, Drusus, the profligacy of his own daughter, Julia, the voluntary retirement of Tiberius to Rhodes, and the death of his grandsons, Lucius and Julius Caesar. This last event led to the adoption of Tiberius, upon whom the only hope of peaceful succession lay.

Tiberius was born in B.C. 42, of an ambitious plebeian family which had held twenty-eight consulships, five dictatorships, seven censorships, and as many tribuneships.² His mother's marriage and his own adoption brought him into the house of the Caesars. His mother became the wife of Augustus when Tiberius was but four years old; five years later his father died and the young boy, then only nine years old, pronounced in public his eulogy. While still a youth he pleaded before Augustus in behalf of King Archelaos, the city of Tralles, and the Thessalians; and in the senate, he interceded in behalf of Thyatira, Laodiceia, and Chios, cities destroyed by an earthquake.³ In 6 A.D., at the time of the revolt of Maroboduus, he saved

the empire from a dangerous crisis'. He had fought in Spain and among the Alps; had been governor of Gaul; had given a king to the Parthians; and had conquered the Pannonians. He subdued the Germans, transported four hundred thousand barbarians into Belgium, and re-assured the empire after the defeat of Varus. With the exception of his stay in Rhodes, he had, for thirty years, been concerned in the most important affairs of state; and he entered upon the imperial power full of talent and experience.

Augustus had long been prejudiced against him, but at last recognized in him his best support. In 14 A.D., at the age of fifty-six Tiberius became emperor.

To Suetonius and Tacitus - especially to the latter - are we indebted for our knowledge of this ruler and his reign. The judgment which Tacitus gives of his character is, on the whole, far from flattering. The historian was evidently prejudiced against him; although he asserted that he would treat his subject with fairness. In the last chapter of the sixth book of the Annals, Tacitus gives a brief sketch of the life of Tiberius, together with his own estimate of his character.

"And so died Tiberius in the seventy-eight year of his life. Nero was his father, and he was descended on both sides from the Claudian house; through his mother he passed by adoption, first into the Livian and then into the Julian family. From earliest infancy, perilous vicissitudes were his lot; himself, an exile, he was the companion of a proscribed father; and, on being admitted as step-son into the house of Augustus, he had to struggle with many rivals so long as Marcellus and Agrippa and, subsequently, Gaius and Lucius Caesar were in their glory. Again his brother, Drusus, enjoyed in

a greater degree, the affections of the citizens. He was more than ever on dangerous ground after his marriage with Julia, whether he tolerated his wife's profligacy or escaped from it. On his return from Rhodes he ruled the Emperor's now heirless house for twelve years, and the Roman world with absolute sway for about twenty-three years. His character, too, had its distinct periods. It was a bright time in his life and reputation, while, under Augustus, he was a private citizen or held high offices; a time of reserve and crafty assumption of virtue, as long as Germanicus and Drusus were alive; while his mother lived he was a compound of good and evil; he was infamous for his cruelties, though he veiled his debaucheries, while he loved or feared Sejanus; finally he plunged into every wickedness and disgrace, when fear or shame being cast off, he simply indulged his own inclinations."

Tacitus, then, assigns distinct periods to the character of Tiberius. Since life is not a series of spectacular changes, but a gradual development and change for better or worse, it is absurd to block out a man's character in this way; but, as Tacitus has made these divisions, it may be well in this discussion, to examine each period in succession and try to determine whether or not Tacitus has given a just decision.

I. "It was a bright time in his life and reputation while, under Augustus, he was a private citizen or held high offices."

This is high praise, coming as it does from one who, we know, was not any too well disposed toward his subject. There is little doubt that the public life

of Tiberius up to his fifty-sixth year was unimpeachable, although Suetonius says of him, that as a young soldier in camp he was so given to wine that his comrades nick-named him Biberius baldius Mero,² as an indication of his excessive drunkenness.

Born about the time of the battle of Philippi, his infancy and early childhood were spent in the midst of dangers and trouble; his parents took him with them everywhere they went in their flight.² At nine years of age he entered the house of his stepfather, who, two years later, by the battle of Actius became the undisputed master of the Roman Empire. "He was brought up from infancy in a reigning family and loaded with consulships and triumphs in his youth."³ Yet, this could not have been a condition of unalloyed happiness; for as already noted, "he had to struggle with many rivals while Marcellus and Agrippa and, subsequently, while Gaius and Lucius Caesar were in their glory". By special privilege, he became quaestor at the age of nineteen. About this time, B.C. 23, the death of Marcellus removed his first rival. He became praetor at twenty-five, and consul at twenty-nine. After serving as military tribune in the Cantabrian⁴ war, he was sent to the East in B.C. 20 to give a king to the Parthians⁵ and had the honor of bringing back the standards lost by Crassus thirty-three years before. About the year 15 B.C., he was married to Vipsania Agrippina. Agrippa, the husband of Julia suddenly died in B.C. 12, which event removed a second rival and left only the two boys, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, aged eight and five respectively, between Tiberius and the ~~imperial~~ succession. But this event was

immediately disastrous to him, in as much as the Emperor compelled him, for political reasons, to divorce Vipsania to whom he was deeply attached, and marry Julia who courted him as a lover but despised him as a husband. Almost immediately after this marriage he was sent to quell an uprising in Dalmatia and Pannonia; and, after the death of his brother Drusus in B.C. 9, he prosecuted the war in Germany so successfully that he was awarded triumphal distinctions and given a second consulship in B.C. 7, next he received the tribunitian power for five years; which office, Augustus, having confidence in his own greatness and in the moderation of Tiberius, felt that he could safely entrust to him¹.

It was now that he formed his resolution to retire to Rhodes and with the greatest difficulty received permission to go². The conduct of his wife is assigned as the most potent reason³; but, of course, Tiberius dared make no such statement, so he said that being satiated with honors and desirous of relief from the fatigues of business, also, that the grandsons of Augustus being now grown to manhood, he voluntarily relinquished the second place in government which he had so long enjoyed⁴.

After the banishment of Julia in B.C. 2, he desired to return, but was not permitted to do so⁵. The protection of his tribunitian power expired, and the rest of his stay there was nothing

less than exile'; he was now exposed to insult, and even peril of his life. Returning to Rome in 2 A.D., the year of the death of Lucius Caesar, he remained in complete retirement until 4 A.D., when Gaius Caesar died. This event brought about a complete change in his position. Now, at the age of forty-six, he was formally adopted into the family of the Caesars, was received as partner in the tribunitian power, and was displayed before the great armies of the state as a colleague in the empire. In 12 A.D., he was given a richly deserved triumph, and his tribunitian power was permanently renewed. Just at this time, the last illness of Augustus called him back to Italy, where he remained the rest of his life.

It was evidently the wish of Augustus to found a family dynasty, though he, himself, was without male issue. He, of course, desired a worthy successor, yet worthiness was with him a secondary matter. The succession must fall to one ripe in years, rich in experience and acceptable to the state. The condition of his health made it expedient to support his throne by means of a number of heirs in various grades of expectancy. His nearest relatives, if time permitted them to become sufficiently prominent, were his first choice, such was Marcellus, and afterward Gaius and Lucius Caesar. Then there must be another in reserve, ripe in years and experience, who could govern for a few years in case of emergency, and be set aside afterward by a youth as soon as circumstances made it expedient. Such was the position of Agrippa, and after him, of Tiberius. Each in turn was a

victim to the matrimonial arrangements of Augustus, who, in such matters, had no regard whatever for natural affection or even common decency; but consulted only what seemed to him dynastic policy. His own daughter Julia he gave to three successive husbands - Marcellus, Agrippa, and Tiberius - for no other than political reasons. He cared nothing for the personal feelings of the ones who were affected by his management.

The forced separation of Tiberius from the woman of his choice, and his marriage with one whom he could not love was a cruel injustice. His heart always remained with Vipsania. Meeting her one day by accident, his eyes filled with tears and remained fixed upon her as long as she was in sight. It was necessary to guard against his ever seeing her again.

In adopting Tiberius, Augustus compelled him to adopt Germanicus, the son of his brother Drusus; and thus to prejudice the position of his own son, Drusus, who was a year or two younger than Germanicus. From this arose the undisguised coldness and jealousy of Tiberius and his mother Livia toward the house of Germanicus, and the suspicion that the young man might some day work harm to them. There was also the fear that Agrippa Posthumus, though consigned to perpetual banishment, might, at any time, be received back into favor.

Livia was a woman of masculine strength of mind. She had intrigued for years in order to secure the adoption of her son. Having succeeded thus far, she would not be likely to give up the object of her labor without a great struggle. She was no doubt impelled by a

selfish motive; yet she may have acted partly from a sense of public duty. She afterward frequently reminded Tiberius of this, her greatest service to him. Had it not been for her, Augustus might never have adopted him. It is true that Augustus sometimes spoke well of his stepson; but there are other occasions when he did not. At one time, apparently in jest, he said that the poor Roman people would be deliberately masticated when Tiberius should come into power². He often broke off lively conversation at his approach; and even, under show of apology, sometimes taunted him with his personal appearance.³ "Tiberius is made heir," so reads the will of Augustus, "only because evil fortune has snatched away Gaius and Julius Caesar."⁴ As to the true opinion that Augustus had of Tiberius it must be confessed that one is hardly able to determine. His exclamation, "Ah, unhappy Roman people to be ground by the jaws of a slow devourer!" is bad enough;⁵ yet on another occasion, he said that he adopted him for the public good.⁵ Then again his letters to him while in the army contain the highest praise; as, "Farewell my gallant man and accomplished general," "Indeed, my dear Tiberius, I think no one could have acted more prudently than you have done," "All acknowledge that this verse is applicable to you:

"Unus homo nobis vigilando restituit rem," "Whenever I am out of humor, I long for my dear Tiberius," "I beg you spare yourself, lest the news of your illness prove fatal to me and to your mother, and the Roman people should fear for the safety of the Empire." Augustus was circumspect and prudent, and did nothing

rashly, especially in an affair of such importance as choosing his successor. It appears that he weighed the vices and virtues of Tiberius and found the virtues to predominate; hence, he swore publicly that he adopted him "for the public good".

Up to this time the life of Tiberius had been a succession of trials and struggles which must have affected his character. He was naturally austere, reserved, and distant; the best part of his life had been spent in camp or in retirement; his position at court had been more or less overshadowed by rivals; his domestic life had been ruthlessly wrecked; he had been schooled from infancy in repression and disguise; he had lived in the cold shade of neglect, as well as in the warm sunshine of flattery; he could rate the homage of the senate and of the people at its true value.

Of his character at this time, everything indicates that his penetration was keen while his resolution was weak; although he could read men's minds clearly enough, he was always at a loss as to how to deal with them. He was a mixture of strength and weakness with distrust², modified by the unpleasant experiences of his past life. Tacitus' opinion of this period is fairly well sustained by the facts as found in history. He might, with seeming justice, ^{have} spoken less favorably of him.

II. "A time of reserve and crafty assumption of virtue while Germanicus and Drusus were still alive"

The second period as outlined by Tacitus covers the first nine years of the principate of Tiberius. In this period, in which Tacitus declares him to have been

most crafty in sustaining his disguise, we have very full information.

Before the senate, Tiberius made a show of reluctance in assuming supreme power; but it is noticeable that he showed such hesitancy nowhere else. He ruled by and through the senate as did his great predecessor. During this period his government was, for the most part, moderate and just. He frequently consulted the senate on matters which did not strictly fall under its jurisdiction¹. He encouraged the discussion of important measures; and, at times, rebuked the senate for severity. He respected the magistrates; and, except in cases of "maiestas"², according to Tacitus, administered the laws uprightly; in the bestowal of offices and honors, he strove to choose the worthiest; he set an example of frugality both in the size and number of his estates amid the vast villas of the nobles³; he rejected sumptuary laws as ineffective, but himself set an example of moderate living. These characteristics at home were accompanied by clemency and vigilance in the provinces; no new burdens were laid upon them, while old ones were adjusted with care and remitted when circumstances permitted. Personal violence and confiscation were scrupulously avoided; cruelty and extortion in governors, duly punished; fiscal procuratorships conferred upon men of good character, even without personal knowledge; tenure of office was indefinitely extended to the worthy.

The first crime of the new reign, says Tacitus, was the murder of Posthumus Agrippa⁴. No one knows who was responsible for this murder. This Agrippa, though a grandson of Augustus, was detested by him, and had

been sent into exile several years before, not because of any particular crime, but because of his general stupidity and animal disposition. Augustus did not desire such a man as a successor, and the report that he ~~was~~ ^{had} given orders for his execution was probably a true one. Suetonius says that Agrippa was slain before the death of Augustus was made public, and expressed the doubt as to whether the order was written by Augustus, or by Livia in the name of Augustus; also whether with the knowledge of Tiberius or not. At any rate, Tiberius told the tribune who reported the execution to him, that he had given no order, and that the tribune would have to answer for his act before the senate, with that the matter dropped. Tiberius may have given the order - which is not likely - , or he may have lent it his silent approval - which is likely. In either case his act could be considered nothing more than a minor crime, committed for the good of the state, and by no means as repulsive as were some of the acts of the great Augustus.

Many acts which seemed to Tacitus to be defects of governmental policy, were, in fact, merits. He would lead us to believe that Germanicus was ill-treated when he was recalled from Germany as if from an all but completed conquest. But what had he accomplished there? Ravage and massacre, regardless of age or sex², ostentatious obsequies to the remains of those who had fallen with Varus in 9 A.D.³, barren victories in the field and disastrous retreats⁴ and the complete exhaustion of Gaul in furnishing supplies⁵. Germanicus was popular and, to a certain extent, aggressive; still he lacked

that force of character and firmness of purpose which characterize really great men. I'm recalling him, ^{Tiberius} decreed a triumph to him, just the same as if had really conquered; at the same time he reminded him that while he had gained great victories, ^{he} had also suffered severe losses; that he himself had been sent nine times into Gaul by Augustus, and had been able to accomplish more by policy than by arms. The best plan, he said, would be to leave Germany to be destroyed by internal discord. The civil war between Arminius and Maroboduus⁵, besides many minor conflicts, fully proved the wisdom of this policy.

Tacitus implies that jealousy impelled Tiberius to recall Germanicus from the North and send him to the East; and, perhaps the act was not entirely free from selfish motives; nevertheless the policy was wise and consistent. Practically nothing had been accomplished in Germany. Why waste more men and treasure there? The affairs of the East needed attention; Tiberius himself was in the decline of life, Drusus was still a youth, and Germanicus was at the period of vigorous manhood; he, then, was the most suitable person for the work.

The desire of Tiberius to preserve order and settle difficulties without recourse to arms is commendable. The partition of Thrace under its own princes⁶; the acquisition of Cappadocia with advantage both to its own inhabitants and to the Roman people³; the maintenance of prestige in the East without an open breach with the Parthians; and the securing of Armenia to Roman interests through a prince of Roman sympathies, but not too Roman for his subjects⁴, - all attest the wise management of Tiberius.

Again the severe punishment of governors for extortion is to be commended. But, Tacitus, when he does mention these cases, lays no special stress upon them as worthy acts.

When occasion called for it Tiberius was ever ready to open his purse; and he retained this munificent spirit, says Tacitus, long after every other virtue was extinguished. An ex-praetor wished to withdraw from the senate on account of his poverty; Tiberius gave him a million sesterces. Another complained that the foundations of his house had been ruined by the construction of a public road and aqueduct; Tiberius made good his loss². Frontinus offered his daughter for the service of Vestal; Tiberius did not appoint her, but gave her a dowry of a million sesterces³. Marcus Hortalus, the grandson of Hortensius, already once rescued from poverty by Augustus, begged again for assistance; Tiberius refused, but allowed the senate to vote gifts to the children of the persistent beggar. He afterward allowed the family of Hortalus to sink into obscure poverty, Tacitus condemns this act, but Tiberius did just right; there is no good reason why any man should thus be supported in luxury. Tacitus tells us that at this time Tiberius did not care to enrich himself.⁴ The property of Amelia Musa, an intestate, he handed over to Amilius Lepidus, although legally the property reverted to the imperial treasury; ~~the~~ the estate of Patuleius, although he himself was named as heir, he gave to Marcus Servilius, whose name he found in an earlier will. In general he accepted legacies only from friends, and rejected those offered to him by strangers, or because of spite on the part of relatives. He was liberal not only to individuals

but to communities as well, as shown by the relief which he gave to the cities of Asia which had been visited by an earth-quake¹. Again when all his resources were strained to feed the people², economy is a praiseworthy quality. While he relieved honest and virtuous poverty, he was pitiless toward that caused by prodigality and profligacy, as was experienced by certain men whom he expelled from the senate³.

Augustus regarded it as a duty to be present at public games and owed to this deference a part of his popularity; but Tiberius despised such methods and left the populace to amuse itself without him. He even limited the expense of the games, reduced the pay of actors, and forbade senators to visit the houses of buffoons, and knights to be seen with them in public. By a decree of the senate, he invested praetors with the right of condemning turbulent spectators to exile. He rarely permitted gladiatorial spectacles, and on one occasion is known to have rebuked his son Drusus for showing too much pleasure at the sight of blood*. He made no base concession to secure the popular will, yet he did desire solid approval as shown by his own remark; "Let them hate me so long as they do but approve my conduct."⁵

The main charges brought against Tiberius during the period under consideration were insincerity, ill-treatment of Germanicus, trials of "maiestas", and encouragement of delation.

He is charged with insincerity because, at the very outset, he hesitated to take the power which he and his mother had waited so long to obtain. He seems to have been somewhat insincere; for the ill-treatment

which he had received at Rhodes after the expiration of his tribunitian power, must have taught him that his only safety lay in ruling. But, on the other hand, since he was naturally irresolute, no one can wonder that he hesitated, when brought face to face with a crisis. To assume control of the Roman Empire was no child's play. As regards the army, "he held a wolf by the ears". The troops both in Illyricum and Germany mutinied. The army in Germany urged Germanicus to seize the throne². More than this the constitution of the principate required him to secure his position by laying all stress upon the apparent free choice of the senate³.

As to his attitude toward Germanicus, he showed irresolution, rather than malice. Considering the popularity of Germanicus and his strength in arms, there is no wonder that Tiberius looked upon him with some little apprehension⁴; yet, we find that very soon he bestowed the proconsular power upon him⁵, and the next year decreed him a triumph, though the war still lasted, and gave him the title, *Imperator*⁶. Tacitus says that Tiberius felt safer when both his sons were at the heads of armies⁸; and that he feared the zeal of Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, as much as he did the popularity of Germanicus himself⁹. This, then, would be an additional reason for sending Germanicus to the East among troops with whom he was not acquainted, and for placing in Syria, Piso, a man noted for his violent temper, in order to check him if he should become too ambitious. Plancia, wife of Piso, stood high in the favor of Augusta; hence all the more reason for this arrangement.

The most heinous crime laid at the door of Tiberius

is the poisoning of Germanicus through the instrumentality of Piso. There is no proof that he was poisoned. In fact all the circumstances seemed to disprove it, and the charge could not be sustained in the trial. It is true that Piso and Plancina were both unfriendly to Germanicus, but this proves nothing. The fact that Martina, a professional poisoner, died at Brundisium just as she was about to be tried for the crime proves nothing. The magical incantations spoken of are nonsensical. Tacitus says that Tiberius and Augustus concealed their satisfaction by remaining at home during the time of the funeral, that they restrained Antonia, mother of Germanicus, and that there was lack of funeral pomp. But Tiberius had always been averse to the tumult of public funerals; Antonia did not believe Tiberius to be the murderer of her son, for she remained his lifelong friend; there was as much funeral pomp as could be expected under the circumstances. The body had lain in state ^{in the East} and had been cremated there, hence these principal ceremonies could not be repeated at Rome. Tiberius ordered that the magistrates of the districts through which the body passed should attend it on the way; that tribunes and centurions should bear the urn; and that the altars of the Dii Manes should smoke with propitiatory offerings. Drusus with the younger brother and children of Germanicus went forth as far as Tarracina to meet it; the consuls, the senate, and a large concourse of all ranks fell in with the procession as it drew near the city². Tiberius, Augusta, and Antonia were lacking. This led to the base suspicion expressed by Tacitus.

After the mourning had been sufficiently prolonged, Tiberius issued an edict to bring it to a close, saying

that other men had died for the state, and that Rome had lost great armies, and that at the same time they had endured their disasters with more firmness. "Brief for Germanicus," he said, "did honor both to himself and to the Roman people, provided that it be kept within proper bounds; principes die, but the state is immortal; wherefore, let the people return to their ordinary pursuits and to their pleasures."¹ Tiberius had caused statues and arches of triumph to be erected in honor of Germanicus at Rome, upon Mount Amanus, and upon the banks of the Rhine. Mourning had lasted for about four months, during which time all public business was neglected, and it was time that it should cease. But the enemies of Tiberius, especially Agrippina, strove to prolong it. Tiberius began to be assailed with vague accusations; stones were even thrown at the imperial statues; no wonder that he at length became weary and ^{issued} his decree.²

In the prosecution of Piso, although Tiberius might have been sole judge, he gave the case over into the hands of the senate, and asked the senators for impartiality and justice³. In the trial, the accused man beheld with terror that Tiberius was without pity or anger, was impassionate and inscrutable⁴. He very soon committed suicide, leaving a letter behind acknowledging no other crime except that of returning to his province in arms⁵.

Next, we will consider the treason trials, the one point excepted by Tacitus, in the generally just administration of the laws during this period. Tiberius revived the law of treason⁶ which appears to have been gradually defined with increasing application by the Apulian, Varian, Cornelian, and Julian laws;⁷ and even in the time of Cicero

had such an elastic meaning that it might easily have been made to cover offensive words. This application was, however, extremely limited; but Augustus had applied the law in cases of libellous writings'. Under Tiberius, as early as the second year of his reign, it was used in similar cases. During this period, there were about twelve trials in which the charge of "maiestas" was either the sole charge or was coupled with other charges². In some cases treasonable acts were alleged³; in others, the charges were grounded upon more or less strained interpretations of acts, or, in one or two cases, upon writings⁴. In one case, the nature of the charge is not specified⁵. In three cases, those of Falanius, Rubrius, and Emnius, the charge is dismissed before trial.⁶ Two others result in acquittal⁷, and the only case, that of Priscus, where death is inflicted for an offence of words, takes place in the absence of Tiberius who censures the act and takes measures to prevent the recurrence of so swift an execution of sentence.⁸ He forbade prosecutions on account of words used against the royal family, and did not, as yet, especially encourage delation. The number of cases is not large considering that accusers were often tempted to bring charges without cause; and could, by trumping up some vague charge that might be interpreted as treason, endanger the life and property of an enemy. Tiberius himself did not seem anxious for conviction, nor for extreme sentence upon conviction.

Certain fawning courtiers encouraged Tiberius in extending the definition of "maiestas" from libellous writings to slanderous words. They even went farther and proposed that certain acts, which seemed disrespectful to the Emperor, such as allowing a low actor to take part in the funeral rites of Augustus,

selling a statue of Augustus along with a villa, or perjury in the name of Augustus, should be declared treasonable.¹ Tiberius refused to give his sanction to this, and ended by saying that Augustus had not been deified for the purpose of bringing destruction upon the citizens; and as for the charge of perjury, let the gods look out for themselves. Granus Marcellus, who about this time was charged with abusive language toward the Emperor, of placing his own statue higher than that of the Caesars, and of removing the head from a statue of Augustus, was acquitted of the charge of treason, and his prosecutor was rebuked for officiousness.² When Ennius was charged with melting an image of the Emperor and converting ^{it} into plate for his table, Anteius Capito, an eminent jurist, declared the crime to be a grave one; but Tiberius peremptorily forbade proceeding to be instituted against him³. In the cases of Silenus⁴, Apuleia Varilia⁵, and Lepida⁶, Tiberius refused to consider the charges of treason against them; and moderated the sentences imposed on account of crimes really proved.

Such was the moderation of Tiberius for several years from the commencement of his reign in the defence of his own person and position. Such was the difficulty in which he was placed by the zeal of his flatterers; and still more by the ambition or cupidity of those who wished to gain distinction or profit by the informer's trade. He himself, desired justice; he was firm enough against money; but the horde of delators proved too strong for him.

It was a time of peace; There were no uprisings or conspiracies of any importance; the conspiracy of Libo Drusus⁷ amounted to nothing, being merely an idle charge; the plot of Clemeus⁸ was easily suppressed; the senators

were servile, even to the disgust of their ruler¹; the opposition had sunk into the writing of epigrams²; the babble of dinner parties, and idle murmurs or suspicious silence³.

As already noted, Tiberius did not, as yet, encourage delation; never-the-less an organized system grew up and acquired a fatal prominence in this and succeeding reigns. There are several causes which brought about this condition. In Rome, at all times, the absence of a public prosecutor, threw the duty of accusation upon individuals; and the desire to conduct impeachments was strong among Roman orators. Under the Empire, this was almost the only road to distinction; and, in the schools of rhetoric, the brilliant strokes of a successful accuser were held up as something admirable. To men of wealth and rank like Scaurus⁴, as well as to the needy and obscure like Junius Otho⁵, the trade of informer offered many attractions. Again, successful delation was profitable; for the informer received one-fourth of the property of the condemned. To the extent that Tiberius permitted informers to receive property^a, he may be said to have encouraged them. He saw clearly enough the evil of this practice, and wished to escape it; but he had little originality; he did not have the ability to blaze out new paths in governmental policy; he was more than content if he could but follow in the footsteps of Augustus. Augustus had used delators⁶; Tiberius simply did likewise. The number of cases of delation increased to such an extent, however, that Tacitus calls this reign the period of its origin⁷. In this statement, Tacitus is not fair. In reality the practice originated away back in the time of the Republic when the evil inherent in its principle was disguised in

loftier aims. Liberty, the priceless jewel of the Roman citizen was to be maintained at any cost; and it was maintained by a system which made every man a spy upon the acts and words of every other man. Every young noble was trained in the art of pleading, in order that he might have weapons of defence when necessary, and weapons of offence at all times for his own advancement. The young orator who could sway a bench of judges against a veteran pleader was marked as sure to rise to high political honors. Crassus, Caesar, and Pollio are examples of this. The elder Cato is said to have been prosecuted about fifty times, and himself to have been indefatigable in prosecuting others. Under the Empire this same system of private accusation was kept up, although there was less necessity for it. And yet there was no public accuser to manage the prosecution for the government on information from whatever sources derived; the delator, accuser, and prosecutor were one and the same person. The odium of prosecution was thus removed from the government and placed upon the private delator.

Thus with the sanction and encouragement of the great Augustus, the common right of accusation, the Palladium of Roman liberty became an instrument of despotism. Successful delation brought money, celebrity, influence, authority, favor of the prince, and not infrequently the applause of the multitude. Tiberius used it because he did not know of anything better. He prized it as machinery by the aid of which the true ends of government, as he saw it, could be most readily and certainly accomplished. During the first half of his reign he did not make an unjust use delation in cases of "maiestas"; and we have no

instance of any man's being punished solely on the charge of an offence against the person of the Emperor'. Two informers, though belonging to the equestrian rank, he punished for preferring false charges². His justice was stern and equal toward all, even the gods, he caused a temple of Isis to be destroyed, the statue of the goddess to be thrown into the Tiber, and the priest to be crucified, because a young knight, by the aid of the priests, had passed himself off as the god Anubis and had deceived a matron in the temple³. Some Jews had converted the wife of a Roman noble and had extorted large sums of money from her. When complaint was brought by the husband, Tiberius forbade the practice of foreign cults at Rome, and enrolled four thousand Jews to fight against the freebooters of Sardinia⁴. Tiberius cared little for creeds; he regarded oracles with suspicion; and tolerated religious freedom only so long as it was not a source of strife and dissention. He used every effort to secure justice in the courts, and combatted with all his power the venality of tribunals. He would sometimes sit on the bench with magistrates and offer to advise. "Thus," says Tacitus, "justice was saved but liberty was lost"

Beesly⁵ calls attention to the fact that during the first twelve years of Tiberius' reign, there were thirty-seven state cases. Of these, fourteen suffered banishment, which, by the way, did not mean penal servitude but living in comparative ease and comfort somewhere away from Rome; six committed suicide; two were expelled from the senate; three were acquitted; the prosecution of five was stopped by Tiberius' using his tribunitian power; and just one executed, this being done in the absence of Tiberius and without his knowledge and consent. By means of these

state trials, Tiberius held the nobility in subjection and dragged guilty and oppressive governors to justice.

Taking this period as a whole, and assuming the Annals of Tacitus to be reliable, we have little fault to find with Tiberius. At the close of this period he is characterized by the lack of force and originality, the same worshipful spirit toward the enactments of Augustus, and the same vacillating and hesitating mind which marked the beginning of his reign; yet with all an honest desire to reign well. Moreover, the government was in a by no means deplorable condition. We have no reason for saying, with Tacitus, that he cloaked his true character with a show of virtue.

III. "While his mother was alive he was a compound of good and evil."

Such is the judgment of the next six years, from the ninth to the fifteenth of the reign and from the sixty-fourth to the seventieth year of the Emperor's life². Tacitus thinks that the character of the Emperor was thoroughly bad before this time but had always been disguised. Now the "mala" appears on the surface; cruelty and covetousness are plainly evident³; although a show of "bona" is still preserved. The odium of this outward change is cast upon Aelius Sejanus, the minister and confidant of Tiberius. History assigns to Sejanus a character fulsome in adulation, base in dissimulation, and atrocious in crime. In the first place he gained the confidence of the Emperor by his indefatigable activity and wise counsels⁴. Later, by saving the life of his master when all but himself had fled, he secured almost unbounded influence⁵. Tiberius recognized him as the companion of his labors; consulted him in the distribution of offices and provinces; permitted his statues to

be placed in the theaters, in the forum, and in the camps beside his own; and gave him a share in the proconsular power²

Sejanus was a mere knight, but, having gained such a height of influence, he dreamed of something higher. He aimed at the throne. He concentrated the praetorians, scattered throughout the capital, into one camp near the city so that they could be handled more effectively³. Then he proceeded to remove those who stood between him and his object. He corrupted Livina, the wife of Drusus, and constrained her to poison her husband. He afterward made bold to ask Tiberius for the hand of this woman in marriage. He was met by refusal, decided but tempered with kind words⁴.

The death of Drusus was a severe blow to Tiberius, who forbade, for some time, all whom his son had loved to appear before him, as the sight of them increased his grief⁵.

Sejanus now turned his attention to the house of Germanicus, and to the overthrow of persons friendly to it. The whole period is described as a dreary chronicle of cruel orders, incessant accusations, treacherous friendships, and ruin of innocence⁶. This is an exaggeration; for the records of trials, mostly of state offences, are almost the only history of the times. The number of cases of "maiestas" had increased from twelve in the first period of nine years, to about twenty in the six years following. There was an increase in the number of informers and in the severity of punishments. In fact the Empire was in a state of wretched peace which many would have been glad to exchange for war. States, like individuals, are

liable to lapse into evil practices unless awakened to action by some great or noble purpose. Had the life of the Empire been assailed from without, Rome would have arisen to the occasion, and we should hear nothing of this disgraceful and revolting court strife.

Many serious charges were brought, and some of them really proved, as in the cases of Silvius¹, Serenus², and Lucius Capito³. In the case of Sullius, convicted of selling justice, Tiberius protested vigorously against leniency; and the later history of the man shows that compassion was not deserved. Tiberius strove to punish false accusers, as in the case of Catus Firmius, who, having falsely accused his sister, was sentenced to banishment⁴. In this case, however, because of former excellent service, the punishment was lightened to expulsion from the senate.

Tacitus complains that only the insignificant and obscure are punished, while conspicuous informers are practically inviolable⁵. This charge cannot be sustained.

There were a number of acquittals⁷: Quintilius Varus was saved by indefinite adjournment⁸; Caius Cominius, convicted of writing libellous verses against the Emperor, was pardoned; the charge against Calpurnius Piso of treasonable conversation was dropped without inquiry⁹; Apianus Merula, for not having sworn obedience to the legislation of the divine Augustus, was merely expelled from the senate¹⁰. Thus the number of actual and severe punishments was not so great as one might be led to suppose; yet, it cannot be denied that Tiberius showed and increased suspiciousness and sensitiveness to libels and an increased vindictiveness in punishing them. Charges of this kind helped to bring about the downfall of Silius² and Calpurnius Piso², the death

of Nativius¹, and the banishment of Cassius Severus². The law of "maiestas" was stretched so as to reach Crematius Cordus for writings which, according to one account, had even been recited before Augustus without bringing punishment upon their author³. For a single passage in which Brutus and Cassius were called the "last of the Romans", Cordus was arraigned and driven to voluntary suicide³, - his only escape from execution.

Sometimes, also, conviction was enforced where actual proof was lacking, as in the case of the elder Seneca who was charged with conspiracy by his own son. The charge, in respect to the persons implicated, was absurd, and the evidence broke down; yet Tiberius, who, by the way, is said to have had an old grudge at Seneca, insisted upon conviction, though interposing to modify the severity of the sentence⁴. Lastly, at the close of this period, we are told, as in the case of Titius Sabinus, of disgraceful expedients to procure evidence⁵. In obedience to a letter from Tiberius there was a hurried vote and an immediate execution without trial on the first day of the year. Tacitus justifies this execution by saying that Sabinus was at the head of the party of Agrippina and was really plotting the destruction of the Emperor, and the raising of the young Nero to the throne. He quotes the Elder Pliny, Natural History, Book 8, to support his statement, Now began to come to Rome the ominous letters from Capreae.

As time went on informers seem to have received more encouragement; were protected from prosecution and just retribution when bringing in false accusations⁶; and were secured in their rewards, as in the case of Cornutus, even when condemnation was anticipated by suicide⁷. On the other

traces of the better side of Tiberius remain in his dignified address at the death of Drusus¹; in his display of energy in public business;² in his strict suppression of a popular scandal by banishing certain players from Italy;³ in his prompt investigation of the crime of Silvanus the praetor;⁴ in his refusal to permit Farther Spain erect a temple to his honor;⁵ and finally in his munificence on the occasion of the fire on Mount Caelius.⁶ That he was jealous of the honor paid to Nero and Drusus;⁷ attended to public business only to divert people's talk;⁸ that he refused a temple from mere meanness of spirit;⁹ suppressed mention of military disasters because he dared not trust anyone to levy war;¹⁰ and other like statements may be considered as arising largely from the prejudice of the historian.

But a change for the worse in the character of Tiberius plainly showed itself; he was all too conscious of his failing powers¹¹; and his offer to resign may have been half sincere¹², certainly for a man of his advanced age to lay down his power and retire, while yet ardently desiring to remain in control, would be no unheard of thing. He had a growing dread of conspiracies and conspirators in the interest of the house of Germanicus¹³. How far the conduct of this family justified a suspicion which did not exist at the beginning of this period¹⁴, can not be known. It is very probable that the intrigues of Sejanus had more to do with the estrangement of Tiberius and his nephew's family than anything else; moreover the spirit of Agrippina was such, "*degni impatientis dominandi avida*",¹⁵ that she unwittingly played into the intriguer's hands.

Sejanus was the only favorite that Tiberius ever had. He, by playing upon the weaknesses of his master, induced

him, to take the step which marks the latter part of this period and a distinct epoch in the life of the Emperor; that is, of permanently withdrawing from Rome and fixing his habitation on the island of Capreae. Yet Tacitus is not sure, after all, that the influence of Sejanus caused this withdrawal, since Tiberius remained there six years after the fall of his minister². Other causes, such as the dictatorial spirit which his mother exercised over him; his aversion to society; and his personal appearance - form, tall, gaunt, and bent, and face covered with loathsome sores - may have impelled him to seek seclusion, and avoid the sight of men.

The period which began with the concentration of the praetorian cohorts, ended with almost self-imprisonment. The increasing timidity and suspiciousness of old age, were aggravated by a minister impelled by his own selfish interests. The outcome was no more than what might be expected, when a weak and vacillating man is entrusted with full power.

Tiberius was a mixture of good and evil during this period; so is almost everyone throughout the entire period of life. Tiberius, it is true, was growing worse; but this fact is sufficiently explained when we remember the terrible influences brought to bear upon his naturally weak character. He needed support. Sejanus, strong-minded, ambitious, and unprincipled, furnished it; and was, for the time, the power which stimulated the evil disposition of the Emperor.

IV. "He was infamous for his cruelties, though he veiled his debaucheries, while he loved or feared Sejanus".

Tacitus begins Book V. of his Annals, by relating the

death of Augusta, she is no longer represented as the person who has been charged, by hints at least, with intriguing for the destruction of all who might bar herself and son from power; but as the sole remaining protector of the family supposed to be obnoxious to her; In another place, however, this apparent discrepancy is accommodated by saying that she secretly undermined in their prosperity, those whom she outwardly supported in their adversity.³ The verdict of historical criticism has acquitted her of these imputations; and she may truly be regarded throughout the long and unbroken period of her ascendancy, as the power behind the throne, as a softening and moderating influence upon the cruel propensities of her husband and her son. "Livia", says Beesly, "was one of the noblest types of the Roman matron." Whatever may have been her personal feeling toward the house of Germanicus, she was too much imbued with the policy of Augustus, not to see that her son had more to gain than to lose by surrounding himself with family support, and that it would not be desirable for him at the age of seventy to ^{be} left with no heir except his grandson, Tiberius Gemellus, a boy of ten years. Her overpowering influence, even to the close of her life, is shown by Tacitus' statement that as soon as she was dead, ^{Sejanus and Tiberius} threw off restraint and let loose their fury; and that a letter directed ^{against} Agrippina and Nero, and believed to have been kept back by Augusta, was publicly read in the senate.⁵ Agrippina was charged with arrogant language; Nero, with profligacy. No act of treason was alleged against either, nor could evidence of such be produced. The characteristic irresolution of the charge causing the senate to hesitate, in its action, Tiberius

reserved the whole matter for his own decision. Strongly guarded and in closed litters, the prisoners were hurried away into exile. A year later Drusus, the second son was thrown into a dungeon on the Palatine; two years after his exile, Nero was either executed or sought voluntary suicide. Agrippina and Drusus still lived, and Sejanus had not yet attained his object. Soon the star of Sejanus was to set; for when other objects of apprehension had been removed Tiberius began to fear and suspect his minister himself, and the plotter, being surpassed in his ^{own} arts, fell completely.

Defenders of Tiberius, always make Sejanus the scapegoat of his wickedness; but Tacitus says that at the outset, Sejanus wished to be known as an upright counsellor², and that his fall was as great a calamity to the state as his ascendancy had been³. If he had exerted an evil influence upon Tiberius, he had also exerted a restraining force; for after his death Tiberius is said to have become cruel in the extreme⁴.

Yet this violent change was but the natural result of a long series of troubles and misfortunes, capped by the treachery of Sejanus, which tended completely to submerge his better nature, and to destroy whatever moral force he may still have retained. Sejanus has been charged with the death of Drusus, with causing the retirement to Capreae, with bringing about the downfall of the family of Germanicus, and, finally, with conspiring against the life of Tiberius. But in no instance is the positive evidence very strong. The first charge rests upon evidence given by tortured slaves. This evidence was not disclosed until eight years afterward, when it could no longer be verified, by Apicata, the divorced wife of Sejanus, whose knowledge must have been second hand; and who, moreover,

had strong motives for saying or doing whatever might make her rival, Livia, feel uncomfortable. On the second charge, Tacitus himself expresses doubt.² On the third, the loss of the fifth book of the Annals makes our knowledge imperfect. As to the last charge, recorded by most historians,³ Tiberius himself, when afterward justifying his course toward Sejanus, said that he had punished his minister because he had found him to be plotting against the children of his son Germanicus.⁴ This statement is, of course, sheer nonsense.

Sejanus was the ruling spirit of this period; he was ambitious and unscrupulous; every act of the drama from the concentration of the praetorians to the final plot, falls into natural sequence and was the work of his active brain.

The loss of the fifth book of the Annals, makes it impossible to give the details of this period. Suetonius gives a most revolting account of the infamous practices of Tiberius during his retirement on Capreae.⁵ It is a picture that the mind does not care to linger over, so we pass it. Beesly regards the statements of Tacitus and Suetonius on this point as false, contradictory, and insulting to common sense.⁶

After the failure of Sejanus to secure the hand of Livia, and thereby the succession to himself, he began to plot against the life of the Emperor. The plot was revealed to Tiberius by Antonia, his sister-in-law.⁷ After some hesitation, Tiberius at length sent the letter from Capreae which called for the execution of Sejanus. His body was dragged through the streets and torn limb from limb. Then followed the killing of his friends and relatives. When Apicata, the widow of Sejanus, assured Tiberius that her husband had, seven years before, brought about the death of Drusus; and when Tiberius learned the extent of the plot against

him, he henceforth trusted for security to the executioner alone. "From this time," says Suetonius, "his cruelty knew no limits" At last, he ordered the execution of all who were in prison, charged with with being accomplices of Sejanus.

V. "Finally he plunged into every wickedness and disgrace; when, fear or shame being cast off, he simply indulged his own inclinations."

In this last period of his life, related in the sixth book of the Annals, Tiberius is represented as never tired of trials and condemnations; never satiated, but even stimulated by them to further carnage, like a wild beast that had tasted blood. Some were condemned before his private court of *laepreae*³; others, by the senate, without form of trial, or on a mere letter of accusation sent against them.⁴ We are told of a universal panic in which the highest, as if infected by a plague, stooped to the informer's trade; that men were executed alike for offences old or recent; and for words as well as deeds; even for words spoken in private life;⁵ the very walls seemed to have ears.

Tacitus sometimes gives decisions that are manifestly unsound; yet, in general, his statement of historical fact may be safely accepted. A careful examination of the Annals shows us the other side. There were cases of acquittal⁶ and pardon⁷; some escaped by giving information⁸; others, by adjournment⁹; still others, by being ignored.¹⁰ Many being found guilty, received only moderate punishment. Prudent men like M^o Lepidus¹¹, Aelius Lanina¹², and L. Pies¹³ still held their own in honor. Altogether we have the names of about forty, who were either put to death or committed suicide to avoid execution. Among these were Agrippina and her two sons¹⁴, her old enemy Plancina¹⁵; Tigraeus¹⁶, exking of

Parthia, and the distinguished senators, Asinius Gallus¹ and Lucius Aruntius². Noble and obscure, foreign and native, fell alike. To the number already given, an addition must be made for names which probably appeared in the lost part of the Annals; also for the execution of the unknown number of prisoners, supposed to be accomplices of Sejanus. The "immensa strages"³ of corpses mentioned by Tacitus is limited by Suetonius to twenty in a single day⁴. The probable number that perished during this reign of terror of six years, may have amounted to one hundred. With the exception of a few cases which Maecius, the successor of Sejanus, prosecuted⁵, all fell at the command of Tiberius.

It is not strange that some innocent blood flowed amidst so much of guilt and crime. Many, perhaps most, of the executions were deserved. The creatures of Sejanus, who had staked their all on his chances of success, could not expect otherwise than to fall with him. Such were Laticius Laticius⁶, Uesularius Placcus⁷, Fulcinius Trio⁸, and others of their kind. But the circumstances of the execution of the young children of Sejanus are revolting in the extreme⁹. There was cold-blooded cruelty in the execution of the aged mother of Fulvius Seminus¹⁰; as also in the causes assigned for the destruction of the descendants of Theophrastus¹¹. On the other hand, Stahr¹² points out the fact that in the persecution of Sejanus' friends and followers, the senate, not Tiberius, was guilty of blood-thirstiness, and that Tiberius restrained its actions. Many of the worst crimes can be charged to the senate, which continued to shed blood even after the people and Tiberius were appeased.

As to the tales of abominable profligacy related by Tacitus and Suetonius, we find it hard to give them full credence.

Beesly, in attempting to disprove these charges, makes much of the fact that in spite of these irregularities as charged, Tiberius retained excellent health throughout the period of a long life, and that, too, without the aid of a physician; and so he maintains that the charges must be false. Such evidence, of course, is not conclusive; yet modern scientific knowledge gives weight to it. The older writers as Philo, Josephus, Seneca, and the Elder Pliny show no knowledge of the orgies of *leaprae*; although Tacitus says that toward the last no concealment of his wickedness was attempted.²

The administration was slowly but surely sinking; yet, Tiberius still rose occasionally to deeds truly imperial. The overthrow of Sejanus; the energy displayed in the East, when the Parthian king had goaded him with taunts and threats³; his ability to fill the fiscus⁴; his munificence in restoring financial confidence⁵; his relief of sufferers by fire⁶; his organization of the corn supply at Rome⁷; and his interest in the authenticity of a new sibylline *book*,⁸ - all show that he was not yet ready to lapse into nothingness. On the other hand he so far abandoned the government, that ambassadors were no longer able to obtain a hearing;^{and} the decuriae of the knights were no longer filled up⁹. The best men avoided public service; some were kept for years from going to the provinces nominally awarded to them¹⁰; others were kept year after year in office, with apparent indifference as to their merits, whether they ^{were} judicious, as Poppaeus Sabinus¹¹, cruel and oppressive, as Pontius Pilate, or bold and outspoken, as Gaetulicus¹². On the whole it may be said that the government was not vigorously attended to, and that the frontiers suffered from the raids of hostile bands¹³.

The attempt of Tiberius to explain, by a puerile and

palpable falsehood, his motive for the execution of Sejanus; the letter in which he published to the world his agony of soul; the shameless parade of reproaches which, in former years seem to have hurt his feelings; his hovering about Rome and never entering it; and the restless shiftings of the last days of his life⁵, - all proclaim the decrepit old man sinking into imbecility, if not insanity.

Had Tiberius died at the time he became emperor, his name would have been handed down to us with scarcely a stain, and he would have been regarded as one fully competent to rule. Had his career closed before his final departure from Rome, he would still have been regarded as a fairly good ruler. The last eleven or twelve years of his life are responsible for the infamy that clings to his name.

We have heard the bitter accusations of Tacitus and Suetonius; it is now but fair that we hear the other side as given by Velleius. Velleius shows himself strongly prejudiced in favor of Tiberius and, as a historian, can not be regarded as altogether trustworthy. His history was published in A.D. 30, seven years before the death of Tiberius; and so could not contain the record of the last seven years of his life. Velleius had served seven years under the military command of Tiberius and was one of his first praetors⁶. He says that when Tiberius was quaestor at nineteen, he almost saved Rome from a famine⁷; that at twenty-five he had virtually subjected Armenia, had terrified Parthia, and had all but subdued Germany⁸. These statements are exaggerations. Velleius would have us believe that the troops were most closely attached to Tiberius; yet we know that, at the time of his succession, Tiberius himself did not feel that this was true, and Tacitus tells us that Germanicus might easily

have had the support of his soldiers, had he wished to seize the throne¹.

Velleius has very little to say concerning treason trials, and makes no mention of the retirement to Capreae, although it occurred about four years before his book was published. Even Sejanus received great praise from this historian, in as much as his relation to Tiberius is compared with that of Laelius to Scipio, and of Agrippa to Augustus². In praising Drusus, Velleius says, "In comeliness of person he approached very near to that of his brother Tiberius. When Tiberius had been raised to a partnership in the tribunitian power with Augustus, Velleius said that that he was the most eminent man in the country and inferior to Augustus only because he wished to be³. He relates further how the whole realm was moved to sorrow when Tiberius, out of consideration for Caius and Lucius Caesar, decided to retire to Rhodes; and how he lived there for seven years, treated with the greatest respect by all who came that way, even by Caius Caesar himself⁴. The return of Tiberius to Rome, filled the city with incredible joy, prayers were offered, and all felt that the safety of the Empire was forever secure⁵. When Tiberius again returned to his army, the soldiers were overjoyed to see him; the meeting was a sight never to be forgotten⁶. With these soldiers he again gained glorious victories over the German tribes⁷. Tiberius had great regard for the health and comfort of his soldiers, at the same time never sparing himself. He carried along a litter for the use of sick soldiers; Velleius gives testimony of having once enjoyed it himself. Tiberius rode on horseback⁸. By his splendid victories, Tiberius merited seven triumphs, but was satisfied with three⁹. One hardly knows which to admire most, his

great deeds of valor or his moderation with regard to honors.¹ When Augustus was about to die he declared that his mind was perfectly at ease, since he was resigning his power to such a man as Tiberius.² In truth, so powerful was the majesty of the new ruler, that the affairs of state moved on from the first without the least disturbance.³ Thus does Velleius sum up the sixteen years of this reign which he, as historian treats:³ "Of the transactions of the last sixteen years which have passed into view, and are fresh in the memory of all, who shall presume to give an account Caesar deified his parent, not by arbitrary authority, but by paying religious respect to his character. He did not call him a divinity, but made him one. In that time credit has been restored to merchantile affairs, sedition has been banished from the forum, corruption from Campus Martius, and discord from the senate house; justice, equity, and industry, which had long lain buried in neglect, have been revived in the state; authority has been given to magistrates, majesty to the senate, and solemnity to the courts of justice; the dissensions of the theater have been suppressed, and all men have had either a desire excited in them, or a necessity imposed upon them of acting with integrity. Virtuous acts are honoured; wicked deeds are punished. The humble respect the powerful, without dreading them; the powerful take precedence of the humble, without despising them. When were provisions more moderate in price? when were the blessings of peace more abundant? Augustan peace, diffused over all the earth, preserves every corner of the world free from the dread of predatory molestation. Fortuitous losses, not only of individuals, but also of cities, the munificence of the prince is ready to relieve.

The cities of Asia have been repaired; the provinces have been secured from the oppression of their governors. Honor promptly rewards the deserving; and the punishment of the guilty, if slow, is certain. Interest gives place to justice; solicitation, to merit. For the best of princes teaches his countrymen to act rightly by his own practice; and while he is the greatest in power, he is still greater in example."

Of Sejanus, Velleius says: "He is a man of great vigor of body and mind; of pleasing gravity and unaffected cheerfulness; appearing in the dispatch of business, like a man quite at ease; assuming nothing to himself, and hence receiving every honor; always deeming himself inferior to others men's estimation of him; calm in looks and conversation, but in mind indefatigable and vigilant."¹

Velleius has nothing but praise for Tiberius and his minister. Tiberius was to him a noble hero whom he held in high esteem; a most just and wise Emperor whom he could not help loving. This is what his history tells us. It is not at all unlikely, however, that Velleius deemed it wise and expedient to flatter the reigning prince, and to suppress many facts of history. He has exaggerated the virtues and left the vices of Tiberius unmentioned. His history is far from reliable and its greatest value lies in giving to us the bright side of a picture which Tacitus and Suetonius have painted with repulsive blackness.

Among modern writers who are disposed to seek out the good points of Tiberius' life and character, are Stahr, Beesly, and Furneaux. Stahr treats the subject at great length and points out many facts as recorded by Tacitus and Suetonius which show the better side of Tiberius."

nature. Tiberius journeyed on foot from the Rhine to the Tiber with the corpse of his brother Drusus, although hostility had been imputed to him toward his brother.¹ The company which he took with him to Capreae was not such as a person of disgraceful character would be likely to associate with. It consisted of men of highest culture.² In thus retiring he was but following the example of his illustrious predecessor, who had a somewhat similar retreat in his old age.³ Besides Capreae was less than twenty-four hours journey from Rome, and his retirement interfered very little with government. With regard to the many executions under the law of "maiestas", Caligula charged them to the senate rather than to Tiberius.⁴ Voltaire has written a great number of volumes on Roman history and gives little credence to the horrible stories related by Tacitus and Suetonius concerning Tiberius.⁵ Does it not seem incredible that one who used every means to check immorality,⁶ and against whose moral character nothing can be said up to his seventieth year, should suddenly give himself up to base and disgraceful practices? His tireless activity in government; his moderation when he had the greatest cause for severity; his persistent disregard for honors; and his forbearance when assailed by his enemies, — all proclaim him to have been a good, wise, and noble prince.⁷

Beesly in his lecture on Tiberius, follows Velleius very closely in attributing a brave and noble character to his subject. As a general, he compares him to Wellington, who, he says, never experienced defeat.⁸ He admits that Tiberius committed acts of cruelty in the latter part of his reign; but maintains that any character, however mild, may, when subjected to the environments which

attended the life of Tiberius, become sour and disagreeable. Beesly has no sympathy with the idea that Germanicus was mistreated by Tiberius, but believes that he received more consideration than he deserved. "Germanicus as a general and administrator", he says, "was a failure, and no one realized this better than did Tiberius"; "Tiberius governed well; in the provinces his government was beneficent to an extent hitherto unknown; at Rome the nobility was restrained with a firm hand. He is reported to have said to his son Drusus on one occasion; "You shall not break the laws nor commit outrages while I am alive; and if I find you attempting it, you shall not have the chance to do it after I am dead and gone."²

His retirement to Capreae, so much discussed, was brought about by two causes. 1st, He brooded over his growing unpopularity. He the stern moralist was being accused of immorality.³ 2nd, He began to dread conspiracies. As to the great number of executions on the charge of "maiestas" during the period of his retirement, Beesly calls attention to the fact that out of fifty-seven cases, eighteen were executed, eighteen committed suicide, eight were acquitted or spared, three were banished, three turned state's evidence, one was expelled from the senate, and of six the fate is not known; also that these persecutions were carried on by the nobility rather than by the Emperor.⁴

Aside from Tacitus, Suetonius, Velleius, and perhaps Dion Cassius, there is little history concerning the life and character of Tiberius. Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, Seneca, Josephus, and the Elder Pliny have left scanty records of this reign. Tacitus, as we have seen is not friendly to Tiberius; he traces back systematic delation and charges it up to him;

he outlines the periods of his life and character; and shows that he degenerated into an incarnate fiend. His picture is gloomy enough; but Suetonius has even a keener appetite for scandal than he. Velleius in shielding his hero, becomes altogether untrustworthy as a historian. The explanation put in the mouth of Aruntius, that Tiberius had been wholly changed by the force of despotism, comes pretty close to the truth.

Tiberius lived too long for his own reputation. Had he died in the life time of Augustus, we should read of him as a worthy prince and brave soldier; after eight years of supreme power, he would have left a worthy name as a ruling prince; death, even at seventy, would have rescued his name from the foulest stains upon it. He ^{was} "infelix vitae diurnitate". Even at his best he lacked originality and self reliance, and clung too closely to the ideas of Augustus, whom he took as his pattern. His reign was peaceful, on the whole, but lacked historical progress and interest; it left little impression upon the history of the Empire.

His change of character as years went by, is not hard to explain. His virtues were those of a subordinate rather than of a ruler; and when the master mind of Augustus directed him, he did well. That controlling force being removed, he was directed by his mother; afterward, by Sejanus. These superior minds moulded his actions. When, at length, he was deprived of these supports, he was overwhelmed by the sense of his insecurity and helplessness; he saw fresh enemies on every side, whom safety for himself compelled him to remove. The vicissitudes of his early youth, the forced separation from the wife of his choice, the compulsory marriage with the hated and profligate

Julia, the rivalries of his early manhood, the plots which gradually thickened about him as a ruler, and finally, the treachery of Sejanus, the only man whom he ever thoroughly trusted, quite perverted his moral nature. The worst that can be said against the character of Tiberius is that it was too weak to rise superior to the environments with which it was surrounded. The government became just what might reasonably be expected, when a man of mediocre ability is entrusted for any length of time with full power.

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