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RONALD SYME

## Domitian: The Last Years

### I

Fifteen years of tyranny from 81 to 96, September to September precisely. The formulation imposed by Cornelius Tacitus in his first monograph attracts and detains: *grande mortalis aevi spatium*. For generations indifferent to the Latin classics it is perpetuated in the novel of Proust, in a garbled fashion. Commenting on the long ordeal endured by Swann in servitude to a woman, the Sorbonne professor observes: «ce que le poète appelle à bon droit *grande spatium mortalis aevi*.»

In the reigns of emperors as in their biographies a dichotomy is commonly advertised. Tiberius Caesar offers the standard example. The writers of annalistic history whom Suetonius and Dio followed made the cut either in 19 (the death of Germanicus) or in 26 (the ruler's departure from Rome). Although the latter date, half way through a reign of twenty three years, was variously attractive, Tacitus decided on 23, with momentous consequences for the structure of the hexad and for his portrayal of Tiberius.

These dichotomies tend to be denounced as schema and artifice. On the contrary, if a Caesar outlasted an initial felicity he ran into trouble soon or late. The first Princeps was not exempt. In 6 B. C., twenty five years from the Battle of Actium, the government of Caesar Augustus took a turn for the worse. Livy avoided vexation by setting the term of his great work three years previously.

### II

To come to Domitian. According to Suetonius he was not able to abide by his early *clementia* and *abstinentia* (Dom. 10.1). The declension to cruelty intensified: *verum aliquanto post civilis belli victoriam saevior* (10.5). That is to say, in the year 89 after the military proclamation of Antonius Saturninus, the legate of Germania Superior, which impinged on a season of acute embarrassment. The Dacian War was not yet over. Beginning in 85 with the defeat of Oppius Sabinus, it had brought another disaster in the field when Cornelius Fuscus, the Prefect of the Guard, met his end. However, in the late summer of 88 Tettius Julianus, the legate

of Moesia Superior, won a signal victory at Tapae; and Decebalus might be ready to come to terms.<sup>1</sup>

Saturninus made his proclamation on the first day of January.<sup>2</sup> Time and place were ominous, evoking the mutiny of the two legions at Moguntiacum that led at once to the elevation of A. Vitellius (at Colonia Claudia) twenty years before. What ensued destroyed the parallel. Lappius Maximus, the commander of the other army, intervened with prompt decision.

Obscurity envelops the whole transaction. Conspiracy has been assumed.<sup>3</sup> Accident may be the answer, poor discipline, or evil counsellors among the officers, with Saturninus in the role of the 'reluctant usurper', as prefigured by Verginius Rufus in 68, as exemplified often by history or by fiction in the late annals of the Empire.<sup>4</sup>

No allies of Saturninus can be ascertained among the other army commanders.<sup>5</sup> And, so far as known, no partisans were indicted and punished at the capital. Saturninus (*suff.* 82), a new senator, was far from promising as a candidate for the purple – and perhaps a bad choice to have charge of four legions.<sup>6</sup> Whether Germania Superior was his first province after the consulship lies beyond knowledge.<sup>7</sup> The unfortunate Oppius Sabinus, by anomaly *consul ordinarius* in 84, had gone straight to Moesia, a province with the same legionary strength.

Lappius Maximus (*suff.* 86) won glory exorbitant for a senator, and dangerous prominence. Further promotion might be a problem. There was Syria, a command of eminent prestige, denied to Julius Agricola by the jealous emperor after he had conquered Britain. One might have been moved to wonder about Lappius.<sup>8</sup> None the less, Lappius went there, on attestation in 90.<sup>9</sup> That may be taken as a sign that

<sup>1</sup> To obviate the citation of some names and facts not in dispute see W. ECK, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (1970).

<sup>2</sup> As reconstructed from the protocol of the Arvales by E. RITTERLING, *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift* 12, 1893, 218 ff.: widely adopted, as in CAH XI (1936), 172 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Thus in CAH XI (1936), 172 ff. Compare G. WALSER, *Provincialia. Festschrift Laur Belart* (Basel, 1968), 498: «hinter Saturninus stand eine größere Verschwörung aus Kreisen des Senats und der Generalität».

<sup>4</sup> For this conception, JRS 68, 1978, 20 f.

<sup>5</sup> It cannot be assumed that Sallustius Lucullus (Dom. 10.3) was legate of Britain in this season.

<sup>6</sup> Despite the governorship in Judaea (combined with a legion), as deduced from the erased name on a dedication set up towards the end of Vespasian's reign. Cf. JRS 68, 1978, 12 ff.

<sup>7</sup> There is space for a legate, or rather for two, after Corellius Rufus, attested in 82 (CIL XVI 28).

<sup>8</sup> Observe, as a warning against premature assumptions, Tacitus (1958), 51 (on Lappius Maximus and Tettius Julianus): «neither of those generals could with safety have been put in charge of Syria.» – annulled rapidly for Lappius by a diploma of 91 emerging (AE 1961, 319); while death may have anticipated further employment and honours for Tettius.

<sup>9</sup> AE 1977, 827 = SEG 27, 1009 (Gerasa).

Domitian retained confidence in his generals – and further as some confirmation of doubts concerning the events at Moguntiacum.

The year 89 would command high relief in a narrative history, either to open a book dramatically or to close it: peace with Dacia and Domitian's double triumph. In the sequel the last Danubian campaign, waged on the Pannonian frontier against Suebi and Sarmatians, occurred in 92. A period of ease and security for the government might now seem vouchsafed.

### III

In the autumn of the next year concord between the ruler and the high assembly was disrupted.<sup>10</sup> Hence for a senatorial historian a significant turning point, introducing the last epoch of a doomed reign.

A sequence of prosecutions for treason brought death or exile to sundry persons of rank and to their adherents or clients. Calamity overtook a whole group, the relatives and friends who carried on the tradition of the illustrious Thrasea Paetus, a victim of Nero. Their opposition to Nero had been slow to take shape, and Thrasea was not prosecuted until 66, the twelfth year of the reign. The parallel is not without instruction in other respects.

About Thrasea Paetus the historian furnished a full and explicit exposition in the *Annales*. What happened in 93 depends almost entirely on recent testimony, highly favourable towards the incriminated group and standing in need of elucidation. Tacitus, writing when less than five years had elapsed, gave voice to horror and indignation in his biography of Agricola.<sup>11</sup> Next Pliny, ever alert for approbation. He showed courage during the prosecutions (he was praetor at the time), public spirit in aspirations for revenge when the exiles came back; and he continued to put emphasis on his ties with the deceased.<sup>12</sup>

### IV

The government thus came into conflict with educated opinion – and philosophers were banished. A grave consequence, it should seem, but requiring sober estimation. Likewise the origin and nature of the crisis.

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<sup>10</sup> Subsequent to the decease of Julius Agricola on August 23 of 93 (Agr. 44.1). A recent book puts these transactions in 94, Pliny's praetorship in 95 (H. BENGTON, *Die Flavier* [1979], 233 ff.).

<sup>11</sup> Agr. 45.1: *non vidit Agricola obsessam curiam et clausum armis senatum*, etc. There is a chance that Tacitus was still abroad, despite *mox nostrae duxere Helvidium in carcerem manus* (collective guilt).

<sup>12</sup> Observe for example Epp. III 11.2 (help to a philosopher); IX 13 (an action in 97). Pliny now halted in his career, so he alleged (Pan. 95.3 f.) – but he became praefect in charge of the *Aerarium militare* before the death of the tyrant (ILS 2927: Comum).

It was expedient for Caesar to hold the balance between rival combinations and factions, to avoid being beguiled by a powerful minister or entrapped by a helpful company of eager adherents. Assessment of these deplorable transactions should not neglect factional rivalries, though not perhaps provoked by the Emperor himself yet developing to his gratification. Freedom to prosecute was one of the last vestiges of Republican *libertas*.

The senators under attack professed allegiance to a tradition of liberty, of integrity and courage; and they further paraded the teaching of the Stoics. While fortifying character in the evil days, that doctrine engendered arrogance and conceit, with a danger of incautious political activity or attitudes.<sup>13</sup> And some perhaps were thrust further into paths of opposition or *contumacia* than they intended, through the zeal of younger partisans.

The group easily inspired animosity. For their own part, no recent or personal grievances can be discovered. On the contrary. Junius Rusticus attained to a retarded consulship in 92 (when tribune of the plebs in 66 he offered his intercession to Thræsea). The consulate of the younger Helvidius Priscus is not on record. If not previous to 87, it might fall in 93, precisely. To the second pair of that year belongs Avidius Quietus, once a friend of Thræsea: hence to be assumed a late consul, like Junius Rusticus.<sup>14</sup> Quietus is not named among the exiles, one of whom was Mauricus, the brother of Rusticus.

There is another factor. As happens elsewhere, hot weather or the plague may have exacerbated competition and enmities. From 89 onwards is detected a sequence of unhealthy seasons – or rather a pestilence, such as the Dacian War would easily cause or encourage. Cassius Dio has the revealing story of malefactors operating with poison pins at Rome and throughout the world: repeated later for the great plague in the reign of Commodus.<sup>15</sup>

For these years an adequate sum can be mustered of deaths among the young and middle-aged.<sup>16</sup> And at any time September is found more lethal at Rome even than August.

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<sup>13</sup> As alleged by Tigellinus against Rubellius Plautus: *veterum Romanorum imitamenta praeferre, adsumpta etiam Stoicorum adrogantia sectaque quae turbidos et negotiorum adpetentes faciat* (Ann. XIV 57.3). Similarly, the prosecutor of Thræsea Paetus: *ut imperium evertant, libertatem praeferunt* (XVI 22.4).

<sup>14</sup> Pliny, Epp. VI 29.1 (Thræsea and Quietus). His command of the legion VIII Augusta (ILS 6105) belongs about the year 82.

<sup>15</sup> Dio LXVII 11.6; LXXII 14.3f.

<sup>16</sup> Tacitus (1958), 69; Some Arval Brethren (1980), 21 ff. Search for victims of the great plague under Titus is not so remunerative.

## V

In this fashion might be excogitated reasons for modifying the impression conveyed by Tacitus and Pliny – and even for extenuating the ill fame of the ruler, at the expense of the prosecutors as well as their victims.<sup>17</sup> Is the historical significance of the year 93 thereby impaired?

The testimony of Suetonius now comes in. The biographer, who at this stage in his exposition was moving towards narrative, might have discerned and registered a second turn for the worse (subsequent to 89). He does not. Between the two notices concerning Domitian's cruelty (10.1 and 10.5) he inserted a catalogue of consulars put to death (10.2–4). It comprises ten names, with no indications of time or order. The first three, leading off with *Civica Cerealis* the proconsul of Asia, are defined as *quasi molitores rerum novarum*.<sup>18</sup> For the rest, trivial pretexts are registered: *ceteros levissima quemque de causa*. In all, the ten names include four members of the high aristocracy, or what now counted as such.<sup>19</sup> But only two consulars who had held military commands.<sup>20</sup>

Junius Rusticus and the son of Helvidius Priscus figure as the eighth and ninth items, before Flavius Sabinus (*cos.* 82). The former was condemned *quod Paeti Thraseae et Helvidi Prisci laudes edidisset appellassetque eos sanctissimos viros*, the latter because in a mythological stage play he mocked Domitian's alienation from his consort Domitia Longina. The notice on Rusticus concludes with the phrase *cuius criminis occasione philosophos omnes urbe Italiaque summovit*. That is all.

Suetonius, it will be salubrious to recall, was a sober and distrustful character. He nowhere betrays an affection for doctrines, let alone any propensity to hero worship. In the company of his patron Pliny he no doubt heard more than he liked about the recent martyrs, the *sanctissimi viri* whose memory was cult and veneration.

A brief glance at one of the earlier biographies furnishes various instruction on the score of omissions. Suetonius in the <Nero> passed over the fame and the fate

<sup>17</sup> For a general rehabilitation of Domitian see K. H. WATERS, *Phoenix* 18, 1964, 49 ff.; *AJP* 90, 1969, 385 ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Cerealis* (*suff.* c. 76) was presumably proconsul in 88/9: replaced temporarily by a Roman knight (ILS 1374). The offence of the other two baffles conjecture: *Salvidienus Orfitus* (*suff. ann. inc.*) and *M. Acilius Glabrio* (*cos.* 91). The latter was killed in exile, in 95 according to Dio (LXVII. 14.3).

<sup>19</sup> *Viz.* *Salvidienus Orfitus*, *Acilius Glabrio*, *Lamia Aelianus*, *Salvius Cocceianus* (nephew to the Emperor Otho). There is no call to bring any of the four into relation with the faction of *Junius Rusticus*.

<sup>20</sup> *Viz.* *Civica Cerialis*, attested in *Moesia* in 82 (CIL XVI. 26), where he succeeded his brother *Sex. Vettulenus Cerialis* (*suff.* c. 73); on whom cf. now the diploma of 75 (M. M. ROXAN, *RMD* [1978], no. 2); and *Sallustius Lucullus*, legate of Britain, who remains a total enigma.

of Domitius Corbulo; and (also in the <Galba>) he managed to recount the fall of Nero without mentioning Verginius Rufus. The short list of Neronian victims admits Thræsea Paetus, it is true, but in a trivial and miserable fashion, namely his *tristior et paedagogi vultus*, whereas Cornelius Tacitus had been impelled to celebrate Thræsea Paetus and Barea Soranus as *virtus ipsa*.<sup>21</sup>

Some detect in the biographer not only a soured temper but a distance from senators and from senatorial historians, or even revulsion. The notion is not devoid of seductive appeal. It is not the whole truth. Suetonius is shown hasty and incompetent, perhaps in a hurry to polish off the lives of the first six Caesars. Friends no less than enemies should adhere to any biography, even were it not composed by a person of scholarly habits who was a government official, the secretary *ab epistulis*.<sup>22</sup> Along with Petronius and Lucan the <Nero> omits Ofonius Tigellinus and Nymphidius Sabinus.

To resume and conclude this rubric. Philosophers and their fanciers might earn dispraisal, as is manifest in the pages of Tacitus, despite eulogy for Thræsea Paetus as earlier for Helvidius Priscus.<sup>23</sup> The judicious Quintilian discovered pretence as well as pretension in the grim visages and heavy beards.<sup>24</sup> When Juvenal, near coeval to Suetonius, referred to Domitian's end, he put emphasis on the lower classes and on the fate of an aristocrat, namely Plautius Lamia Aelianus (*suff.* 80):

*sed periit postquam Cerdonibus esse timendus  
coeperat. hoc nocuit Lamiarum caede madenti.*<sup>25</sup>

## VI

If somewhat abated, the significance of the year 93 does not have to be discounted. Yet it remains a question how far the government suffered damage or discredit in the eyes of the leading personages in the Senate, whether discreet relics of the old aristocracy (they were few, and counted little) or men who had risen through patronage and loyalty towards the new dynasty. Neither class was enslaved to principles or doctrines.

They wanted to be consuls, but legitimate aspirations were restricted by the Flavian habit of holding the eponymate, which Domitian continued.<sup>26</sup> However,

<sup>21</sup> Suetonius, Nero 37.1; Tacitus, Ann. XVI 21.7.

<sup>22</sup> The season in which Suetonius composed the biographies may here be waived.

<sup>23</sup> Hist. IV 5.1: *ingenium inlustre altioribus studiis iuvenis admodum dedit*. He was *recti pervicax, constans adversus metus*.

<sup>24</sup> Quintilian, praef. 15; XII 3.12.

<sup>25</sup> Juvenal IV 153 f. To balance <Lamiae>, <Cerdones> is requisite. Thus (and also in VIII 102) MAYOR in his edition (1872); followed by KNOCHE (Teubner, 1950) and E. COURTNEY (1980): not so in OCT (1959). For this low-class cognomen, see TLL; and four at least of the thirteen instances in ILS are libertine.

<sup>26</sup> With a remission after a time in five years (89, 91, 93, 94, 96).

he was not reluctant to share the *fasces* with noblemen, as witness the two Volusii in 87 and 92. Safe men, whose grandfather lived unscathed until the age of ninety three, *inoffensa tot imperatorum amicitia*.<sup>27</sup>

Second consulates tended to fall to kinsmen of the Flavii or to their civilian agents and ministers. They are generally awarded early in a reign. Thus no fewer than four in 85 (and none again, save in 90 and 95).<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile in 83 Vibius Crispus and Fabricius Veiento exhibited their value by a third tenure.

For the rest Domitian had to make provision for those who benefited from his father's usurpation. The Fasti of 90 show eleven *suffecti*. Not solely the men loyal in the year of crisis. There had been a blockage in promotions – only five *suffecti* both in 87 and in 88 and four in 89. But later (in 92) perhaps as many as ten.<sup>29</sup>

## VII

After a time the Caesars of the first dynasty came to fear the conjunction of high birth and military achievement. In the sequel Sulpicius Galba, the legate of Tarraconensis, served as a warning lesson. Even sons of consuls (the new imperial nobility) are seldom permitted to govern the armed provinces.

Excellence in warfare was the *imperatoria virtus*. Domitian had been careful to visit the Rhine and embark on a campaign against the Chatti in 83, assuming a triumphal cognomen; and he went to the Danube on three occasions (85, 89, 92). His selection of governors and generals demands attention. Likewise his relations with them.

Julius Agricola, anomalous by a seven years' tenure and by the conquest of new territory, earned the rare award of the *ornamenta triumphalia*. Two generals in the Dacian War received consular *dona militaria*, namely Funisulanus Vettonianus (*suff.* 78) and Cornelius Nigrinus (*suff.* 83).<sup>30</sup> About Tettius Julianus, no information.

Agricola might have aspired to a second consulate – and so might Tettius, if he survived long enough. That honour fell to Lappius Maximus in 95, subsequent to his governorship in Syria. Not, one supposes, without arousing surprise and envy among his peers and coevals.

<sup>27</sup> Ann. XIII 30.2.

<sup>28</sup> Viz. Aurelius Fulvus with the Emperor, then Rutilius Gallicus, Catullus Messallinus, Arrecinus Clemens. Cf. F. Zevi, RSA 3, 1973, 106, whence AE 1975, 131.

<sup>29</sup> AE 1975, 132 (reproducing Zevi's view). But only six according to L. Vidman, LF 102, 1979, 97.

<sup>30</sup> ILS 1005; AE 1973, 283. For Nigrinus see below, Appendix. Funisulanus belonged to an important nexus, linked to Tettius Julianus: a Funisulana Vettulla married Tettius Africanus, the Prefect of Egypt (ILS 8759 c).



## VIII

Prudent men supported the second dynasty, even when it came to avow the shape and substance of despotism. They saw no alternative, save civil war and disruption of the Empire. Prominent among the advocates of centralised government, though not always vocal, were senators and consuls who derived their origin from the zones of the <old frontier>: Transpadana, Narbonensis and the two Spains.

Cornelius Tacitus, who denounced the excesses of the Domitianic tyranny, had already raised protest against excess in another direction: undue admiration of the martyrs who *in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt*.<sup>31</sup> There could still be great men under evil emperors, so he proclaimed. Referring to Julius Agricola, he had Ulpius Traianus in mind – and a defence of his own career and comportment.

Thrasea Paetus was a citizen of Patavium; and a northern origin is surmised for Junius Rusticus.<sup>32</sup> Not all Transpadani shared the sentiments and attitudes of the ostensibly dissident faction: not, for example, the aged Verginius Rufus, who after defeating Vindex had been reluctant to declare against Nero, or Silius Italicus, orator and poet, the last of the Neronian consuls (in both senses of the term). And the alert ambition of younger men was pressing forward.

Italia Transpadana was destined to be outshone by Spain and Narbonensis. Groups and combinations were quietly forming, with consequences to be made manifest at no long interval. First Narbonensis, a robust core issuing from the city of Nemausus. Aurelius Fulvus rose to a second consulate in 85. His son died untimely, not long after his consulship (*ordinarius* in 89), but Fulvus himself became *praefectus urbi* either on the decease of Rutilius Gallicus in 92 or a few years later.<sup>33</sup> The two Domitii also come in, the heirs of the opulent Afer: Lucanus, the younger brother, perished in 93 or 94, but Tullus had a long survival. On these families waited a resplendent future: the second Aurelius Fulvus married a daughter of the elegant and amiable Arrius Antoninus.<sup>34</sup>

Next Baetica, with Ulpius Traianus (*cos.* 91) in pride of place: the parent legate of Syria, a *vir triumphalis* and adlected into the patriciate by Vespasian. Nor was the other province negligible, with the Pedanii of Barcino, consular already (since the year 43) and neo-patrician.<sup>35</sup> Somewhere in those parts of Tarraconensis lies

<sup>31</sup> Agr. 42.4.

<sup>32</sup> Pliny, discussing a reputable family of Brixia, appealed to *illa nostra Italia* (Epp. I 14.4: to Mauricus, the brother of Rusticus). The inference is not wholly secure.

<sup>33</sup> For the three Aurelii Fulvi, observe the precious details in HA, Pius 1.1 ff.

<sup>34</sup> For the group, and for the nexus with the Annii Veri from Baetica, see Tacitus (1958), 603 ff.; 792 ff.; Some Arval Brethren (1980), 82; 86.

<sup>35</sup> For the family, E. GROAG, RE XIX, 19 ff.; R. SYME, Tacitus (1958), 479 f.; Harvard Studies 83, 1979, 287 ff.

the *patria* of the enigmatic Licinius Sura, first on show as an orator;<sup>36</sup> and Domitian's general Cornelius Nigrinus came from Liria, in the far south of the province.<sup>37</sup>

That was not all. Domitian showed amity and favour towards the Hellenic lands. He took the archonship at Athens. More important, consuls from the dynastic houses of Asia, Julius Celsus of Sardis (*suff.* 92) and the Pergamene Julius Quadratus (94). Recent investigations add the name of a new senator not related to that group: Julius Candidus, consul suffect in 86 and governing the military province of Cappadocia (?89–92).<sup>38</sup> The magnates of Asia had no quarrel with government or ruler. Apart from his odious personality, state and society was already proto-Antonine as well as cosmopolitan.

## IX

The monarch requires subtle or courageous counsellors. They overcome his hesitations and fortify decision – and they protect him from impulses which even when generous or benevolent would have no good issue. In the Palace they intervene gently to maintain concord, in the high assembly they expound the policy of the administration and cover up errors or scandal.

Vespasian and Titus were well served, and Domitian on his accession refrained from changes in the privy council.<sup>39</sup> Declaring long continuity, the company of Caesar's friends still numbered substantial phantoms from the era of iniquity such as Montanus, the fat epicure: *noverat ille / luxuriam imperii veterem noctesque Neronis*. Juvenal supplies the name, along with nine others.<sup>40</sup> He parodied the opening scene in the poem of Statius, *De bello Germanico*. That is, the council antecedent to Domitian's expedition against the Chatti in 83.

The first to make his entry is the jurist Pegasus, recently appointed Prefect of the City.<sup>41</sup> The bland Vibius Crispus follows, and the procession terminates with Fabricius Veiento and Catullus Messallinus.

<sup>36</sup> Martial VII 47 (recovering from a grave illness in 92). Sura's tribe is the *«Sergia»* (CIL II 4282: near Tarraco), which does not go with an origin from Barcino or Tarraco. Perhaps Celsa or Osca.

<sup>37</sup> AE 1973, 283.

<sup>38</sup> H. HALFMANN, *Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jh. n. Chr.* (1979), 107; R. SYME, *Some Arval Brethren* (1980), 90 ff.

<sup>39</sup> For the continuity, J. DEVREKER, *Ancient Society* 8, 1977, 223 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Juvenal IV 75 ff. Montanus is to be identified as T. Junius Montanus (*suff.* 81), cf. AE 1973, 500 (Alexandria Troadis): the first eastern consul, but from a Roman colonia. He came to the *fasces* after a proconsulate in Sicily.

<sup>41</sup> Pegasus (*suff.* c.73) now emerges as Jtius Pegasus, governor of Dalmatia (AE 1967, 355). Not therefore a Cornelius from Vasio in Narbonensis, as conceived possible in Tacitus (1958), 805.

The conclave furnishes various instruction as well as entertainment. Enough without speculation about absent members. The argument from silence is liable to be misused – or deprecated. Nevertheless it often leads without discomfort to conclusions of a certain value. For example, individuals or groups whom Pliny failed to honour with a missive.<sup>42</sup> In this instance, three characters should have invited curiosity.

First, Cocceius Nerva, the aristocrat whom Vespasian selected to share the *fasces* in 71. A favourite of Nero, he lent comfort and support on the occasion of Piso's conspiracy. Nerva was smooth and subtle – and, like Vibius Crispus, not one to go against the current.

Second, Arrecinus Clemens (*suff.*73), a kinsman of the dynasty: his sister Tertulla had been the first wife of Titus, and mother to Julia.<sup>43</sup> Suetonius happens to call him a friend and agent of Domitian.<sup>44</sup>

Third, Julius Ursus. Juvenal registered one Guard Prefect, Cornelius Fuscus. There were normally two. A papyrus brings welcome elucidation.<sup>45</sup> It is a letter of Domitian inviting a Prefect of Egypt to become the colleague of Fuscus: he had transferred Julius Ursus *in amplissimum ordinem*. The demotion of Ursus, at his own request (that was the formula), brought him a suffect consulship in 84. According to Dio he had tried to mediate in the quarrel between Domitian and his arrogant consort, and it was Julia's favour that secured him the consulate.<sup>46</sup> Her name implies a Julia for maternal grandmother, married to an Arrecinus – and presumably from the family of Julii Lupi.<sup>47</sup> Ursus had court influence – and kinship with Julia, so it may be supposed.

For these absences, explanations are not far to seek. Arrecinus was in fact governor of Tarraconensis, whence he came back to assume a second consulate in 85.<sup>48</sup> Further, one may note in passing that Flavius Sabinus (*cos.* 82) the husband of Julia would be an appropriate member of Domitian's *consilium*, and likewise Petillius Rufus (*cos.* II 83). On the other hand, Cocceius Nerva and Julius Ursus can hardly

<sup>42</sup> e.g. Annius Verus (*suff.*97), Aelius Hadrianus (108) – or the third Aurelius Fulvus (*cos.* 120); some of whose coevals he did not neglect, viz. Pedanius Fuscus (*cos.* 118) and Ummidius Quadratus (*suff.* 118). On whom, Harvard Studies 83, 1979, 287 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Suetonius attributes Julia to the second wife, Marcia Furnilla (Divus Titus 4.2). An error, as now turns out. See the convincing arguments of H. CASTRITIUS, *Historia* 18, 1969, 492 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Dom. 11.1: *unum e familiaribus et emissariis suis, capitis condemnaturus*.

<sup>45</sup> P. Berol. 8334. The interpretation of PIGANIOL is followed in Tacitus (1958), 835 f.; JRS 70, 1980, 66. For Ursus see further PIR<sup>2</sup>, J 630; W. ECK, RE Suppl. XIV, 211 f.

<sup>46</sup> Dio LXVIII 3.1; 4.2.

<sup>47</sup> Arrecinus Clemens, one of the Guard Prefects in 41, had for kinsman and friend a tribune called Julius Lupus (Josephus, AJ XIX 191). His son is clearly Ti. Julius Lupus, dying as Prefect of Egypt in 73 (PIR<sup>2</sup>, J 390). Close kinship with Ursus has been surmised, cf. Tacitus (1958), 636: perhaps indeed first cousins.

<sup>48</sup> AE 1947, 40 (Pisaurum), cf. G. ALFÖLDY, *Fasti Hispanienses* (1969), 22 ff.

have been left out by Statius. For Juvenal they jarred with a satirist's presentation. He could not use persons who survived to high eminence and a blameless reputation in public.

By the year 95 most of the ten *amici Caesaris* put on parade by Juvenal were no longer among the living. Still extant, however, was *prudens Veiento*, the Nestor of the age, and not perhaps forfeiting the esteem of the despot. Otherwise curiosity goes short. A thought might be given to Aurelius Fulvus (*cos. II 85*), if successor in the prefecture of the City to Rutilius Gallicus.<sup>49</sup>

Some earlier reigns had seen the emergence of a single potent minister, not without baneful consequences. While Domitian avoided recourse to a Seianus, he was trapped in his increasing isolation, and he came to distrust his near entourage. In 95 the two Guard Prefects were put on trial.<sup>50</sup> Their successors, Norbanus and Petronius Secundus, lacked the social prestige or senatorial relatives possessed by Cornelius Fuscus and Julius Ursus.

## X

Domitian opened the year 95 as consul for the seventeenth time, with for colleague his cousin Flavius Clemens, the husband of Flavia Domitilla. Earning from the biographer the label of *contemptissima inertia*, this innocuous adjunct met his end in the spring shortly after he vacated the *fasces* (Dom. 15.1).

When Vespasian seized the power he was in a happy posture to found a lasting dynasty. Not only a pair of sons, separated by a dozen years, and the elder embellished with military renown. He presided over a large family group, to be thinned and reduced by the course of nature or by actions of Domitian. Briefly as follows.<sup>51</sup>

First, his brother Sabinus (the *praefectus urbi*) left a son by a wife nowhere named: T. Flavius Sabinus, known only as *suffectus* in 69, *ordinarius* in 72.<sup>52</sup> There was also a daughter.<sup>53</sup> The next generation is represented by Sabinus (*cos. 82*) and Clemens (95), grandsons thus of the City Prefect.

Sabinus (who married Julia, the daughter of Titus) was put to death. The date is not clear, the trivial reason is reported in Suetonius' catalogue of the ten consulars: the herald at the election had inadvertently announced him as *imperator* (10.4). That occasion, it has been supposed, might refer to a subsequent second consulate.<sup>54</sup> If so, perhaps the elections held in 87.

<sup>49</sup> Gallicus (*suff. II 85*) died in 92 (Statius, *Silvae I*, praef.).

<sup>50</sup> Dio LXVII 14.4. No names – but Casperius Aelianus, who turns up in 97 had been a prefect under Domitian (LXVIII 3.3).

<sup>51</sup> The stemma presented in PIR<sup>2</sup> (subjoined to F 398) has been modified in a thorough study by G. B. TOWNEND, JRS 51, 1961, 54 ff. His own stemma (ib. 62) is now fortified by having Arrecina Tertulla mother to Julia.

<sup>52</sup> He married an Arrecina, as conjectured by TOWNEND, o. c. 57.

<sup>53</sup> The wife of L. Caesennius Paetus, the consul of 61 (ILS 995).

<sup>54</sup> As suggested in PIR<sup>2</sup>, F 355. Sabinus is normally identified as the eminent and ill-

Second, the Arrecini. The progenitor was M. Arrecinus, one of the two commanders of the Guard when Caligula was assassinated.<sup>55</sup> His wife can be specified without hesitation as a Julia.<sup>56</sup> The daughter, Arrecina Tertulla, married Titus (about the year 63), another daughter Flavius Sabinus (*suff.* 69), so it is plausibly conjectured: hence the cognomen of their second son, T. Flavius Clemens (*cos.* 95).<sup>57</sup> The son of the Guard Prefect is Arrecinus Clemens (*suff.* 73, *suff.* II 85).

This consular is absent from the Suetonian list. He occurs in a subsequent notice, with Domitian described as *capitis condemnaturus* (Dom. 11.2).

In September of the year 87 the Arvales offered thanksgivings *ob detecta scelera nefariorum*.<sup>58</sup> Conspiracies do not always impose credence, as Domitian himself was in the habit of observing (21.1). Whatever view be held of this transaction, it acquires singular value if it involved Arrecinus Clemens. Not only kin to the dynasty, but *praefectus urbi*, as now disclosed by the emendation of one letter on his inscription.<sup>59</sup> Flavius Sabinus (*cos.* 82) may also come in (cf. above). Valid conjecture assigned him an Arrecina for mother.

Despite some uncertainties the family nexus is shown to interlock tightly. By the same token, necessary reconstructions reveal the inadequacies of the written sources.

Third, the general Petillius Cerialis (*suff.* II 74) was linked to Vespasian by a *propinqua adfinitas*.<sup>60</sup> He married a sister, so it is presumed. Hence Petillius Rufus, consul for the second time in 83 as colleague of Domitian, was the ruler's first cousin.<sup>61</sup>

The Petillii faded out, and after the killing of Flavius Clemens in 95 Domitian was left with the two boys, the sons of Clemens und Domitilla, to whom he allotted the names 'Vespasianus' and 'Domitianus'.<sup>62</sup> They were the survivors of seven children.<sup>63</sup> The facts of mortality at Rome, especially among the young, deterred

starred patron of Dio (Or. XIII 1). C. P. JONES puts his death 'perhaps early in the reign when many of Titus' friends came to grief' (The Roman World of Dio of Prusa [1978], 46).

<sup>55</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup>, A 1703. His earlier career is now revealed by AE 1976, 200 (Ariminum) – where, however, the editors insert the tribe *Ani(ensis)*, ignoring the son's inscription at Pisaurum which duly certified *Camilia*.

<sup>56</sup> As indicated above in the matter of Julius Ursus.

<sup>57</sup> TOWNEND, o. c. 57.

<sup>58</sup> CIL VI 2065.

<sup>59</sup> J. DEVREKER, Epigraphica 38, 1976, 180: on AE 1947, 40. Duly noted from DEVREKER by W. ECK, ANRW II 1 (1974), 209.

<sup>60</sup> Tacitus, Hist. III 59.2. By his full style 'Q. Petillius Cerialis Caesius Rufus'.

<sup>61</sup> The identity of this consul is a problem. Cerialis himself, so it is argued by A. R. BIRLEY, Britannia 4, 1973, 186 f. Against, J. DEVREKER, Ancient Society 8, 1977, 233. He suggests a younger brother of the general.

<sup>62</sup> Dom. 15.1. They had been entrusted to Quintilian for education (IV, praef. 2; VI, praef. 1).

<sup>63</sup> ILS 1839 (their nurse).

hopes for a long perpetuation of the dynasty – or, at the best, prudent men might be moved to exclaim *dii avertant principes pueros!*<sup>64</sup>

Some may have wondered about an alternative, if Domitian died, to superintend the government as guardian to the boy princes. Caesennius Paetus, the consul of 61, had married a daughter of Flavius Sabinus.<sup>65</sup> Vespasian's brother was appointed *praefectus urbi* the same year – in a season of notable political changes and promotions.

Paetus left two sons. The elder, the homonymous consul of 79, went to Asia as proconsul in 92 or 93.<sup>66</sup> No evidence tells for or against his survival. The younger, Sospes (recalling by that name his preservation during the parent's invasion of Armenia), earned military decorations in 92, commander of the legion XIII Gemina in the campaign against Suebi and Sarmatae.<sup>67</sup> Sospes lived on, but he was not to be gratified by a consulship in the near sequel to his next post, namely Galatia: the province Cappadocia – Galatia was divided for a short time on the decease of the consular Antistius Rusticus, who died there in 93 or 94.<sup>68</sup>

In invoking any prospective role or aspirations for Caesennius Sospes, extreme caution is prescribed. By age, something like fifteen years separated the brothers. Since death or divorce was a common phenomenon, it is far from clear that the mother of Sospes was a Flavia Sabina.<sup>69</sup>

## XI

So far, the Flavian family and dynasty. By 95 Domitian had surmounted some of his preoccupations. The wars on the Danubian frontier were over. The Parthians, normally quiescent for good reasons, were alert to cause trouble if opportunity offered. In 88 and 89 they were lending support to a false Nero.<sup>70</sup> Diplomacy had recently induced them to surrender the impostor.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>64</sup> HA, Tac. 6.5. A prospect to be feared in September of 6 B. C. when Caesar Augustus reached the age of fifty seven.

<sup>65</sup> ILS 995.

<sup>66</sup> W. ECK, *Senatoren*, etc. (1970), 226.

<sup>67</sup> ILS 1017 (Pisidian Antioch). For this reconstruction, JRS 67, 1977, 38 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Martial IX 30. For the career of Rusticus (*suff.* 90), AE 1925, 126 (Pisidian Antioch). To be presumed legate from 92, in succession to Julius Candidus (*suff.* 86), attested by CIL III. 250 (Ancyra). T. Pomponius Bassus, the next governor (consul on September 1 of 94) reached the province while still consul-designate. Cf., on the coin evidence, P. R. FRANKE, *Chiron* 9, 1979, 277 ff.

<sup>69</sup> Sospes (it is assumed) came to a retarded consulship in the summer of 114. See the Thracian diploma, M. M. ROXAN, RMD (1978), no. 14.

<sup>70</sup> Suetonius, Nero 57: *tam favore nomen eius apud Parthos fuit ut vehementer adiutus et vix redditus sit.*

<sup>71</sup> Statius, *Silvae* IV 3.110: *Eoae citius venite laurus.* The opening poem in the book celebrates January 1 of 95 (the ruler's seventeenth consulship).

Domestic policy was not devoid of embarrassment. Domitian increased the pay of the troops, and he needed money for his buildings. Hence rapacity and confiscations, with resentment among the propertied class; and his rigour alienated the lower orders.<sup>72</sup> However, his building programme (much of it inherited from the reign of Titus) was close to completion, the imperial treasury now amply replenished, so at least it can be argued.<sup>73</sup>

Whatever the situation at the capital, the security of the ruler depended on the armies and their commanders. It was a favourable sign that in 95 he conferred a second consulate on Lappius Maximus, the governor of Syria: an abnormal honour, none since 85 apart from Cocceius Nerva in 90.<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, the ruin of an army commander, the solitary specimen on Suetonius' list. It was Sallustius Lucullus, the legate of Britannia.<sup>75</sup> His identity and full nomenclature is a problem.<sup>76</sup> Likewise the period of his tenure, the date of his prosecution and death.

Although crafty and rancorous, Domitian was arrogant and impulsive. The destruction of Flavius Clemens was a fatal mistake.<sup>77</sup> A propensity to erratic behaviour became manifest shortly before, when, to encourage cereal production in a season of famine, he promulgated an imperious decree: no new vineyards in Italy, in most regions abroad half of them to be torn up.<sup>78</sup> Protests arose, leading to an eloquent embassy from Asia, and Domitian dropped the notion.

Otherwise the men of substance and repute in the provinces east or west had little to complain about. The ruler was vigilant, intent to curb exactions and malpractice of the governors.<sup>79</sup>

Domitian's edict about the vines would put elderly senators like Fabricius Vei-

<sup>72</sup> Dom. 12.1: *exhaustus operum ac munerum impensis, stipendioque quod adiecerat*, etc. He was *super ingenii naturam inopia rapax, metu saevus* (3.2).

<sup>73</sup> JRS 20, 1930, 55 ff. = Roman Papers (1979), 1 ff. Against which, C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, JRS 25, 1935, 150 ff. For a middle view, A. GARZETTI, Nerva (1950), 60 ff. See further Tacitus (1958), 629 f.

<sup>74</sup> Perhaps a reward for successful diplomacy in the matter of the false Nero.

<sup>75</sup> Dom. 10.3: *quod lanceas novae formae appellari Luculleas passus esset*. Not sufficient to demonstrate much previous military experience.

<sup>76</sup> P. Sallustius Blaesus (*suff.* 89) might be polyonymous, cf. Tacitus (1958), 648. But never thus registered on the lavish protocol of the Arvales. For an intricate and inconclusive discussion see now Some Arval Brethren (1980), 42 ff. Add now A. R. BIRLEY, The Fasti of Roman Britain (1981), 82 f.

<sup>77</sup> Dom. 15.1: *quo maxime facto maturavit sibi exitum*.

<sup>78</sup> Dom 7.2., cf. 14.2. In 94 or perhaps even in 93, cf. *sobria rura* in Statius, Silvae IV 2. 37 along with 3.11 f. For this abortive measure see now B. LEVICK, Latomus 41, 1982, 66 ff.

<sup>79</sup> So much that *neque modestiores umquam neque iustiores extiterint: e quibus plerosque post illum reos omnium criminum vidimus* (8.2). Suetonius may be guilty of exaggeration. The notorious case was Marius Priscus, proconsul in Africa. Many will now concede that the *patria* of Suetonius was in fact Hippo Regius (AE 1952, 73).

ento in mind of an earlier emperor. Nero came out with an idea of genius: to abolish indirect taxes and thus confer *pulcherrimum donum generi mortalium*. Imperial counsellors, the *seniores*, restrained the juvenile impulse, after due praise for *magnitudo animi*.<sup>80</sup>

Nero became contemporary and visible in matters of grave import. After Flavius Clemens the next victim was the freedman Epaphroditus, killed (it was alleged) for ingratitude because he deserted his patron and friend in the supreme emergency.<sup>81</sup> After the suppression of Piso's plot Epaphroditus had received military decorations.<sup>82</sup> Some may have remembered that Cocceius Nerva on that occasion was honoured with the *ornamenta triumphalia*, and also with statues in triumphal garb. In the transactions of 68 and 69 (so far as recoverable) Nerva escaped any mention for good or ill.<sup>83</sup> However, it is an idle fancy that Nerva now went in fear of his life.<sup>84</sup>

As consuls to introduce the next year Domitian designated the aristocratic Aristius Vetus, with as colleague the almost nonagenarian Manlius Valens.<sup>85</sup> Selection of that relic could scarcely have been taken by the high assembly as other than affront and contempt, comparable to the one day consul appointed by Caesar the Dictator – or to Rosius Regulus by Vitellius on the last day of October in 69, saluted by derision.<sup>86</sup> Manlius Valens brought up Nero's end, the rapid sequence of pretenders, the invasions of Italy. In the winter of 68/9 he commanded the legion *I Italica*, then stationed at Lugdunum.<sup>87</sup>

## XII

Juvenal styled Domitian a *calvus Nero*. Clearly not a coinage of the satirist. Men of the time might with propriety adduce a more formidable predecessor, likewise a

<sup>80</sup> Ann. XIII 50.2.

<sup>81</sup> Dated by Dio before the killing of Flavius Clemens (LXVII 14.4), therefore late in 94. Suetonius also puts it before Clemens, and proceeds *denique Flavium Clementem* (15.7); and, after *maturavit sibi exitium*, follow the celestial phenomena of the first eight months of 96 (15.2). Suetonius thus abridges unduly the interval between the end of Clemens and the end of Domitian.

<sup>82</sup> ILS 9505 (his large sepulchral monument on the Esquiline). On which (against STEIN in PIR<sup>2</sup>, E 69), W. ECK, *Historia* 25, 1976, 382 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Ann. XV 72.1.

<sup>84</sup> Alleged by an anecdote in Dio (LXVII 15.6). In the fiction of Philostratus, Nerva is exiled along with (Salvidienus) Orfitus and an unidentified Rufus (*Vita Apollonii* VIII 8).

<sup>85</sup> Dio LXVII 14.5.

<sup>86</sup> Hist. III 37.3.

<sup>87</sup> Hist. I 64.4.



bald head.<sup>88</sup> The state papers of Tiberius Caesar were the sole reading matter of Domitian, so they opined.<sup>89</sup>

Tiberius, who distrusted the medical profession, lived to seventy seven. Curious particulars show him delicate in his diet. He liked pears and cucumbers, asparagus and broccoli.<sup>90</sup> Not enough perhaps to certify a vegetarian in the last years on the island. Tiberius had previously been addicted to strong drink. That consolation in his vicissitudes might have abated with old age and tranquillity on the island retreat.

Something is known about Domitian's habits. At noon he took a substantial meal, but nothing much in the evening, only an apple and *modicam in ampulla potiunculam*; and when he gave banquets they were not extended to long hours of drinking.<sup>91</sup> In short, he was careful and abstemious. No court doctor happens to be on record – and for that matter no astrologer or philosopher, all standard equipment of the Palace, and sometimes potent influences.

Domitian was now completing his forty fourth year and surpassing his corpulent brother who died at forty one.<sup>92</sup> As far as bodily health went, a firm candidate for survival or even longevity, apart from the hazards of a pestilence. But he might fear poison or an assassin.

Domitian's mind was clouded, his spirits in depression. He was dangerously isolated, he felt the fears he inspired, *terribilis cunctis et invisus* (14.1). During the first eight months of the next year celestial anger was manifested by much thunder and lightning. (15.2). Many buildings were struck, including the *Templum gentis Flaviae* – and even the palace and the imperial bedchamber. Other portents supervened. While some members of the educated class might renounce traditional beliefs or superstitions, few remained impervious to the science of the stars. The Chaldaeans (it was said) warned Domitian in his youth, hence no danger from eating mushrooms. He knew the year destined for his end, the day and even the hour. He was *pavidus semper atque anxius*, he became *sollicitior in dies* (14.2; 4).

<sup>88</sup> While furnishing valuable particulars about the physique and complexion of Tiberius, the biographer missed the *nudus capillo vertex* (Ann. IV 57.2). Likewise the *ulcerosa facies ac plerumque medicaminibus interstincta*.

<sup>89</sup> Dom. 20: *praeter commentarios et acta Tiberi Caesaris nihil lectitabat*. Not meant for praise. The modern scholar will interpret in a contrary sense.

<sup>90</sup> Pliny, NH XV 54; XIX. 64; 145; 137. He even had <is>er brought from Germany (CXIX 90): perhaps parsnips.

<sup>91</sup> Dom. 21. Compare Statius, *Silvae* V 1. 121 f. (on the wife of Abascantus): *ipsa dapas modicas et sobria pocula tradit / exemplumque ad erile monet*. Domitian's habits were duly traduced by Pliny, Pan. 49.

<sup>92</sup> Suetonius, *Divus Titus* 11. In 2.1 the biographer was in error by two years.

## XIII

On September 14 Domitian completed his fifteenth year in the purple. Four days later he succumbed in the Palace. The chamberlain Parthenius arranged the murder. Even when a plot succeeds, not all of the facts become public; and the passage of time brings embellishment or misconceptions. Suetonius furnished the essential names and particulars, prefixed with a cautious phrase: *haec fere divulgata sunt* (19.1). He had already assumed the complicity of Domitia Longina (14.1). But he omits the commanders of the Praetorian Guard.

Dio has a lengthy account, composite and of unequal value.<sup>93</sup> Three items deserve brief attention, though not for the same reason.

First, the Empress Domitia along with the Guard Prefects Norbanus and Petronius Secundus had foreknowledge, «so at least it is said.»<sup>94</sup>

Second, Domitian wrote down the names of those he intended to do away with, and he put the tablet under his pillow when taking his siesta. A small boy noticed the object and innocently gave it to the Empress. The persons endangered at once went into action.

Circumstantial (as fiction has to be), the story betrays a precise and damaging parallel to what occurred (or was believed) in the lifetime of the historian. Namely when Commodus was assassinated on the evening of the last day of December, 192.<sup>95</sup> That has been duly noted. Curiosity or pedantry may observe that another small boy was in fact present when they killed Domitian. He gave a report on one particular (Dom. 17).

Third, the conspirators did not go to work before making sure of a candidate for the power. After vain approach to others, they had recourse to Cocceius Nerva, and he complied, having been himself in dire peril yet preserved because an astrologer told Domitian that he would die anyhow within a few days.

Dio's exposition concludes (it is highly suitable) with the anecdote about the notorious sage and charlatan of Tyana. On that September day Apollonius had a vision at Ephesus, and he joyously ejaculated the name of Stephanus, the author of the deed.

A large measure therefore of fable as well as speculation and surmise. Conspirators, it should seem, ought not to have gone ahead without enlisting the Prefects of the Guard or deciding on the choice of the next emperor.<sup>96</sup> Conspirators are not always given the requisite leisure. However, if acting on chance and sudden impul-

<sup>93</sup> Dio LXVII 15–18.

<sup>94</sup> Dio LXVII 15.6.

<sup>95</sup> Herodian I 17. On which, F. GROSSO, *La Lotta Politica al Tempo di Commodo* (1964), 400 ff. That scholar was sceptical about both stories.

<sup>96</sup> Thus S. GSELL, *Essai sur le Règne de l'Empereur Domitien* (1894), 327 f.

sion, Parthenius and his agents may well have managed to get in touch with the commanders of the Praetorians.<sup>97</sup> Cocceius Nerva was likely to be elusive.

#### XIV

Provinces and armies created the monarchy. Dissembled or forgotten for a time, the alarming truth came out in 68 and 69 – and it had to be faced by a civilian usurper emergent at the capital. Furthermore, an assessment of Domitian's rule during the last triennium bears heavily on his relations with the legates governing the military regions.

Despite the events of 93 and a sequence of consulars put to death (sporadic, however, and a highly miscellaneous list), Domitian was able to find loyal adherents, so it appears. Caesar and his counsellors had to manage a system of promotions without undue disturbances. Regularity was expedient, and it appealed to the convenience of most senators.

Long tenures were a dubious benefit. Apart from Agricola, prorogued for a task of conquest at the outset of the reign, they are not easy to establish later. For the most part three years, or sometimes four. Many of the legates had previously governed one of the eight praetorian provinces in the portion of Caesar. That type of promotion was acquiring stability. Further, some of the ex-consuls went out to take up their commands quite soon.

Active warfare ended with the end of 92. In the near sequel governors may have been replaced, and perhaps again in the summer of 96.<sup>98</sup> The identity of nine consular legates in office in September of 96 would be worth knowing. Not merely for the intensive, albeit sometimes hazardous, investigation of senators and their careers.<sup>99</sup> Domitian's policy is in question, and the prospects awaiting his successor.

For an armed proclamation, distance and time hampered consensus among the legates. Britain and Syria (along with Cappadocia) lay on the far edges of the Roman dominions. Likewise Spain, and not likely to repeat with a single legion the fateful elevation of Sulpicius Galba.

The armies now comprised twenty eight legions. Of that total fifteen stood on Rhine and Danube. Though the two Germanies had fallen from eight to six, they carried heavy and historic prestige. Recent warfare shifted the balance of military power: four legions in Pannonia, five in the two Moesian commands.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Dom. 23.1: *miles ... paratus et ulcisci, nisi duces defuissent.*

<sup>98</sup> A certain temptation must be confessed, to assign important changes of governors to 89, 93, 96.

<sup>99</sup> W. Eck, *Senatoren*, etc. (1970). Since then valuable discoveries or revisions accrue.

<sup>100</sup> JRS 18, 1928, 43 ff.; CAH XI (1936), 177; 187. Mainly following E. RITTERLING in the article 'Legio' (RE XII). For Moesia the vital document is ILS 2719: a tribune of II Adiatrix commanding detachments of five legions and receiving decorations in Domitian's Suebo-

Search for those nine legates encounters lacunae in the evidence and intricate problems going back to 89 or 93; and constructions are liable to be overturned by the emergence of new inscriptions. Confined to Rhine and Danube, the enquiry takes the following shape and procedure.

For Germania Inferior the gap of a decade intervenes after Lappius Maximus, who defeated Antonius Saturninus. In Germania Superior the successor to Saturninus is on record: the jurist Javolenus Priscus (*suff.* 86), attested by a military diploma of 90.<sup>101</sup> He can be allocated the period from 89 to 92 or 93. Then another lacuna. In both Germanies the next known legates are men appointed after the death of Domitian.<sup>102</sup>

Moesia is more helpful. The successor to Tettius Julianus is missing, but a diploma of 93 disclosed Pompeius Longinus (*suff.* 90) in Moesia Superior;<sup>103</sup> and new testimony shows him still there on July 12 of 96.<sup>104</sup> In the other province Octavius Fronto (*suff.* 86) is attested in July of 92.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps towards the close of his tenure. If so, the successor should be an Ignotus. The next document is dated to January of 97, not without problems, and perhaps instruction.<sup>106</sup> The auxiliary troops are registered as *sub Iulio Marf.* He is identified as Julius Marinus, proconsul of Bithynia c. 89 and presumed a consul suffect of 93.<sup>107</sup> Given the season and the region, he is more likely to have been appointed by Domitian than by his successor.<sup>108</sup>

Julius Marinus should engage some interest – from the eastern lands and probably from the Roman colony Berytus.<sup>109</sup> Though put in charge of three legions, Marinus may not have had much military experience in his favour. That was not in demand for legates in a quiet period.

Pannonia is the crux, by its central and strategic position in the world empire, by its garrison of four legions. No other province now had more than three. After Funisulanus Vettonianus (*suff.* 78),<sup>110</sup> who left in 85 when the Dacians invaded Moesia and became the first legate of Moesia Superior, no governor is on direct

Sarmetian campaign (of 92). Of those five, three were allocated to Moesia Superior in JRS 18, 1928, 48 f. For various reasons I now believe that to be erroneous.

<sup>101</sup> CIL XVI 36, cf. ILS 1015 (Nedinum: his cursus).

<sup>102</sup> Viz. Ulpian Traianus and Julius Servianus. On whom see below.

<sup>103</sup> CIL XVI 39 (issued on September 16, 94).

<sup>104</sup> AE 1977, 104 = M. M. ROXAN, RMD (1978), no. 6.

<sup>105</sup> CIL XVI 37.

<sup>106</sup> CIL XVI 41.

<sup>107</sup> The proconsulate, the only known detail in the career of Marinus, emerges from the inscription of his son (ILS 1026). For some uncertainty about the cognomen, A. STEIN, Die Legaten von Moesia (1940), 59. Further, proposing to read Mar[ in XVI 41, Some Arval Brethren (1980), 54 f.

<sup>108</sup> The next legate is Pomponius Rufus (*suff.* 95), in 99 (CIL XVI 44 f.).

<sup>109</sup> For the evidence and the arguments, H. HALFMANN, Die Senatoren aus dem östlichem Teil, etc. (1979), no. 14. The family has the tribe *Fabia*.

<sup>110</sup> ILS 1005.

attestation for a long space of time, through the years of Danubian warfare and the ensuing cessation until Pompeius Longinus at the beginning of 98.<sup>111</sup>

A new inspection of an important document brings supplement. Two consular Neratii stand together on an inscription, both governors of Pannonia.<sup>112</sup> The elder was identified as Neratius Priscus the jurist, consul suffect in 97 (and the brother of Marcellus, *suff.* 95).<sup>113</sup> The younger, a homonymous son, was assigned to the reign of Hadrian.<sup>114</sup> Then the *Fasti Potentini* revealed a Neratius Priscus, consul suffect in 87.<sup>115</sup> Not but that conviction persisted in the existence of three Neratii Prisci.<sup>116</sup>

The revision reduces them to two, consuls in 87 and in 97.<sup>117</sup> The Pannonian governorship of the former is therefore assigned somewhere in the period 90–96. There are notable consequences for the career of latter, the jurist.<sup>118</sup>

If accepted, Neratius Priscus (*suff.* 87) may belong without discomfort to 93–6. Pompeius Longinus now comes in, attested in Pannonia at the beginning of 98. He went there from Moesia Superior. The date of transition therefore demands close attention. Perhaps before September of 96 – and he may in fact have already left before the diploma was issued in July of 96.<sup>119</sup> Delays in these documents are not without parallel. For example, Funisulanus had probably been called to Moesia by the Dacian invasion before September of 85.<sup>120</sup>

The gaps in the evidence for 96 are painful and discouraging. Two names of note and consequence have not failed to arouse hopes: Ulpius Traianus (*cos.* 91), and Julius Servianus (*suff.* 90), neither with known consular occupations before the death of Domitian. For Traianus the first on record is Germania Superior (he was appointed in the summer of 97); and Servianus took his place there in the winter of 97/8.<sup>121</sup>

Resort has been had to an indirect approach. Tribunes commonly saw service in

<sup>111</sup> CIL XVI 42.

<sup>112</sup> ILS 1034 (Saepinum).

<sup>113</sup> PIR<sup>1</sup>, N 46. The document showed the prefecture of the *Aerarium Saturni* – but no priesthood.

<sup>114</sup> Because of the supplement *leg. Aug. pr. pr. P[annonia] / inferiore et Pannonia [superiore]*. Pannonia was divided in 106, with Aelius Hadrianus (*suff.* 108) the first legate. This Neratius Priscus, be it noted, was *septemvir epulonum*.

<sup>115</sup> AE 1949, 23.

<sup>116</sup> A full statement of the thesis was rendered in *Hermes* 85, 1957, 480 ff. = *Roman Papers* (1979), 339 ff.

<sup>117</sup> G. CAMODECA, *Atti Acc. Napoli* 87, 1976, 19 ff., whence AE 1976, 195.

<sup>118</sup> See below, Appendix.

<sup>119</sup> AE 1977, 104 = M. M. ROXAN, *RMD* (1978), no. 6.

<sup>120</sup> CIL XVI 31.

<sup>121</sup> HA, *Hadr.* 2.6. Thence to Pannonia in 98, cf. Pliny, *Epp.* VIII 25.3 (a tribune who shared the transit).

an army commanded by a consular kinsman. Aelius Hadrianus was the son of Traianus' cousin, and Servianus had married his sister. Hadrianus passed through three tribunates, abnormally.<sup>122</sup> His movements ought to reveal something. Early in 98 he joined Julius Servianus in Germania Superior. Before that he had served in II Adiutrix (Moesia Superior, it is presumed) and in V Macedonica (stationed at Oescus in Moesia Inferior). Hence a Moesian command held by either consular, or perhaps by both.

The search has not been attended with success. For Traianus, Moesia Superior seemed plausible.<sup>123</sup> It is annulled by Pompeius Longinus now emerging as still there in 96 – unless Traianus had after Longinus a tenure of a dozen months before going to Germania Superior.<sup>124</sup>

## XV

Traianus acquired the power without needing to make a proclamation. Nerva's government ran into trouble, and in October it was pushed to the verge of collapse. Casperius Aelianus fomented a tumult of the Praetorian Guard and compelled Nerva to surrender to their vengeance the assassins of Domitian – assigning his colleague Petronius to that company.<sup>125</sup>

In discredit and dire emergency, Nerva mounted the Capitol and declared Traianus his partner and heir. An orator later invoked guidance from divine providence. Pliny and others would not underrate secret influences and strong pressures; and Pliny conceded that Nerva's decision was tantamount to an abdication.<sup>126</sup> The ingenious (and among them the erudite) are prone to discover design where chance or accident operates. There are clear temptations. The conspiracy that removed Commodus has not failed to provoke surmise, notably the role of the Guard Prefect Aemilius Laetus. He was able to impose quickly his candidate, an elderly military man who was in the near vicinity, being *praefectus urbi*: namely Helvius Pertinax. Ulterior plans have even been suspected: Septimius Severus had been installed in a key position, the governorship of Pannonia.<sup>127</sup>

Without conjecture to excess, missing facts and persons encourage sundry questions about the elevation of Ulpus Traianus. In 97 army commanders had time to weigh their chances and enter into negotiation anterior to a provocative crisis in

<sup>122</sup> HA, Hadr. 2.2. ff.; ILS 308.

<sup>123</sup> For this conjecture, Arh. Vestnik 19, 1968, 101 ff. = Danubian Papers (1971), 204 ff.

<sup>124</sup> Rapid changes in this season (97) are not excluded (likewise in 98).

<sup>125</sup> The fate of Petronius occurs only in a late source (Epit. 12.8). Norbanus had lapsed – perhaps extruded by Casperius.

<sup>126</sup> Pliny, Pan. 8.4: *nam quantum refert, deponas an partiaris imperium?* Further, 7.6: *quem constat imperaturum fuisse etiamsi non adoptasses*. That Nerva abdicated was assumed in Lactantius, De mortibus pers. 18; Victor, De Caes. 12.2.

<sup>127</sup> A. R. BIRLEY, Septimius Severus (1971), 134 f.

the government. Germania Superior and Pannonia offered routes for a rapid invasion of Italy.<sup>128</sup>

At Rome Traianus could reckon on friends and allies among senior consulars, notably the Narbonensians, like himself adherents of the Flavian dynasty. Aurelius Fulvus may (or may not) have held the urban prefecture.<sup>129</sup> Significant iterations of the fasces were soon manifest: Domitius Tullus, followed by Julius Frontinus and Julius Ursus.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, a decisive role for Licinius Sura is registered by a late epitomator.<sup>131</sup> The position Sura held so far evades ascertainment.<sup>132</sup>

There were other agents. Suspicion attaches to the person and aims of Casperius Aelianus, asking for whose benefit he operated.

Trajan lacked resplendent kinsfolk, but he enjoyed high social prestige, being patrician and *consul ordinarius*, son of a *vir triumphalis*. He stood at the peak of the new imperial aristocracy, already visible and solid as *capax imperii* in the terminal epoch and malady of an upstart dynasty.

#### Appendix: Syria

In a season of hazard Syria would not be expected to make the first move; and if the legate chose to intervene in a civil war, he needed support from Cappadocia and from Egypt (two legions in each).<sup>133</sup>

In the course of 97 the alleged prospects of the Syrian governor caused disquiet.<sup>134</sup> Rumour exaggerates, but the sequel shows a solid basis of fact. The governor departed or was removed, young Larcus Lepidus (*quaestor* in Asia) being despatched to take over his functions, as legate of IV Scythica.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Emphasis therefore on Pompeius Longinus.

<sup>129</sup> In 69 Fulvus may have encouraged the Moesian army to declare for Vespasian. He had recently brought III Gallica from Syria.

<sup>130</sup> The fourth was T. Vestricius Spurinna. Of two *consules tertio* in 100 (i. e. Frontinus and Ursus) Pliny observed *utriusque cura utriusque vigilantia obstrictus es* (Pan. 60.6). The *Fasti Ostienses* have recently disclosed the honour of Ursus, expelling Spurinna. For the iterations in 98 and 100, F. Zevi, *La Parola del Passato* 186, 1979, 189 ff.

<sup>131</sup> Epit. 13.6: *Surae, cuius studio imperium arripuerat*.

<sup>132</sup> For his consulship opinions vary between 93 and 97. An earlier date is advocated by T. D. Barnes, *Phoenix* 30, 1976, 76 ff. An added complication is the Ignotus of ILS 1022: Licinius Sura – or perhaps Sosius Senecio (*cos.* 99). For the latter, C. P. Jones, *JRS* 60, 1970, 98 ff.

<sup>133</sup> Pomponius Bassus (*suff.* 94) was in Cappadocia–Galatia from 94 to 100. He had been legate in Asia to Trajan's parent, proconsul in 79/80 (ILS 8797). Likewise continuous, in Egypt, was Junius Rufus, from July of 94 to June of 98 (PIR<sup>2</sup>, J 812).

<sup>134</sup> Pliny, *Epp.* IX 13. 10 f.

<sup>135</sup> ILS 1055. At the same time Julius Proculus, after being *quaestor Augustorum*, was ap-

The identity of the Ignotus continues to aliment curiosity and speculation, for valid and various reasons. On short statement as follows.

In the first place, Javolenus Priscus. Subsequent to Germania Superior he held Syria.<sup>136</sup> At what date, that was a question. An epistle of Pliny, which should belong to the year 100, addresses a consular legate called Priscus, then close to the end of his tenure.<sup>137</sup> No other Priscus being then available in that office, Javolenus was the man. That is, Trajan's first governor of Syria, from 98 to 100.<sup>138</sup>

The argument seemed coherent, and it was widely accepted.<sup>139</sup> As is amply apparent in studies of this kind, a new fact emerging may result in manifold perturbations. The Neratii Prisci now come up again. The revision of the evidence gave the elder (*suff.* 87) a Pannonian governorship before the end of Domitian's reign (cf. above). It extends to the younger (*suff.* 97). By a different reading of the obscured letter that opens the gap in the inscription (ILS 1034) he is presented as *leg. Aug. pr. pr. [in provinc. Germania] inferiore et Pannonia*.<sup>140</sup> That is to say, an unsuspected consular command (?98–101), preceding Pannonia. Neratius Priscus there took the place of Glitius Agricola (*suff.* II 102), being thus the last governor before Pannonia was divided.

The revision is welcome indeed, for many reasons.<sup>141</sup> Noteworthy consequences ensue. Neratius Priscus in Germania Inferior denies to Javolenus Priscus the notice in Pliny's letter.<sup>142</sup> Javolenus' Syrian governorship falls earlier than 98, subsequent to Germania Superior (from 89 to 92 or 93). He therefore succeeded Lappius Maximus, who entered on his second consulship on May 1, 95. Lappius (it was a convenient assumption) went straight from Syria to that signal honour. Yet it

pointed tribune in that legion (ILS 1040). Those measures convey a crisis, genuine or believed such, not the mere decease of a governor.

<sup>136</sup> ILS 1015.

<sup>137</sup> Pliny, Epp. II 13.2: *longum praeterea tempus quo amicos tuos exornare potuisti*.

<sup>138</sup> Historia 9, 1960, 365 = Roman Papers (1979), 480 f.

<sup>139</sup> Thus ECK, *Senatoren* (1970), 153. Conceded with some hesitations (he preferred to date the letter II 13 before the decease of Nerva) by SHERWIN-WHITE in his commentary (1966).

<sup>140</sup> G. CAMODECA, *Atti Acc. Napoli* 87, 1976, 19 ff.: with photograph, ib. 20. That is, Germania Inferior instead of Pannonia Inferior, thus abolishing the supposed third Neratius Priscus, hitherto assumed governor of both Pannonias (under Hadrian).

<sup>141</sup> Cf. remarks in 'Governors Dying in Syria', ZPE 41, 1981, 140 f.

<sup>142</sup> Previously no letter to Neratius Priscus could be certified in the collection, though Pliny (without the names) paid handsome tribute to Priscus and Marcellus (Epp. III 3.1), along with the grandfather of Corellia's son (M. Hirrius Fronto Neratius Pansa [*Suff.* c. 75]). As concerns the *suffectus* of 97, two items should here be added for brief record. First, Larinum disclosed the first part of his career (AE 1969/70, 152): it showed him plebeian. Second, the monumental inscription (in four pieces) that had been standing for some time in the forum at Saepinum: published by G. A. PENTTI, *Studi Romani* 26, 1978, 343 ff. Plates XVIII and XIX show its structure. That scholar, however, assigned it to the 'third Neratius Priscus'. CAMODECA (in 1976) was apparently not aware of this document.



might not be so. The two items admit of a partial dissociation. Lappius might have left earlier, in 93. If so, 93–6 for Javolenus, to be followed by the Ignotus.<sup>143</sup>

That is not all. The Ignotus himself now acquires name and substance – as M. Cornelius Nigrinus Curiatius Maternus (*suff.* 83). Three fragments found at Liria in Tarraconensis fit together, and although not complete, they reveal the essentials of a splendid career. The document has been interpreted in a long and thorough investigation.<sup>144</sup>

Nigrinus, adlected by Vespasian *inter praetorios*, commanded the legion VIII Augusta and had Aquitania for praetorian province. Further, not long after his consulship he became governor of Moesia, earning in the Dacian War military decorations: indeed, a double set.<sup>145</sup> Of that, a convincing explanation avails.<sup>146</sup> In 85 Nigrinus took the place of the dead Oppius Sabinus; and then, the command being divided, he continued and fought in the war as legate of Moesia Inferior.<sup>147</sup> Since the emperor who awarded the decorations is not named, the dedication to Nigrinus was set up subsequent to the death of Domitian. Finally, Nigrinus was legate of Syria (the concluding item on the inscription).<sup>148</sup>

Cornelius Nigrinus held that post, it is argued, in succession to Lappius Maximus from 94 or early in 95. About the initial term a difficulty intervenes, not to be avoided if Javolenus Priscus shifts, moving back from 98–100 to the last years of Domitian.<sup>149</sup> There is an instant remedy. Nigrinus need not have arrived in Syria before the summer of 96.

Even if not the Ignotus, Nigrinus excites interest on several counts, for example the relationship to the senator and orator Curiatius Maternus. His binary nomenclature carries alternative explanations. In short, the father of the consular general either adopted a Curiatius Maternus or had married a lady of that family (to be deemed Spanish).<sup>150</sup> Either way, a close link.

<sup>143</sup> A faint chance might appear to subsist that Javolenus was still there in 97. Imprudent political ambitions will not lightly be ascribed to jurists.

<sup>144</sup> G. ALFÖLDY, and H. HALFMANN, *Chiron* 3, 1973, 331–72. Whence *AE* 1973, 283.

<sup>145</sup> Otherwise exhibited on ILS 983 (Carthage), probably Sex. Vettulenus (*suff.* c. 73), and by ILS 1022 (Sura or Senecio).

<sup>146</sup> ALFÖLDY and HALFMANN, *o. c.* 356 f.

<sup>147</sup> With Funisulanus governing Moesia Superior (ILS 1005).

<sup>148</sup> Moesia and Syria were already shown by the abridged inscriptions. *CIL* II. 3783; 6013 (Liria), with a wide range in dating, cf. GROAG in *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C1407; ECK, *Senatoren* (1970), 239; 242; and, supposing the governor a son of the *suffectus* of 83, the twenties under Hadrian (gaps in Moesia Superior and in Syria) was suggested in *Dacia* 12, 1968, 322 = *Danubian Papers* (1971), 214.

<sup>149</sup> The emergence of Neratius Priscus (*suff.* 97), as legate of Germania Inferior, affecting the Plinian letter, came several years later than the Chiron paper.

<sup>150</sup> ALFÖLDY and HALFMANN assumed that the orator Curiatius Maternus adopted a Cornelius Nigrinus (*o. c.* 345 f.). And further, that Maternus came to a bad end not long after 75. Thus A. D. E. CAMERON, *CR* 17, 1967, 258 f. On the decease of Maternus, see further ‘Spaniards at Tivoli’, *Ancient Society* 13, 1982, forthcoming.

More important, the pervading theme recurs of Domitian's relations with the legates in the closing triennium. Sending Nigrinus to Syria, the ruler exhibited a double anomaly. He went back to a consul from the earliest years of the reign (which traversed the normal scheme of promotions); and he chose a consular of military renown. Again, no sign that Cornelius Nigrinus belonged to any potent group or faction.

Brief reflection brings some abatement. After the termination of warfare on the frontier, employment offered for safe men with little previous experience of provinces and armies. Thus Neratius Priscus in Pannonia (*suff.* 87), who acceded to the consulate from an urban post, the prefecture of the *Aerarium Saturni*.<sup>151</sup> Another example may be Julius Marinus in Moesia Inferior, if appointed by Domitian rather than (in winter) by his successor.<sup>152</sup>

Syria with three legions, confronting the Parthians, cannot be denied military importance. Yet the Parthians were normally averse from acts of aggression, and Syria should be regarded as a political appointment. The Caesars tend to choose the elderly and torpid, or their own close friends. Thus Trajan's second governor A. Julius Quadratus (*suff.* 94), in Syria from 100 to 104.<sup>153</sup> In any event, Cornelius Nigrinus therefore enjoyed the confidence of Domitian.

So far the powerful case for Nigrinus as the portentous Ignotus. The preceding pages had reason to put hazards and uncertainties on high relief. It will be suitable before the end to indicate alternative dates for the tenure of Cornelius Nigrinus.

First, he went to Syria from Moesia Inferior in 89 and died soon after. A pestilence was abroad in this season, and death in office was the fate all too frequent of Syrian legates. Facts and conjecture accumulate a formidable total.<sup>154</sup>

Second, if Javolenus Priscus (as seems plausible) recedes into the late years of Domitian, Nigrinus might assume the place as Trajan's first governor.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup> ILS 1033 f.

<sup>152</sup> Or again, perhaps Sallustius Lucullus in Britain, at some time between the departure of Agricola in 85 and 93 or 94. Domitian's last legate was P. Metilius Sabinus (*suff.* 91). Whose previous career is a blank. A diploma of 98 (CIL XVI 43, month not given) shows him replaced by Avidius Quietus: the latter appointed late in Nerva's reign, it might be supposed. He was still at Rome when the name of the Syrian governor was mentioned (Pliny, *Epp.* IX 13.15).

<sup>153</sup> No trace in his career of any military post.

<sup>154</sup> ZPE 41, 1981, 125 ff. The list covers a century, from Germanicus Caesar to the fatal malady of Trajan. It is convenient to subjoin the decease of Burbuleius Ligarianus c. 142 (ILS 1066). And problems about the governorships of Bruttius Praesens and Julius Maior (cf. ZPE 37, 1980, 10 f.) would be resolved by the conjecture that Sex. Julius Severus (*suff.* 127) died shortly after going to Syria from Syria Palaestina after the termination of the Jewish insurrection (ILS 1056). On which, *Harvard Studies* 86, 1982, 205, n. 141.

<sup>155</sup> This alternative was not recognised in ZPE 41, 1981, 140 ff. It is not very plausible. That Nigrinus was like Trajan «a Spaniard» will not safely be adduced.

Hence a chance to be conceded that Nigrinus, although prepollent on the known evidence, is not the Ignotus. The revelation manifested at Liria brought a surprise and new information about the Dacian Wars. Gaps subsist – thus no legates of Pannonia between 85 and 93.

Sundry great generals of the period escape all mention in the written record. They owe existence to epigraphy. Thus Glitius Agricola, legate of Pannonia, honoured for action in Trajan's first campaign with military decorations and a second consulate; thus Julius Quadratus Bassus the Pergamene, a general on the Danube after his consulship (in 105) and going on to be legate of Cappadocia, Syria, Dacia.<sup>156</sup>

As Sir Thomas Browne pronounced when reviewing in *Hydriotaphia* the famous nations of the dead, *«who knows whether the best of men be known? Or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time?»*

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<sup>156</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup>, G 181; J 508. Glitius, although Transpadane (from Augusta Taurinorum), finds no mention in the letters of Pliny; and Quadratus Bassus did not burst upon the world until AD 1932.