

PART II.  
MODERN HISTORY

CHAPTER I.

ROMAN HISTORY CONTINUED, FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF  
THE CHRISTIAN ERA, TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE WESTERN  
EMPIRE OF THE ROMANS, A. D. 1, TO A. D. 476

SECTION I.

ROMAN HISTORY FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE DEATH  
OF DOMITIAN, THE LAST OF THE TWELVE CÆSARS, A. D. 96.

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1. As we enter upon the time of the Roman emperors, Roman history, so highly pleasing and attractive in its early stages, and during the eventful period of the Republic, gradually declines in interest to the general reader; for the Roman people, whose many virtues and sufferings awakened our warmest sympathies, had now become corrupt and degenerate; the liberal influences of their popular assemblies, and the freedom of the Roman senate, had given place to arbitrary force; and although the splendors of the empire continue to dazzle for awhile, henceforward the political history of the Romans is little more than the biographies of individual rulers, and their few advisers and associates in power, who controlled the political destinies of more than a hundred millions of people.

2. We shall find that, at the end of the first century of the Christian era, the empire, having already attained its full strength and maturity, began to verge towards its decline; and we are apt to hurry over the closing scenes of Roman history with an instinctive feeling that shrinks from the contemplation of waning glories and national degeneracy. But while the history of the Republican era may exceed in interest that of the "decline and fall" of the empire, yet the latter is of far greater political importance than the former; for, including the early history of many important sects, and codes, and systems, whose influences still exist, it is the link that connects the past with the present—the Ancient with the Modern world. The theologian and jurist must be familiar with it in order to understand much of the learning and history of their respective departments; and it deserves the careful preparatory study of every reader of modern European history; as nearly all the kingdoms of modern Europe have arisen from the fragments into which the empire of the Cæsars was broken. We proceed then, in the present chapter to a brief survey, which is all that our limited space will allow, of, first, the overtowering greatness, and, second, the decline, and final overthrow, in all the west of Europe, of that mighty fabric of empire which valor had founded, and enlightened policy had so long sustained, upon the seven hills of Rome.

3. The rule of Julius Cæsar, who is called the first of the twelve

I. EARLIER  
AND LATER  
HISTORY OF  
THE EMPIRE  
COMPARED.

Cæsars, although he was not nominally king, was that of one who possessed all the essential attributes of sovereignty; and from the battle of Pharsalia, which decided the fate of the Roman world, might with propriety be dated the commencement of the Roman empire, although its era is usually dated at the beginning of the twenty-eighth year before the Christian era,—the time of the general acknowledgment of the sovereignty of Augustus.

4. The reign of Augustus continued until the fourteenth year after the birth of Christ—forty-four years in all, dating from the battle of Actium, which made Augustus sole sovereign of the empire. After the general peace which followed the early wars and conquests of the emperor, the great prosperity of his reign was disturbed by a rebellion of the Germans, which had been provoked by the extortions of Varus, the Roman commander on the northern frontier. Varus was entrapped in the depths of the German forests, where nearly his whole army was annihilated, and he himself, in despair, put an end to his own life. (A. D. 9.) Awful vengeance was taken upon the Romans who became prisoners, many of them being sacrificed to the gods of the Germans.

5. The news of the defeat of his general threw Augustus into transports of grief, during which he frequently exclaimed, "Varus, restore me my legions!" It was thought that the Germans would cross the Rhine, and that all Gaul would unite with them in the revolt; but a large Roman army under Tibérius, the son-in-law and heir of Augustus, was sent to guard the passes of the Rhine, and the danger was averted.

6. Augustus, having designed Tibérius for his successor, associated him in his counsels, and conferred upon him so large a share of present power, that on the death of the emperor, Tibérius easily took his place, so that the nation scarcely perceived the change of masters. (A. D. 14.) The policy of Augustus in selecting, and preparing the way for, the future sovereign, was successfully imitated by nearly all his successors during nearly two centuries, although the emperors continued to be elected, ostensibly at least, by the authority of the senate, and the consent of the soldiers.

7. Tibérius, a man of reserved character, and of great dissimulation,—suspicious, dark, and revengeful, but possessing a handsome figure, and in his early years exhibiting great talents and unwearied industry, having yielded with feigned reluctance to the wishes of the senate that he would undertake the government, commenced his

reign with the appearance of justice and moderation, but after nine years of dissimulation, his sensual and tyrannical character openly exhibited itself in the vicious indulgence of every base passion, and the perpetration of the most wanton cruelties.

8. The early part of his reign is distinguished by the wars carried on in Germany by his accomplished general and nephew, the virtuous Germanicus; but Tibérius, jealous of the glory and fame which Germanicus was winning, recalled him from his command, and then sent him as governor to the Eastern provinces, where all his undertakings were thwarted by the secret commands of the emperor, who was supposed to have caused his death to be hastened by poison.

9. The only confidant of Tibérius was his minister Sejānus, whose character bore a great resemblance to that of his sovereign. Secretly aspiring to the empire, he contrived to win the heart of Tibérius by exciting his mistrust towards his own family relatives, most of whom he caused to be poisoned, or condemned to death for suspected treason; but his most successful project was the removal of Tibérius from Rome to the little island of Capreae, where the monarch remained during a number of years, indulging his indolence and debaucheries, while Sejānus, ruling at Rome, perpetrated the most shocking cruelties in the name of his master, and put to death the most eminent citizens, scarcely allowing them the useless mockery of a trial.

10. But Sejānus at length fell under the suspicion of the emperor, and the same day witnessed his arrest and execution—a memorable example of the instability of human grandeur. His death was followed by a general massacre of his friends and relations. At length Tibérius himself, after a long career of crime, falling sick, was smothered in bed by one of his officers, at the instigation of the base Calig'ula, the son of Germanicus, and adopted heir of the emperor. It was during the reign of Tibérius that Jesus Christ was crucified in Judea, under the prætorship of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of that province.

11. Calig'ula, whose real character was unknown to the people,

1. *Caprea*, now called *Capri*, is a small island, about ten miles in circumference, on the south side of the entrance to the bay of Naples. It is surrounded on all sides but one by lofty and perpendicular cliffs; and in the centre is a secluded vale, remarkable for its beauty and salubrity. The tyrant was led to select this spot for his abode, as well from its difficulty of access, as from the mildness and salubrity of its climate, and the unrivalled magnificence of the prospects which it affords. He is said to have built no less than twelve villas in different parts of the island, and to have named them after the twelve celestial divinities. The ruins of one of them—the villa of Jove—are still to be seen on the summit of a cliff opposite *Sorrento*.

received from them an enthusiastic welcome on his accession to the throne, (A. D. 37,) but they soon found him to be a greater monster of wickedness and dissimulation than his predecessor. A detailed description of his wicked actions, which some have attributed to madness, would afford little pleasure to the reader. Not satisfied with mere murder, he ordered all the prisoners in Rome, and numbers of the aged and infirm, to be thrown to wild beasts; he claimed divine honors, erected a temple, and instituted a college of priests to superintend his own worship; and finding the senate too backward in adulation, he seriously contemplated the massacre of the entire body.

12. His follies were no less conspicuous than his vices. For his favorite horse Incitatus he claimed greater respect and reverence than were due to mortals: he built him a stable of marble and a manger of ivory, and frequently invited him to the imperial table; and it is said that his death alone prevented him from conferring upon the animal the honors of the consulship! A fortune of eighteen millions sterling, which had been left by Tiberius, was squandered by Calig'ula, in a most senseless manner, in little more than a year, while fresh sums, raised by confiscations, were lavished in the same way. At length, after a reign of four years, Calig'ula was murdered by his own guards, to the great joy of the senators, who suddenly awoke to the wild hope of restoring the Republic.

13. The illusion soon disappeared, for the spirit of Roman liberty no longer existed. The Prætorian guards,<sup>a</sup> who had all the power in their own hands, insisting upon being governed by a monarch, proclaimed the imbecile Claudius emperor, at a time when he expected nothing but death; and their choice was sanctioned by the senate. Claudius was an uncle of the late emperor, and brother of German'icus. He was so deficient in judgment and reflection as to be deemed intolerably stupid; he was not destitute of

<sup>a</sup> The Prætorian guards were gradually instituted by Augustus to protect his person, awe the senate, keep the veterans and legions in check, and prevent or crush the first movements of rebellion. Something similar to them had existed from the earliest times in the body of armed guides who accompanied the general in his military expeditions. At first Augustus stationed three cohorts only in the capital: but Tiberius assembled all of them, to the number of ten thousand, at Rome, and assigned them a permanent and well-fortified camp close to the walls of the city, on the broad summit of the Quirinal and Viminal hills. This measure of Tiberius forever riveted the fetters of his country. The Prætorian bands, soon learning their own strength, and the weakness of the civil government, became eventually the real masters  
Rome, i. 61; and Niebuhr, v. 75

good nature, but unfortunately he was made the dupe of abandoned favorites, for whose crime history has unjustly held him responsible.

14. For a time his wife Messalina, the most dissolute and abandoned of women, ruled him at pleasure; and numbers of the most worthy citizens were sacrificed to her jealousy, avarice, and revenge; but finally she was put to death by the emperor for her shameless infidelity to him. Claudius then married his niece Agrippina, then a widow and the mother of the afterwards infamous Nero. She was no less cruel in disposition than Messalina; her ambition was unbounded, and her avarice insatiable. After having prevailed upon Claudius to adopt as his heir and successor her son Nero, to the exclusion of his own children, she caused the emperor to be poisoned by his physician. (A. D. 54.) As Agrippina had gained the captain of the Prætorian guards to her interest, the army proclaimed Nero emperor, and the senate confirmed their choice.

15. The foreign events of the reign of Claudius were of greater importance than his domestic administration. Julius Cæsar had first carried the Roman arms into Britain in a brief and fruitless invasion; but during the reign of Claudius the Romans began to think seriously of reducing the whole island under their dominion. At first Claudius sent over his general Plau'tus, (A. D. 43,) who gained some victories over the rude inhabitants. Claudius himself then made a journey into Britain, and received the submission of the tribes that inhabited the south-eastern parts of the island; but the other Britons, under their king Carac'tacus, maintained an obstinate resistance until the Roman army was placed under the command of Ostorius, who defeated Carac'tacus in a great battle, and sent him prisoner to Rome. (A. D. 51.)

16. Nero, the successor of Claudius, was a youth of only seventeen when he ascended the throne. (A. D. 54.) He had been nurtured in the midst of crimes, and the Roman world looked upon him with apprehension and dread; but during five years, while he still remained under the influence of his early instructors Seneca and Burrhus, he disappointed the fears of all by the mildness of his reign. At length his mother Agrippina fell under the suspicion of designing to restore the crown to the still surviving son of Claudius: and the emperor caused both to be put to death. After this he abandoned himself to bloodshed, in which he took a savage delight. He is accused of having caused the death of his able min

ister Burrhus by poison; Seneca<sup>a</sup> the philosopher, Lucan<sup>b</sup> the poet, and most of the leading nobles, were condemned on the charge of treason; and a conflagration in Rome which lasted nine days, and destroyed the greater part of the city, (A. D. 64,) was generally believed to have been kindled by his orders; and some reported that in order to enjoy the spectacle, he ascended a high tower, where he amused himself with singing the Destruction of Troy

17. In order to remove the suspicions of the people, he caused a report to be circulated that the Christians were the authors of the fire; and thousands of that innocent sect were put to death under circumstances of the greatest barbarity. Sometimes, covered by the skins of wild beasts, they were exposed to be torn in pieces by devouring dogs; some were crucified: others, wrapped in combustible garments, which were set on fire, were made to serve as torches to illuminate the emperor's gardens by night. Nero often appeared on the Roman stage in the character of an actor, musician, or gladiator: he also visited the principal cities of Greece in succession, where he obtained a number of victories in the public Grecian games.

18. While he was engaged in these extravagances, the provinces of the empire were pillaged to support his luxuries and maintain his almost boundless prodigalities. To the lower classes, who felt nothing of his despotism, he made monthly distributions of corn, to the encouragement of indolence; and he gratified the populace of Rome by occasional supplies of wine and meat, and by the magnificent shows of the circus. Nero was popular with the rabble, which explains the fact that his atrocities and follies were so long endured by the Roman people. At length, however, the standard of revolt was raised in Gaul by Vindex, the Roman governor, and soon after by Galba in Spain. Vindex perished in the struggle; and Galba

a. Seneca, the moral philosopher, was born at Cordova in Spain, in the second or third year of the Christian era; but at an early age he went to reside at Rome. Messalina, who hated him, caused him to be banished to Corsica, where he remained eight years; but Agrippina recalled him from banishment, and appointed him, in conjunction with Burrhus, tutor to Nero. Burrhus, a man of stern virtue, instructed the prince in military science. Seneca taught him philosophy, the fine arts, and elegant accomplishments. Although Seneca laid down excellent rules of morality for others, his own character is not above reproach. Being ordered by Nero to be his own executioner, he caused his veins to be opened in a hot bath; but as, at his age, the blood flowed slowly, he drank a dose of hemlock to accelerate his death.

b. Lucan, a nephew of Seneca, and also a native of Cordova, was an eminent Latin poet, although he died at the early age of twenty-seven years. Of his many poems, the *Pharsalia* or war between Cæsar and Pompey, is the only one that has escaped destruction. He incurred the enmity of Nero by vanquishing him in a poetical contest.

would have been ruined had not the Prætorian guards, under the influence of their commander Otho, renounced their allegiance. With this latter calamity Nero abandoned all hope; and when he learned that the senate had declared him an enemy to the country, too cowardly to kill himself, he sought death by the hands of one of his freedmen, from whom he received a mortal wound. (A. D. 68.)

19. During the greater part of the reign of Nero the empire enjoyed, in general, a profound peace; the only wars of importance being with the Parthians and the Britons. The former were defeated and reduced by Cor'bulo, the greatest general of his time. This virtuous Roman had kept his faith even to Nero; but the only reward which he received from the emperor for his victories, was—death. In Britain, Suetonius Paulinus defeated the inhabitants in several battles, and penetrating into the heart of the country, destroyed the consecrated groves and altars of the druids.<sup>a</sup> Afterwards the Iceni,<sup>b</sup> under the command of their queen Boadice'ea, revolted, burned London,<sup>c</sup> then a flourishing Roman colony, reduced many other settlements, and put to death, in all, seventy thousand Romans. Suetonius avenged their fate in a decisive battle, in which eighty thousand Britons are said to have perished. The heroic Boadice'ea, rather than submit to the victor, put an end to her life by poison. During the reign of Nero also occurred the famous rebellion in Judea, and the beginning of the war which resulted in the destruction of the Jewish nation.

20. With the death of Nero the reign of the Julian family, or the true line of the Cæsars, ended; although six succeeding emperors are included in what are usually styled "the twelve Cæsars." A series of sanguinary wars, arising from disputed succession, followed.

a. The druids were the priests or ministers of religion among the ancient Gauls and Britons. Their chief seat was an island of the Irish Sea, now called *Anglesey*, which was taken by Suetonius after a fanatical resistance. This general cut down the groves of the druids, and nearly exterminated both the priests and their religion. The druids believed in the existence of one Supreme Being, a state of future rewards and punishments, the immortality of the soul, and its transmigration through different bodies. They possessed some knowledge of geometry, natural philosophy, and astronomy; they practiced astrology, magic, and sooth-saying; they regarded the mistletoe as the holiest object in nature, and esteemed the oak sacred; they abhorred images; they worshipped fire as the emblem of the sun, and in their sacrifices often immolated human victims. They exercised great authority in the government of the State, appointed the highest officers in the cities, and were the chief administrators of justice. On the introduction of Christianity into Britain, the druidical order gradually ceased.

b. The Iceni inhabited the country on the eastern coast of England. Their chief town was a place now called *Caister*, about three miles from Norwich.

c. London, anciently *Londinium* was in existence, as a town of the Trinobantes, before the invasion of Julius Cæsar.

At first Galba, then in the seventy-third year of his age, a man of unblemished personal character, was universally acknowledged emperor; but he soon lost the attachment of the soldiery by his parsimony, while the influence of injudicious favorites led him into unseasonable severities for the suppression of the enormous vices of the times. Several revolts against his authority rapidly succeeded each other, and finally, Otho, who had been among the foremost to espouse his cause, finding that Galba refused to nominate him for his successor, procured a revolt of the Prætorian guards in his own favor. After a brief struggle in the streets of Rome, Galba was slain, after a reign of only seven months.

21. While the unworthy Otho, a passive instrument in the hands of a licentious soldiery, remained at Rome, with the title of emperor, immersed in pleasures and debaucheries, Vitel' lius, a man more vulgar and vicious than Otho, was proclaimed emperor by the legions under his command on the German frontier. A brief but sanguinary struggle followed, and Otho, having sustained a defeat in the north of Italy, fell by his own hand, after a reign of ninety-five days.

22. Vitel' lius, entering Rome in triumph, ordered more than a hundred of the prætorian guards to be put to death; but he endeavored to win the favor of the populace by large donations of provisions, and expensive games and entertainments. His personal character was cruel and contemptible. Under the most frivolous pretences the wealthy were put to death, and their property seized by the emperor; and in less than four months, as stated by historians, this bloated and pampered ruler, expended on the mere luxuries of the table a sum equal to about seven millions sterling. But while wallowing in the indulgence of the most debasing appetites, he was startled by the intelligence that the legions engaged in the Jewish war in Syria had declared their general, Vespasian, emperor, and were already on their march towards Rome.

23. As province after province submitted to Vespasian, and his generals rapidly overcame the little opposition they encountered, Vitel' lius in dismay would have abdicated his authority, but the Prætorian guards, dreading the strict discipline of Vespasian, compelled the wretched monarch to a farther resistance. Rome however easily fell into the hands of the conquerors, and Vitel' lius, having retained the sceptre only eight months, was ignominiously

put to death, and his mangled carcass thrown into the Tiber, amid the execrations of the same fickle multitude that had so recently welcomed his accession to power. (A. D. Dec. 69.)

24. During several months, Domitian, the second son of Vespasian, ruled at Rome in the absence of his father, taking part with the contending factions, committing many acts of cruelty, and already exhibiting the passions and vices which characterized his later years; but at length the arrival of the monarch elect restored tranquillity and diffused universal joy. (A. D. 70.) Vespasian was XI. VESPA-  
SIAN. universally known and respected for his virtues, and his mild and happy reign restored to the distracted empire some degree of its former prosperity. He improved the discipline of the army, enlarged the senate to its former numbers, and revived its authority, reformed the courts of law, and enriched Rome with many noble buildings, of which the Colossæum still remains, in much of its ancient grandeur—the pride and glory of his reign.

25. Three years before his accession to the throne, Vespasian had been sent into Judea by Nero, (A. D. 67,) at the head of sixty thousand men, to conduct the war against the Jews, who XII. JEWISH  
WAR. had revolted against the Roman power. They had been driven to rebellion by the execution and tyranny of Florus the Roman governor, and having once taken up arms they were so strangely infatuated as to believe that, although without a regular army, or munitions of war of any kind, they could resist the united force of the whole Roman empire. The war thus commenced was one of extermination, in which mercy was seldom asked or shown by either party.

26. While the war raged around Jerusalem, and city after city was taken, and desolated by the massacre of its inhabitants, there were three hostile factions in Jerusalem, afterwards reduced to two, holding possession of different parts of the city, and wasting their strength in cruel conflicts with each other. When Vespasian departed for Rome to assume the royal authority, he left the conduct of the war to his son Titus, who soon after commenced the siege of Jerusalem, during the time of the feast of the passover, when the city was crowded with people from all Judea. Titus expected that although Jerusalem was defended by six hundred thousand men, such a multitude gathered within the walls of a poorly-provisioned city, would occasion a famine that would soon make a surrender inevitable.

27. Although the Jews were promised liberty and safety if they

would surrender the city; and Josephus, the future historian of his country, who had been taken prisoner by the Romans, was sent to expostulate with them on the folly of longer resistance; yet they rejected all warnings and counsel with scorn and derision; and although the opposing Jewish factions were embroiled in a civil war, with a strange infatuation both declared their resolution to defend the city to the very last, confident that God would not permit his temple and city to fall before the heathen.

28. The horrors of the siege surpassed all that the pen can describe. When the public granaries had become empty the people were plundered of their scanty stores, so that the famine devoured by houses and by families. At length no table was spread, nor regular meal eaten in Jerusalem. People bartered all their wealth for a measure of corn, and ate it in secret, uncooked, or snatched half baked from the coals. They were often compelled, by torture, to discover their food, or were still more cruelly treated if they had eaten it. Wives would steal the last morsel from their husbands, children from parents, mothers from children; and there were instances of dead infants being eaten by their parents; so that the ancient prophecy, in which Moses had described the punishments of the unbelieving Jews, was fulfilled.<sup>a</sup>

29. At length the dead accumulated so fast that they were left unburied, and were cast off the walls by thousands down into the valleys; and as Titus went his rounds, and saw the putrefying masses, he wept, and, stretching his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his work! By slow degrees one wall after another was battered down; but so desperate was the defence of the Jews that it was three months after the lower city was taken before the Romans gained possession of the temple, and, in its destruction, completed the fall of Jerusalem. (A. D. 70.) Titus would have saved the noble edifice, but was unable to restrain the rage of his soldiery, and the Temple was burnt.

30. Josephus computes the number of his countrymen who perished during the war at more than one million three hundred thousand, with a total of more than a million prisoners. Thousands of the latter were sent to toil in the Egyptian mines; but such were their numbers that they were offered for sale "till no man would buy them," and then they were sent into different provinces as pre-

a. Deut. xxviii. 56, 57.

sents, waer; they were consumed by the sword, or by wild beasts in the amphitheatres. With the destruction of the holy city and its famous temple Israel ceased to be a nation, and thus was inflicted the doom which the unbelieving Jews invoked when they cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children."

31. Britain had been only partially subdued prior to the reign of Vespasian, but during the two years after the fall of Jerusalem its conquest was completed by the Roman governor Julius Agric'ola, who was justly celebrated for his great merits as a general and a statesman. Carrying his victorious arms northward he defeated the Britons in every encounter, penetrated the forests of Caledonia,<sup>1</sup> and established a chain of fortresses between the Friths of Clyde and Forth, which marked the utmost permanent extent of the Roman dominion in Britain. The fastnesses of the Scottish highlands were ever too formidable to be overcome by the Roman arms. By an enlightened policy Agric'ola also taught the Britons the arts of peace, introduced laws and government among them, induced them to lay aside their barbarous customs, taught them to value the conveniences of life, and to adopt the Roman language and manners. The life of Agric'ola has been admirably written by Tac'itus, the historian, to whom the former had given his daughter in marriage.

32. On the death of Vespasian (A. D. 79) his son Titus succeeded to the throne. Previous to his accession the general opinion of the people was unfavorable to Titus, but afterwards his conduct changed, and he is celebrated as a just and <sup>XIII. TITUS.</sup> humane ruler; and so numerous were his acts of goodness, that his grateful subjects bestowed upon him the honorable title of "benefactor of the human race." During his brief reign of little more than two years, Rome and the provinces were in the enjoyment of peace and prosperity, only disturbed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius,<sup>2</sup>

1. Ancient Caledonia comprehended that portion of Scotland which lay to the north of the Forth and the Clyde. A frith is a narrow passage of the sea, or the opening of a river into the sea. Agric'ola penetrated north as far as the river Tay. (See Map No. XVI.)

2. Mount Vesuvius, ten miles south-east from the city of Naples, is the only active volcano at present existing on the European continent. Its extreme height is three thousand eight hundred and ninety feet—about two-fifths of that of Aet'na. Its first known eruption occurred on the 24th of August, A. D. 79, when Herculaneum and Pompeii were buried under showers of volcanic ashes, sand, stones, and lava, and the elder Pliny lost his life, being suffocated by the sulphurous vapor as he approached to behold the wonderful phenomena. It is related that, such was the immense quantity of volcanic ashes thrown out during this eruption, the whole country was involved in pitchy darkness; and that the ashes fell in Egypt, Syria, and various parts of Asia Minor. Since the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii there have been nearly fifty authenticated eruptions of Vesuvius.

which caused the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompéii,<sup>1</sup> (A. D. 79,) and by a great fire at Rome, which was followed by a pestilence. (A. D. 80.)

33. Domitian succeeded his brother without opposition, (A. D. 81,) although the perfidy and cruelty of his character were notorious.

XIV. He began his reign by an affectation of extreme virtue, DOMITIAN. but was unable long to disguise his vices. There was no law but the will of the tyrant, who caused many of the most eminent senators to be put to death without even the form of trial; and when, by his infamous vices, and the openness of his debaucheries, he had sunk, in the eyes of his subjects, to the lowest stage of degradation, he caused himself to be worshipped as a god, and addressed with the reverence due to Deity. Both Jews and Christians were persecuted by him, and thousands of them put to death because they would not worship his statues. This is called in ecclesiastical history the second great persecution of the Christians, that under Nero being the first.

34. It was in the early part of this reign that Agricola completed the conquest of Britain; but on the whole the reign of Domitian was productive of little honor to the Roman arms, as in Mœ' sia,<sup>2</sup> and Dácia,<sup>3</sup> in Germany,<sup>4</sup> and Pannónia, the Romans were defeated,

1. *Herculaneum* was close to the sea, south of Vesuvius, and eight miles south-east from the city of Naples. Little is known of it except its destruction. It was completely buried under a shower of ashes, over which a stream of lava flowed, and afterwards hardened. So changed was the aspect of the whole country, and even the outlines of the coast, that all knowledge of the city, beyond its name, was soon lost, when, in 1713, after a concealment of more than sixteen centuries, accident led to the discovery of its ruins, seventy feet below the surface of the ground.

2. *Pompéii* was fifteen miles south-east from Naples, and was not buried by lava, but by ashes, sand, and stones only, and at a depth of only twelve or fifteen feet above the buildings. It has been excavated much more extensively than *Herculaneum*—disclosing the city walls, streets, temples, theatres, the forum, baths, monuments, private dwellings, domestic utensils, &c.,—the whole conveying the impression of the actual presence of a Roman town in all the circumstantial reality of its existence two thousand years ago. "The discovery of Pompéii has thrown a strong and steady light on many points connected with the private life and economy of the ancients, that were previously involved in the greatest obscurity."—The small number of skeletons discovered in *Herculaneum* and *Pompéii* render it quite certain that most of the inhabitants saved themselves by flight.

3. *Mœ' sia*, extending north to the Danube and eastward to the Euxine, corresponded to the present Turkish provinces of *Ser' via* and *Bulgária*. (Map No. IX.)

4. *Dácia* was an extensive frontier province north of the Danube, extending east to the Euxine. It embraced the northern portions of the present Turkey, together with *Transylvánia* and a part of Hungary. (Map No. IX.)

5. The word *Germánia* was employed by the Romans to designate all the country east of the Rhine and north of the Danube as far as the German ocean and the Baltic, and eastward as far as *Sarmáta* and *Dácia*. The limits of Germany, as a Roman province, were very indefinite. (Map No. IX.)

and whole provinces lost. In Mœ' sia, Domitian himself was several times defeated, yet he wrote to the senate boasting of extraordinary victories, and the servile body decreed him the honors of a triumph. In a similar manner other triumphs were decreed him, which caused Pliny the younger to say that the triumphs of Domitian were always evidence of some advantages gained by the enemies of Rome.

35. At length, after a reign of fifteen years, Domitian was assassinated at the instigation of his wife, who accidentally discovered that her own name was on the fatal list of those whom the emperor designed to put to death. The soldiers, whose pay he had increased, and with whom he often shared his plunder, lamented his fate; but the senate ordered his name to be struck from the Roman annals, and obliterated from every public monument.

36. The death of Domitian closes the reign of those usually denominated "the twelve Cæsars," only three of whom, Augustus, Vespasian, and Titus, died natural deaths. Julius Cæsar fell under the daggers of conspirators in the very senate-house of Rome. *Tiberius*, at the instigation of *Calig' ula*, was smothered on a sick bed. *Calig' ula* was murdered in his own palace while attending a theatrical rehearsal: *Claudius* was poisoned, at the instigation of his own wife, by his favorite physician: *Nero*, by the aid of his freedman, committed suicide to avoid a public execution: the aged *Galba* was slain in the Roman forum, in a mutiny of his guards: *Otho*, on learning the success of his rival *Vitel' lius*, committed suicide: *Vitel' lius* was dragged by the populace through the streets of Rome, put to death with tortures, and his mangled carcass thrown into the *Tiber*; and Domitian was killed in his bed-chamber by those whom he had marked for execution. The heart sickens not more at the recital of these murders than of the crimes that prompted them; and thus far the history of the Roman emperors is little else than a series of constantly recurring scenes of violence and blood.

37. But as we pass from the city of Rome into the surrounding Roman world, we almost forget the revolting scenes of the capital in view of the still-existing power and majesty of the Roman empire—an empire the greatest the world has ever seen—and still great in the remembrance of the past, and in the influences which it has bequeathed to modern times. While the emperors were steeped in the grossest sensuality, and Rome was a hot-bed of infamy and crime the numerous provincial governments were generally administered with ability and success; and the glory of the Roman arms was

sustained in repelling the barbarous hordes that pressed upon the frontiers. But national valor cannot compensate for the want of national virtue: the soul that animated the Republic was dead; the spirit of freedom was gone; and national progress was already beginning to give place to national decay.

## SECTION II.

ROMAN HISTORY FROM THE DEATH OF DOMITIAN, A. D. 96, TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITARY DESPOTISM, AFTER THE MURDER OF ALEXANDER SEVERUS, A. D. 235 = 139 YEARS

ANALYSIS. 1. NERVA. His character, reign, and death. [Um'bria.]—2. TRAJAN. His character, and character of his reign. Remarkable words attributed to him.—3. His wars and conquests. His death. [Ctes'iphon. Trajan's column.]—4. Persecutions of the Christians during the reign of Trajan. The proverbial goodness of Trajan's character.—5. Accession of ADRIAN. His peaceful policy. General administration of the government. His visit to the provinces.—6. Revolt of the Jews. Results of the Jewish war. Defences in Britain. [Solway Frith. River Tyne.]—7. Doubtful estimate of Adrian's character and reign. His ruling passions.—8. Accession of TITUS ANTONINUS.—9. His character, and the character of his reign.—10. MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS. Verus associated with him.—11. War with the Parthians. With the Germans. Remarkable deliverance of the Roman army.—12. Character of the five preceding reigns. The evils to which an arbitrary government is liable. Illustrated in the annals of the Roman emperors.—13. Accession of COMMODUS. Beginning of his government.—14. The incident which decided his fluctuating character. His subsequent wickedness.—15. His debaucheries and cruelties. His death.—16. The brief reign of PERTINAX.—17. Disposal of the empire to DIDIUS JULIANUS.—18. Dangerous position of the new ruler.—19. His competitors. [Dalmatia.] Successes of SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS, and death of JULIANUS.—20. Dissimulation of SEVERUS. He defeats Niger at Issus in Asia. His continued duplicity. Overthrow and death of ALBINUS. [Lyons.]—21. Subsequent reign of SEVERUS. His last illness and death. [York.]—22. CARACALLA and Géta. Death of the latter. Character, reign, and death of Caracalla. Brief reign of MACRINUS.—23. Accession of ELAGABALUS.—24. His character and follies. Circumstances of his death.—25. ALEXANDER SEVERUS. His attempts to reform abuses. Character of his administration. His death. His successor.

1. Domitian was succeeded by Nerva, who was a native of Um'bria,<sup>1</sup> but whose family originally came from Crete. He was the first Roman emperor of foreign extraction, and was chosen by the senate on account of his virtues. His mild and equitable administration forms a striking contrast to the sanguinary rule of Domitian; but his excessive lenity, which was his greatest fault, encouraged the profligate to persevere in their accustomed

1. Um'bria was a country of Italy east of Etruria and north of the Sabine territory. The ancient Um'brians were one of the oldest and most numerous nations of Italy. (Map No. VIII.)

peculations. At length the excesses of his own guards convinced him that the government of the empire required greater energy than he possessed, and he therefore wisely adopted the excellent Trajan as his successor, and made him his associate in the sovereignty. Nerva soon after died, (A. D. 98,) in the seventy-second year of his age, having reigned but little more than sixteen months.

2. Trajan, who was by birth a Spaniard, proved to be one of Rome's best sovereigns; and it has been said of him that he was equally great as a ruler, a general, and a man. After he had made a thorough reformation of abuses, he restored as much of the free Roman constitution as was consistent with a monarchy, and bound himself by a solemn oath to observe the laws; yet while he ruled with equity, he held the reins of power with a strong and steady hand. No emperor but a Trajan could have used safely the remarkable words attributed to him, when, giving a sword to the prefect of the Prætorian guards, he said, "Take this sword and use it; if I have merit, for me; if otherwise, against me."

3. In his wars, Trajan, commanding in person, conquered the Dacians, after which he passed into Asia, subdued Armenia, took Seleucia and Ctes'iphon,<sup>1</sup> the latter the capital of the Parthian kingdom, and sailing down the Tigris displayed the Roman standards for the first time on the waters of the Persian Gulf, whence he passed into the Arabian peninsula, a great part of which he annexed to the Roman empire. But while he was thus passing from kingdom to kingdom, emulating the glory of Alexander, and dreaming of new conquests, he was seized with a lingering illness, of which he died in Cilicia, in the twentieth year of his reign. (A. D. 117.) His ashes were conveyed to Rome in a golden urn, and deposited under the famous column which he had erected to commemorate his Dacian victories.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ctes'iphon was a city of Parthia, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, opposite to and three miles distant from Seleucia.

2. Trajan's column, which is still standing, is the most beautiful mausoleum ever erected to departed greatness. Its height, not including the base, which is now covered with rubbish, is one hundred and fifteen feet ten inches; and the entire column is composed of twenty-four great blocks of marble, so curiously cemented as to seem one entire stone. It is ascended on the inside by one hundred and eighty-five winding steps. The noblest ornament of this pillar was a bronze statue of Trajan, twenty-five feet in height, representing him in a coat of arms, holding in the left hand a sceptre, and in the right a hollow globe of gold, in which, it has been asserted, the ashes of the emperor were deposited. The column is now surmounted by a statue of St. Peter, which Sixtus V. had the bad taste to substitute in place of that of Trajan. On the external face of the column is a series of bas-reliefs, running in a spiral course up the shaft, representing Trajan's victories, and containing two thousand five hundred human figures.



4. The character of Trajan, otherwise just and amiable, is stained by the approval which he gave to the persecution of Christians in the eastern provinces of the empire; for although he did not directly promote that persecution, he did little to check its progress, and allowed the enemies of the Christians to triumph over them. Still, the goodness of his character was long proverbial, inasmuch as, in later times, the senate, in felicitating the accession of a new emperor were accustomed to wish that he might surpass the prosperity of Augustus and the virtue of Trajan.

5. Whether Trajan, in his last moments, adopted his relative Adrian as his successor, or whether the will attributed to him was forged by the empress Plotina, is a doubtful point in history; but

### III. ADRIAN.

Adrian succeeded to the throne with the unanimous declaration of the Asiatic armies in his favor, whose choice was immediately ratified by the senate and people. His first care was to make peace with the surrounding nations; and in order to preserve it he at once abandoned all the conquests made by his predecessor, except that of Dacia, and bounded the eastern provinces by the river Euphrates. He diminished the military establishments, lowered the taxes, reformed the laws, and encouraged literature. He also passed thirteen years in visiting all the provinces of the empire inspecting the administration of government, repressing abuses, and erecting and repairing public edifices.

6. During his reign occurred another war with the Jews, who, incensed at the introduction of Roman idolatry into Jerusalem, were excited to revolt by an impostor who called himself Bar-Cóchab, (*the son of a star*;) and who pretended to be the expected Messiah. Two hundred thousand devoted followers soon flocked to the Jewish standard, and for a time gained important advantages; but Sévérus, afterwards emperor, being sent against them, in a sanguinary war of three years' duration he accomplished the almost total destruction of the Jewish nation. More than five hundred thousand of the misguided Jews are estimated to have fallen by the sword during this period; and those who survived were "scattered abroad among all the nations of the earth."—In Britain, Adrian repaired the frontier fortresses of Agricola as a bulwark against the Caledónians, and erected a second wall, from the Solway Frith<sup>1</sup> to the Tyne,<sup>2</sup> remains of which are still visible

1. *Solway Frith*, the north-eastern arm of the Irish sea, divides England from Scotland. (*Map No. XVI.*)

2. The *Tyne*, an important river in the north of England, enters the sea on the eastern coast, the southern extremity of Northumberland county. (*Map No. XVI.*)

7. Although the general tenor of the reign of Adrian deserved praise for its equity and moderation, yet his character had some dark stains upon it; and the Romans of a later age doubted whether he should be reckoned among the good or the bad princes. He allowed a severe persecution of the Jews and Christians; he was jealous, suspicious, superstitious, and revengeful; and although in general he was a just and able ruler, he was at times an unrelenting and cruel tyrant. His ruling passions were curiosity and vanity; and as they were attracted by different objects, his character assumed the most opposite phases.

8. Adrian, a short time previous to his death, (A. D. 138,) adopted for his successor, Titus Antonínus, surnamed Pius, on IV. TITUS ANTONI' NUS. condition that the latter should associate with him, in the empire, Marcus Aurélius, and the youthful Vérus. Antonínus, immediately after his accession, gave one of his daughters in marriage to Marcus Aurélius, afterwards called Marcus Aurélius Antonínus; but while he associated the worthy Aurélius in the labors of government, he showed no regard for the profligate Vérus.

9. During twenty-two years Antonínus governed the Roman world with wisdom and virtue, exhibiting in his public life a love of religion, peace and justice; and in his private character goodness, amiability, and a cheerful serenity of temper, without affectation or vanity. His regard for the future welfare of Rome is manifest in the favor which he constantly showed to the virtuous Aurélius: the latter, in return, revered the character of his benefactor, loved him as a parent, obeyed him as a sovereign, and, after his death, regulated his own administration by the example and maxims of his predecessor.

10. On the death of Antonínus, (A. D. 161,) the senate, distrust-V. MARCUS AURÉLIUS ANTONI' NUS.ing Vérus on account of his vices, conferred the sovereignty upon Marcus Aurélius alone; but the latter immediately took Vérus as his colleague, and gave him his daughter in marriage; and notwithstanding the great dissimilarity in the characters of the two emperors, they reigned jointly ten years, until the death of Vérus, (A. D. 171,) without any disagreement, for Vérus, destitute of ambition, was content to leave the weightier affairs of government to his associate.

11. Although Aurélius detested war, as the disgrace of humanity and its scourge, yet his reign was less peaceful than that of his predecessor; for the Parthians overran Syria; but they were eventually repulsed, and some of their own cities captured. During five years