

CHAPTER II.

Cæsar passes the Rubicon—Marches to Rome—Named Dictator—Battle of Pharsalia—Flight and Death of Pompey—Defeat of Pharnaces—Death of Cato—Cæsar's Reforms in the Roman State—Reform of the Calendar—Is created perpetual Dictator with the title of Imperator—Character of Cæsar—Is assassinated—Artful conduct of Mark Antony—His ambitious views—Second Triumvirate—Bloody Proscription—Death of Cicero—Battle of Philippi, and End of the Republic—Battle of Actium—Death of Antony and Cleopatra—Octavius (afterwards Augustus) sole master of the Roman Empire.

THE brilliancy of the warlike exploits of Cæsar, and the influence of his partisans in the public measures of the commonwealth, easily procured the prolongation of his government of the Gauls, to a period double the length of that for which it had been originally granted. In the course of ten years, he had reduced the greater part of what is now called France into a Roman province; a conquest, in which his political talents were no less signally displayed than his abilities as a general. His Commentaries, a military journal which contains a brief and perspicuous detail of his campaigns, are no less a proof of his excelling in those splendid features of a public character, than of his possessing all the qualities of a skilful and eloquent historian.

The renewed term of his government was on the eve of expiring; but this extraordinary man had no design of relinquishing his military command. To secure himself against a deprivation of power, he bribed Curio, one of the tribunes, to make a proposal which wore the appearance of great moderation, and regard for the public liberty. This was, that Cæsar and Pompey should either both continue in their governments—or both be recalled; as they were equally capable of endangering the safety of the commonwealth by an abuse of power. The motion passed, and Cæsar immediately offered to resign on condition that his rival should follow his example; but Pompey rejected the proposal, probably aware of the real designs of Cæsar, but too confidently relying on the strength of his own party, and the influence he had with his troops. A civil war was the necessary consequence. Every connection between these two ambitious men was now at an end. The death of Julia, the daughter of Cæsar, and wife of Pompey, dissolved that feeble bond of union which had hitherto subsisted between them.* They were now declared enemies, and each pre-

* This lady died in childbed. She was beloved by Pompey with the fondest

pared to assert, by arms, his title to an unrestrained dominion over his country. It is not a little surprising, that the citizens of Rome should deliberately prepare to sacrifice their lives and fortunes in the decision of such a contest, with all the zeal of men who fight for their most valuable rights and possessions.

Pompey had on his side the consuls and a great part of the senate. In one respect he had justice on his side, for the term of his government was not yet at an end, and the proposed accommodation was evidently a snare laid for him by Cæsar. Cato and Cicero had taken part with Pompey, which showed their sense of the justice of his cause, for they were no false patriots. But Cæsar had in his favor a victorious army of veteran troops, profound military skill, and a great portion of popularity gained by his general character of humanity, and well-employed largesses among all ranks of the people.

The boundary which separates Italy from Cisalpine Gaul is a small river named the Rubicon. The Roman senate, aware of the designs of Cæsar, had pronounced a decree, devoting to the infernal gods whatever general should presume to pass this boundary with an army, a legion, or even a single cohort.

Cæsar, who, with all his ambition, inherited a large share of the benevolent affections, did not resolve on the decisive step which he had now taken without some compunction of mind. Arrived with his army at the border of his province, he hesitated for some time, while he pictured to himself the inevitable miseries of that civil war, in which he was now preparing to unsheath the sword. "If I pass this small stream," said he, "in what calamities must I involve my country! Yet, if I do not, I myself am ruined." The latter consideration was too powerful. Ambition, too, presented allurements, which to a mind like Cæsar's were irresistible. He passed the boundary, and took possession of Ariminum, where he was joined by Mark Antony and Cassius. They were at that time *tribunes of the people*, and after endeavoring in vain to serve his interest at Rome, by strenuously opposing a decree of the senate, which required Cæsar to disband his army, now openly joined him in the field with a considerable body of their followers.

Rome was now in the utmost alarm and consternation. Cæsar had with him ten legions, while Pompey, to whom the city looked for protection, and whom the senate had invested with all authority to defend the republic, had, with unpardonable supineness, taken no measures to guard against a step of this kind, which he might well have apprehended from the daring genius of his rival. He now ordered in haste a general levy to be made over all Italy;

affection; and thus, in the expressive words of Velleius Paterculus, *erat medium malè coherentis inter Pompeium et Cæsarem concordia pignus*.—Lib. ii. c. 47.

but found to his mortification, that Cæsar had pre-occupied the most important places whence troops were to be drawn, and was daily joined by fresh reinforcements. His well-timed bounties, and that clemency which he showed on every success of his arms, and which was truly a part of his nature, had gained him the general favor. The circumstance of the two tribunes espousing his cause gave it a show of patriotism, and he now publicly proclaimed that his sole purpose in leaving his government was to vindicate the authority of *the people* thus injured in the persons of their magistrates.

Pompey was now sensible of his weakness. The voice of the public openly expressed an impatient desire for the arrival of Cæsar, who, on his part, was rapidly advancing to the gates of Rome, when Pompey quitted the city, followed by the consuls and the greater part of the senators. Unable to collect a sufficient force in Italy, he passed over into Epirus. The East had been the scene of his conquests, and thence he trusted that he would be supplied both with troops and treasure. Before sailing from Brundisium, he had declared that he would treat all those as enemies who did not follow him. Cæsar, with more wisdom, declared that he would esteem all those his friends who did not arm against him.

Cæsar, by immediately following Pompey, might, perhaps, have brought the war to a speedy termination; but, besides the want of transports for the conveyance of his army, he judged it hazardous to leave Italy defenceless against the lieutenants of Pompey, then in considerable force in the Province of Spain. His first objects, therefore, were the securing the seat of empire, and reducing the hostile army under Pompey's officers. After making his public entry into Rome, where he was received with the loudest acclamations, and possessing himself of the public treasury, he set out for Spain. Marseilles, which lay in his route, had declared for his rival, but leaving Trebonius to besiege it, he proceeded in his march to meet the lieutenants of Pompey, Afranius and Petreius. These he speedily subdued, and, compelling them to yield at discretion, sent them home to Rome to proclaim his clemency and moderation. In the space of forty days all Spain submitted to the arms of Cæsar, and he returned victorious to Rome, where, in his absence, he had been proclaimed dictator. In that quality, he presided at the annual election of the chief magistrates of the state, and was himself elected consul. He had now that legal title to act in the name of the republic, which he had hitherto wanted. If the power of an usurper is capable of being validated by the subsequent voluntary sanction of those over whom it is usurped, Cæsar had now that ratification.

Meantime Pompey was strenuously collecting forces in Greece, Macedonia, and Epirus. He likewise drew large supplies from the sovereigns of Asia, and had already mustered an army of five legions, with five hundred ships of war, under the command of

Bibulus. Cæsar embarked at Brundisium with an equal armament of five legions, and the two armies came in sight of each other near Dyrrachium, in Illyria. After one doubtful engagement, in which the advantage was rather on the side of Pompey, Cæsar led him on to Macedonia, where he had two additional legions under his lieutenant Calvinus. Pompey, who was easily elated with every appearance of success, flattered himself that this was a retreat upon the part of his enemy. He was, therefore, anxious to come up with him, and eager to terminate the war by a general engagement. This was exactly what Cæsar wished. This important battle was fought in the field of Pharsalia. The army of Pompey amounted to forty-five thousand foot, and seven thousand horse, which was more than double that of his rival; and so confident of victory were the former, that they had adorned their tents with festoons of laurel and myrtle, and prepared a splendid banquet against their return from the battle. Vain and presumptuous preparations! Of this immense army, fifteen thousand were left dead on the field, and twenty-four thousand surrendered themselves prisoners of war, and cheerfully incorporated themselves into the army of the victor, whose loss, in all, did not exceed two hundred men. Cæsar found in the camp of Pompey, all his papers, containing the correspondence he carried on with the chief of his partisans at Rome. The sagacious and magnanimous chief committed them unopened to the flames, declaring that he wished rather to be ignorant who were his enemies, than to be obliged to punish them.

After this fatal engagement, Pompey experienced all the miseries of a fugitive. The last scenes of the life of this illustrious man afford a striking picture of the vicissitudes of fortune, and the instability of all human greatness. He passed the first night, after his defeat, in the solitary hut of a fisherman upon the seacoast. Thence he went on board a vessel, which landed him first at Amphipolis; whence he sailed to Lesbos, where his wife Cornelia was waiting, in anxious expectation, the issue of the late decisive conflict. They met upon the seashore. Pompey embraced her without uttering a word, and this silence spoke at once the whole extent of her misfortune. They fled for protection to Egypt, where Pompey expected to find a welcome asylum at the court of the young Ptolemy, whose father Auletes had owed to him his settlement upon the throne. But Ptolemy was then at war with his sister Cleopatra, to whom their father had jointly bequeathed the kingdom; and his ministers, apprehending that Pompey would take the part of Cleopatra, in order to enforce that settlement of which the Roman people were appointed the executors, immediately determined his destruction. The ship which carried Pompey and Cornelia had approached within sight of the land, and he despatched a messenger ashore desiring an audience of the Egyptian monarch. A single boat rowed off from the land, in which came some offi-

cers with orders to bring him on shore; and he parted with many tears from Cornelia, who was justly apprehensive of his safety, but could not foresee all the misery of his fate.

They were still in sight of the ship, and Pompey, who began to fear that he was betrayed, sought to ingratiate himself with those to whom he was now a prisoner. He reminded some of them of having served under his banners, when a few years before he was the conqueror of the East; but they, answering nothing, rowed on in gloomy silence till they reached the land. While Pompey rose to step on shore, he received the stroke of a dagger in his side, and, decently covering his face with his robe, resigned himself to his fate. They cut off his head, and cast his body naked upon the sand; where a faithful slave, who had attended him, stealing to the place during the silence of the night, made a small funeral pile from the fragments of a boat, and burnt the body, carrying the ashes to Cornelia. "Præcipue Romani nominis imperio arbitrioque Egyptii mancipii jugulatus est. Hic post tres consulatus, et totidem triumphos, domitumque terrarum orbem, vitæ fuit exitus. In tantum in illo viro a se discordante fortuna, ut cui modò ad victoriam terra defuerat, deesset ad sepulturam."*

Cæsar, being told of the course which Pompey had steered, sailed directly to Alexandria. When informed of his fate, he could not restrain his tears; and when his murderers presented to him the head of that unhappy man, which they judged must have been to him a grateful spectacle, he turned aside with horror from the sight. He caused every honor to be paid to his memory, and from that time showed the utmost indulgence and even beneficence to the partisans of his unfortunate rival. Those men have a bad opinion of human nature, who ascribe this conduct altogether to a refined policy, and account Cæsar only the greater hypocrite, the more examples he showed of the milder virtues. An hypothesis so contrary to every rule of candid judgment, is contradicted by the whole tenor of this truly great man's life.

Ptolemy Auletes, the father of the present sovereign of Egypt, had named, as we before remarked, the Roman people as the executors of his testamentary settlement of the kingdom; and Cæsar, as acting in the name of the republic, now took on himself the right of deciding between the pretensions of Cleopatra and her brother. The charms of Cleopatra had probably their influence on this decision. Such, at least, was the allegation of the partisans of the young Ptolemy, who for several months main-

* "He, the noblest of the Roman name, fell by the orders of an Egyptian bondsman.—Such was the miserable end of him who had thrice borne the dignity of consul, thrice been honored with a triumph, and been, in fact, the lord of the world. In him so great was the reverse of fortune, that he, who but lately found the earth too small for his conquests, could not now command enough to cover his remains."—Vell. Pater. ii. 25.

tained his cause by force of arms, and besieged Cæsar in the city of Alexandria. In this war the young Ptolemy was killed, and an accident happened of which the general consequences were more to be deplored; the greater part of the celebrated library of the Ptolemies was burnt to the ground.* The issue of the war would probably have been fatal to Cæsar, had he not received timely succors from Asia. Thus reinforced he brought the kingdom of Egypt under complete subjection, bestowing the sovereignty jointly on Cleopatra and a younger Ptolemy, a child of eleven years of age, the brother of the last prince.

He now turned his arms against Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates, who had seized the kingdom of Pontus, and meditated, after his father's example, to strip the Romans of their Asiatic possessions. This war he very speedily terminated, intimating its issue to his friends at Rome in three words, *Veni, vidi, vici.*†

Thus having established order and tranquillity in the East, Cæsar returned to Rome, where he was elected consul for the ensuing year, and dictator, being the third time he had enjoyed both these dignities. Rome stood in need of his presence; for the troops which, under the command of Mark Antony, had remained in Italy, had spread universal disorder and anarchy. The partisans of his late rival were at the same time in arms in Africa, headed by Scipio and Cato, who, together with the sons of Pompey, had fled thither after the defeat of Pharsalia, and received cordial aid from Juba, king of Mauritania. Cæsar, therefore, found the chief obstacle to his ambition in this quarter, and embarking for Africa, was obliged for some time to act with the greatest caution, and avoid a general engagement, with an enemy whose effective forces greatly outnumbered his own. He gained, however, several advantages, and his high reputation, together with the prevailing opinion of that prosperous fortune which had hitherto attended all his enterprises, caused daily desertions to his standards from the ranks of his enemies. A favorable situation at length presenting itself, he engaged the allied army at Thapsus, and obtained a complete victory. Scipio perished in his passage to Spain. Cato alone remained, whose indomitable spirit no reverse of fortune was capable of forcing to yield to any terms of submission. With an undaunted resolution, he shut himself up in Utica with a few noble spirits, who, like himself, disdained to yield to the master of Rome. He formed the principal citizens into a senate, and for some time

* The royal library of Alexandria was said to consist of seven hundred thousand volumes: of these four hundred thousand, deposited in the quarter of the city called Bruchion, were destroyed on this occasion; the other part, containing three hundred thousand, was within the Serapeum, and escaped the flames; there it was that Cleopatra deposited the two hundred thousand volumes of the Pergamean library, given to her by Mark Antony. This was increased from age to age, till it was finally burnt by the caliph Omar, in A. D. 642.

† "I came, I saw, I conquered."

cherished the desperate purpose of holding out the town against the whole force which Cæsar could bring against it. But the spirits of his party were not equal to his own, and some of his friends venturing to hint a wish for a timely capitulation, Cato counselled them to provide as they judged best for their own safety. After supper, during which he conversed with his usual cheerfulness, he retired to his apartment, and for awhile occupied himself in perusing Plato's *Dialogue on the Immortality of the Soul*. He then composed himself to sleep, and after a short repose, inquiring whether his friends had saved themselves by flight, and being assured that all was well, he calmly fell upon his sword.

Juba was now driven from his kingdom, and Mauritania became a Roman province. The victorious Cæsar returned to Rome. The natural clemency of his disposition now signally displayed itself: he remembered no longer that there had been opposite parties, but showed the same humane indulgence to the friends of Pompey, as if they had never been his enemies. Many of them he raised to offices of dignity and emolument, and found them henceforward the most attached of his partisans. He was decreed a splendid triumph, and on that occasion gratified the people with the most magnificent games and entertainments. Master of the state, he from this time employed his whole attention in contributing to its prosperity and happiness. He turned his mind to the reformation of abuses of every kind. He repressed luxury by sumptuary laws; stimulated industry by rewards; and by sedulously promoting the comforts of the lower class of citizens, gave the most effectual encouragement to population. While he thus advanced the prosperity of the capital, he introduced order and economy into the government of the provinces, where hitherto every species of oppression and peculation had been permitted and countenanced.

The genius of Cæsar was not confined to the arts of government, but carried its researches into every branch of science and philosophy. The duration of the year at this time was twelve lunar months, with an intercalation of twenty-two or twenty-three days, alternately, at the end of every two years: but the pontiffs either introduced or omitted the intercalation according to circumstances, as they wanted to abridge or prolong the time of the magistrates' continuing in office—and thus there was the greatest confusion in the calendar. Cæsar, who was a proficient in astronomy, and to whose writings in that science even Ptolemy confesses that he owed information, corrected the errors of the calendar, by fixing the solar year at three hundred and sixty-five days, with an intercalation of one day every fourth year.*

* Romulus divided the year into ten months, which consisted of three hun-

The sons of Pompey, Cneius and Sextus, attempted to rekindle the war in Spain; but they were soon subdued by Cæsar in a decisive engagement at Munda. Returning from this expedition to Rome, he was hailed the Father of his Country, was created consul for ten years, and perpetual dictator. His person was declared *sacred*; as a symbol of which, he was allowed to wear constantly a circlet of laurel, hitherto the temporary distinction of a triumphant general. In like manner the epithet of *imperator*, which was only occasionally bestowed on the commander of a victorious army, was now conferred on Cæsar as a perpetual title of honor, as he was invested for life with the power of chief commander of the whole armies of the state.

By these public acts and decrees of the Roman people, accumulating the most despotic powers of sovereignty in the person of an individual, the commonwealth of Rome had now voluntarily resigned its liberties: the ancient republican constitution was at an end: there were none who either had an interest or a desire to maintain it; for the passion for manly independence, and the anxious vindication of their rights as free citizens, which in former times animated the great body of the people, and checked all inordinate ambition in individuals, had now given place to that selfish spirit which is content with the pleasures of luxury, and seeks the gratification of its narrow schemes of enjoyment by courting the favor of a sovereign or meanly flattering his passions. The Roman liberty, as Montesquieu has well observed, was not extinguished by the ambition of a Pompey or of a Cæsar. If the sentiments of Cæsar and Pompey had been the same with those of Cato, others would have cherished the same ambitious thoughts which they discovered; and since the republic was fated to fall, there never would have been wanting a hand to drag it to destruction.

Yet though the fall of a constitution is the necessary and un-

dred and four days; but Numa added two other months, January and February, which made his year to contain three hundred and fifty-four days. But this computation falling short of the space of a regular year by ten days and six hours nearly, occasioned every eighth year an interposition of three whole months, which they called the intercalary or leap year. The care of making this intercalation being left to the priests, they introduced or omitted a month whenever they pleased, till at last there was such disorder, that festivals came to be kept at a season quite different from that of their first institution. To remedy these abuses, Julius Cæsar added the odd ten days to Numa's year; and lest the odd six hours should create confusion, he ordered that every fourth year one whole day should be inserted, next after the twenty-third of February, or next before the sixth of the calends of March; for which reason the supernumerary day was called *dies bis-sextus*, and thence the leap year came to be called *annus bis-sextilis*. This is the Julian or Old Style. Yet because there wanted eleven minutes in the six odd hours of Julius's year, the equinoxes and solstices, losing something continually, were found, about the year 1584, to have run back ten whole days: for which reason Pope Gregory XIII, cut off ten days to bring them to their proper places, and this is called the Gregorian or New Style.