

avoidable consequence of the decay of those principles by which it had originally been supported, men must reprobate the instrument of usurpation by which their ruin is finally accomplished. In this point of view the conduct of Cæsar cannot be vindicated on the score of right. He was an usurper; and had it been possible to restore the Roman liberty and the ancient fabric of the commonwealth by the extinction of the tyrant, an open and manly use of the sword for his destruction had been a meritorious and patriotic attempt. But here lay the delusion: it may be the fact, that those men who accomplished the death of Cæsar acted upon principles truly virtuous and patriotic; they did perhaps believe, that by his death, they would restore the liberty and ancient constitution of their country: but we must deplore the narrowness of their views who did not perceive that an internal principle of corruption had annihilated the one, and must have proceeded to extinguish the other, although Julius Cæsar had never been born. Even Cicero, whose political principles led him to approve of the death of Cæsar, candidly owns that the republic gained nothing by that event:—"Interfecto domino, liberi non sumus: non fuit dominus ille fugiendus: sublato enim tyranno, tyrannida manere video."*

The personal character, too, of this illustrious man has greatly contributed to increase the censure of those who conspired and accomplished his death; † but in impartial reasoning on the merit or demerit of this action, it is not equitable to allow force to such considerations.

The magnificent schemes of a public nature which Cæsar had formed would certainly have contributed both to his own glory and to the interest and happiness of the people whom he governed; and a just sense of these benefits was doubtless the principal

* "The master is slain, but we are not the more free. It was not he who was to be dreaded. The tyrant is indeed removed, but the tyranny remains." Cic. ad Attic. xiv. 14.

† Julius Cæsar united in himself more of the advantages of mind and body than perhaps, any of his contemporaries, and to these were added the splendor of ancestry; for he could trace his pedigree, on his mother's side, up to Ancus Martius; and the Julian family, of which he was the head, were generally believed to have descended from the Trojan Æneas. Velleius Paterculus thus shortly enumerates these striking characteristics of Cæsar:—"Hic nobilissima Juliorum genitus familia, et quod inter omnes antiquissimos constabat, ab Anchise et Venere deducens genus, forma omnium civium excellentissimus, vigore animi acerrimus, munificentia effusissimus, animo supra humanam et naturam et fidem evectus, magnitudine cogitationum, celeritate bellandi, patientia periculorum, magno illi Alexandro, sed sobrio nec iracundo, simillimus." Vell. Pat. ii. 41.

"Born of the most illustrious family of the Julii, and tracing his highest descent from Anchises and Venus, he excelled all his fellow citizens in the graces of his person, the vigor of his mind, and the splendor of his munificence; and that to a degree not only beyond human nature, but beyond human conception: in the magnitude of his designs, his promptitude in war, his indifference to danger, he was the equal of the great Alexander, but in command over himself far his superior."

cause of his popularity while alive, and of the splendid reputation which has attended his memory. He had proposed to collect, arrange, and methodize the laws of his country. He had employed the most learned men of his times to collect libraries for the public use. He had planned the most magnificent structures for the embellishment of the city, and the preservation of the public records. He projected the draining of the marshes of Italy, which rendered the whole country unwholesome; the deepening the bed of the Tiber, and the construction of a harbor at the mouth of that river capable of receiving the largest vessels both for war and merchandise. We have noticed the reforms which he introduced in the government of the provinces. He proposed to have a complete survey and geographical delineation made of the whole Roman empire. These were certainly schemes equally splendid and beneficial to the public. They create a just admiration of the character of Cæsar, and make us regret that blind and infatuated zeal which frustrated the accomplishment of those great designs, without giving in exchange for them any real or substantial good.

It was almost the only weakness of this truly great man, that, possessing the reality of sovereign power, he was not satisfied without obtaining likewise its external pageantry. To gratify this frivolous passion, the senate had decreed him the privilege of constantly wearing the triumphal robe, of having a gilded chair of state, and of taking the precedence of all the magistrates of the commonwealth. He was allowed a constant escort of knights and senators; his birthday was ordained to be solemnized as a festival through the whole empire; and a temple was built and priests appointed to offer sacrifice unto the Julian Jupiter. It was generally believed that he coveted a yet more dangerous distinction, and had determined that the title of KING, which, from the days of the last Tarquin, had been odious to every Roman ear, should be revived in his person. The report was current that a party of the senators had determined to crown him in public by that title on the ides of March. A conspiracy had been for some time formed, at the head of which were Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius, whom Cæsar had placed on the list of prætors, and intrusted with the higher jurisdiction of the city—the former a man whom he had reason to believe most sincerely attached to him, as he had saved his life at the battle of Pharsalia, and given him numberless proofs of his affection. The conspirators determined to execute their purpose on that day which had been destined for bestowing on Cæsar the regal title. He had no sooner taken his place in the senate-house, than the conspirators, surrounding him, plunged their daggers into his body: he defended himself for some time, till seeing Brutus among the assassins, whom he had always distinguished by the epithet of his son, he resigned himself to his fate, and fell, pierced with twenty-three wounds, at the foot of Pompey's statue.

The conspirators had no sooner accomplished their purpose than they ran through the streets of the city, proclaiming aloud that the king of Rome was dead; but the effect did not answer their expectation. The people, almost to a man, seemed struck with horror at the deed. They loved Cæsar, master as he was of their lives and liberties. Mark Antony, who was consul, and Lepidus, the general of the horse, ambitious themselves of succeeding to the power of dictator, resolved to pave the way for it by avenging his death. The senate was convoked to determine whether the ordinances of the late dictator had the force of law;—that is to say, whether Cæsar was an usurper, or was invested with legal authority. It was a nice question, but it required an immediate determination. The senators were of opposite opinions. The party of the assassins was formidable, from the experience of what they had the courage to attempt: yet the extreme disorder that must have ensued from annulling all the laws and regulations of the dictator made it a thing impossible to be thought of in the present situation of affairs. The senate had recourse to an equivocal, and, in fact, a contradictory decree; which was, to confirm all the laws of Cæsar, and to declare at the same time that his murderers should not be prosecuted. But the latter part of this decree was evaded by the art of Antony, who determined to call forth the vengeance of the people upon the heads of those men whom he justly regarded as the chief obstacles to his own designs of ambition.

Cæsar had adopted Caius Octavius, the grandson of his sister Julia, and left him heir to the greatest part of his fortune. He had appointed several of the conspirators themselves for his tutors, and had bequeathed a large legacy to the people of Rome, to be divided among the whole of the citizens. These bequests redoubled the affection of the people, and they flocked to attend his obsequies, penetrated with the highest regard to his memory, and with the utmost indignation against his murderers. Mark Antony took advantage of these favorable dispositions. The body being laid on a couch of state in the *forum*, he mounted the consul's tribunal, and after reading the decree of the senate, which had conferred upon Cæsar even the honors due to a divinity, he entered into an enumeration of all his illustrious achievements for the glory and aggrandizement of the state: he then proceeded to recount the examples of his clemency, and heightened all his virtues with the most pathetic eloquence. "By these titles we have sworn that his person should be held sacred and inviolable; and here (said he) behold the force of our oaths." At these words he lifted up the robe which covered the body, and holding it out to the people, who melted into tears, he showed it all covered with blood, and pierced with the daggers of the conspirators. A general cry of vengeance was heard. The populace strove to increase the funeral pile, by throwing into it their most precious effects; while numbers

ran to destroy and set fire to the houses of the murderers. These at first fled to the capitol for safety; but finding their lives even there in the utmost hazard, prudently quitted the city, and sought shelter in the distant provinces.

The Consul Antony, by the steps he had hitherto taken, wanted only to sound the dispositions of the people. Finding these to his wish, he very soon began to discover his own views of ambition. He was possessed of the whole of the dictator's papers. He had received likewise from Calpurnia, the widow, all the treasures of Cæsar. Not content with these, he made a traffic of fabricating acts and deeds, to which he counterfeited the dictator's subscription, and availed himself of them as genuine. He next persuaded the senate, on pretence that his personal safety was in danger, to allow him a guard; and under that decree, he chose six thousand of the ablest veterans, whom he embodied and armed. Thus secured, he found himself absolute master in Rome. In all revolutions there are critical moments when all that is requisite to the attainment of the supreme power is the courage to assume it.

But the ambition of Antony was frustrated by the measures of a rival against whom he had not provided. The young Octavius arrived in Rome; and declaring himself the heir of Cæsar, found no other title necessary to gain the favor of the people,—a powerful stimulant to the ambitious plan he had secretly formed of succeeding to the full power of the dictator. Pursuing the same object with Antony, it was impossible they could long be on good terms. An open rupture ensued on account of the government of Cisalpine Gaul, which Antony, in opposition to the will of the dictator, who had decreed it to Decimus Brutus, endeavored to secure for himself. This province, from its vicinity to the capital, was always of prime importance to the ruler of the state.

Octavius on this occasion armed against him, in order to enforce the will of his adopted father. He had the address to persuade the senate into his views, and to inspire them with a dread of the ambition of his rival. But after some indecisive acts of hostility, Octavius and Antony, finding their parties very nearly balanced, judged it for the present to be their most prudent scheme to unite their interests, and to admit into their association Lepidus, who then enjoyed the government of Transalpine Gaul. Thus was formed the second triumvirate, the effects of whose union were beyond measure dreadful. Octavius, Mark Antony, and Lepidus held a conference in a small island in the middle of the river Po. They agreed that, under the title of *Triumviri*, they should possess themselves of absolute authority; and they made a partition on the spot of all the provinces, and divided between them the command of the legions. Lepidus had Gallia Narbonnensis and Spain; Antony had Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul; Octavius contented himself with Africa, Sicily, and Sardinia. None of them

ventured to appropriate to himself Italy; because they affected to regard that country as the *communis patria*, which they were all equally bound to protect and defend. The eastern provinces were as yet possessed by Brutus and the other conspirators, against whom it was determined that Antony and Octavius should immediately march with a large army.

Before entering, however, upon this expedition, it was resolved to clear the way by a proscription of all that were obnoxious to any one of the triumviri: a dreadful resolution! since the firmest friends of any one of the three had necessarily been the enemies of the others. What souls must those men have possessed who could advise or consent to so horrible a scheme! Lepidus agreed to sacrifice his brother Paulus; Antony, his uncle Lucius Cæsar; Octavius, his guardian Torranus, and his friend Cicero. The latter had been won by the flattery of Octavius, to espouse his interest by unmasking the ambitious design of Antony to succeed to the power of the dictator; on which occasion, Cicero pronounced his famous Philippics, in imitation of the orations of Demosthenes to rouse the spirit of the Greeks against the designs of the Macedonian tyrant. It was no wonder, then, that Antony should mark this illustrious man as a certain victim of his revenge.

Cicero, who had never been remarkable for strength of mind, showed more magnanimity on this occasion than he had ever before manifested. When informed that his name was included in the proscription, he yielded at first to the earnest persuasion of his friends to attempt to save himself by flight: but on being informed that the country was beset by his enemies, so as to leave no chance for his escape, he desired to be carried to one of his own villas. On perceiving the approach of a band of soldiers, who were commissioned to assassinate him, he ordered his litter to be stopped, beheld his murderers with a fixed regard, and stretched out his neck to the blow. A fragment of one of the lost books of Livy gives a striking description of this last scene in the life of Cicero. After judiciously remarking, that amidst all the reverses of fortune which this great man had undergone, it was only on this last occasion that he displayed true magnanimity, the historian adds these words: *Siquis tamen virtutibus vitia pensarit, vir magnus, acer, memorabilis fuit, et in cujus laudes persequendas Cicerone laudatore opus fuerit.** In this horrible proscription, 300 senators and 3,000 Roman knights were put to death in cold blood.

Satiated, at length, with murder, the triumvirate prepared for their expedition against the conspirators. Lepidus remained in Rome, while Antony and Octavius marched against Brutus and Cassius, then in Macedonia. No Roman armies had ever been

* "But weighing his great qualities with his failings, he was a great and most able man, to do justice to whose praises would require a second Cicero."

seen equal in number to those which were now to decide the fate of the world. Each party led into the field above 100,000 men. They met near the town of Philippi, on the confines of Macedonia. This decisive battle was fought on both sides with the most desperate courage. Brutus was victorious at the head of that division which he commanded; but too rashly pursuing his success, he separated himself from the main body of the army, which in the meantime was vigorously attacked by Antony, and entirely broken. Cassius, ignorant of what had become of Brutus, and believing that all was lost, obliged one of his own freedmen to put him to death. The plan of Brutus, who had come off in safety with a large body of men, was evidently now to avoid a second engagement: but his troops, flushed with their individual success, forced him to come to action, and he was totally defeated. Convinced that the chances of success were now irretrievably gone, and well-assured of the fate he had to expect from the conquerors, he chose to deprive his enemies at least of one victim, and, falling on his sword, he died the death of his friend Cassius.

Octavius appears in this decisive action to have behaved in no heroic manner. It was even asserted that he chose to post himself among the baggage in the rear, during the whole time of the engagement; and such a report, even if we suppose it a falsehood, is, at least, a proof that he had not the reputation of valor. Mark Antony had real courage, and after victory displayed that generosity which is ever its attendant; while the former exhibited a cruelty of nature which is the inseparable companion of cowardice. He caused the most distinguished of the prisoners to be slaughtered before his eyes, and even insulted them in the agonies of death.

The Triumvirs were obliged to gratify their troops with very high rewards. To furnish a supply for that necessary purpose, Antony went into Asia, where he levied the most exorbitant contributions from the tributary states. While in Cilicia, he summoned Cleopatra, who, by assassinating her brother, had secured to herself the undivided sovereignty of Egypt, to appear before him, and answer for her conduct in allowing Serapion, her lieutenant in the isle of Cyprus, to send succors to Cassius. The queen came to Tarsus. Her beauty, the splendor of her suite and equipage, and the artful allurements of her manners, made a complete conquest of the triumvir. He forgot glory, ambition, fame, and every thing for Cleopatra. Octavius, meantime, thought of nothing but his own interest and exaltation, to which he regarded the infatuation of Antony as a most happy preparative.

The younger Pompey had taken possession of Sicily, of Sardinia, and Corsica. Octavius now turned his attention to this quarter; but incapable himself of commanding in a military expedition, he employed Marcus Agrippa, a man of uncommon talents, whom he had raised from obscurity to the consulship; and who

very speedily compelled Pompey to evacuate Sicily and all his other possessions, and fly into Asia, where he was put to death by the lieutenants of Antony.

Octavius now determined to rid himself of the partners of his power. Lepidus, a man of an indolent character and no talent, had already lost all credit, even with his own troops. The legions under his command, won by the bribes and promises of Octavius, deserted their general, who, sensible of his own insufficiency, sought permission to retire to Circæum, on the Latian coast, where he passed the remainder of his life in quiet obscurity. It has been well remarked of this man, who for some time sustained a high part in the political drama of the times, that he had neither those virtues nor those vices for which the names of men are transmitted with distinction to posterity.

Antony, in the meantime, intoxicated with Eastern luxury and debauchery, was daily sinking in the esteem of his army. In the madness of his passion for Cleopatra, he had proclaimed her queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Africa, and Cælo-Syria; and lavished kingdoms and provinces on the children that were the fruit of her various amours. These shameless proceedings reflected dishonor on the Roman name, and deprived him of the esteem of his best friends; and the imprudent measure he now took in divorcing his wife Octavia, the sister of his colleague, was a justifiable cause for their coming to an open rupture, and appealing to the sword to decide their claim to undivided sovereignty of the empire. Octavius had foreseen this issue, and made formidable preparations, which Antony had supinely neglected. He trusted chiefly to his fleet, and was persuaded by Cleopatra to rest the fortune of the war on a naval engagement, which was fought near Actium in Epirus. In the heat of the battle, which was maintained for some time with equal spirit, Cleopatra, with her Egyptian armament of sixty galleys, took to flight; and what is scarcely conceivable, such was the infatuation of Antony, that he followed her, leaving his fleet to fight for themselves. After a contest of some hours, they yielded to the squadron of Octavius. The army of Antony, which had witnessed this engagement from the land, held out for a few days, in hopes of the return of their commander, but at length seeing their expectation vain, they surrendered to the victor.

The flight of Cleopatra had been attributed by Antony to female timidity; but her subsequent conduct gave full reason to believe it shameful treachery. Octavius pursued the fugitives to Egypt, where Antony, in desperate infatuation, gave himself up entirely to riot and debauchery, still blind to the treacherous character of his paramour, who, in the meantime, was carrying on a secret negotiation with Octavius, on whom she vainly imagined that her personal charms might have such influence as to procure her association in the supreme power and government of the Ro-

man empire. In this view she surrendered to him the sovereignty of Egypt, while, without positively assenting to her terms, Octavius gave her reason to believe that he was not disinclined to an accommodation that would gratify her utmost ambition.

Meantime Octavius advancing with his army to besiege Pelusium, its governor, instructed by Cleopatra, surrendered the city at discretion, and this event was followed by the surrender of the Egyptian fleet. The eyes of Antony were at length opened. He plainly saw that he was betrayed. A report which Cleopatra caused to be spread, that she had put an end to her life, hastened the fate of her injured lover, who died by his own hand; and Cleopatra, soon after, discovering that all arts were lost upon Octavius, who had determined to treat her as a captive, now executed in reality what she had before feigned, and put herself to death by the poison of an asp.

Octavius returned to Italy, sole master of the Roman Empire. He owed his elevation to no manly virtue or heroism of character. A concurrence of happy circumstances, the adoption of the great Julius, the weakness of Lepidus, the folly and infatuation of Antony, the treachery of Cleopatra, and, above all, his own address and artifice, were the instruments of his fortune.

At this remarkable period, the end of the Commonwealth of Rome, it may be well to suspend for a while our historical narrative, and interpose some brief observations on the general character of Roman education; the state of literature at this period; the predominant tastes and passions of this remarkable people; and the system of their military art.

CHAPTER III.

On the Genius and National Character of the Romans—System of Roman Education—Progress of Literature—The Drama—Historians—Poets.

IN the present chapter, we are to attend to those particular circumstances which appear most peculiarly to mark the genius, and to have formed the national character of the Romans.

A virtuous but rigid severity of manners was the characteristic of the Romans under their kings, and during the first ages of the republic. The private life of the citizens was frugal, temperate, and laborious, and it reflected its influence on their public charac-