

Cowper himself was hardly less adapted for the storms of state than was Cicero. And yet Cicero was ever consumed by the desire of grasping that scepter of power, which, by his nature, he was utterly incapable of wielding. It is not difficult to find such men in modern times.

We hear much in our degenerate days, so called, of Roman virtue. Unfortunately, authentic history seems to be but a record of Roman vice. One of the first acts of Octavius Cæsar, after his arrival in Rome, was to hire some assassins to murder Antony. The plot was discovered. Antony, who had at one time been engaged in a similar endeavor to assassinate Cæsar, knowing how easy it was in Rome to hire any number of daggers, was greatly alarmed. The indications of Octavius' popularity were such that he did not dare to bring him to trial. He became even afraid to trust the strong body guard with which he had surrounded himself. He accordingly left Rome and went to Brundisium, that he might, by flattery and bribes, devote to his interests four legions which were quartered there. He addressed the troops with all his powers of persuasion, and offered to each man a gratuity amounting to about fifteen dollars. To his surprise and mortification, the troops, accustomed to the largesses of Cæsar, ridiculed the meanness of the gift.

Alarmed and indignant at these indications of revolt, Antony summoned several officers whom he suspected of being ringleaders in the disaffection, and caused them instantly to be put to death. Receiving tidings from Rome that his enemies were making headway there he hastily returned. Octavius Cæsar was more successful with some legions in the vicinity of the imperial city. Through his friends and the vast wealth which Cæsar had bequeathed him, he was enabled to present to every man of these legions a sum amounting to eighty dollars. He commenced collecting his troops at Capua, and wrote to Cicero urging him to advocate his cause in the senate. The illustrious orator, deeming the prospects of Octa-

avius encouraging, after much hesitation, and casting longing eyes toward Brutus and Cassius, who were now far away beyond the Ionian gulf, ventured to accept the proffered hand of Octavius.

The young adventurer, under the auspices of Cicero, visited Rome, and addressed the assembled citizens in the forum. But he had a difficult task to perform, as he wished to reconcile in his favor the two antagonistic elements of aristocratic privilege and popular rights. But the spirit of Julius Cæsar was in his heart, and it broke out in his words. And when, in the fervor of his address, he pointed to the statue and swore, by the immortal gods, that he would emulate his uncle's spirit, and strive to attain his uncle's greatness, the people applauded him to the skies, while the nobles turned away in disgust and indignation. Cæsar, though dead, still ruled in Rome.

In the meantime Antony was marching upon Rome with some troops who remained faithful to him. Octavius, not able then to resist him, retired. Antony issued a proclamation denouncing him as a traitor, and threatening with the severest punishments all who should, in any way, abet his cause. But every day, tidings were reaching Antony that his legions were in revolt, and were giving in their adhesion to Octavius. He, in his alarm, retired to Gaul, taking command of that distant province, hoping there to reestablish his power; but his fears of Octavius were so great that he traversed Italy by cross roads, lest he should be intercepted by his formidable foe. Decimus Brutus was then in command of Gaul, and he resolved not to surrender his office. Antony thus found himself immediately arrayed against hostile troops. Dolabella, the colleague of Antony in the consulship, was now in Syria; consequently Rome was left without the presence of either of the consuls.

The purity of Cicero's private character gave him much influence, notwithstanding the boundless corruption of those times. The worst of men could appreciate the nobleness of



what is called good morals. The pendulum of Cicero's mind now vibrated again to the cause of the aristocracy, and, as Brutus had sent a proclamation to Rome, declaring both his determination and his ability to defend Gaul against Marc Antony, Cicero hastened to the metropolis, and in a full meeting of the senate pronounced his renowned oration, entitled the Third Philippic. This oration, in its eloquence and its caution, is characteristic of the author. He proposed a vote of thanks to Brutus, the illustrious advocate of aristocracy, for the firm stand he was making against Antony; and, at the same time, called for an expression of gratitude to Octavius, the representative of the plebeian cause, for his hostility to Antony.

The indications were very decisive that Antony was ruined; but whether the party of Brutus, or that of Octavius would rise upon those ruins, was not settled. Cicero was prudently prepared for either. The opening of the new year introduced two new consuls, Hirtius and Pansa. Cicero grew more bold, and proposed in the senate, that Antony should be declared a public enemy, and that the people should be summoned to rise *en masse* to crush him. The proposition of Cicero was adopted, with the exception that a deputation should first be sent to Antony with the demand, that he should throw down his arms and submit himself to the senate and people. The sun of Octavius Cæsar was now manifestly rising. The senate admitted him to its membership with high rank, and erected an equestrian statue in his honor.

The delegation sent to Antony was composed of Sulpicius, a renowned lawyer, and one of Cæsar's most devoted friends, of Piso, the father of Cæsar's wife, and of Philippus, the husband of Cæsar's niece, and stepfather of Octavius. One of the consuls, Hirtius, also took the field, with a well provided army, against Antony. The courage and decision of Cicero now waxed rapidly. Antony rejected the terms proposed by the senate, but returned some propositions of his

own, which he offered in the way of compromise, but which in their turn were peremptorily cast aside, and Antony was declared to be a rebel. This was a great gain for Octavius Cæsar. The embroilment of parties was, however, now such, that the people were embarrassed to know which was the popular, and which the aristocratic side.

Junius Brutus, then in Greece, with consummate sagacity and administrative skill roused the enthusiasm of Pompey's veteran soldiers, and assembled beneath the banners of the old aristocratic party, seven legions, with a well-supplied treasury, and all the needful munitions of war. Dolabella, then in Greece, discomfited and defeated, fled to Syria, and sought a cowardly refuge from life's woes, in suicide.

Cassius in Syria, was as triumphant as Brutus in Greece, and it now became apparent that the civil war would be one of no ordinary magnitude; and, from the chaos of parties, there began to emerge again the two distinct arrays of the advocates of patrician supremacy on the one hand, and of plebeian equality of rights on the other. Cicero, whose *sympathies* were invariably with the patricians, proposed in the senate,

“That the senate highly approve of the conduct of Brutus and confirm him in the government of the armies he has raised and the provinces he has acquired; and that they request him to hold himself in readiness to lend his assistance to the commonwealth, when necessary.”

By the *commonwealth*, was meant the old aristocratic regime of Pompey. Cicero was now rushing headlong into the embraces of the aristocracy, and, in his zeal, which was tempered with but very little discretion, he urged a resolution equally laudatory of the conduct of Cassius, the other leading assassin of Cæsar, and which conferred upon him also almost absolute control over the fleets, armies, and revenues of the East. This inordinate proposal alarmed the *people*, and raised a great outcry against Cicero. Antony availed



himself of this sentiment, in the endeavor to rally around him the undivided energies of the popular party. He wrote a letter to Octavius, urging upon him the impolicy of committing himself to the old Pompeian policy, a policy which was in deadly hostility to all the principles of Cæsar's government, and, though it might deceive the people for a time, could never secure their cordial support.

This letter was intercepted and placed in the hands of Cicero, and he read it to the assembled senate. The progress of the war in Italy, or rather in that portion of Italy then called Cisalpine Gaul, had placed Octavius as commander-in-chief of those forces which were fighting the battles of the assassins of his uncle, an eminently false position for him to occupy. Antony had been defeated in a sanguinary battle at Mutina, now Modena, and was on the rapid retreat, pursued by Decimus Brutus and Octavius, yet hoping to find refuge beyond the maritime Alps. As, in confused retreat, he pressed along his way, his ranks were continually swelled by the slaves, and the lowest portion of the people who flocked to his standards. When the tidings reached Rome that the army of Antony was defeated, and in wild confusion was rushing through the fastnesses of the Alps, the exultation was very great with the aristocratic party then in the ascendancy there. Congratulations, thanks, and ovations were voted to Brutus and Octavius, and it was reaffirmed that Antony and all his followers were public enemies.

Octavius seems to have been conscious of his false position, and that through the force of circumstances he had become the tool of a party who execrated the principles of his uncle, and who were the unrelenting foes of that popular political equality, through which alone he could hope for permanent ascendancy. He therefore manifested but little zeal in the pursuit of the fugitives; and Antony soon rallied his forces between Genoa and Nice, and was joined by such reinforcements, as enabled him again to assume the aspect

of one prepared to cope with his foes. Cicero, now avowedly the warm friend and partisan of the aristocracy, was, by his commanding influence, at the head of the government of Rome, directing all its measures. He was watchful to reward with honors and to strengthen with office, those upon whom he could rely as supporters of the patrician cause.

Murmurs loud and deep were now heard in the army of Octavius, respecting the unequal distribution of purse and place in favor of the enemies of the people. Octavius, every hour, became more and more warmly in sympathy with his troops, and decided to turn his attention from the prosecution of a provincial war in which he was but harming his own cause, to the endeavor to secure his election as consul at Rome. This would place the scepter of power in his hand which he could wield effectually for the furtherance of his high ambition. He accordingly sent a deputation of his friends to Rome, to suggest his name and to labor for his election. These men engaged in their enterprise of securing the consulship for their commander, Octavius, with the spirit of successful soldiers, who felt conscious that they were backed by a powerful army. It is said that the centurion who headed this delegation, when he presented the name of Octavius to the senate, insolently pointed to the hilt of his sword and said:

“If you refuse our request, this shall grant it.”

Octavius Cæsar, now, in imitation of his uncle Julius Cæsar, wheeled around his columns and commenced a march toward Rome. He was at the head of an army flushed with victory, and devoted to his service, and who knew that if the scepter of power was placed in their commander's hands he would wield that scepter for their benefit. By a singular coincidence, he marched along the same road from Cisalpine Gaul, which his uncle had traversed. The revolution of the wheel which crushed the patricians and elevated the plebeians, was almost instantaneous. Octavius encountered no impedi-



ments in his march; no murmurs even seem to have been raised. He advanced to the gates of the capital and encamped his troops in the Campus Martius, uttering no other menace than the presence of such an army silently indicated. He was everywhere recognized as the Nephew of his Uncle, and that armed him with almost invincible power.

Almost without opposition he was elected consul, and the plebeian's heel fell crushing upon the patrician's head. We should have more sympathy for the patricians in their downfall, had they not enjoyed long ages of ascendancy, during which the plebeians had writhed beneath the trappings of patrician feet. This oblivion of the ties of brotherhood—this attempt of one class of men to live at the expense of another—this irrepressible conflict, in which the patrician has endeavored to crowd his brother plebeian into the dust, has been through all ages the fruitful source of human woe. And this conflict will continue bitterly to the end, until the ties of fraternity shall be recognized, and until the principle of our own declaration of independence is enthroned in all hearts—that all men are created equal, and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Octavius Cæsar commenced his consular reign vigorously. He first expunged the decree that Antony and his friends were public enemies. He then sent a wave of terror to the remotest bounds of the Roman empire, by a law which enacted that all implicated in the assassination of Cæsar, wherever they could be found, should be arrested and brought to trial. M. Agrippa appeared as the accuser of the conspirators, whose names were well known. As they did not appear to respond to the charge, they were all convicted of treason, and doomed to perpetual exile from Rome, by a bill of attainder, which in the usual style prohibited them the use of fire and water, within a certain distance from the metropolis.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### OCTAVIUS CÆSAR.

FROM 42 B. C. TO 32 B. C.

FATE OF DECIMUS BRUTUS.—MASSACRES IN ROME.—DEATH OF CICERO.—ANECDOTES.—THE TRIUMVIRATE.—WAR IN MACEDONIA.—RUIN OF THE PATRICIAN CAUSE.—SUICIDE OF CASSIUS AND BRUTUS.—TRIUMPH OF THE TRIUMVIRATE.—OPPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE AND DISCONTENT IN ROME.—PROFLIGACY OF OCTAVIUS CÆSAR.—DOWNFALL OF LEPIDUS.—DRUSILLA.—DIVORCE OF ANTONY'S WIFE.—ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.—WAR BETWEEN OCTAVIUS AND ANTONY.—MUSTERING OF THE FORCES.—ANTONY AND HIS BRIDAL PARAMOUR.

DECIMUS BRUTUS, abandoned by his soldiers who deserted in battalions to Antony, attempted to escape to Greece, in the disguise of a Gaul. But he was arrested, and, at the command of Antony, beheaded. Though the assassin of Cæsar deserved no better fate, there was no virtue in Antony, which authorized him to be executor of such vengeance. Octavius, now invested with the consular dignity, and at the head of a victorious army, opened a friendly correspondence with Antony and Lepidus, in which they agreed to bury all past differences, and to coöperate in the furtherance of the common cause. Antony had reconducted his troops back to Mutina, and the three chieftains held an interview on one of the numerous marshy islands, which then existed between the Apennines and the Po. They constituted themselves a triumvirate to administer the affairs of the empire, supported by their united armies; they divided among themselves the powers within their grasp, and made arrangements for the punishment of their adversaries. The three returned to Rome, followed by their troops, and, without difficulty, secured the appointment of the triumvirate by the legal