

SUETONIUS
THE LIFE OF VESPASIAN

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M.D.

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VITA DIVI VESPASIANI

(441) I. The empire, which had been long thrown into a disturbed and unsetled state, by the rebellion and violent death of its three last rulers, was at length restored to peace and security by the Flavian family, whose descent was indeed obscure, and which boasted no ancestral honours; but the public had no cause to regret its elevation; though it is acknowledged that Domitian met with the just reward of his avarice and cruelty. Titus Flavius Petro, a townsman of Reate [721], whether a centurion or an evocatus [722] of Pompey's party in the civil war, is uncertain, fled out of the battle of Pharsalia and went home; where, having at last obtained his pardon and discharge, he became a collector of the money raised by public sales in the way of auction. His son, surnamed Sabinus, was never engaged in the military service, though some say he was a centurion of the first order, and others, that whilst he held that rank, he was discharged on account of his bad state of health: this Sabinus, I say, was a publican, and received the tax of the fortieth penny in Asia. And there were remaining, at the time of the advancement of the family, several statues, which had been erected to him by the cities of that province, with this inscription: "To the honest Tax-farmer." [723] He afterwards turned usurer amongst the Helvetii, and there died, leaving behind him his wife, Vespasia Pella, and two sons by her; the elder of whom, Sabinus, came to be prefect of the city, and the younger, Vespasian, to be emperor. Polla, descended of a good family, at Nursia [724], had for her father Vespasius Pollio, thrice appointed (442) military tribune, and at last prefect of the camp; and her brother was a senator of praetorian dignity. There is to this day, about six miles

from Nursia, on the road to Spoletum, a place on the summit of a hill, called Vespasiae, where are several monuments of the Vespasii, a sufficient proof of the splendour and antiquity of the family. I will not deny that some have pretended to say, that Petro's father was a native of Gallia Transpadana [725], whose employment was to hire workpeople who used to emigrate every year from the country of the Umbria into that of the Sabines, to assist them in their husbandry [726]; but who settled at last in the town of Reate, and there married. But of this I have not been able to discover the least proof, upon the strictest inquiry.

II. Vespasian was born in the country of the Sabines, beyond Reate, in a little country-seat called Phalacrine, upon the fifth of the calends of December [27th November], in the evening, in the consulship of Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus and Caius Poppaeus Sabinus, five years before the death of Augustus [727]; and was educated under the care of Tertulla, his grandmother by the father's side, upon an estate belonging to the family, at Cosa [728]. After his advancement to the empire, he used frequently to visit the place where he had spent his infancy; and the villa was continued in the same condition, that he might see every thing about him just as he had been used to do. And he had so great a regard for the memory of his grandmother, that, upon solemn occasions and festival days, he constantly drank out of a silver cup which she had been accustomed to use. After assuming the manly habit, he had a long time a distaste for the senatorian toga, though his brother had obtained it; nor could he be persuaded by any one but his mother to sue for that badge of honour. She at length drove him to it, more by taunts and reproaches, than by her entreaties (443) and authority, calling

him now and then, by way of reproach, his brother's footman. He served as military tribune in Thrace. When made quaestor, the province of Crete and Cyrene fell to him by lot. He was candidate for the aedileship, and soon after for the praetorship, but met with a repulse in the former case; though at last, with much difficulty, he came in sixth on the poll-books. But the office of praetor he carried upon his first canvass, standing amongst the highest at the poll. Being incensed against the senate, and desirous to gain, by all possible means, the good graces of Caius [729], he obtained leave to exhibit extraordinary [730] games for the emperor's victory in Germany, and advised them to increase the punishment of the conspirators against his life, by exposing their corpses unburied. He likewise gave him thanks in that august assembly for the honour of being admitted to his table.

III. Meanwhile, he married Flavia Domitilla, who had formerly been the mistress of Statilius Capella, a Roman knight of Sabrata in Africa, who [Domitilla] enjoyed Latin rights; and was soon after declared fully and freely a citizen of Rome, on a trial before the court of Recovery, brought by her father Flavius Liberalis, a native of Ferentum, but no more than secretary to a quaestor. By her he had the following children: Titus, Domitian, and Domitilla. He outlived his wife and daughter, and lost them both before he became emperor. After the death of his wife, he renewed his union [731] with his former concubine Caenis, the freedwoman of Antonia, and also her amanuensis, and treated her, even after he was emperor, almost as if she had been his lawful wife. [732]

(444) IV. In the reign of Claudius, by the interest of Narcissus, he was sent to Germany, in command of a legion; whence being removed into Britain, he engaged the enemy in thirty several battles. He reduced under subjection to the Romans two very powerful tribes, and above twenty great towns, with the Isle of Wight, which lies close to the coast of Britain; partly under the command of Aulus Plautius, the consular lieutenant, and partly under Claudius himself [733]. For this success he received the triumphal ornaments, and in a short time after two priesthoods, besides the consulship, which he held during the two last months of the year [734]. The interval between that and his proconsulship he spent in leisure and retirement, for fear of Agrippina, who still held great sway over her son, and hated all the friends of Narcissus, who was then dead. Afterwards he got by lot the province of Africa, which he governed with great reputation, excepting that once, in an insurrection at Adrumetum, he was pelted with turnips. It is certain that he returned thence nothing richer; for his credit was so low, that he was obliged to mortgage his whole property to his brother, and was reduced to the necessity of dealing in mules, for the support of his rank; for which reason he was commonly called "the Muleteer." He is said likewise to have been convicted of extorting from a young man of fashion two hundred thousand sesterces for procuring him the broad-stripe, contrary to the wishes of his father, and was severely reprimanded for it. While in attendance upon Nero in Achaia, he frequently withdrew from the theatre while Nero was singing, and went to sleep if he remained, which gave so much (445) offence, that he was not only excluded from his society, but debarred the liberty of saluting him in public. Upon this, he retired to a small out-of-the-way town, where he lay skulking in constant fear of his life, until a

province, with an army, was offered him. A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East [735], that it was fated for the empire of the world, at that time, to devolve on some who should go forth from Judaea. This prediction referred to a Roman emperor, as the event shewed; but the Jews, applying it to themselves, broke out into rebellion, and having defeated and slain their governor [736], routed the lieutenant of Syria [737], a man of consular rank, who was advancing to his assistance, and took an eagle, the standard, of one of his legions. As the suppression of this revolt appeared to require a stronger force and an active general, who might be safely trusted in an affair of so much importance, Vespasian was chosen in preference to all others, both for his known activity, and on account of the obscurity of his origin and name, being a person of whom (446) there could be not the least jealousy. Two legions, therefore, eight squadrons of horse, and ten cohorts, being added to the former troops in Judaea, and, taking with him his eldest son as lieutenant, as soon as he arrived in his province, he turned the eyes of the neighbouring provinces upon him, by reforming immediately the discipline of the camp, and engaging the enemy once or twice with such resolution, that, in the attack of a castle [738], he had his knee hurt by the stroke of a stone, and received several arrows in his shield.

V. After the deaths of Nero and Galba, whilst Otho and Vitellius were contending for the sovereignty, he entertained hopes of obtaining the empire, with the prospect of which he had long before flattered himself, from the following omens. Upon an estate belonging to the Flavian family, in the neighbourhood of Rome, there was an old oak, sacred to Mars, which, at

the three several deliveries of Vespasia, put out each time a new branch; evident intimations of the future fortune of each child. The first was but a slender one, which quickly withered away; and accordingly, the girl that was born did not live long. The second became vigorous, which portended great good fortune; but the third grew like a tree. His father, Sabinus, encouraged by these omens, which were confirmed by the augurs, told his mother, "that her grandson would be emperor of Rome;" at which she laughed heartily, wondering, she said, "that her son should be in his dotage whilst she continued still in full possession of her faculties." Afterwards in his aedileship, when Caius Caesar, being enraged at his not taking care to have the streets kept clean, ordered the soldiers to fill the bosom of his gown with dirt, some persons at that time construed it into a sign that the government, being trampled under foot and deserted in some civil commotion, would fall under his protection, and as it were into his lap. Once, while he was at dinner, a strange dog, that wandered about the streets, brought a man's hand [739], and laid it under the table. And another time, while he was at supper, a plough-ox throwing the yoke off his neck, broke into the room, and after he had frightened away all the attendants, (447) on a sudden, as if he was tired, fell down at his feet, as he lay still upon his couch, and hung down his neck. A cypress-tree likewise, in a field belonging to the family, was torn up by the roots, and laid flat upon the ground, when there was no violent wind; but next day it rose again fresher and stronger than before. He dreamt in Achaia that the good fortune of himself and his family would begin when Nero had a tooth drawn; and it happened that the day after, a surgeon coming into the hall, showed him a tooth which he had just extracted from Nero. In Judaea, upon his consulting the oracle of the divinity at

Carmel [740], the answer was so encouraging as to assure him of success in anything he projected, however great or important it might be. And when Josephus [741], one of the noble prisoners, was put in chains, he confidently affirmed that he should be released in a very short time by the same Vespasian, but he would be emperor first [742]. Some omens were likewise mentioned in the news from Rome, and among others, that Nero, towards the close of his days, was commanded in a dream to carry Jupiter's sacred chariot out of the sanctuary where it stood, to Vespasian's house, and conduct it thence into the circus. Also not long afterwards, as Galba was going to the election, in which he was created consul for the second time, a statue of the Divine Julius [743] turned towards the east. And in the field of Bedriacum [744], before the battle began, two eagles engaged in the sight of the army; and one of them being beaten, a third came from the east, and drove away the conqueror.

(448) VI. He made, however, no attempt upon the sovereignty, though his friends were very ready to support him, and even pressed him to the enterprise, until he was encouraged to it by the fortuitous aid of persons unknown to him and at a distance. Two thousand men, drawn out of three legions in the Moesian army, had been sent to the assistance of Otho. While they were upon their march, news came that he had been defeated, and had put an end to his life; notwithstanding which they continued their march as far as Aquileia, pretending that they gave no credit to the report. There, tempted by the opportunity which the disorder of the times afforded them, they ravaged and plundered the country at discretion; until at length, fearing to be called to an account on their return, and punished for it, they resolved upon

choosing and creating an emperor. "For they were no ways inferior," they said, "to the army which made Galba emperor, nor to the pretorian troops which had set up Otho, nor the army in Germany, to whom Vitellius owed his elevation." The names of all the consular lieutenants, therefore, being taken into consideration, and one objecting to one, and another to another, for various reasons; at last some of the third legion, which a little before Nero's death had been removed out of Syria into Moesia, extolled Vespasian in high terms; and all the rest assenting, his name was immediately inscribed on their standards. The design was nevertheless quashed for a time, the troops being brought to submit to Vitellius a little longer. However, the fact becoming known, Tiberius Alexander, governor of Egypt, first obliged the legions under his command to swear obedience to Vespasian as their emperor, on the calends [the 1st] of July, which was observed ever after as the day of his accession to the empire; and upon the fifth of the ides of the same month [the 28th July], the army in Judaea, where he then was, also swore allegiance to him. What contributed greatly to forward the affair, was a copy of a letter, whether real or counterfeit, which was circulated, and said to have been written by Otho before his decease to Vespasian, recommending to him in the most urgent terms to avenge his death, and entreating him to come to the aid of the commonwealth; as well as a report which was circulated, that Vitellius, after his success against Otho, proposed to change the winter quarters of the legions, and remove those in Germany to a less (449) hazardous station and a warmer climate. Moreover, amongst the governors of provinces, Licinius Mucianus dropping the grudge arising from a jealousy of which he had hitherto made

no secret, promised to join him with the Syrian army, and, among the allied kings, Volugesus, king of the Parthians, offered him a reinforcement of forty thousand archers.

VII. Having, therefore, entered on a civil war, and sent forward his generals and forces into Italy, he himself, in the meantime, passed over to Alexandria, to obtain possession of the key of Egypt [745]. Here having entered alone, without attendants, the temple of Serapis, to take the auspices respecting the establishment of his power, and having done his utmost to propitiate the deity, upon turning round, [his freedman] Basilides [746] appeared before him, and seemed to offer him the sacred leaves, chaplets, and cakes, according to the usage of the place, although no one had admitted him, and he had long laboured under a muscular debility, which would hardly have allowed him to walk into the temple; besides which, it was certain that at the very time he was far away. Immediately after this, arrived letters with intelligence that Vitellius's troops had been defeated at Cremona, and he himself slain at Rome.

Vespasian, the new emperor, having been raised unexpectedly from a low estate, wanted something which might clothe him with divine majesty and authority. This, likewise, was now added. A poor man who was blind, and another who was lame, came both together before him, when he was seated on the tribunal, imploring him to heal them [747], and saying that they were admonished (450) in a dream by the god Serapis to seek his aid, who assured them that he would restore sight to the one by anointing his eyes with his spittle, and give strength to the leg of the other, if he vouchsafed but to touch it with his heel. At first he could scarcely believe that the thing would any how succeed, and therefore hesitated to venture on making

the experiment. At length, however, by the advice of his friends, he made the attempt publicly, in the presence of the assembled multitudes, and it was crowned with success in both cases [748]. About the same time, at Tegea in Arcadia, by the direction (451) of some soothsayers, several vessels of ancient workmanship were dug out of a consecrated place, on which there was an effigy resembling Vespasian.

VIII. Returning now to Rome, under these auspices, and with a great reputation, after enjoying a triumph for victories over the Jews, he added eight consulships [749] to his former one. He likewise assumed the censorship, and made it his principal concern, during the whole of his government, first to restore order in the state, which had been almost ruined, and was in a tottering condition, and then to improve it. The soldiers, one part of them emboldened by victory, and the other smarting with the disgrace of their defeat, had abandoned themselves to every species of licentiousness and insolence. Nay, the provinces, too, and free cities, and some kingdoms in alliance with Rome, were all in a disturbed state. He, therefore, disbanded many of Vitellius's soldiers, and punished others; and so far was he from granting any extraordinary favours to the sharers of his success, that it was late before he paid the gratuities due to them by law. That he might let slip no opportunity of reforming the discipline of the army, upon a young man's coming much perfumed to return him thanks (452) for having appointed him to command a squadron of horse, he turned away his head in disgust, and, giving him this sharp reprimand, "I had rather you had smelt of garlic," revoked his commission. When the men belonging to the fleet, who travelled by turns from Ostia and

Puteoli to Rome, petitioned for an addition to their pay, under the name of shoe-money, thinking that it would answer little purpose to send them away without a reply, he ordered them for the future to run barefooted; and so they have done ever since. He deprived of their liberties, Achaia, Lycia, Rhodes, Byzantium, and Samos; and reduced them into the form of provinces; Thrace, also, and Cilicia, as well as Comagene, which until that time had been under the government of kings. He stationed some legions in Cappadocia on account of the frequent inroads of the barbarians, and, instead of a Roman knight, appointed as governor of it a man of consular rank. The ruins of houses which had been burnt down long before, being a great desight to the city, he gave leave to any one who would, to take possession of the void ground and build upon it, if the proprietors should hesitate to perform the work themselves. He resolved upon rebuilding the Capitol, and was the foremost to put his hand to clearing the ground of the rubbish, and removed some of it upon his own shoulder. And he undertook, likewise, to restore the three thousand tables of brass which had been destroyed in the fire which consumed the Capitol; searching in all quarters for copies of those curious and ancient records, in which were contained the decrees of the senate, almost from the building of the city, as well as the acts of the people, relative to alliances, treaties, and privileges granted to any person.

IX. He likewise erected several new public buildings, namely, the temple of Peace [750] near the Forum, that of Claudius on the (453) Coelian mount, which had been begun by Agrippina, but almost entirely demolished by Nero [751]; and an amphitheatre [752] in the middle of the

city, upon finding that Augustus had projected such a work. He purified the senatorian and equestrian orders, which had been much reduced by the havoc made amongst them at several times, and was fallen into disrepute by neglect. Having expelled the most unworthy, he chose in their room the most honourable persons in Italy and the provinces. And to let it be known that those two orders differed not so much in privileges as in dignity, he declared publicly, when some altercation passed between a senator and a Roman knight, "that senators ought not to be treated with scurrilous language, unless they were the aggressors, and then it was fair and lawful to return it."

X. The business of the courts had prodigiously accumulated, partly from old law-suits which, on account of the interruption that had been given to the course of justice, still remained undecided, and partly from the accession of new suits arising out of the disorder of the times. He, therefore, chose commissioners by lot to provide for the restitution of what had been seized by violence during the war, and others with extraordinary jurisdiction to decide causes belonging to the centumviri, and reduce them to as small a number as possible, for the dispatch of which, otherwise, the lives of the litigants could scarcely allow sufficient time.

XI. Lust and luxury, from the licence which had long prevailed, had also grown to an enormous height. He, therefore, obtained a decree of the senate, that a woman who formed an union with the slave of another person, should be considered (454) a bondwoman herself; and that

usurers should not be allowed to take proceedings at law for the recovery of money lent to young men whilst they lived in their father's family, not even after their fathers were dead.

XII. In other affairs, from the beginning to the end of his government, he conducted himself with great moderation and clemency. He was so far from dissembling the obscurity of his extraction, that he frequently made mention of it himself. When some affected to trace his pedigree to the founders of Reate, and a companion of Hercules [753], whose monument is still to be seen on the Salarian road, he laughed at them for it. And he was so little fond of external and adventitious ornaments, that, on the day of his triumph [754], being quite tired of the length and tediousness of the procession, he could not forbear saying, "he was rightly served, for having in his old age been so silly as to desire a triumph; as if it was either due to his ancestors, or had ever been expected by himself." Nor would he for a long time accept of the tribunitian authority, or the title of Father of his Country. And in regard to the custom of searching those who came to salute him, he dropped it even in the time of the civil war.

XIII. He bore with great mildness the freedom used by his friends, the satirical allusions of advocates, and the petulance of philosophers. Licinius Mucianus, who had been guilty of notorious acts of lewdness, but, presuming upon his great services, treated him very rudely, he reproved only in private; and when complaining of his conduct to a common friend of theirs, he concluded with these words, "However, I am a man." Salvius Liberalis, in pleading the cause of a rich man under prosecution, presuming to say, "What is it to Caesar, if Hipparchus possesses a hundred millions of sesterces?" he commended him for it. Demetrius,

the Cynic philosopher [755], (455) who had been sentenced to banishment, meeting him on the road, and refusing to rise up or salute him, nay, snarling at him in scurrilous language, he only called him a cur.

XIV. He was little disposed to keep up the memory of affronts or quarrels, nor did he harbour any resentment on account of them. He made a very splendid marriage for the daughter of his enemy Vitellius, and gave her, besides, a suitable fortune and equipage. Being in a great consternation after he was forbidden the court in the time of Nero, and asking those about him, what he should do? or, whither he should go? one of those whose office it was to introduce people to the emperor, thrusting him out, bid him go to Morbonia [756]. But when this same person came afterwards to beg his pardon, he only vented his resentment in nearly the same words. He was so far from being influenced by suspicion or fear to seek the destruction of any one, that, when his friends advised him to beware of Metius Pomposianus, because it was commonly believed, on his nativity being cast, that he was destined by fate to the empire, he made him consul, promising for him, that he would not forget the benefit conferred.

XV. It will scarcely be found, that so much as one innocent person suffered in his reign, unless in his absence, and without his knowledge, or, at least, contrary to his inclination, and when he was imposed upon. Although Helvidius Priscus [757] was the only man who presumed to salute him on his return from Syria by his private name of Vespasian, and, when he came to be

praetor, omitted any mark of honour to him, or even any mention of him in his edicts, yet he was not angry, until Helvidius proceeded to inveigh against him with the most scurrilous language. (456) Though he did indeed banish him, and afterwards ordered him to be put to death, yet he would gladly have saved him notwithstanding, and accordingly dispatched messengers to fetch back the executioners; and he would have saved him, had he not been deceived by a false account brought, that he had already perished. He never rejoiced at the death of any man; nay he would shed tears, and sigh, at the just punishment of the guilty.

XVI. The only thing deservedly blameable in his character was his love of money. For not satisfied with reviving the imposts which had been repealed in the time of Galba, he imposed new and onerous taxes, augmented the tribute of the provinces, and doubled that of some of them. He likewise openly engaged in a traffic, which is discreditable [758] even to a private individual, buying great quantities of goods, for the purpose of retailing them again to advantage. Nay, he made no scruple of selling the great offices of the state to candidates, and pardons to persons under prosecution, whether they were innocent or guilty. It is believed, that he advanced all the most rapacious amongst the procurators to higher offices, with the view of squeezing them after they had acquired great wealth. He was commonly said, "to have used them as sponges," because it was his practice, as we may say, to wet them when dry, and squeeze them when wet. It is said that he was naturally extremely covetous, and was upbraided with it by an old herdsman of his, who, upon the emperor's refusing to enfranchise him gratis, which on his advancement he humbly petitioned for, cried out, "That the fox

changed his hair, but not his nature." On the other hand, some are of opinion, that he was urged to his rapacious proceedings by necessity, and the extreme poverty of the treasury and exchequer, of which he took public notice in the beginning of his reign; declaring that "no less than four hundred thousand millions of sesterces were wanting to carry on the government." This is the more likely to be true, because he applied to the best purposes what he procured by bad means.

XVII. His liberality, however, to all ranks of people, was excessive. He made up to several senators the estate required (457) by law to qualify them for that dignity; relieving likewise such men of consular rank as were poor, with a yearly allowance of five hundred thousand sesterces [759]; and rebuilt, in a better manner than before, several cities in different parts of the empire, which had been damaged by earthquakes or fires.

XVIII. He was a great encourager of learning and the liberal arts. He first granted to the Latin and Greek professors of rhetoric the yearly stipend of a hundred thousand sesterces [760] each out of the exchequer. He also bought the freedom of superior poets and artists [761], and gave a noble gratuity to the restorer of the Coan of Venus [762], and to another artist who repaired the Colossus [763]. Some one offering to convey some immense columns into the Capitol at a small expense by a mechanical contrivance, he rewarded him very handsomely for his invention, but would not accept his service, saying, "Suffer me to find maintenance for the

poor people." [764]

XIX. In the games celebrated when the stage-scenery of (458) the theatre of Marcellus [765] was repaired, he restored the old musical entertainments. He gave Apollinaris, the tragedian, four hundred thousand sesterces, and to Terpinus and Diodorus, the harpers, two hundred thousand; to some a hundred thousand; and the least he gave to any of the performers was forty thousand, besides many golden crowns. He entertained company constantly at his table, and often in great state and very sumptuously, in order to promote trade. As in the Saturnalia he made presents to the men which they were to carry away with them, so did he to the women upon the calends of March [766]; notwithstanding which, he could not wipe off the disrepute of his former stinginess. The Alexandrians called him constantly Cybiosactes; a name which had been given to one of their kings who was sordidly avaricious. Nay, at his funeral, Favo, the principal mimic, personating him, and imitating, as actors do, both his manner of speaking and his gestures, asked aloud of the procurators, "how much his funeral and the procession would cost?" And being answered "ten millions of sesterces," he cried out, "give him but a hundred thousand sesterces, and they might throw his body into the Tiber, if they would."

XX. He was broad-set, strong-limbed, and his features gave the idea of a man in the act of straining himself. In consequence, one of the city wits, upon the emperor's desiring him "to say something droll respecting himself," facetiously answered, "I will, when you have done

relieving your bowels." [767] He enjoyed a good state of health, though he used no other means to preserve it, than repeated friction, as much (459) as he could bear, on his neck and other parts of his body, in the ball-court attached to the baths, besides fasting one day in every month.

XXI. His method of life was commonly this. After he became emperor, he used to rise very early, often before daybreak. Having read over his letters, and the briefs of all the departments of the government offices; he admitted his friends; and while they were paying him their compliments, he would put on his own shoes, and dress himself with his own hands. Then, after the dispatch of such business as was brought before him, he rode out, and afterwards retired to repose, lying on his couch with one of his mistresses, of whom he kept several after the death of Caenis [768]. Coming out of his private apartments, he passed to the bath, and then entered the supper-room. They say that he was never more good-humoured and indulgent than at that time: and therefore his attendants always seized that opportunity, when they had any favour to ask.

XXII. At supper, and, indeed, at other times, he was extremely free and jocose. For he had humour, but of a low kind, and he would sometimes use indecent language, such as is addressed to young girls about to be married. Yet there are some things related of him not void of ingenious pleasantry; amongst which are the following. Being once reminded by Mestrius Florus, that *plaustra* was a more proper expression than *plostra*, he the next day

saluted him by the name of Flaurus [769]. A certain lady pretending to be desperately enamoured of him, he was prevailed upon to admit her to his bed; and after he had gratified her desires, he gave her [770] four hundred (460) thousand sesterces. When his steward desired to know how he would have the sum entered in his accounts, he replied, "For Vespasian's being seduced."

XXIII. He used Greek verses very wittily; speaking of a tall man, who had enormous parts:

Makra bibas, kradaon dolichoskion enchos.
Still shaking, as he strode, his vast long spear.

And of Cerylus, a freedman, who being very rich, had begun to pass himself off as free-born, to elude the exchequer at his decease, and assumed the name of Laches, he said:

O Lachaes, Lachaes,
Epan apothanaes, authis ex archaes esae Kaerylos.
Ah, Laches, Laches! when thou art no more,
Thou'lt Cerylus be called, just as before.

He chiefly affected wit upon his own shameful means of raising money, in order to wipe off the odium by some joke, and turn it into ridicule. One of his ministers, who was much in his

favour, requesting of him a stewardship for some person, under pretence of his being his brother, he deferred granting him his petition, and in the meantime sent for the candidate, and having squeezed out of him as much money as he had agreed to give to his friend at court, he appointed him immediately to the office. The minister soon after renewing his application, "You must," said he, "find another brother; for the one you adopted is in truth mine." Suspecting once, during a journey, that his mule-driver had alighted to shoe his mules, only in order to have an opportunity for allowing a person they met, who was engaged in a law-suit, to speak to him, he asked him, "how much he got for shoeing his mules?" and insisted on having a share of the profit. When his son Titus blamed him for even laying a tax upon urine, he applied to his nose a piece of the money he received in the first instalment, and asked him, "if it stunk?" And he replying no, "And yet," said he, "it is derived from urine." Some deputies having come to acquaint him that a large statue, which would cost a vast sum, was ordered to be erected for him at the public expense, he told them to pay it down immediately, (461) holding out the hollow of his hand, and saying, "there was a base ready for the statue." Not even when he was under the immediate apprehension and peril of death, could he forbear jesting. For when, among other prodigies, the mausoleum of the Caesars suddenly flew open, and a blazing star appeared in the heavens; one of the prodigies, he said, concerned Julia Calvina, who was of the family of Augustus [771]; and the other, the king of the Parthians, who wore his hair long. And when his distemper first seized him, "I suppose," said he, "I shall soon be a god." [772]

XXIV. In his ninth consulship, being seized, while in Campania, with a slight indisposition, and immediately returning to the city, he soon afterwards went thence to Cutiliae [773], and his estates in the country about Reate, where he used constantly to spend the summer. Here, though his disorder much increased, and he injured his bowels by too free use of the cold waters, he nevertheless attended to the dispatch of business, and even gave audience to ambassadors in bed. At last, being taken ill of a diarrhoea, to such a degree that he was ready to faint, he cried out, "An emperor ought to die standing upright." In endeavouring to rise, he died in the hands of those who were helping him up, upon the eighth of the calends of July [24th June] [774], being sixty-nine years, one month, and seven days old.

XXV. All are agreed that he had such confidence in the calculations on his own nativity and that of his sons, that, after several conspiracies against him, he told the senate, that either his sons would succeed him, or nobody. It is said likewise, that he once saw in a dream a balance in the middle of the porch of the Palatine house exactly poised; in one (462) scale of which stood Claudius and Nero, in the other, himself and his sons. The event corresponded to the symbol; for the reigns of the two parties were precisely of the same duration. [775]

COMMENTARY

Neither consanguinity nor adoption, as formerly, but great influence in the army having now become the road to the imperial throne, no person could claim a better title to that elevation than Titus Flavius Vespasian. He had not only served with great reputation in the wars both in Britain and Judaea, but seemed as yet untainted with any vice which could pervert his conduct in the civil administration of the empire. It appears, however, that he was prompted more by the persuasion of friends, than by his own ambition, to prosecute the attainment of the imperial dignity. To render this enterprise more successful, recourse was had to a new and peculiar artifice, which, while well accommodated to the superstitious credulity of the Romans, impressed them with an idea, that Vespasian's destiny to the throne was confirmed by supernatural indications. But, after his elevation, we hear no more of his miraculous achievements.

The prosecution of the war in Britain, which had been suspended for some years, was resumed by Vespasian; and he sent thither Petilius Cerealis, who by his bravery extended the limits of the Roman province. Under Julius Frontinus, successor to that general, the invaders continued to make farther progress in the reduction of the island: but the commander who finally established the dominion of the Romans in Britain, was Julius Agricola, not less distinguished for his military achievements, than for his prudent regard to the civil administration of the country. He began his operations with the conquest of North Wales,

whence passing over into the island of Anglesey, which had revolted since the time of Suetonius Paulinus, he again reduced it to subjection. Then proceeding northwards with his victorious army, he defeated the Britons in every engagement, took possession of all the territories in the southern parts of the island, and driving before him all who refused to submit to the Roman arms, penetrated even into the forests and mountains of Caledonia. He defeated the natives under Galgacus, their leader, in a decisive battle; and fixing a line of garrisons between the friths of Clyde and Forth, he secured the Roman province from the incursions of the people who occupied the parts of the island (463) beyond that boundary. Wherever he established the Roman power, he introduced laws and civilization amongst the inhabitants, and employed every means of conciliating their affection, as well as of securing their obedience.

The war in Judaea, which had been commenced under the former reign, was continued in that of Vespasian; but he left the siege of Jerusalem to be conducted by his son Titus, who displayed great valour and military talents in the prosecution of the enterprise. After an obstinate defence by the Jews, that city, so much celebrated in the sacred writings, was finally demolished, and the glorious temple itself, the admiration of the world, reduced to ashes; contrary, however, to the will of Titus, who exerted his utmost efforts to extinguish the flames.

The manners of the Romans had now attained to an enormous pitch of depravity, through the unbounded licentiousness of the times; and, to the honour of Vespasian, he discovered great zeal in his endeavours to effect a national reformation. Vigilant, active, and persevering, he was indefatigable in the management of public affairs, and rose in the winter before day-break, to give audience to his officers of state. But if we give credit to the whimsical imposition of a tax upon urine, we cannot entertain any high opinion, either of his talents as a financier, or of the resources of the Roman empire. By his encouragement of science, he displayed a liberality, of which there occurs no example under all the preceding emperors, since the time of Augustus. Pliny the elder was now in the height of reputation, as well as in great favour with Vespasian; and it was probably owing not a little to the advice of that minister, that the emperor showed himself so much the patron of literary men. A writer mentioned frequently by Pliny, and who lived in this reign, was Licinius Mucianus, a Roman knight: he treated of the history and geography of the eastern countries. Juvenal, who had begun his Satires several years before, continued to inveigh against the flagrant vices of the times; but the only author whose writings we have to notice in the present reign, is a poet of a different class.

C. VALERIUS FLACCUS wrote a poem in eight books, on the Expedition of the Argonauts; a subject which, next to the wars of Thebes and Troy, was in ancient times the most celebrated. Of the life of this author, biographers have transmitted no particulars; but we may place his birth in the reign of Tiberius, before all the writers who flourished in the Augustan age were

extinct. He enjoyed the rays of the setting sun which had illumined that glorious period, and he discovers the efforts of an ambition to recall its meridian splendour. As the poem was left (464) incomplete by the death of the author, we can only judge imperfectly of the conduct and general consistency of the fable: but the most difficult part having been executed, without any room for the censure of candid criticism, we may presume that the sequel would have been finished with an equal claim to indulgence, if not to applause. The traditional anecdotes relative to the Argonautic expedition are introduced with propriety, and embellished with the graces of poetical fiction. In describing scenes of tenderness, this author is happily pathetic, and in the heat of combat, proportionably animated. His similes present the imagination with beautiful imagery, and not only illustrate, but give additional force to the subject. We find in Flaccus a few expressions not countenanced by the authority of the most celebrated Latin writers. His language, however, in general, is pure; but his words are perhaps not always the best that might have been chosen. The versification is elevated, though not uniformly harmonious; and there pervades the whole poem an epic dignity, which renders it superior to the production ascribed to Orpheus, or to that of Apollonius, on the same subject.

FOOTNOTES

721]

Reate, the original seat of the Flavian family, was a city of the Sabines. Its present name is Rieti.

722]

It does not very clearly appear what rank in the Roman armies was held by the evocati. They are mentioned on three occasions by Suetonius, without affording us much assistance. Caesar, like our author, joins them with the centurions. See, in particular, *De Bell. Civil.* I. xvii. 4.

723]

The inscription was in Greek, *kalos telothaesanti*.

724]

In the ancient Umbria, afterwards the duchy of Spoleto; its modern name being Norcia.

725]

Gaul beyond, north of the Po, now Lombardy.

726]

We find the annual migration of labourers in husbandry a very common practice in ancient as well as in modern times. At present, several thousand industrious labourers cross over every summer from the duchies of Parma and Modena, bordering on the district mentioned by Suetonius, to the island of Corsica; returning to the continent when the harvest is got in.

727]

A.U.C. 762, A.D. 10.

728]

Cosa was a place in the Volscian territory; of which Anagni was probably the chief town. It lies about forty miles to the north-east of Rome.

729]

Caligula.

730]

These games were extraordinary, as being out of the usual course of those given by praetors.

731]

"Revocavit in contubernium." From the difference of our habits, there is no word in the English language which exactly conveys the meaning of contubernium; a word which, in a military sense, the Romans applied to the intimate fellowship between comrades in war who messed together, and lived in close fellowship in the same tent. Thence they transferred it to a union with one woman who was in a higher position than a concubine, but, for some reason, could not acquire the legal rights of a wife, as in the case of slaves of either sex. A man of rank, also, could not marry a slave or a freedwoman, however much he might be attached to her.

732]

Nearly the same phrases are applied by Suetonius to Drusilla, see CALIGULA, c. xxiv., and to Marcella, the concubine of Commodus, by Herodian, l. xvi. 9., where he says that she had all the honours of an empress, except that the incense was not offered to her. These connections resembled the left-hand marriages of the German princes.

733]

This expedition to Britain has been mentioned before, CLAUDIUS, c. xvii. and note; and see ib. xxiv. Valerius Flaccus, i. 8, and Silius Italicus, iii. 598, celebrate the triumphs of Vespasian in Britain. In representing him, however, as carrying his arms among the Caledonian tribes, their flattery transferred to the emperor the glory of the victories gained by his lieutenant, Agricola.

Vespasian's own conquests, while he served in Britain, were principally in the territories of the Brigantes, lying north of the Humber, and including the present counties of York and Durham.

734]

A.U.C. 804.

735]

Tacitus, Hist. V. xiii. 3., mentions this ancient prediction, and its currency through the East, in nearly the same terms as Suetonius. The coming power is in both instances described in the plural number, profecti; "those shall come forth;" and Tacitus applies it to Titus as well as Vespasian. The prophecy is commonly supposed to have reference to a passage in Micah, v. 2, "Out of thee [Bethlehem-Ephrata] shall He come forth, to be ruler in Israel." Earlier prophetic intimations of a similar character, and pointing to a more extended dominion, have been traced in the sacred records of the Jews; and there is reason to believe that these books were at this time not unknown in the heathen world, particularly at Alexandria, and through the Septuagint version. These predictions, in their literal sense, point to the establishment of a universal monarchy, which should take its rise in Judaea. The Jews looked for their accomplishment in the person of one of their own nation, the expected Messiah, to which character there were many pretenders in those times. The first disciples of Christ, during the whole period of his ministry, supposed that they were to be fulfilled in him. The Romans thought that the conditions were answered by Vespasian, and Titus having been called from

Judaea to the seat of empire. The expectations entertained by the Jews, and naturally participated in and appropriated by the first converts to Christianity, having proved groundless, the prophecies were subsequently interpreted in a spiritual sense.

736]

Gessius Florus was at that time governor of Judaea, with the title and rank of prepositus, it not being a proconsular province, as the native princes still held some parts of it, under the protection and with the alliance of the Romans. Gessius succeeded Florus Albinus, the successor of Felix.

737]

Cestius Gallus was consular lieutenant in Syria.

738]

See note to c. vii.

739]

A right hand was the sign of sovereign power, and, as every one knows, borne upon a staff among the standards of the armies.

740]

Tacitus says, "Carmel is the name both of a god and a mountain; but there is neither image nor temple of the god; such are the ancient traditions; we find there only an altar and religious awe."--Hist. xi. 78, 4. It also appears, from his account, that Vespasian offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel, where Basilides, mentioned hereafter, c. vii., predicted his success from an inspection of the entrails.

741]

Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian, who was engaged in these wars, having been taken prisoner, was confined in the dungeon at Jotapata, the castle referred to in the preceding chapter, before which Vespasian was wounded.--De Bell. cxi. 14.

742]

The prediction of Josephus was founded on the Jewish prophecies mentioned in the note to c. iv., which he, like others, applied to Vespasian.

743]

Julius Caesar is always called by our author after his apotheosis, Divus Julius.

744]

The battle at Bedriacum secured the Empire for Vitellius. See OTHO, c. ix; VITELLIUS, c. x.

745]

Alexandria may well be called the key, claustra, of Egypt, which was the granary of Rome. It was of the first importance that Vespasian should secure it at this juncture.

746]

Tacitus describes Basilides as a man of rank among the Egyptians, and he appears also to have been a priest, as we find him officiating at Mount Carmel, c. v. This is so incompatible with his being a Roman freedman, that commentators concur in supposing that the word "libertus." although found in all the copies now extant, has crept into the text by some inadvertence of an early transcriber. Basilides appears, like Philo Judaeus, who lived about the same period, to have been half-Greek, half- Jew, and to have belonged to the celebrated Platonic school of Alexandria.

747]

Tacitus informs us that Vespasian himself believed Basilides to have been at this time not only in an infirm state of health, but at the distance of several days' journey from Alexandria. But (for his greater satisfaction) he strictly examined the priests whether Basilides had entered the temple on that day: he made inquiries of all he met, whether he had been seen in the city; nay, further, he dispatched messengers on horseback, who ascertained that at the time specified, Basilides was more than eighty miles from Alexandria. Then Vespasian

comprehended that the appearance of Basilides, and the answer to his prayers given through him, were by divine interposition. Tacit. Hist. iv. 82. 2.

748]

The account given by Tacitus of the miracles of Vespasian is fuller than that of Suetonius, but does not materially vary in the details, except that, in his version of the story, he describes the impotent man to be lame in the hand, instead of the leg or the knee, and adds an important circumstance in the case of the blind man, that he was "notus tabe oculorum," notorious for the disease in his eyes. He also winds up the narrative with the following statement: "They who were present, relate both these cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying." Both the historians lived within a few years of the occurrence, but their works were not published until advanced periods of their lives. The closing remark of Tacitus seems to indicate that, at least, he did not entirely discredit the account; and as for Suetonius, his pages are as full of prodigies of all descriptions, related apparently in all good faith, as a monkish chronicle of the Middle Ages. The story has the more interest, as it is one of the examples of successful imposture, selected by Hume in his Essay on Miracles; with the reply to which by Paley, in his Evidences of Christianity, most readers are familiar. The commentators on Suetonius agree with Paley in considering the whole affair as a juggle between the priests, the patients, and, probably, the emperor. But what will, perhaps, strike the reader as most remarkable, is the singular coincidence of the story with the accounts given of several of the miracles of Christ; whence it has been supposed, that the scene was planned in imitation of

them. It did not fall within the scope of Dr. Paley's argument to advert to this; and our own brief illustration must be strictly confined within the limits of historical disquisition. Adhering to this principle, we may point out that if the idea of plagiarism be accepted, it receives some confirmation from the incident related by our author in a preceding paragraph, forming, it may be considered, another scene of the same drama, where we find Basilides appearing to Vespasian in the temple of Serapis, under circumstances which cannot fail to remind us of Christ's suddenly standing in the midst of his disciples, "when the doors were shut." This incident, also, has very much the appearance of a parody on the evangelical history. But if the striking similarity of the two narratives be thus accounted for, it is remarkable that while the priests of Alexandria, or, perhaps, Vespasian himself from his residence in Judaea, were in possession of such exact details of two of Christ's miracles--if not of a third striking incident in his history--we should find not the most distant allusion in the works of such cotemporary writers as Tacitus and Suetonius, to any one of the still more stupendous occurrences which had recently taken place in a part of the world with which the Romans had now very intimate relations. The character of these authors induces us to hesitate in adopting the notion, that either contempt or disbelief would have led them to pass over such events, as altogether unworthy of notice; and the only other inference from their silence is, that they had never heard of them. But as this can scarcely be reconciled with the plagiarism attributed to Vespasian or the Egyptian priests, it is safer to conclude that the coincidence, however singular, was merely fortuitous. It may be added that Spartianus, who wrote the lives of

Adrian and succeeding emperors, gives an account of a similar miracle performed by that prince in healing a blind man.

749]

A.U.C. 823-833, excepting 826 and 831.

750]

The temple of Peace, erected A.D. 71, on the conclusion of the wars with the Germans and the Jews, was the largest temple in Rome. Vespasian and Titus deposited in it the sacred vessels and other spoils which were carried in their triumph after the conquest of Jerusalem. They were consumed, and the temple much damaged, if not destroyed, by fire, towards the end of the reign of Commodus, in the year 191. It stood in the Forum, where some ruins on a prodigious scale, still remaining, were traditionally considered to be those of the Temple of Peace, until Piranesi contended that they are part of Nero's Golden House. Others suppose that they are the remains of a Basilica. A beautiful fluted Corinthian column, forty-seven feet high, which was removed from this spot, and now stands before the church of S. Maria Maggiore, gives a great idea of the splendour of the original structure.

751]

This temple, converted into a Christian church by pope Simplicius, who flourished, A.D. 464-483, preserves much of its ancient character. It is now, called San Stefano in Rotondo, from its

circular form; the thirty-four pillars, with arches springing from one to the other and intended to support the cupola, still remaining to prove its former magnificence.

752]

This amphitheatre is the famous Colosseum begun by Trajan, and finished by Titus. It is needless to go into details respecting a building the gigantic ruins of which are so well known.

753]

Hercules is said, after conquering Geryon in Spain, to have come into this part of Italy. One of his companions, the supposed founder of Reate, may have had the name of Flavus.

754]

Vespasian and his son Titus had a joint triumph for the conquest of Judaea, which is described at length by Josephus, *De Bell. Jud.* vii. 16. The coins of Vespasian exhibiting the captive Judaea (*Judaea capta*), are probably familiar to the reader. See Harphrey's *Coin Collector's Manual*, p. 328.

755]

Demetrius, who was born at Corinth, seems to have been a close imitator of Diogenes, the founder of the sect. Having come to Rome to study under Apollonius, he was banished to the islands, with other philosophers, by Vespasian.

756]

There being no such place as Morbonia, and the supposed name being derived from morbus, disease, some critics have supposed that Anticyra, the asylum of the incurables, (see CALIGULA, c. xxix.) is meant; but the probability is, that the expression used by the imperial chamberlain was only a courtly version of a phrase not very commonly adopted in the present day.

757]

Helvidius Priscus, a person of some celebrity as a philosopher and public man, is mentioned by Tacitus, Xiphilinus, and Arrian.

758]

Cicero speaks in strong terms of the sordidness of retail trade-- Off. i. 24.

759]

The sesterce being worth about two-pence half-penny of English money, the salary of a Roman senator was, in round numbers, five thousand pounds a year; and that of a professor, as stated in the succeeding chapter, one thousand pounds. From this scale, similar calculations may easily be made of the sums occurring in Suetonius's statements from time to time. There appears to be some mistake in the sum stated in c. xvi. just before, as the amount seems fabulous, whether it represented the floating debt, or the annual revenue, of the empire.

760]

See AUGUSTUS, c. xliii. The proscenium of the ancient theatres was a solid erection of an architectural design, not shifted and varied as our stage-scenes.

761]

Many eminent writers among the Romans were originally slaves, such as Terence and Phaedrus; and, still more, artists, physicians and artificers. Their talents procuring their manumission, they became the freedmen of their former masters. Vespasian, it appears from Suetonius, purchased the freedom of some persons of ability belonging to these classes.

762]

The Coan Venus was the chef-d'oeuvre of Apelles, a native of the island of Cos, in the Archipelago, who flourished in the time of Alexander the Great. If it was the original painting which was now restored, it must have been well preserved.

763]

Probably the colossal statue of Nero (see his Life, c. xxxi.), afterwards placed in Vespasian's amphitheatre, which derived its name from it.

764]

The usual argument in all times against the introduction of machinery.

765]

See AUGUSTUS, c. xxix.

766]

At the men's Saturnalia, a feast held in December attended with much revelling, the masters waited upon their slaves; and at the women's Saturnalia, held on the first of March, the women served their female attendants, by whom also they sent presents to their friends.

767]

Notwithstanding the splendour, and even, in many respects, the refinement of the imperial court, the language as well as the habits of the highest classes in Rome seem to have been but too commonly of the grossest description, and every scholar knows that many of their writers are not very delicate in their allusions. Apropos of the ludicrous account given in the text, Martial, on one occasion, uses still plainer language.

Utere lactucis, et mollibus utere malvis:

Nam faciem durum Phoebe, cacantis habes.-- iii. 89.

768]

See c. iii. and note.

769]

Probably the emperor had not entirely worn off, or might even affect the rustic dialect of his Sabine countrymen; for among the peasantry the *au* was still pronounced *o*, as in *plostrum* for *plaustrum*, a waggon; and in *orum* for *aurum*, gold, etc. The emperor's retort was very happy, *Flaurus* being derived from a Greek word, which signifies worthless, while the consular critic's proper name, *Florus*, was connected with much more agreeable associations.

770]

Some of the German critics think that the passage bears the sense of the gratuity having been given by the lady, and that so parsimonious a prince as Vespasian was not likely to have paid such a sum as is here stated for a lady's proffered favours.

771]

The Flavian family had their own tomb. See *DOMITIAN*, c. v. The prodigy, therefore, did not concern Vespasian. As to the tomb of the Julian family, see *AUGUSTUS*, c. ci.

772]

Alluding to the apotheosis of the emperors.

773]

Cutiliae was a small lake, about three-quarters of a mile from Reate, now called Lago di Contigliano. It was very deep, and being fed from springs in the neighbouring hills, the water was exceedingly clear and cold, so that it was frequented by invalids, who required invigorating. Vespasian's paternal estates lay in the neighbourhood of Reate. See chap i.

774]

A.U.C. 832.

775]

Each dynasty lasted twenty-eight years. Claudius and Nero both reigning fourteen; and, of the Flavius family, Vespasian reigned ten, Titus three, and Domitian fifteen.