

# JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF  
HISTORY, VOLUME 04:  
IMPERIAL ANTIQUITY

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**Beacon Lights of History,  
Volume 04: Imperial Antiquity**

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# **John Lord**

## **Beacon Lights of History, Volume 04: Imperial Antiquity**

### **CYRUS THE GREAT**

**559-529 B.C**

#### **ASIATIC SUPREMACY**

One of the most prominent and romantic characters in the history of the Oriental world, before its conquest by Alexander of Macedon, is Cyrus the Great; not as a sage or prophet, not as the founder of new religious systems, not even as a law-giver, but as the founder and organizer of the greatest empire the world has seen, next to that of the Romans. The territory over which Cyrus bore rule extended nearly three thousand miles from east to west, and fifteen hundred miles from north to south, embracing the principal nations known to antiquity, so that he was really a king of kings. He was practically the last of the great Asiatic emperors, absorbing in his dominions those acquired by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Lydians. He was also the first who brought Asia into intimate contact with Europe and its influences, and thus may be regarded as the link between the old Oriental world and the Greek civilization.

It is to be regretted that so little is really known of the Persian hero, both in the matter of events and also of exact dates, since chronologists differ, and can only approximate to the truth in their calculations. In this lecture, which is in some respects an introduction to those that will follow on the heroes and sages of Greek, Roman, and Christian antiquity, it is of more importance to present Oriental countries and institutions than any particular character, interesting as he may be,—especially since as to biography one is obliged to sift historical facts from a great mass of fables and speculations.

Neither Herodotus, Xenophon, nor Ctesias satisfy us as to the real life and character of Cyrus. This renowned name represents, however, the Persian power, the last of the great monarchies that ruled the Oriental world until its conquest by the Greeks. Persia came suddenly into prominence in the middle of the seventh century before Christ. Prior to this time it was comparatively unknown and unimportant, and was one of the dependent provinces of Media, whose religion, language, and customs were not very dissimilar to its own.

Persia was a small, rocky, hilly, arid country about three hundred miles long by two hundred and fifty wide, situated south of Media, having the Persian Gulf as its southern boundary, the Zagros Mountains on the west separating it from Babylonia, and a great and almost impassable desert on the east, so that it was easily defended. Its population was composed of hardy, warlike, and religious people, condemned to poverty and incessant toil by the difficulty of getting a living on sterile and unproductive hills, except in a few favored localities. The climate was warm in summer and cold in winter, but on the whole more temperate than might be supposed from a region situated so near the tropics,—between the twenty-fifth and thirtieth degrees of latitude. It was an elevated country, more than three thousand feet above the sea, and was favorable to the cultivation of the fruits and flowers that have ever been most prized, those cereals which constitute the ordinary food of man growing in abundance if sufficient labor were spent on their cultivation, reminding us of Switzerland

and New England. But vigilance and incessant toil were necessary, such as are only found among a hardy and courageous peasantry, turning easily from agricultural labors to the fatigues and dangers of war. The real wealth of the country was in the flocks and herds that browsed in the valleys and plains. Game of all kinds was abundant, so that the people were unusually fond of the pleasures of the chase; and as they were temperate, inured to exposure, frugal, and adventurous, they made excellent soldiers. Nor did they ever as a nation lose their warlike qualities,—it being only the rich and powerful among them who learned the vices of the nations they subdued, and became addicted to luxury, indolence, and self-indulgence. Before the conquest of Media the whole nation was distinguished for temperance, frugality, and bravery. According to Herodotus, the Persians were especially instructed in three things,—“to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth.” Their moral virtues were as conspicuous as their warlike qualities. They were so poor that their ordinary dress was of leather. They could boast of no large city, like the Median Ecbatana, or like Babylon,—Pasargadae, their ancient capital, being comparatively small and deficient in architectural monuments. The people lived chiefly in villages and hamlets, and were governed, like the Israelites under the Judges, by independent chieftains, none of whom attained the rank and power of kings until about one hundred years before the birth of Cyrus. These pastoral and hunting people, frugal from necessity, brave from exposure, industrious from the difficulty of subsisting in a dry and barren country, for the most sort were just such a race as furnished a noble material for the foundation of a great empire.

Whence came this honest, truthful, thrifty race? It is generally admitted that it was a branch of the great Aryan family, whose original settlements are supposed to have been on the high table-lands of Central Asia east of the Caspian Sea, probably in Bactria. They emigrated from that dreary and inhospitable country after Zoroaster had proclaimed his doctrines, after the sacred hymns called the Gathas were sung, perhaps even after the Zend-Avesta or sacred writings of the Zoroastrian priests had been begun,—conquering or driving away Turanian tribes, and migrating to the southwest in search of more fruitful fields and fertile valleys, they found a region which has ever since borne a name—Iran—that evidently commemorated the proud title of the Aryan race. And this great movement took place about the time that another branch of their race also migrated southeastwardly to the valleys of the Indus. The Persians and the Hindus therefore had common ancestors,—the same indeed, as those of the Greeks, Romans, Slavonians, Celts, and Teutons, who migrated to the northwest and settled in Europe. The Aryans in all their branches were the noblest of the primitive races, and have in their later developments produced the highest civilization ever attained. They all had similar elements of character, especially love of personal independence, respect for woman, and a religious tendency of mind. We see a considerable similarity of habits and customs between the Teutonic races of Germany and Scandinavia and the early inhabitants of Persia, as well as great affinity in language. All branches of the Aryan family have been warlike and adventurous, if we may except the Hindus, who were subjected to different influences,—especially of climate, which enervated their bodies if it did not weaken their minds.

When the migration of the Iranians took place it is difficult to determine, but probably between fifteen hundred and two thousand years before our era, although it may have been even five hundred years earlier than that. All theories as to their movements before their authentic history begins are based on conjecture and speculation, which it is not profitable to pursue, since we can settle nothing in the present state of our knowledge.

It is very singular that the Iranians should have had, after their migrations and settlements, religious ideas and systems so different from those of the Hindus, considering that they had common ancestors. The Iranians, including the Medes as well as Persians, accepted Zoroaster as their prophet and teacher, and the Zend-Avesta as their sacred books, and worshipped one Supreme Deity, whom they called Ahura-Mazda (Ormazd),—the Lord Omniscient,—and thus were monotheists; while the Hindus were practically poly-theists, governed by a sacerdotal caste, who imposed gloomy austerities and sacrifices, although it would seem that the older Vedistic hymns of the Hindus were theistic



in spirit. The Magi—the priests of the Iranians—differed widely in their religious views from the Brahmans, inculcating a higher morality and a loftier theological creed, worshipping the Supreme Being without temples or shrines or images, although their religion ultimately degenerated into a worship of the powers of Nature, as the recognition of Mithra the sun-god and the mysterious fire-altars would seem to indicate. But even in spite of the corruptions introduced by the Magi when they became a powerful sacerdotal body, their doctrine remained purer and more elevated than the religions of the surrounding nations.

While the Iranians worshipped a supreme deity of goodness, they also recognized a supreme deity of evil, both ruling the world—in perpetual conflict—by unnumbered angels, good and evil; but the final triumph of the good was a conspicuous article of their faith. In close logical connection with this recognition of a supreme power in the universe was the belief of a future state and of future rewards and punishments, without which belief there can be, in my opinion, no high morality, as men are constituted.

In process of time the priests of the Zoroastrian faith became unduly powerful, and enslaved the people by many superstitions, such as the multiplication of rites and ceremonies and the interpretation of dreams and omens. They united spiritual with temporal authority, as a powerful priesthood is apt to do,—a fact which the Christian priesthood of the Middle Ages made evident in the Occidental world.

In the time of Cyrus the Magi had become a sort of sacerdotal caste. They were the trusted ministers of kings, and exercised a controlling influence over the people. They assumed a stately air, wore white and flowing robes, and were adept in the arts of sorcery and magic. They were even consulted by kings and chieftains, as if they possessed prophetic power. They were a picturesque body of men, with their mystic wands, their impressive robes, their tall caps, appealing by their long incantations and frequent ceremonies and prayers to the eye and to the ear. "Pure Zoroastrianism was too spiritual to coalesce readily with Oriental luxury and magnificence when the Persians were rulers of a vast empire, but Magism furnished a hierarchy to support the throne and add splendor and dignity to the court, while it blended easily with previous creeds."

In material civilization the Medes and Persians were inferior to the Babylonians and Egyptians, and immeasurably behind the Greeks and Romans. Their architecture was not so imposing as that of the Egyptians and Babylonians; it had no striking originality, and it was only in the palaces of great monarchs that anything approached magnificence. Still, there were famous palaces at Ecbatana, Susa, and Persepolis, raised on lofty platforms, reached by grand staircases, and ornamented with elaborate pillars. The most splendid of these were erected after the time of Cyrus, by Darius and Xerxes, decorated with carpets, hangings, and golden ornaments. The halls of their palaces were of great size and imposing effect. Next to palaces, the most remarkable buildings were the tombs of kings; but we have no remains of marble statues or metal castings or ivory carvings, not even of potteries, which at that time in other countries were common and beautiful. The gems and signet rings which the Persians engraved possessed much merit, and on them were wrought with great skill the figures of men and animals; but the nearest approach to sculpture were the figures of colossal bulls set to guard the portals of palaces, and these were probably borrowed from the Assyrians.

Nor were the Persians celebrated for their textile fabrics and dyes. "So long as the carpets of Babylon, the shawls of India, the fine linen of Egypt, and the coverlets of Damascus poured continually into Persia in the way of tribute and gifts, there was no stimulus to manufacture." The same may be said of the ornamental metal-work of the Greeks, and the glass manufacture of the Phoenicians. The Persians were soldiers, and gloried in being so, to the disdain of much that civilization has ever valued.

It may as well be here said that the Iranians, both Medes and Persians, were acquainted with the art of writing. Harpagus sent a letter to Cyrus concealed in the belly of a hare, and Darius signed a decree which his nobles presented to him in writing. In common with the Babylonians they used the same alphabetic system, though their languages were unlike,—namely, the cuneiform or arrow-

head or wedge-shaped characters, as seen in the celebrated inscriptions of Darius on the side of a high rock thirty feet from the ground. We cannot determine whether the Medes and Persians brought their alphabet from their original settlements in Central Asia, or derived it from the Turanian and Semitic nations with which they came in contact. In spite of their knowledge of writing, however, they produced no literature of any account, and of science they were completely ignorant. They made few improvements even in military weapons, the chief of which, as among all the nations of antiquity, were the bow, the spear, and the sword. They were skilful horsemen, and made use of chariots of war. Their great occupation, aside from agriculture, was hunting, in which they were trained by exposure for war. They were born to conquer and rule, like the Romans, and cared for little except the warlike virtues.

Such were the Persians and the rugged country in which they lived, with their courage and fortitude, their love of freedom, their patriotism, their abhorrence of lies, their self-respect allied with pride, their temperance and frugality, forming a noble material for empire and dominion when the time came for the old monarchies to fall into their hands,—the last and greatest of all the races that had ruled the Oriental world, and kindred in their remote ancestry with those European conquerors who laid the foundation of modern civilization.

Of these Persians Cyrus was the type-man, combining in himself all that was admirable in his countrymen, and making so strong an impression on the Greeks that he is presented by their historians as an ideal prince, invested with all those virtues which the mediaeval romance-writers have ascribed to the knights of chivalry.

The Persians were ruled by independent chieftains, or petty kings, who acknowledged fealty to Media; so that Persia was really a province of Media, as Burgundy was of France in the Middle Ages, and as Babylonia at one period was of Assyria. The most prominent of these chieftains or princes was Achaemenes, who is regarded as the founder of the Persian monarchy. To this royal family of the Achaemenidae Cyrus belonged. His father Cambyses, called by some a satrap and by others a king, married, according to Herodotus, a daughter of Astyages, the last of the Median monarchs.

The youth and education of Cyrus are invested with poetic interest by both Herodotus and Xenophon, but their narratives have no historical authority in the eyes of critics, any more than Livy's painting of Romulus and Remus: they belong to the realm of romance rather than authentic history. Nevertheless the legend of Cyrus is beautiful, and has been repeated by all succeeding historians.

According to this legend, Astyages—a luxurious and superstitious monarch, without the warlike virtues of his father, who had really built up the Median empire—had a dream that troubled him, which being interpreted by the Magi, priests of the national religion, was to the effect that his daughter Mandanê (for he had no legitimate son) would be married to a prince whose heir should seize the supreme power of Media. To prevent this, he married her to a prince beneath her rank, for whom he felt no fear,—Cambyses, the chief governor or king of Persia, who ruled a territory to the South, about one fifth the size of Media, and which practically was a dependent province. Another dream which alarmed Astyages still further, in spite of his precaution, induced him to send for his daughter, so that having her in his power he might easily destroy her offspring. As soon as Cyrus was born therefore in the royal palace at Ecbatana, the king intrusted the infant prince to one of the principal officers of his court, named Harpagus, with peremptory orders to destroy him. Harpagus, although he professed unconditional obedience to his monarch, had scruples about taking the life of one so near the throne, the grandson of the king and presumptive heir of the monarchy. So he, in turn, intrusted the royal infant to the care of a herdsman, in whom he had implicit confidence, with orders to kill him. The herdsman had a tender-hearted and conscientious wife who had just given birth to a dead child, and she persuaded her husband—for even in Media women virtually ruled, as they do everywhere, if they have tact—to substitute the dead child for the living one, deck it out in the royal costume, and expose it to wild beasts. This was done, and Cyrus remained the supposed child of the shepherd. The secret was well kept for ten years, and both Astyages and Harpagus supposed that Cyrus was slain.



Cyrus meanwhile grew up among the mountains, a hardy and beautiful boy, exposed to heat and cold, hunger and fatigue, and thus was early inured to danger and hardship. Added to personal beauty was remarkable courage, frankness, and brightness, so that he took the lead of other boys in their amusements. One day they played king, and Cyrus was chosen to represent royalty, which he acted so literally as to beat the son of a Median nobleman for disobedience. The indignant and angry father complained at once to the king, and Astyages sent for the herdsman and his supposed son to attend him in his palace. When the two mountaineers were ushered into the royal presence, Astyages was so struck with the beauty, wit, and boldness of the boy that he made earnest inquiries of the herdsman, who was forced to tell the truth, and confessed that the youth was not his son, but had been put into his hands by Harpagus with orders to destroy him. The royal origin of Cyrus was now apparent, and the king sent for Harpagus, who corroborated the statement of the herdsman. Astyages dissembled his wrath, as Oriental monarchs can, who are trained to dissimulation, and the only punishment he inflicted on Harpagus was to set before him at a banquet a dish made of the arms and legs of a dead infant. This the courtier in turn professed to relish, but henceforth became the secret and implacable enemy of the king.

Herodotus tells us that Astyages took the boy, unmistakably his grandson and heir, to his palace to be educated according to his rank. Cyrus was now brought up with every honor and the greatest care, taught to hunt and ride and shoot with the bow like the highest nobles. He soon distinguished himself for his feats in horsemanship and skill in hunting wild animals, winning universal admiration, and disarming envy by his tact, amiability, and generosity, which were as marked as his intellectual brilliancy,—being altogether a model of reproachless chivalry.

For some reason, however, the fears and jealousy of Astyages were renewed, and Cyrus was sent to his father in Persia with costly gifts. Possibly he was recalled by Cambyses himself, for a father by all the Eastern codes had a right to the person of his son.

No sooner was Cyrus established in Persia,—a country which it would seem he had never before seen,—than he was sought by the discontented Persians to head a revolt against their masters, and he availed himself of the disaffection of Harpagus, the most influential of the Median noblemen, for the dethronement of his grandfather. Persia arose in rebellion against Media. A war ensued, and in a battle between the conflicting forces Astyages was defeated and taken prisoner, but was kindly treated by his magnanimous conqueror. This battle ended the Median ascendancy, and Cyrus became the monarch of both Media and Persia.

Since the Medes belonged to the same Aryan family as the Persians, and had the same language, religion, and institutions, with slight differences, and lived among the mountains exposed to an uncongenial climate with extremes of heat and cold, and were doomed to hard and incessant labors for a subsistence, and were therefore—that is, the ordinary people—frugal, industrious, and temperate, it will be seen that what we have said of Persia equally applies to Media, except the possession by the latter of political power as wielded by the sovereign of a larger State.

Before a central power was established in Media, the country had been—as in all nations in their formative state—ruled by chieftains, who acknowledged as their supreme lord the King of Assyria, who reigned in Nineveh. Among these chieftains was a remarkable man called Deioces, so upright and able that he was elected king. Deioces reigned fifty-three years wisely and well, bequeathing the kingdom he had founded to his son Phraortes, under whom Media became independent of Assyria. His son and successor Cyaxares, who died 593 B.C., was a successful warrior and conqueror, and was the founder of Median greatness. With the assistance of Nabopolassar, a Babylonian general who had also revolted against the Assyrian monarch, Cyaxares succeeded, after repeated failures, in taking Nineveh and destroying the great Assyrian Empire which had ruled the Eastern world for several centuries. The northern and eastern provinces were annexed to Media, while the Babylonian valley of the Euphrates in the south fell to the share of Nabopolassar, who established the Babylonian ascendancy. This in its turn was greatly augmented by his son Nebuchadnezzar, one of the most famous conquerors of

antiquity, whose empire became more extensive even than the Assyrian. He reigned in Babylon with unparalleled splendor, and made his capital the wonder and the admiration of the world, enriching and ornamenting it with palaces, temples, and hanging gardens, and strengthening its defences to such a marvellous degree that it was deemed impregnable.

Cyaxares the Median meanwhile raised up in Ecbatana a rival power to that of Babylon, although he devoted himself to warlike expeditions more than to the adornment of his capital. He penetrated with his invincible troops as far to the west as Lydia in Asia Minor, then ruled by the father of Croesus, and thus became known to the Ionian cities which the Greeks had colonized. After a brilliant reign, Cyaxares transmitted his empire to an unworthy son,—Astyages, the grandfather of Cyrus, whose loss of the throne has been already related. With Astyages perished the Median Empire, which had lasted only about one hundred years, and Media was incorporated with Persia. Henceforth the Medes and Persians are spoken of as virtually one nation, similar in religion and customs, and furnishing equally the best cavalry in the world. Under Cyrus they became the ascendent power in Asia, and maintained their ascendancy until their conquest by Alexander. The union between Media and Persia was probably as complete as that between Burgundy and France, or that of Scotland with England. Indeed, Media now became the residence of the Persian kings, whose palaces at Ecbatana, Susa, and Persepolis nearly rivalled those of Babylon. Even modern Persia comprises the ancient Media.

The reign of Cyrus properly begins with the conquest of Media, or rather its union with Persia, B.C. 549. We know, however, but little of the career of Cyrus after he became monarch of both Persia and Media, until he was forty years of age. He was probably engaged in the conquest of various barbaric hordes before his memorable Lydian campaign. But we are in ignorance of his most active years, when he was exposed to the greatest dangers and hardships, and when he became perfected in the military art, as in the case of Caesar amid the marshes and forests of Gaul and Belgium. The fame of Caesar rests as much on his conquests of the Celtic barbarians of Europe as on his conflict with Pompey; but whether Cyrus obtained military fame or not in his wars against the Turanians, he doubtless proved himself a benefactor to humanity more in arresting the tide of Scythian invasion than by those conquests which have given him immortality.

When Cyrus had cemented his empire by the conquest of the Turanian nations, especially those that dwelt between the Caspian and Black seas, his attention was drawn to Lydia, the most powerful kingdom of western Asia, whose monarch, Croesus, reigned at Sardis in Oriental magnificence. Lydia was not much known to distant States until the reign of Gyges, about 716 B.C., who made war on the Dorian and Ionian Greek colonies on the coast of Asia Minor, the chief of which were Miletus, Smyrna, Colophon, and Ephesus. His successor Ardys continued this warfare, but was obliged to desist because of an invasion of the Cimmerians,—barbarians from beyond the Caucasus, driven away from their homes by the Scythians. His grandson Alyattes, greatest of the Lydian monarchs, succeeded in expelling the Cimmerians from Lydia. After subduing some of the maritime cities of Asia Minor, this monarch faced the Medes, who had advanced their empire to the river Halys, the eastern boundary of Lydia, which flows northwardly into the Euxine. For five years Alyattes fought the Medes under Cyaxares with varying success, and the war ended by the marriage of the daughter of the Lydian king with Astyages. After this, Alyattes reigned forty-three years, and was buried in a tomb whose magnificence was little short of the grandest of the Egyptian monuments.

Croesus, his son, entered upon a career which reminds us of Solomon, the inheritor of the conquests of David. Like the Jewish monarch, Croesus was rich, luxurious, and intellectual. His wealth, obtained chiefly from the mines of his kingdom, was a marvel to the Greeks. His capital Sardis became the largest in western Asia, and one of the most luxurious cities known to antiquity, whither resorted travellers from all parts of the world, attracted by the magnificence of the court, among whom was Solon himself, the great Athenian law-giver. Croesus continued the warfare on the Greek cities of Asia, and forced them to become his tributaries. He brought under his sway most of

the nations to the west of the Halys, and though never so great a warrior as his father, he became very powerful. He was as generous in his gifts as he was magnificent in his tastes. His offerings to the oracle at Delphi were unprecedented in their value, when he sought advice as to the wisdom of engaging in war with Cyrus. Of the three great Asian empires, Croesus now saw his father's ally, Babylon, under a weak and dissolute ruler; Media, absorbed into Persia under the power of a valiant and successful conqueror; and his own empire, Lydia, threatened with attack by the growing ambition of Persia. Herodotus says he "was led to consider whether it were possible to check the growing power of that people."

It was the misfortune of Croesus to overrate his strength,—an error often seen in the career of fortunate men, especially those who enter upon a great inheritance. It does not appear that Croesus desired war with Persia, but he did not dread it, and felt confident that he could overcome a man whose chief conquests had been made over barbarians. Perhaps he felt the necessity of contending with Cyrus before that warrior's victories and prestige should become overwhelming, for the Persian monarch obviously aimed at absorbing all Asia in his empire; at any rate, when informed by the oracle at Delphi that if he fought with the Persians he would destroy a mighty empire, Croesus interpreted the response in his own favor.

Croesus made great preparations for the approaching contest, which was to settle the destiny of Asia Minor. The Greeks were on his side, for they feared the Persians more than they did the Lydians. With the aid of Sparta, the most warlike of the Grecian States, he advanced to meet the Persian conqueror, not however without the expostulation of some of his wisest counsellors. One of them, according to Herodotus, ventured to address him with these plain words: "Thou art about, O King, to make war against men who wear leather trousers and other garments of leather; who feed not on what they like, but on what they can get from a soil which is sterile and unfriendly; who do not indulge in wine, but drink water; who possess no figs, nor anything which is good to eat. If, then, thou conquerest them, what canst thou get from them, seeing that they have nothing at all? But if they conquer thee, consider how much that is precious thou wilt lose; if they once get a taste of our pleasant things, they will keep such a hold of them that we never shall be able to make them lose their grasp." We cannot consider Croesus as utterly infatuated in not taking this advice, since war had become inevitable. It was "either anvil or hammer," as between France and Prussia in 1870-72,—as between all great powers that accept the fortune of war, ever uncertain in its results. The only question seems to have been who should first take the offensive in a war that had been long preparing, and in which defeat would be followed by the utter ruin of the defeated party.

The Lydians began the attack by crossing the Halys and entering the enemy's territory. The first battle took place at Pteria in Cappadocia, near Sinope on the Euxine, but was indecisive. Both parties fought bravely, and the slaughter on both sides was dreadful, the Lydians being the most numerous, and the Persians the most highly disciplined. After the battle of Pteria, Croesus withdrew his army to his own territories and retired upon his capital, with a view of augmenting his forces; while Cyrus, with the instinct of a conqueror, ventured to cross the Halys in pursuit, and to march rapidly on Sardis before the enemy could collect another army. Prompt decision and celerity of movement characterize all successful warriors, and here it was that Cyrus showed his military genius. Before Croesus was fully prepared for another fight, Cyrus was at the gates of Sardis. But the Lydian king rallied what forces he could, and led them out to battle. The Lydians were superior in cavalry; seeing which, Cyrus, with that fertility of resource which marked his whole career, collected together the camels which transported his baggage and provisions, and placed them in the front of his array, since the horse, according to Herodotus, has a natural dread of the camel and cannot abide his sight or his smell. The result was as Cyrus calculated; the cavalry of the Lydians turned round and galloped away. The Lydians fought bravely, but were driven within the walls of their capital. Cyrus vigorously prosecuted the siege, which lasted only fourteen days, since an attack was made on the side of the city which was undefended, and which was supposed to be impregnable and unassailable. The proud city fell by

assault, and was given up to plunder. Croesus himself was taken alive, after a reign of fourteen years, and the mighty Lydia became a Persian province.

There is something unusually touching in the fate of Croesus after so great prosperity. Saved by Cyrus from an ignominious and painful death, such as the barbarous customs of war then made common, the unhappy Lydian monarch became, it is said, the friend and admirer of the Conqueror, and was present in his future expeditions, and even proved a wise and faithful counsellor. If some proud monarchs by the fortune of war have fallen suddenly from as lofty an eminence as that of Croesus, it is certain that few have yielded with nobler submission than he to the decrees of fate.

The fall of Sardis,—B.C. 546, according to Grote,—was followed by the submission of all the States that were dependent on Lydia. Even the Grecian colonies in Asia Minor were annexed to the Persian Empire.

The conquest of the Ionian cities, first by Croesus and then by Cyrus, was attended with important political consequences. Before the time of Croesus the Greek cities of Asia were independent. Had they combined together for offence and defence, with the assistance of Sparta and Athens, they might have resisted the attacks of both Lydians and Persians. But the autonomy of cities and states, favorable as it was to the development of art, literature, and commerce, as well as of individual genius in all departments of knowledge and enterprise, was not calculated to make a people politically powerful. Only a strong central power enables a country to resist hostile aggressions on a great scale. Thus Greece herself ultimately fell into the hands of Philip, and afterward into those of the Romans.

The conquest of the Ionian cities also introduced into Asia Minor and perhaps into Europe Oriental customs, luxuries, and wealth hitherto unknown. Certainly when Persia became an irresistible power and ruled the conquered countries by satraps and royal governors, it assimilated the Greeks with Asiatics, and modified the forms of social life; it brought Asia and Europe together, and produced a rivalry which finally ended in the battle of Marathon and the subsequent Asiatic victories of Alexander. While the conquests of the Persians introduced Oriental ideas and customs into Greece, the wars of Alexander extended the Grecian sway in Asia. The civilized world opened toward the East; but with the extension of Greek ideas and art, there was a decline of primitive virtues in Greece herself. Luxury undermined power.

The annexation of Asia Minor to the empire of Cyrus was followed by a protracted war with the barbarians on his eastern boundaries. The imperfect subjugation of barbaric nations living in Central Asia occupied Cyrus, it is thought, about twelve years. He pushed his conquests to the Iaxartes on the north and Afghanistan on the east, reducing that vast country which lies between the Caspian Sea and the deserts of Tartary.

Cyrus was advancing in years before he undertook the conquest of Babylon, the most important of all his undertakings, and for which his other conquests were preparatory. At the age of sixty, Cyrus, 538 B.C., advanced against Nabonadius, the proud king of Babylon,—the only remaining power in Asia that was still formidable. The Babylonian Empire, which had arisen on the ruins of the Assyrian, had lasted only about one hundred years. Yet what wonders and triumphs had been seen at Babylon during that single century! What progress had been made in arts and sciences! What grand palaces and temples had been erected! What a multitude of captives had added to the pomp and wealth of the proudest city of antiquity! Babylon the great,—“the glory of kingdoms,” “the praise of the whole earth,” the centre of all that was civilized and all that was corrupting in the Oriental world, with its soothsayers, its magicians, its necromancers, its priests, its nobles,—was now to fall, for its abominations cried aloud to heaven for punishment.

This great city was built on both sides of the Euphrates, was fifteen miles square, with gardens and fields capable of supporting a large population, and was stocked with provisions to maintain a siege of indefinite length against any enemy. The accounts of its walls and fortifications exceed belief, estimated by Herodotus to be three hundred and fifty feet in height, with a wide moat surrounding

them, which could not be bridged or crossed by an invading army. The soldiers of Narbonadius looked with derision on the veteran forces of Cyrus, although they were inured to the hardships and privations of incessant war. To all appearance the city was impregnable, and could be taken only by unusual methods. But the genius of the Persian conqueror, according to traditional accounts, surmounted all difficulties. Who else would have thought of diverting the Euphrates from its bed into the canals and gigantic reservoirs which Nebuchadnezzar had built for purposes of irrigation? Yet this seems to have been done. Taking advantage of a festival, when the whole population were given over to bacchanalian orgies, and therefore off their guard, Cyrus advanced, under the cover of a dark night, by the bed of the river, now dry, and easily surprised the drunken city, slaying the king, with a thousand of his lords, as he was banqueting in his palace. The slightest accident or miscarriage would have defeated so bold an operation. The success of Cyrus had all the mystery and solemnity of a Providential event. Though no miracle was wrought, the fall of Babylon—so strong, so proud, so defiant—was as wonderful as the passage of the Israelites across the Red Sea, or the crumbling walls of Jericho before the blasts of the trumpets of Joshua.

However, this account is to be taken with some reserve, since by the discoveries of historical "cylinders,"—the clay books whereon the Chaldaean priests and scribes recorded the main facts of the reigns of their monarchs,—and especially one called the "Proclamation Cylinder," prepared for Cyrus after the fall of Babylon, it would seem that dissension and treachery within had much to do with facilitating the entrance of the invader. Narbonadius, the second successor of Nebuchadnezzar, had quarrelled with the priesthood of Babylon, and neglected the worship of Bel-Marduk and Nebo, the special patron gods of that city. The captive Jews also, who had been now nearly fifty years in the land, had grown more zealous for their own God and religion, more influential and wealthy, and even had become in some sort a power in the State. The invasion of Cyrus—a monotheist like themselves—must have seemed to them a special providence from Jehovah; indeed, we know that it did, from the records in II. Chronicles xxxvi. 22, 23: "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Koresh, King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing." The same words occur in the beginning of the Book of Ezra, both referring to the sending home of the Jews after the fall of Babylon; the forty-sixth chapter of Isaiah also: "The Lord saith of Koresh, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure."

Babylon was not at that time levelled with the ground, but became one of the capitals of the Persian Empire, where the Persian monarch resided for more than half the year. Although the Babylonian Empire began with Nabopolassar, B.C. 625, on the destruction of Nineveh, yet Babylon was a very ancient city and the capital of the ancient Chaldaean monarchy, which lasted under various dynasties from about 2400 B.C. to 1300 B.C., when it was taken by the Assyrians under Tig Vathin. The great Assyrian Empire, which thus absorbed ancient Babylonia, lasted between six and seven hundred years, according to Herodotus, although recent discoveries and inscriptions make its continuance much longer, and was the dominant power of Asia during the most interesting period of Jewish history, until taken by Cyaxares the Median. The limits of the empire varied at different times, for the conquered States which composed it were held together by a precarious tenure. But even in its greatest strength it was inferior in size and power to the Empire of Cyrus. To check rebellion,—a source of constant trouble and weakness,—the warlike monarchs were obliged to reconquer, imposing not only tribute and fealty, but overrunning the rebellious countries with fire and sword, and carrying away captive to distant cities a large part of the population as slaves. Thus at one time two hundred thousand Jews were transported to Assyria, and the "Ten Tribes" were scattered over the Eastern world, never more to return to Palestine.

On the rebellion of Nabopolassar, in 625 B.C., Babylon recovered not only its ancient independence, but more than its ancient prestige; yet the empire of which it was the capital lasted only about the same length of time as Media and Lydia,—the most powerful monarchies existing when Cyrus was born. Babylon, however, during its brief dominion, after having been subject to Assyria

for seven hundred years, reappeared in unparalleled splendor, and was probably the most magnificent capital the ancient world ever saw until Rome arose. Even after its occupancy by the Persian monarchs for two hundred years, it called out the admiration of Herodotus and Alexander alike. Its arts, its sciences, its manufactures, to say nothing of its palaces and temples, were the admiration of travellers. When the proud conqueror of Palestine beheld the magnificence he had created, little did he dream that "this great Babylon which he had built" would become such a desolation that its very site would be uncertain,—a habitation for dragons, a dreary waste for owls and goats and wild beasts to occupy.

We should naturally suppose that Cyrus, with the kings of Asia prostrate before his satraps, would have been contented to enjoy the fruits of his labors; but there is no limit to man's ambition. Like Alexander, he sought for new worlds to conquer, and perished, as some historians maintain, in an unsuccessful war with some unknown barbarians on the northeastern boundaries of his empire,—even as Caesar meditated a war with the Parthians, where he might have perished, as Crassus did. Unbounded as is human ambition, there is a limit to human aggrandizement. Great conquerors are raised up by Providence to accomplish certain results for civilization, and when these are attained, when their mission is ended, they often pass away ingloriously,—assassinated or defeated or destroyed by self-indulgence, as the case may be. It seems to have been the mission of Cyrus to destroy the ascendancy of the Semitic and Hamitic despotisms in western Asia, that a new empire might be erected by nobler races, who should establish a reign of law. For the first time in Asia there was, on the accession of Cyrus to unlimited power, a recognition of justice, and the adoration of one supreme deity ruling in goodness and truth.

This may be the reason why Cyrus treated the captive Jews with so great generosity, since he recognized in their Jehovah the Ahura-Mazda,—the Supreme God that Zoroaster taught. No political reason will account for sending back to Palestine thousands of captives with imperial presents, to erect once more their sacred Temple and rebuild their sacred city. He and all the Persian monarchs were zealous adherents of the religion of Zoroaster, the central doctrine of which was the unity of God and Divine Providence in the world, which doctrine neither Egyptian nor Babylonian nor Lydian monarchs recognized. What a boon to humanity was the restoration of the Jews to their capital and country! We read of no oppression of the Jews by the Persian monarchs. Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister of such an effeminate monarch as Xerxes, while Daniel before him had been the honored minister of Darius.

Of all the Persian monarchs Cyrus was the best beloved. Xenophon made him the hero of his philosophical romance. He is represented as the incarnation of "sweetness and light." When a mere boy he delights all with whom he is brought into contact, by his wit and valor. The king of Media accepts his reproofs and admires his wisdom; the nobles of Media are won by his urbanity and magnanimity. All historians praise his simple habits and unbounded generosity. In an age when polygamy was the vice of kings, he was contented with one wife, whom he loved and honored. He rejected great presents, and thought it was better to give than to receive. He treated women with delicacy and captives with magnanimity. He conducted war with unknown mildness, and converted the conquered into friends. He exalted the dignity of labor, and scorned all baseness and lies. His piety and manly virtues may have been exaggerated by his admirers, but what we do know of him fills us with admiration. Brilliant in intellect, lofty in character, he was an ideal man, fitted to be the guide of a noble nation whom he led to glory and honor. Other warriors of world-wide fame have had, like him, great excellencies, marred by glaring defects; but no vices or crimes are ascribed to Cyrus, such as stained the characters of David and Constantine. The worst we can say of him is that he was ambitious, and delighted in conquest; but he was a conqueror raised up to elevate a religious race to a higher plane, and to find a field for the development of their energies, whatever may be said of their subsequent degeneracy. "The grandeur of his character is well rendered in that brief and unassuming inscription of his, more eloquent in its lofty simplicity than anything recorded by Assyrian and Babylonian kings: 'I am Kurush [Cyrus] the king, the Achaemenian.'" Whether he fell



in battle, or died a natural death in one of his palaces, he was buried in the ancient but modest capital of the ancient Persians, Pasargadae; and his tomb was intact in the time of Alexander, who visited it,—a sort of marble chapel raised on a marble platform thirty-six feet high, in which was deposited a gilt sarcophagus, together with Babylonian tapestries, Persian weapons, and rare jewels of great value. This was the inscription on his tomb: "O man, I am Kurush, the son of Kambujiya, who founded the greatness of Persia and ruled Asia; grudge me not this monument."

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who though not devoid of fine qualities was jealous and tyrannical. He caused his own brother Smerdis to be put to death. He completed the conquests of his father by adding Egypt to his empire. In a fit of remorse for the murder of his brother he committed suicide, and the empire was usurped by a Magian impostor, called Gaumata, who claimed to be the second son of Cyrus. His reign, however, was short, he being slain by Darius the son of Hystaspes, belonging to another branch of the royal family. Darius was a great general and statesman, who reorganized the empire and raised it to the zenith of its power and glory. It extended from the Greek islands on the west to India on the east. This monarch even penetrated to the Danube with his armies, but made no permanent conquest in Europe. He made Susa his chief capital, and also built Persepolis, the ruins of which attest its ancient magnificence. It seems that he was a devout follower of Zoroaster, and ascribed his successes to the favor of Ahura-Mazda, the Supreme Deity.

It was during the reign of Darius that Persia came in contact with Greece, in consequence of the revolt of the Ionian cities of Asia Minor, which, however, was easily suppressed by the Persian satrap. Then followed two invasions of Greece itself by the Persians under the generals of Darius, and their defeat at Marathon by Miltiades.

Darius was succeeded by Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Hebrew Scriptures, whose invasion of Greece with the largest army the world ever saw properly belongs to Grecian history. It was reserved for the heroes of Plataea to teach the world the lesson that the strength of armies is not in multitudes but in discipline,—a lesson confirmed by the conquests of Alexander and Caesar.

On the fall of the Persian Empire three hundred years after the fall of Babylon, and the establishment of the Greek rule in Asia under the generals of Alexander, Persia proper did not cease to be formidable. Under the Sassanian princes the ambition of the Achaemenians was revived. Sapor defied Rome herself, and dragged the Emperor Valerian in disgraceful captivity to Ctesiphon, his capital. Sapor II. was the conqueror of the Emperor Julian, and Chosroes was an equally formidable adversary. In the year 617 A.D. Persian warriors advanced to the walls of Constantinople, and drove the Emperor Heraclius to despair.

Thus Persia never lost wholly its ancient prestige, and still remains, after the rise and fall of so many dynasties, and such great vicissitudes from Greek and Arab conquests, a powerful country twice the size of Germany, under the rule of an independent prince. There seems no likelihood of her ever again playing so grand a part in the world's history as when, under the great Cyrus, she prepared the transfer of empire from the Orient to the Occident. But "what has been, has been, and she has had her hour."

## **AUTHORITIES**

Herodotus and Xenophon are our main authorities, though not to be fully relied upon. Of modern works Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies* and Rawlinson's *Herodotus* are the most valuable. Ragozin has written interesting books on Media, Persia, Assyria, and Chaldaea, making special note of the researches of European travellers in the East. Fergusson, Layard, Sayce, and George Smith have shed light on all this ancient region. Johnson's work is learned but indefinite. Benjamin is the latest writer on the history of Persia; but a satisfactory life of Cyrus has yet to be written.

# **JULIUS CAESAR**

**100-44 B.C**

## **IMPERIALISM**

The most august name in the history of the old Roman world, and perhaps of all antiquity, is that of Julius Caesar; and a new interest has of late been created in this extraordinary man by the brilliant sketch of his life and character by Mr. Froude, who has whitewashed him, as is the fashion with hero-worshippers, like Carlyle in his history of Frederick II. But it is not an easy thing to reverse the verdict of the civilized world for two thousand years, although a man of genius can say many interesting things and offer valuable suggestions.

In his *Life of Caesar* Mr. Froude seems to vindicate Imperialism, not merely as a great necessity in the corrupt times which succeeded the civil wars of Marius and Sulla, but as a good thing in itself. It seems to me that while there was a general tendency to Imperialism in the Roman world for one or two hundred years before Christ, the whole tendency of modern governments is against it, and has been since the second English Revolution. It still exists in Russia and Turkey, possibly in Germany and Austria; yet constitutional forms of government seem to be gradually taking its place. What a change in England, France, Italy, and Spain during the last hundred years!—what a breaking up of the old absolutism of the Bourbons! Even the imperialism of Napoleon is held in detestation by a large class of the French nation.

It may have been necessary for such a man as Caesar to arise when the Romans had already conquered a great part of the civilized world, and when the various provinces which composed the Empire needed a firm, stable, and uniform government in the hands of a single man, in order to promote peace and law,—the first conditions of human society. But it is one thing to recognize the majesty of divine Providence in furnishing a remedy for the peculiar evils of an age or people, and quite another thing to make this remedy a panacea for all the future conditions of nations. If we believe in the moral government of this world by a divine and supreme Intelligence whom we call God, then it is not difficult to see in Julius Caesar, after nearly two thousand years, an instrument of Providence like Constantine, Charlemagne, Richelieu, and Napoleon himself. It matters nothing whether Caesar was good or bad, whether he was a patriot or a usurper, so far as his ultimate influence is concerned, if he was the instrument of an overruling Power; for God chooses such instruments as he pleases. Even in human governments it is sometimes expedient to employ rogues in order to catch rogues, or to head off some peculiar evil that honest people do not know how to manage. But because a bad man is selected by a higher power to do some peculiar work, it does not follow that this bad man should be praised for doing it, especially if the work is good only so far as it is overruled. Both human consciousness and Christianity declare that it is a crime to shed needless and innocent blood. If ambition prompts a man to destroy his rivals and fill the world with miseries in order to climb to supreme power, then it is an insult to the human understanding to make this ambition synonymous with patriotism. A successful conqueror may be far-sighted and enlightened, whatever his motives for conquest; but because he is enlightened, it does not follow that he fights battles with the supreme view of benefiting his country, like William III. and George Washington. He may have taken the sword chiefly to elevate himself; or, after having taken the sword with a view of rendering important services, and having rendered these services, he may have been diverted from his original intentions,

and have fought for the gratification of personal ambition, losing sight utterly of the cause in which he embarked.

Now this is the popular view which the world has taken of Caesar. Shakspeare may have been unjust in his verdict; but it is a verdict which has been sustained by most writers and by popular sentiment during the last three hundred years. It was also the verdict of Cicero, of the Roman Senate, and of ancient historians. It is one of my objects to show in this lecture how far this verdict is just. It is another object to point out the services of Caesar to the State, which, however great and honestly to be praised, do not offset crime.

Caius Julius Caesar belonged to one of the proudest and most ancient of the patrician families of Rome,—a branch of the *gens Julia*, which claimed a descent from Iules, the son of Aeneas. His father, Caius Julius, married Aurelia, a noble matron of the Cotta family, and his aunt Julia married the great Marius; so that, though he was a patrician of the purest blood, his family alliances were either plebeian or on the liberal side in politics. He was born one hundred years before Christ, and received a good education, but was not precocious, like Cicero. There was nothing remarkable about his childhood. "He was a tall and handsome man, with dark, piercing eyes, sallow complexion, large nose, full lips, refined and intellectual features, and thick neck." He was particular about his appearance, and showed a studied negligence of dress. His uncle Marius, in the height of his power, marked him out for promotion, and made him a priest of Jupiter when he was fourteen years old. On the death of his father, a man of praetorian rank, and therefore a senator, at the age of seventeen Caesar married Cornelia, the daughter of Cinna, which connected him still more closely with the popular party. He was only a few years younger than Cicero and Pompey. When he was eighteen he attracted the notice of Sulla, then dictator, who wished him to divorce his wife and take such a one as he should propose,—which the young man, at the risk of his life, refused to do. This boldness and independence of course displeased the Dictator, who predicted his future. "In this young Caesar," said he, "there are many Mariuses;" but he did not kill him, owing to the intercession of powerful friends.

The career of Caesar may be divided into three periods, during each of which he appeared in a different light: the first, until he began the conquest of Gaul, at the age of forty-three; the second, the time of his military exploits in Gaul, by which he rendered great services and gained popularity and fame; and the third, that of his civil wars, dictatorship, and imperial reign.

In the first period of his life, for about twenty-five years, he made a mark indeed, but rendered no memorable services to the State and won no especial fame. Had he died at the age of forty-three, his name would probably not have descended to our times, except as a leading citizen, a good lawyer, and powerful debater. He saw military service, almost as a matter of course; but he was not particularly distinguished as a general, nor did he select the military profession. He was eloquent, aspiring, and able, as a young patrician; but, like Cicero, it would seem that he sought the civil service, and made choice of the law, by which to rise in wealth and power. He was a politician from the first; and his ambition was to get a seat in the Senate, like all other able and ambitious men. Senators were not hereditary, however nobly born, but gained their seats by election to certain high offices in the gift of the people, called *curule* offices, which entitled them to senatorial position and dignity. A seat in the Senate was the great object of Roman ambition; because the Senate was the leading power of the State, and controlled the army, the treasury, religious worship, and the provinces. The governors and ambassadors, as well as the dictators, were selected by this body of aristocrats. In fact, to the Senate was intrusted the supreme administration of the Empire, although the source of power was technically and theoretically in the people, or those who had the right of suffrage; and as the people elected those magistrates whose offices entitled them to a seat in the Senate, the Senate was virtually elected by the people. Senators held their places for life, but could be weeded out by the censors. And as the Senate in its best days contained between three and four hundred men, not all the *curule* magistrates could enter it, unless there were vacancies; but a selection from them was made by the

censors. So the Senate, in all periods of the Roman Republic, was composed of experienced men,—of those who had previously held the great offices of State.

To gain a seat in the Senate, therefore, it was necessary to be elected by the people to one of the great magistracies. In the early ages of the Republic the people were incorruptible; but when foreign conquest, slavery, and other influences demoralized them, they became venal and sold their votes. Hence only rich men, ordinarily, were elected to high office; and the rich men, as a rule, belonged to the old families. So the Senate was made up not only of experienced men, but of the aristocracy. There were rich men outside the Senate,—successful plebeians, men who had made fortunes by trade, bankers, monopolists, and others; but these, if ambitious of social position or political influence, became gradually absorbed among the senatorial families. Those who could afford to buy the votes of the people, and those only, became magistrates and senators. Hence the demagogues were rich men and belonged to the highest ranks, like Clodius and Catiline.

It thus happened that, when Julius Caesar came upon the stage, the aristocracy controlled the elections. The people were indeed sovereign; but they abdicated their power to those who would pay the most for it. The constitution was popular in name; in reality it was aristocratic, since only rich men (generally noble) could be elected to office. Rome was ruled by aristocrats, who became rich as the people became poor. The great source of senatorial wealth was in the control of the provinces. The governors were chosen by the Senate and from the Senate; and it required only one or two years to make a fortune as a governor, like Verres. The ultimate cause which threw power into the hands of the rich and noble was the venality of the people. The aristocratic demagogues bought them, in the same way that rich monopolists in our day control legislatures. The people are too numerous in this country to be directly bought up, even if it were possible, and the prizes they confer are not high enough to tempt rich men, as they did in Rome.

A man, therefore, who would rise to power at Rome must necessarily bribe the people, must purchase their votes, unless he was a man of extraordinary popularity,—some great orator like Cicero, or successful general like Marius or Sulla; and it was difficult to get popularity except as a lawyer and orator, or as a general.

Caesar, like Cicero and Hortensius, chose the law as a means of rising in the world; for, though of ancient family, he was not rich. He must make money by his profession, or he must borrow it, if he would secure office. It seems he borrowed it. How he contrived to borrow such vast sums as he spent on elections, I do not know. He probably made friends of rich men like Crassus, who became security for him. He was in debt to the amount of \$1,500,000 of our money before he held office. He was a bold political gambler, and played for high stakes. It would seem that he had very winning and courteous manners, though he was not distinguished for popular oratory. His terse and pregnant sentences, however, won the admiration of his friend Cicero, a brother lawyer, and he was very social and hospitable. He was on the liberal side in politics, and attacked the abuses of the day, which won him popular favor. At first he lived in a modest house with his wife and mother, in the Subarra, without attracting much notice. The first office to which he was elected was that of a Military Tribune, soon after his sojourn of two years in Rhodes to learn from Apollonius the arts of oratory. His next office was that of Quaestor, which enabled him to enter the Senate, at the age of thirty-two; and his third office, that of Aedile, which gave him the control of the public buildings: the Aediles were expected to decorate the city, and this gave him opportunities of cultivating popularity by splendor and display. The first thing which brought him into notice as an orator was a funeral oration he pronounced on his Aunt Julia, the widow of Marius. The next fortunate event of his life was his marriage with Pompeia, a cousin of Pompey, who was then the foremost man in Rome, having distinguished himself in Spain and in putting down the slave insurrection under Spartacus; but Pompey's great career in the East had not yet commenced, so that the future rivals at that time were friends. Caesar glorified Pompey in the Senate, which by virtue of his office he had lately entered. The next step to greatness was his election by the people—through the use of immense amounts of borrowed money—to the great office

of Pontifex Maximus, which made him the pagan Pope of Rome for life, with a grand palace to live in. Soon after he was made Praetor, which office entitled him to a provincial government; and he was sent by the Senate to Spain as Pro-praetor, completed the conquest of the peninsula, and sent to Borne vast sums of money. These services entitled him to a triumph; but, as he presented himself at the same time as a candidate for the consulship, he was obliged to forego the triumph, and was elected Consul without opposition: his vanity ever yielded to his ambition.

Thus far there was nothing remarkable in Caesar's career. He had risen by power of money, like other aristocrats, to the highest offices of the State, showing abilities indeed, but not that extraordinary genius which has made him immortal. He was the leader of the political party which Sulla had put down, and yet was not a revolutionist like the Gracchi. He was an aristocratic reformer, like Lord John Russell before the passage of the Reform Bill, whom the people adored. He was a liberal, but not a radical. Of course he was not a favorite with the senators, who wished to perpetuate abuses. He was intensely disliked by Cato, a most excellent and honest man, but narrow-minded and conservative,—a sort of Duke of Wellington without his military abilities. The Senate would make no concessions, would part with no privileges, and submit to no changes. Like Lord Eldon, it "adhered to what was established, because it was established."

Caesar, as Consul, began his administration with conciliation; and he had the support of Crassus with his money, and of Pompey as the representative of the army, who was then flushed with his Eastern conquests,—pompous, vain, and proud, but honest and incorruptible. Cicero stood aloof,—the greatest man in the Senate, whose aristocratic privileges he defended. He might have aided Caesar "in the speaking department;" but as a "new man" he was jealous of his prerogatives, and was always conservative, like Burke, whom he resembled in his eloquence and turn of mind and fondness for literature and philosophy. Failing to conciliate the aristocrats, Caesar became a sort of Mirabeau, and appealed to the people, causing them to pass his celebrated "*Leges Juliae*," or reform bills; the chief of which was the "land act," which conferred portions of the public lands on Pompey's disbanded soldiers for settlement,—a wise thing, which senators opposed, since it took away their monopoly. Another act required the provincial governors, on their return from office, to render an account of their stewardship and hand in their accounts for public inspection. The Julian Laws also were designed to prevent the plunder of the public revenues, the debasing of the coin, the bribery of judges and of the people at elections. There were laws also for the protection of citizens from violence, and sundry other reforms which were enlightened and useful. In the passage of these laws against the will of the Senate, we see that the people were still recognized as sovereign in *legislation*. The laws were good. All depended on their execution; and the Senate, as the administrative body, could practically defeat their operation when Caesar's term of office expired; and this it unwisely determined to do. The last thing it wished was any reform whatever; and, as Mr. Froude thinks, there must have been either reform or revolution. But this is not so clear to me. Aristocracy was all-powerful when money could buy the people, and when the people had no virtue, no ambition, no intelligence. The struggle at Rome in the latter days of the Republic was not between the people and the aristocracy, but between the aristocracy and the military chieftains on one side, and those demagogues whom it feared on the other. The result showed that the aristocracy feared and distrusted Caesar; and he used the people only to advance his own ends,—of course, in the name of reform and patriotism. And when he became Dictator, he kicked away the ladder on which he climbed to power. It was Imperialism that he established; neither popular rights nor aristocratic privileges. He had no more love of the people than he had of those proud aristocrats who afterwards murdered him.

But the empire of the world—to which Caesar at that time may, or may not, have aspired: who can tell? but probably not—was not to be gained by civil services, or reforms, or arguments in law courts, or by holding great offices, or haranguing the people at the rostrum, or making speeches in the Senate,—where he was hated for his liberal views and enlightened mind, rather than from any fear of his overturning the constitution,—but by military services and heroic deeds and the devotion



of a tried and disciplined regular army. Caesar was now forty-three years of age, being in the full maturity of his powers. At the close of his term as Consul he sought a province where military talents were indispensable, and where he could have a long term of office. The Senate gave him the "woods and forests,"—an unsubdued country, where he would have hard work and unknown perils, and from which it was probable he would never return. They sent him to Gaul. But this was just the field for his marvellous military genius, then only partially developed; and the second period of his career now began.

It was during this second period that he rendered his most important services to the State and earned his greatest fame. The dangers which threatened the Empire came from the West, and not the East. Asia was already-subdued by Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey, or was on the point of being subdued. Mithridates was a formidable enemy; but he aimed at establishing an Asiatic empire, not conquering the European provinces. He was not so dangerous as even Pyrrhus had been. Moreover, the conquest of the East was comparatively easy,—over worn-out races and an effete civilization; it gave *éclat* to Sulla and Pompey,—as the conquest of India, with a handful of British troops, made Clive and Hastings famous; it required no remarkable military genius, nor was it necessary for the safety of Italy. Conquest over the Oriental monarchies meant only spoliation. It was prompted by greed and vanity more than by a sense of danger. Pompey brought back money enough from the East to enrich all his generals, and the Senate besides,—or rather the State, which a few aristocrats practically owned.

But the conquest of Gaul would be another affair. It was peopled with hardy races, who cast their greedy eyes on the empire of the Romans, or on some of its provinces, and who were being pushed forward to invasion by a still braver people beyond the Rhine,—races kindred to those Teutons whom Marius had defeated. There was no immediate danger from the Germans; but there was ultimate danger, as proved by the union they made in the time of Marcus Antoninus for the invasion of the Roman provinces. It was necessary to raise a barrier against their inundations. It was also necessary to subdue the various Celtic tribes of Gaul, who were getting restless and uneasy. There was no money in a conquest over barbarians, except so far as they could be sold into slavery; but there was danger in it. The whole country was threatened with insurrections, leagues, and invasion, from the Alps to the ocean. There was a confederacy of hostile kings and chieftains; they commanded innumerable forces; they controlled important posts and passes. The Gauls had long made fixed settlements, and had built bridges and fortresses. They were not so warlike as the Germans; but they were yet formidable enemies. United, they were like "a volcano giving signs of approaching eruption; and at any moment, and hardly without warning, another lava stream might be poured down Venetia and Lombardy."

To rescue the Empire from such dangers was the work of Caesar; and it was no small undertaking. The Senate had given him unlimited power, for five years, over Gaul,—then a *terra incognita*,—an indefinite country, comprising the modern States of France, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, and a part of Germany. Afterward the Senate extended the governorship five years more; so difficult was the work of conquest, and so formidable were the enemies. But it was danger which Caesar loved. The greater the obstacles the better was he pleased, and the greater was the scope for his genius,—which at first was not appreciated, for the best part of his life had been passed in Rome as a lawyer and orator and statesman. But he had a fine constitution, robust health, temperate habits, and unbounded energies. He was free to do as he liked with several legions, and had time to perfect his operations. And his legions were trained to every kind of labor and hardship. They could build bridges, cut down forests, and drain swamps, as well as march with a weight of eighty pounds to the man. They could make their own shoes, mend their own clothes, repair their own arms, and construct their own tents. They were as familiar with the axe and spade as they were with the lance and sword. They were inured to every kind of danger and difficulty, and not one of them was personally braver than the general who led them, or more skilful in riding a horse, or fording a river, or climbing a mountain. No one of them could be more abstemious. Luxury is not one of the peculiarities of successful generals in barbaric countries.

To give a minute sketch of the various encounters with the different tribes and nations that inhabited the vast country he was sent to conquer and govern, would be impossible in a lecture like this. One must read Caesar's own account of his conflicts with Helvetii, Aedui, Remi, Nervii, Belgae, Veneti, Arverni, Aquitani, Ubii, Eubueones, Treveri, and other nations between the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Rhine, and the sea. Their numbers were immense, and they were well armed, and had cavalry, military stores, efficient leaders, and indomitable courage. When beaten in one place they sprang up in another, like the Saxons with whom Charlemagne contended. They made treaties only to break them. They fought with the desperation of heroes who had their wives and children, firesides and altars, to guard; yet against them Caesar was uniformly successful. He was at times in great peril, yet he never lost but one battle, and this through the fault of his generals. Yet he had able generals, whom he selected himself,—Labienus, who afterwards deserted him, Antony, Publius Crassus, Cotta, Sabinus,—all belonging to the aristocracy. They made mistakes, but Caesar never. They would often have been cut off but for Caesar's timely aid.

When we consider the dangers to which he was constantly exposed, the amazing difficulties he had to surmount, the hardships he had to encounter, the fears he had to allay, the murmurs he was obliged to silence, the rivers he was compelled to cross in the face of enemies, the forests it was necessary to penetrate, the swamps and mountains and fortresses which impeded his marches, we are amazed at his skill and intrepidity, to say nothing of his battles with forces ten times more numerous than his own. His fertility of resources, his lightning rapidity of movement, his sagacity and insight, his perfection of discipline, his careful husbandry of forces, his ceaseless diligence, his intrepid courage, the confidence with which he inspired his soldiers, his brilliant successes (victory after victory), with the enormous number of captives by which he and the State became enriched,—all these things dazzled his countrymen, and gave him a fame such as no general had ever earned before. He conquered a population of warriors to be numbered by millions, with no aid from charts and maps, exposed perpetually to treachery and false information. He had to please and content an army a thousand miles from home, without supplies, except such as were precarious,—living on the plainest food, and doomed to infinite labors and drudgeries, besides attacking camps and assaulting fortresses, and fighting pitched battles. Yet he won their love, their respect, and their admiration,—and by an urbanity, a kindness, and a careful protection of their interests, such as no general ever showed before. He was a hero performing perpetual wonders, as chivalrous as the knights of the Middle Ages. No wonder he was adored, like a Moses in the wilderness, like a Napoleon in his early conquests.

This conquest of Gaul, during which he drove the Germans back to their forests, and inaugurated a policy of conciliation and moderation which made the Gauls the faithful allies of Rome, and their country its most fertile and important province, furnishing able men both for the Senate and the Army, was not only a great feat of genius, but a great service—a transcendent service—to the State, which entitled Caesar to a magnificent reward. Had it been cordially rendered to him, he might have been contented with a sort of perpetual consulship, and with the *éclat* of being the foremost man of the Empire. The people would have given him anything in their power to give, for he was as much an idol to them as Napoleon became to the Parisians after the conquest of Italy. He had rendered services as brilliant as those of Scipio, of Marius, of Sulla, or of Pompey. If he did not save Italy from being subsequently overrun by barbarians, he postponed their irruptions for two hundred years. And he had partially civilized the country he had subdued, and introduced Roman institutions. He had also created an army of disciplined veterans, such as never before was seen. He perfected military mechanism, that which kept the Empire together after all vitality had fled. He was the greatest master of the art of war known to antiquity. Such transcendent military excellence and such great services entitled him to the gratitude and admiration of the whole Empire, although he enriched himself and his soldiers with the spoils of his ten years' war, and did not, so far as I can see, bring great sums into the national treasury.

But the Senate was reluctant to give him the customary rewards for ten years' successful war, and for adding Western Europe to the Empire. It was jealous of his greatness and his renown. It also feared him, for he had eleven legions in his pay, and was known to be ambitious. It hated him for two reasons: first, because in his first consulship he had introduced reforms, and had always sided with the popular and liberal party; and secondly, because military successes of unprecedented brilliancy had made him dangerous. So, on the conclusion of the conquest of Gaul, it withdrew two legions from his army, and sought to deprive him of his promised second consulate, and even to recall him before his term of office as governor was expired. In other words, it sought to cripple and disarm him, and raise his rival, Pompey, over him in the command of the forces of the Empire.

It was now secret or open war, not between Caesar and the Roman people, but between Caesar and the Senate,—between a great and triumphant general and the Roman oligarchy of nobles, who, for nearly five hundred years, had ruled the Empire. On the side of Caesar were the army, the well-to-do classes, and the people; on the side of the Senate were the forces which a powerful aristocracy could command, having the prestige of law and power and wealth, and among whom were the great names of the republic.

Mr. Froude ridicules and abuses this aristocracy, as unfit longer to govern the State, as a worn-out power that deserved to fall. He uniformly represents them as extravagant, selfish, ostentatious, luxurious, frivolous, Epicurean in opinions and in life, oppressive in all their social relations, haughty beyond endurance, and controlling the popular elections by means of bribery and corruption. It would be difficult to refute these charges. The Patricians probably gave themselves up to all the pleasures incident to power and unbounded wealth, in a corrupt and wicked age. They had their palaces in the city and their villas in the country, their parks and gardens, their fish-ponds and game-preserves, their pictures and marbles, their expensive furniture and costly ornaments, gold and silver vessels, gems and precious works of art. They gave luxurious banquets; they travelled like princes; they were a body of kings, to whom the old monarchs of conquered provinces bowed down in fear and adulation. All this does not prove that they were incapable, although they governed for the interests of their class. They were all experienced in affairs of State,—most of them had been quaestors, aediles, praetors, censors, tribunes, consuls, and governors. Most of them were highly educated, had travelled extensively, were gentlemanly in their manners, could make speeches in the Senate, and could fight on the field of battle when there was a necessity. They doubtless had the common vices of the rich and proud; but many of them were virtuous, patriotic, incorruptible, almost austere in morals, dignified and intellectual, whom everybody respected,—men like Cato, Brutus, Cassius, Cicero, and others. Their sin was that they wished to conserve their powers, privileges, and fortunes, like all aristocracies,—like the British House of Lords. Nor must it be forgotten that it was under their régime that the conquest of the world was made, and that Rome had become the centre of everything magnificent and glorious on the earth.

It was doubtless shortsighted and ungrateful in these nobles to attempt to deprive Caesar of his laurels and his promised consulship. He had earned them by grand services, both as a general and a statesman. But their jealousy and hatred were not unnatural. They feared, not unreasonably, that the successful general—rich, proud, and dictatorial from the long exercise of power, and seated in the chair of supremest dignity—would make sweeping changes; might reduce their authority to a shadow, and elevate himself to perpetual dictatorship; and thus, by substituting imperialism for aristocracy, subvert the Constitution. That is evidently what Cicero feared, as appears in his letters to Atticus. That is what all the leading Senators feared, especially Cato. It was known that Caesar—although urbane, merciful, enlightened, hospitable, and disposed to govern for the public good—was unscrupulous in the use of tools; that he had originally gained his seat in the Senate by bribery and demagogic arts; that he was reckless as to debts, regarding money only as a means to buy supporters; that he had appropriated vast sums from the spoils of war for his own use, and, from being poor, had become the richest man in the Empire; that he had given his daughter Julia in marriage to Pompey from political ends; that he was long-sighted in his ambition, and would be content with nothing less than the gratification of this

insatiate passion. All this was known, and it gave great solicitude to the leaders of the aristocracy, who resolved to put him down,—to strip him of his power, or fight him, if necessary, in a civil war. So the aristocracy put themselves under the protection of Pompey,—a successful but overrated general, who also aimed at supreme power, with the nobles as his supporters, not perhaps as Imperator, but as the agent and representative of a subservient Senate, in whose name he would rule.

This contest between Caesar and the aristocracy under the lead of Pompey, its successful termination in Caesar's favor, and his brilliant reign of about four years, as Dictator and Imperator, constitute the third period of his memorable career.

Neither Caesar nor Pompey would disband their legions, as it was proposed by Curio in the Senate and voted by a large majority. In fact, things had arrived at a crisis: Caesar was recalled, and he must obey the Senate, or be decreed a public enemy; that is, the enemy of the power that ruled the State. He would not obey, and a general levy of troops in support of the Senate was made, and put into the hands of Pompey with unlimited command. The Tribunes of the people, however, sided with Caesar, and refused confirmation of the Senatorial decrees. Caesar then no longer hesitated, but with his army crossed the Rubicon, which was an insignificant stream, but was the Rome-ward boundary of his province. This was the declaration of civil war. It was now "either anvil or hammer." The admirers of Caesar claim that his act was a necessity, at least a public benefit, on the ground of the misrule of the aristocracy. But it does not appear that there was anarchy at Rome, although Milo had killed Clodius. There were aristocratic feuds, as in the Middle Ages. Order and law—the first conditions of society—were not in jeopardy, as in the French Revolution, when Napoleon arose. The people were not in hostile array against the nobles, nor the nobles against the people. The nobles only courted and bribed the people; but so general was corruption that a change in government was deemed necessary by the advocates of Caesar,—at least they defended it. The gist of all the arguments in favor of the revolution is: better imperialism than an oligarchy of corrupt nobles. It is not my province to settle that question. It is my work only to describe events.

It is clear that Caesar resolved on seizing supreme power, in taking it away from the nobles, on the ground probably that he could rule better than they,—the plea of Napoleon, the plea of Cromwell, the plea of all usurpers.

But this supreme power he could not exercise until he had conquered Pompey and the Senate and all his enemies. It must need be that "he should wade through slaughter to his throne." This alternative was forced on him, and he accepted it. He accepted civil war in order to reign. At best, he would do evil that good might come. He was doubtless the strongest man in the world; and, according to Mr. Carlyle's theory, the strongest ought to rule.

Much has been said about the rabble,—the democracy,—their turbulence, corruption, and degradation, their unfitness to rule, and all that sort of thing, which I regard as irrelevant, so far as the usurpation of Caesar is concerned; since the struggle was not between them and the nobles, but between a fortunate general and the aristocracy who controlled the State. Caesar was not the representative of the people or of their interests, as Tiberius Gracchus was, but the representative of the Army. He had no more sympathy with the people than he had with the nobles: he probably despised them both, as unfit to rule. He flattered the people and bought them, but he did not love them. It was his soldiers whom he loved, next to himself; although, as a wise and enlightened statesman, he wished to promote the great interests of the nation, so far as was consistent with the enjoyment of imperial rule. This friend of the people would give them spectacles and shows, largesses of corn,—money, even,—and extension of the suffrage, but not political power. He was popular with them, because he was generous and merciful, because his exploits won their admiration, and his vast public works gave employment to them and adorned their city.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the final contest of Caesar with the nobles, with Pompey at their head, since nothing is more familiar in history. Plainly he was not here rendering public services, as he did in Spain and Gaul, but taking care of his own interests. I cannot see how a civil war was a

service, unless it were a service to destroy the aristocratic constitution and substitute imperialism, which some think was needed with the vast extension of the Empire, and for the good administration of the provinces,—robbed and oppressed by the governors whom the Senate had sent out to enrich the aristocracy. It may have been needed for the better administration of justice, for the preservation of law and order, and a more efficient central power. Absolutism may have proved a benefit to the Empire, as it proved a benefit to France under Cardinal Richelieu, when he humiliated the nobles. If so, it was only a choice of evils, for absolutism is tyranny, and tyranny is not a blessing, except in a most demoralized state of society, which it is claimed was the state of Rome at the time of the usurpation of Caesar. It is certain that the whole united strength of the aristocracy could not prevail over Caesar, although it had Pompey for its defender, with his immense prestige and experience as a general.

After Caesar had crossed the Rubicon, and it was certain he would march to Rome and seize the reins of government, the aristocracy fled precipitately to Pompey's wing at Capua, fearing to find in Caesar another Marius. Pompey did not show extraordinary ability in the crisis. He had no courage and no purpose. He fled to Brundisium, where ships were waiting to transport his army to Durazzo. He was afraid to face his rival in Italy. Caesar would have pursued, but had no navy. He therefore went to Rome, which he had not seen for ten years, took what money he wanted from the treasury, and marched to Spain, where the larger part of Pompey's army, under his lieutenants, were now arrayed against him. These it was necessary first to subdue. But Caesar prevailed, and all Spain was soon at his feet. His successes were brilliant; and Gaul, Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia were wholly his own, as well as Spain, which was Pompey's province. He then rapidly returned to Rome, was named Dictator, and as such controlled the consular election, and was chosen Consul. But Pompey held the East, and, with his ships, controlled the Mediterranean, and was gathering forces for the invasion of Italy. Caesar allowed himself but eleven days in Rome. It was necessary to meet Pompey before that general could return to Italy. It was mid-winter,—about a year after he had crossed the Rubicon. He had with him only thirty thousand men, but these were veterans. Pompey had nine full Roman legions, which lay at Durazzo, opposite to Brundisium, besides auxiliaries and unlimited means; but he was hampered by senatorial civilians, and his legions were only used to Eastern warfare. He also controlled the sea, so that it was next to impossible for Caesar to embark without being defeated. Yet Caesar did cross the sea amid overwhelming obstacles, and the result was the battle of Pharsalia,—deemed one of the decisive battles of the world, although the forces of the combatants were comparatively small. It was gained by the defeat of Pompey's cavalry by a fourth line of the best soldiers of Caesar, which was kept in reserve. Pompey, on the defeat of his cavalry, upon whom he had based his hopes, lost heart and fled. He fled to the sea,—uncertain, vacillating, and discouraged,—and sailed for Egypt, relying on the friendship of the young king; but was murdered treacherously before he set foot upon the land. His fate was most tragical. His fall was overwhelming.

This battle, in which the flower of the Roman aristocracy succumbed to the conqueror of Gaul, with vastly inferior forces, did not end the desperate contest. Two more bloody battles were fought—one in Africa and one in Spain—before the supremacy of Caesar was secured. The battle of Thapsus, between Utica and Carthage, at which the Roman nobles once more rallied under Cato and Labienus, and the battle of Munda, in Spain, the most bloody of all, gained by Caesar over the sons of Pompey, settled the civil war and made Caesar supreme. He became supreme only by the sacrifice of half of the Roman nobility and the death of their principal leaders,—Pompey, Labienus, Lentulus, Ligarius, Metellus, Scipio Afranius, Cato, Petreius, and others. In one sense it was the contest between Pompey and Caesar for the empire of the world. Cicero said, "The success of the one meant massacre, and that of the other slavery,"—for if Pompey had prevailed, the aristocracy would have butchered their enemies with unrelenting vengeance; but Caesar hated unnecessary slaughter, and sought only power. In another sense it was the struggle between a single man—with enlightened views and vast designs—and the Roman aristocracy, hostile to reforms, and bent on greed and oppression. The success of

Caesar was favorable to the restoration of order and law and progressive improvements; the success of the nobility would have entailed a still more grinding oppression of the people, and possibly anarchy and future conflicts between fortunate generals and the aristocracy. Destiny or Providence gave the empire of the world to a single man, although that man was as unscrupulous as he was able.

Henceforth imperialism was the form of government in Rome, which lasted about four hundred years. How long an aristocratic government would have lasted is a speculation. Caesar, in his elevation to unlimited power, used his power beneficently. He pardoned his enemies, gave security to property and life, restored the finances, established order, and devoted himself to useful reforms. He cut short the grant of corn to the citizen mob; he repaired the desolation which war had made; he rebuilt cities and temples; he even endeavored to check luxury and extravagance and improve morals. He reformed the courts of law, and collected libraries in every great city. He put an end to the expensive tours of senators in the provinces, where they had appeared as princes exacting contributions. He formed a plan to drain the Pontine Marshes. He reformed the calendar, making the year to begin with the first day of January. He built new public buildings, which the enlargement of business required. He seemed to have at heart the welfare of the State and of the people, by whom he was adored. But he broke up the political ascendancy of nobles, although he did not confiscate their property. He weakened the Senate by increasing its numbers to nine hundred, and by appointing senators himself from his army and from the provinces,—those who would be subservient to him, who would vote what he decreed.

Caesar's ruling passion was ambition,—thirst of power; but he had no great animosities. He pardoned his worst enemies,—Brutus, Cassius, and Cicero, who had been in arms against him; nor did he reign as a tyrant. His habits were simple and unostentatious. He gave easy access to his person, was courteous in his manners, and mingled with senators as a companion rather than as a master. Like Charlemagne, he was temperate in eating and drinking, and abhorred gluttony and drunkenness,—the vices of the aristocracy and of fortunate plebeians alike. He was indefatigable in business, and paid attention to all petitions. He was economical in his personal expenses, although he lavished vast sums upon the people in the way of amusing or bribing them. He dispensed with guards and pomps, and was apparently reckless of his life: anything was better to him than to live in perpetual fear of conspirators and traitors. There never was a braver man, and he was ever kind-hearted to those who did not stand in his way. He was generous, magnanimous, and unsuspecting. He was the model of an absolute prince, aside from laxity of morals. In regard to women, of their virtue he made little account. His favorite mistress was Servilia, sister of Cato and mother of Brutus. Some have even supposed that Brutus was Caesar's son, which accounts for his lenity and forbearance and affection. He was the high-priest of the Roman worship, and yet he believed neither in the gods nor in immortality. But he was always the gentleman,—natural, courteous, affable, without vanity or arrogance or egotism. He was not a patriot in the sense that Cicero and Cato were, or Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, since his country was made subservient to his own interests and aggrandizement. Yet he was a very interesting man, and had fewer faults than Napoleon, with equally grand designs.

But even he could not escape a retribution, in spite of his exalted position and his great services. The leaders of the aristocracy still hated him, and could not be appeased for the overthrow of their power. They resolved to assassinate him, from vengeance rather than fear. Cicero was not among the conspirators; because his discretion could not be relied upon, and they passed him by. But his heart was with them. "There are many ways," said he, "in which a man may die." It was not a wise thing to take his life; since the Constitution was already subverted, and somebody would reign as emperor by means of the army, and his death would necessarily lead to renewed civil wars and new commotions and new calamities. But angry, embittered, and passionate enemies do not listen to reason. They will not accept the inevitable. There was no way to get rid of Caesar but by assassination, and no one wished him out of the way but the nobles. Hence it was easy for them to form a conspiracy. It was easy to stab him with senatorial daggers. Caesar was not killed because he had personal enemies,



nor because he destroyed the liberties of Roman citizens, but because he had usurped the authority of the aristocracy.

Yet he died, perhaps at the right time, at the age of fifty-six, after an undisputed reign of only three or four years,—about the length of that of Cromwell. He was already bending under the infirmities of a premature old age. Epileptic fits had set in, and his constitution was undermined by his unparalleled labors and fatigues; and then his restless mind was planning a new expedition to Parthia, where he might have ingloriously perished like Crassus. But such a man could not die. His memory and deeds lived. He filled a role in history, which could not be forgotten. He inaugurated a successful revolution. He bequeathed a policy to last as long as the Empire lasted; and he had rendered services of the greatest magnitude, by which he is to be ultimately judged, as well as by his character. It is impossible for us to settle whether or not his services overbalanced the evils of the imperialism he established and of the civil wars by which he reached supreme command. Whatever view we may take of the comparative merits of an aristocracy or an imperial despotism in a corrupt age, we cannot deny to Caesar some transcendent services and a transcendent fame. The whole matter is laid before us in the language of Cicero to Caesar himself, in the Senate, when he was at the height of his power; which shows that the orator was not lacking in courage any more than in foresight and moral wisdom:—

"Your life, Caesar, is not that which is bounded by the union of your soul and body. Your life is that which shall continue fresh in the memory of ages to come, which posterity will cherish and eternity itself keep guard over. Much has been done by you which men will admire; much remains to be done which they can praise. They will read with wonder of empires and provinces, of the Rhine, the ocean, and the Nile, of battles without number, of amazing victories, of countless monuments and triumphs; but unless the Commonwealth be wisely re-established in institutions by you bestowed upon us, your name will travel widely over the world, but will have no fixed habitation; and those who come after you *will dispute about you* as we have disputed. Some will extol you to the skies; others will find something wanting, and the most important element of all. Remember the tribunal before which you are to stand. The ages that are to be will try you, it may be with minds less prejudiced than ours, uninfluenced either by the desire to please you or by envy of your greatness."

Thus spoke Cicero with heroic frankness. The ages have "disputed about" Caesar, and will continue to dispute about him, as they do about Cromwell and Napoleon; but the man is nothing to us in comparison with the ideas which he fought or which he supported, and which have the same force to-day as they had nearly two thousand years ago. He is the representative of imperialism; which few Americans will defend, unless it becomes a necessity which every enlightened patriot admits. The question is, whether it was or was not a necessity at Rome fifty years before Christ was born. It is not easy to settle in regard to the benefit that Caesar is supposed by some—including Mr. Froude and the late Emperor of the French—to have rendered to the cause of civilization by overturning the aristocratic Constitution, and substituting, not the rule of the people, but that of a single man. It is still one of the speculations of history; it is not one of its established facts, although the opinions of enlightened historians seem to lean to the necessity of the Caesarian imperialism, in view of the misrule of the aristocracy and the abject venality of the citizens who had votes to sell. But it must be borne in mind that it was under the aristocratic rule of senators and patricians that Rome went on from conquering to conquer; that the governing classes were at all times the most intelligent, experienced, and efficient in the Commonwealth; that their very vices may have been exaggerated; and that the imperialism which crushed them, may also have crushed out original genius, literature, patriotism, and exalted sentiments, and even failed to have produced greater personal security than existed under the aristocratic Constitution at any period of its existence. All these are disputed points of history. It may be that Caesar, far from being a national benefactor by reorganizing the forces of the Empire, sowed the seeds of ruin by his imperial policy; and that, while he may have given unity, peace, and law to the Empire, he may have taken away its life. I do not assert this, or even argue its probability. It may have been, and it may not have been. It is an historical puzzle. There are two sides to all great

questions. But whether or not we can settle with the light of modern knowledge such a point as this, I look upon the defence of imperialism in itself, in preference to constitutional government with all its imperfections, as an outrage on the whole progress of modern civilization, and on whatever remains of dignity and intelligence among the people.

## AUTHORITIES

Caesar's Commentaries, Leges Juliae, Appian, Plutarch, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, and Cicero's Letters to Atticus are the principal original authorities. Napoleon III. wrote a dull Life of Caesar, but it is rich in footnotes, which it is probable he did not himself make, since nothing is easier than the parade of learning. Rollin's Ancient History may be read with other general histories. Merivale's History of the Empire is able and instructive, but dry. Mr. Froude's sketch of Caesar is the most interesting I have read, but advocates imperialism. Niebuhr's Lectures on the History of Rome is also a standard work, as well as Curtius's History of Rome.

# MARCUS AURELIUS

A.D. 121-180

## THE GLORY OF ROME

Marcus Aurelius is immortal, not so much for what he *did* as for what he *was*. His services to the State were considerable, but not transcendent. He was a great man, but not pre-eminently a great emperor. He was a meditative sage rather than a man of action; although he successfully fought the Germanic barbarians, and repelled their fearful incursions. He did not materially extend the limits of the Empire, but he preserved and protected its provinces. He reigned wisely and ably, but made mistakes. His greatness was in his character; his influence for good was in his noble example. When we consider his circumstances and temptations, as the supreme master of a vast Empire, and in a wicked and sensual age, he is a greater moral phenomenon than Socrates or Epictetus. He was one of the best men of Pagan antiquity. History furnishes no example of an absolute monarch so pure and spotless and lofty as he was, unless it be Alfred the Great or St. Louis. But the sphere of the Roman emperor was far greater than that of the Mediaeval kings. Marcus Aurelius ruled over one hundred and twenty millions of people, without check or hindrance or Constitutional restraint. He could do what he pleased with their persons and their property. Most sovereigns, exalted to such lofty dignity and power, have been either cruel, or vindictive, or self-indulgent, or selfish, or proud, or hard, or ambitious,—men who have been stained by crimes, whatever may have been their services to civilization. Most of them have yielded to their great temptations. But Marcus Aurelius, on the throne of the civilized world, was modest, virtuous, affable, accessible, considerate, gentle, studious, contemplative, stained by novices,—a model of human virtue. Hence he is one of the favorite characters of history. No Roman emperor was so revered and loved as he, and of no one have so many monuments been preserved. Everybody had his picture or statue in his house. He was more than venerated in his day, and his fame as a wise and good man has increased with the flight of ages.

This illustrious emperor did not belong to the family of the great Caesar. That family became extinct with Nero, the sixth emperor. Like Trajan and Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius derived his remote origin from Spain, although he was born in Rome. His great-grandfather was a Spaniard, and yet attained the praetorian rank. His grandfather reached the consulate. His father died while praetor, and when he himself was a child. He was adopted by his grandfather Annius Verus. But his marvellous moral beauty, even as a child, attracted the attention of the Emperor Hadrian, who bestowed upon him the honor of the aequiestrian rank, at the age of six. At fifteen he was adopted by Antoninus Pius, then, as we might say, "Crown Prince." Had he been older, he would have been adopted by Hadrian himself. He thus, a mere youth, became the heir of the Roman world. His education was most excellent. From Fronto, the greatest rhetorician of the day, he learned rhetoric; from Herodes Atticus he acquired a knowledge of the world; from Diognotus he learned to despise superstition; from Apollonius, undeviating steadiness of purpose; from Sextus of Chaeronea, toleration of human infirmities; from Maximus, sweetness and dignity; from Alexander, allegiance to duty; from Rusticus, contempt of sophistry and display. This stoical philosopher created in him a new intellectual life, and opened to him a new world of thought. But the person to whom he was most indebted was his adopted father and father-in-law, the Emperor Antoninus Pius. For him he seems to have had the greatest reverence. "In him," said he, "I noticed mildness of manner with firmness of resolution, contempt of vain-glory, industry in business, and accessibility of person. From him I learned to acquiesce in every

fortune, to exercise foresight in public affairs, to rise superior to vulgar praises, to serve mankind without ambition, to be sober and steadfast, to be content with little, to be practical and active, to be no dreamy bookworm, to be temperate, modest in dress, and not to be led away by novelties." What a picture of an emperor! What a contrast to such a man as Louis XIV!

We might draw a parallel between Marcus Aurelius and David, when he was young and innocent. But the person in history whom he most resembled was St. Anselm. He was a St. Anselm on the throne. Philosophical meditations seem to have been his delight and recreation; and yet he could issue from his retirement and engage in active pursuits. He was an able general as well as a meditative sage,—heroic like David, capable of enduring great fatigue, and willing to expose himself to great dangers.

While his fame rests on his "Meditations," as that of David rests upon his Psalms, he yet rendered great military services to the Empire. He put down a dangerous revolt under Avidius Cassius in Asia, and did not punish the rebellious provinces. Not one person suffered death in consequence of this rebellion. Even the papers of Cassius, who aimed to be emperor, were burned, that a revelation of enemies might not be made,—a signal instance of magnanimity. Cassius, it seems, was assassinated by his own officers, which assassination Marcus Aurelius regretted, because it deprived him of granting a free pardon to a very able but dangerous man.

But the most signal service he rendered the Empire was a successful resistance to the barbarians of Germany, who had formed a general union for the invasion of the Roman world. They threatened the security of the Empire, as the Teutons did in the time of Marius, and the Gauls and Germans in the time of Julius Caesar. It took him twenty years to subdue these fierce warriors. He made successive campaigns against them, as Charlemagne did against the Saxons. It cost him the best years of his life to conquer them, which he did under difficulties as great as Julius surmounted in Gaul. He was the savior and deliverer of his country, as much as Marius or Scipio or Julius. The public dangers were from the West and not the East. Yet he succeeded in erecting a barrier against barbaric inundations, so that for nearly two hundred years the Romans were not seriously molested. There still stands in "the Eternal City" the column which commemorates his victories,—not so beautiful as that of Trajan, which furnished the model for Napoleon's column in the Place Vendôme, but still greatly admired. Were he not better known for his writings, he would be famous as one of the great military emperors, like Vespasian, Diocletian, and Constantine. Perhaps he did not add to the art of war; that was perfected by Julius Caesar. It was with the mechanism of former generals that he withstood most dangerous enemies, for in his day the legions were still well disciplined and irresistible.

The only stains on the reign of this good and great emperor—for there were none on his character—were in allowing the elevation of his son Commodus as his successor, and his persecution of the Christians.

In regard to the first, it was a blunder rather than a fault. Peter the Great caused *his* heir to be tried and sentenced to death, because he was a sot, a liar, and a fool. He dared not intrust the interests of his Empire to so unworthy a son; the welfare of Russia was more to him than the interest of his family. In that respect this stern and iron man was a greater prince than Marcus Aurelius; for the law of succession was not established at Rome any more than in Russia. There was no danger of civil war should the natural succession be set aside, as might happen in the feudal monarchies of Europe. The Emperor of Rome could adopt or elect his successor. It would have been wise for Aurelius to have selected one of the ablest of his generals, or one of the wisest of his senators, as Hadrian did, for so great and responsible a position, rather than a wicked, cruel, dissolute son. But Commodus was the son of Faustina also,—an intriguing and wicked woman, whose influence over her husband was unfortunately great; and, what is common in this world, the son was more like the mother than the father. (I think the wife of Eli the high-priest must have been a bad woman.) All his teachings and virtues were lost on such a reprobate. She, as an unscrupulous and ambitious woman, had no idea of seeing her son supplanted in the imperial dignity; and, like Catherine de'Medici and Agrippina,

probably she connived at and even encouraged the vices of her children, in order more easily to bear rule. At any rate, the succession of Commodus to the throne was the greatest calamity that could have happened. For five reigns the Empire had enjoyed peace and prosperity; for five reigns the tide of corruption had been stayed: but the flood of corruption swept all barriers away with the accession of Commodus, and from that day the decline of the Empire was rapid and fatal. Still, probably nothing could have long arrested ruin. The Empire was doomed.

The other fact which obscured the glory of Marcus Aurelius as a sovereign was his persecution of the Christians,—for which it is hard to account, when the beneficent character of the emperor is considered. His reign was signalized for an imperial persecution, in which Justin at Rome, Polycarp at Smyrna, and Ponthinus at Lyons, suffered martyrdom. It was not the first persecution. Under Nero the Christians had been cruelly tortured, nor did the virtuous Trajan change the policy of the government. Hadrian and Antoninus Pius permitted the laws to be enforced against the Christians, and Marcus Aurelius saw no reason to alter them. But to the mind of the Stoic on the throne, says Arnold, the Christians were "philosophically contemptible, politically subversive, and morally abominable." They were regarded as statesmen looked upon the Jesuits in the reign of Louis XV., as we look upon the Mormons,—as dangerous to free institutions. Moreover, the Christians were everywhere misunderstood and misrepresented. It was impossible for Marcus Aurelius to see the Christians except through a mist of prejudices. "Christianity grew up in the Catacombs, not on the Palatine." In allowing the laws to take their course against a body of men who were regarded with distrust and aversion as enemies of the State, the Emperor was simply unfortunate. So wise and good a man, perhaps, ought to have known the Christians better; but, not knowing them, he cannot be stigmatized as a cruel man. How different the fortunes of the Church had Aurelius been the first Christian emperor instead of Constantine! Or, had his wife Faustina known the Christians as well as Marcia the mistress of Commodus, perhaps the persecution might not have happened,—and perhaps it might. Earnest and sincere men have often proved intolerant when their peculiar doctrines have been assailed,—like Athanasius and St. Bernard. A Stoical philosopher was trained, like a doctor of the Jewish Sandhedrim, in a certain intellectual pride.

The fame of Marcus Aurelius rests, as it has been said, on his philosophical reflections, as his "Meditations" attest. This remarkable book has come down to us, while most of the annals of the age have perished; so that even Niebuhr confesses that he knows less of the reign of Marcus Aurelius than of the early kings of Rome. Perhaps that is one reason why Gibbon begins his history with later emperors. But the "Meditations" of the good emperor survive, like the writings of Epictetus, St. Augustine, and Thomas à Kempis: one of the few immortal books,—immortal, in this case, not for artistic excellence, like the writings of Thucydides and Tacitus, but for the loftiness of thoughts alone; so precious that the saints of the Middle Ages secretly preserved them as in accord with their own experiences. It is from these "Meditations" that we derive our best knowledge of Marcus Aurelius. They reveal the man,—and a man of sorrows, as the truly great are apt to be, when brought in contact with a world of wickedness, as were Alfred and Dante.

In these "Meditations" there is a striking resemblance to the discourses of Epictetus, which alike reveal the lofty and yet sorrowful soul, and are among the most valuable fragments which have come down from Pagan antiquity; and this is remarkable, since Epictetus was a Phrygian slave, of the lowest parentage. He belonged to the secretary and companion of Nero, whose name was Epaphroditus, and who treated this poor Phrygian with great cruelty. And yet, what is very singular, the master caused the slave to be indoctrinated in the Stoical philosophy, on account of a rare intelligence which commanded respect. He was finally manumitted, but lived all his life in the deepest poverty, to which he attached no more importance than Socrates did at Athens. In his miserable cottage he had no other furniture than a straw pallet and an iron lamp, which last somebody stole. His sole remark on the loss of the only property he possessed was, that when the thief came again he would be disappointed to find only an earthen lamp instead of an iron one. This earthen lamp was subsequently purchased by



a hero-worshiper for three thousand drachmas (\$150). Epictetus, much as he despised riches and display and luxury and hypocrisy and pedantry and all phariseism, living in the depths of poverty, was yet admired by eminent men, among whom was the Emperor Hadrian himself; and he found a disciple in Arrian, who was to him what Xenophon was to Socrates, committing his precious thoughts to writing; and these thoughts were to antiquity what the "Imitation of Christ" was to the Middle Ages,—accepted by Christians as well as by pagans, and even to-day regarded as one of the most beautiful treatises on morals ever composed by man. The great peculiarity of the "Manual" and the "Discourses" is the elevation of the soul over external evils, the duty of resignation to whatever God sends, and the obligation to do right because it is right. Epictetus did not go into the dreary dialectics of the schools, but, like Socrates, confined himself to practical life,—to the practice of virtue as the greatest good,—and valued the joys of true intellectual independence. To him his mind was his fortune, and he desired no better. We do not find in the stoicism of the Phrygian slave the devout and lofty spiritualism of Plato,—thirsting for God and immortality; it may be doubted whether he believed in immortality at all: but he did recognize what is most noble in human life,—the subservience of the passions to reason, the power of endurance, patience, charity, and disinterested action. He did recognize the necessity of divine aid in the struggles of life, the glory of friendship, the tenderness of compassion, the power of sympathy. His philosophy was human, and it was cheerful; since he did not believe in misfortune, and exalted gentleness and philanthropy. Above everything, he sought inward approval, not the praises of the world,—that happiness which lies within one's self, in the absence of all ignoble fears, in contentment, in that peace of the mind which can face poverty, disease, exile, and death.

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