

Godley Alfred Denis

The Casual Ward: Academic and Other Oddments



Alfred Godley

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A. D. Godley
The Casual Ward: Academic
and Other Oddments

Nearly all the flights in this book have been first taken in the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *Oxford Magazine*, or the *Saturday Review*. They are reproduced by the kind permission of the Editors of these periodicals. I am allowed also to reprint a set of verses published by Messrs. Constable & Co.

A. D. G.

November, 1912

M. T. CICERONIS DE LEGE BODLEIANA ORATIO

[Literally Translated by a Balliol First-Class Man]

[On a Proposal to place Bicycles within the precincts of the Bodleian Library]

I. Not concerning a thing of no moment, O Conscript Fathers, you are now called upon to decide: whether to one man by the counsel and advice of Curators it is to be permitted that he should take away from you the power of placing in the Proscholium the instruments of celerity, the assistances of (your) feet, the machines appointed by a certain natural providence for the performance of your duties: whether, in which place our ancestors sold pigs with the greatest consent and indeed applause of the Roman people, from that (place) bicycles are to be ejected by one guardian of books. O singular impudence of the man! For be unwilling, Conscript Fathers, be unwilling to believe that in this pretence of consulting for (the interests of) a public building something more is not also being aimed at and sought to be obtained: in such a way (*lit.* so) he attacks bicycles that in reality he endeavours to oppress the liberty of each one of you: that by this example and as it were by the thin end of a certain wedge he may lay the foundation of a royal power over all these things, which I (as) consul preserved. Concerning which matter I could say much, if time allowed me: now behold and examine the miserable condition of those whom a man devoid of constancy and gravity overturns from (their) fortunes.

II. What! shall the Masters of Arts, what! shall the Doctors, what! shall the Proctors themselves (than which kind of men nothing can exist more holy, nothing more upright, nothing more auspiciously established) be compelled to come on foot that they may consult those most sacred volumes in which the Roman people have wished that all learning should be included? The Hypobibliothecarii, what men! what citizens! will, I believe, walk, especially considering that it is to be contended by them against the lengthiness of a journey: and then, if, as (usually) happens, some sudden tempest should arise, they must suffer (their) bicycles lacking shelter to be most miserably corrupted by rain. It has been handed down to memory, Conscript Fathers, that Caius Duilius was permitted by the republic, which he had saved by (his) incredible fortitude, to be borne by an elephant whenever he had been invited to a dinner. Therefore, did he use a most luxurious quadruped that he might by so much the more quickly arrive at a banquet: shall we, who desire to hasten not for the sake of lust and the belly, but for the sake of this learning and books, be forbidden to employ bicycles? I pray and entreat you, Conscript Fathers, do not allow this disgrace to be branded upon the heart itself and entrails of the commonwealth.

III. But for(sooth) the College of All Souls (which I name; for the sake of honour) is near, in which machines may be sheltered. O thing before unheard (of)! From which place even undergraduates have been excluded by a certain divine will: into that shall bicycles be thrown? O times, O manners! It is not fitting, Conscript Fathers, that the studies of most learned men, Fellows, should be interrupted in this way. Moreover, they also have a library, that to them also it may be possible to say that wheels should be kept afar off: they have keys, bolts, bars, a gate, a porter: they will exclude, reject, expectorate them. Which act I blame in such a way that I confess and acknowledge that it will be done with the greatest legality.

IV. If the Founder of the Library, if Sir Thomas Bodley himself, I say, should stand forth from the Elysian fields, it is not necessary that I should remind you with what ancient severity he would inveigh against this new power, against the Bibliothecarius, nay rather, against the Curators themselves: for you can calculate (it) in (your) minds. He would say to them, "Did I give you authority over books, that you should use it against bicycles? did I place you in an upper part of a most convenient building, that you should also rule the lower? did I endow you with huge wealth and an enormousness of stipend, that you should therefore the more exercise a kingly dominion over the

common utility, and the necks, heads, lives, fortunes of the poorer citizens?" To which interrogation and most stern reproach I do not think they, although they are of a remarkable audacity, could answer anything: for neither is there (anything) that can be replied.

V. Although I wish to say more things, I am deterred by the will of the editor of that most known Magazine (than which paper I do not think that anything is more conjoined with the safety of the republic): nor am I not also prevented by tears and weeping itself. Conscript Fathers, if there is anything in you of constancy, if of gravity, if of fortitude, if of humanity (which that there is I most certainly know), fortify this common citadel of the good: open the Pig Market, closed by the intolerable influence of bad men: be unwilling, be unwilling that the seat of the Muses, the School of Divinity, the most delightful meeting-places of Boards of Faculties, should be stained by royal power and polluted by cruelty. Which that it will certainly happen if you do not prevent it by your votes, I most confidently predict and vaticinate.

THE EIGHTS IN FICTION

I. Old Style

“There’s nothing that emphasizes the *amari aliquid* of life like one’s tobacconist,” mused Fane Trevyllyan as he flung a box of eighteenpenny Emeticos into the fire and lit a Latakia cigarette.

It was a lovely August morning in the Eights of 18-; and the stroke of the Charsley Hall boat reclined wearily in his luxuriously furnished apartments within that venerable College and watched the midday sun gilding the pinnacles of the Martyr’s Memorial. It had been a fast and furious night, and Trevyllyan had lost more I.O.U.s than even he cared to remember: and now he was very weary of it all. Had it not been for one thing, he would have thrown it all up – sent dons, deans, duns, and dice to the devil, and gone down by the afternoon train: as it was, there was nothing for it but to recline on his tiger-skins and smoke countless cigars. He never would train.

“Going to row to-day, Fane?” It was little Bagley Wood, the cox. Trevyllyan sanctioned his presence as if he had been a cat or a lapdog: to all others he was stern and unapproachable – a true representative of his Order.

“Don’t know, *caro mio*,” was the reply. “It’s such a bore, you know: and then I half think I promised to take La Montmorenci of the Frivolity up the Cherwell to Trumpington in the University Barge.”

“What! when the Lady Gwendolen de St. Emilion has come down on purpose to see us catch Christ Church! why, *sapristi*, where can your eyes be?” The stroke hissed something between his clenched teeth, and Bagley Wood found himself flying through an unopened window.

“*Cherchez la femme!* it’s always the way with the Trevyllyans,” muttered the lad, as he picked himself up from the grass plot in the quadrangle and strolled off to quiet his nerves with a glass of *aguardiente* at the Mitre.

* * * * *

An August moon shone brightly on the last night of the great aquatic contest: the starter had fired his pistol, and all the boats but one were off.

“Hadn’t you better think about starting, Trevyllyan?” asked the coach of the Charsley Hall Eight, a trifle pale and anxious. “See, they are all under way. Glanville Ferrers, the Christ Church stroke, swears you shan’t bump him as you did last week. He must be past the Soapworks by this time.”

“*Caramba!* then I suppose we ought to get in,” replied the other; and as he spoke he divested himself of the academical garb that scarcely concealed his sky-blue tights, and stood, a model of manly beauty, on the banks of the rushing river. Then, throwing away a half-finished cigar, Trevyllyan strode into the boat. *Per Bacco!* ’twas a magnificent sight. As the crack Eight of the river sped swiftly after her rival, cheers arose from the bank, and odds on both boats were freely taken and offered by the *cognoscenti*.

You and I, *amigo mio!* have seen many a race in our day. We have seen the ’Varsity crews flash neck and neck past Lillie Bridge: we have held our breath while Orme ran a dead heat with Eclipse for the Grand National: we have read how the victor of the *pancratium* panted to the *meta* amid the Io Triumphes of Attica’s vine-clad Acropolis. But we did not see the great Christ Church and Charsley’s race – that great contest which is still the talk of many a learned lecture-room. They say the pace was tremendous. Four men fainted in the Christ Church boat, and Trevyllyan’s crew repeatedly entreated him to stop. But he held on, inexorable as the Erinnyes.

Fair as Pallas Anadyomene – fair as the Venus whom Milo fashioned *pour se désennuyer* in his exile at Marseilles – the Lady Gwendolen de St. Emilion sat throned on the University Barge, and watched the heroes as their bare arms flashed in the moonlight. And now they were through the Gut, and the nose of the Charsley’s boat pressed hard on its rival: yet Fane Trevelylyan did not make his final effort. Would he spare Glanville Ferrers? *Quien sabe?* They had been friends – once. But the die was cast. As the boats sped past her the Lady Gwendolen stooped from her pride of place and threw a rose – just one – into the painted poop of the Christ Church wherry. That was all: but it was enough. Trevelylyan saw the action where he sat: one final, magnificent, unswerving stroke – those who saw it thought it would never end! – and with a muttered “Habet!” he sent the brazen beak of his Eight crashing in among the shattered oars of his helpless competitor.

Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.

II. New or Kodak Style (From the French)

If they are frivolous, these Universities!
At present great sensation in Oxford: this town, so gloomy, so sad
ordinarily, is to-day *en fête*.

Is it that one elects a new *Vice-Chancellor*?

No.

It is the contest aquatic of the Colleges which goes to take place.

One discusses in the *salons* the most *chic* how many kilogrammes they
weigh, these heroes of the oar.

Everywhere Professors in straw hats and Heads of Colleges *en matelot*.

What a spectacle!

...

On the barges..

Grouped on these venerable hulks, crowds of ladies excite our
admiration by their beauty and our respect by their intelligence.

Whence do they come, these damsels, so young, so charming?

It is that they have arrived from the metropolis at the request of
their brothers, their cousins – what do I know of it? perhaps their
prétendants– of whom they wish to enhance with their applause the
athletic triumph.

...

After all, they are adorable, these English misses!

...

On the bank..

One hears the portentous echo of the *Five-Minutes-Gun*.

Moment tremendous!

They have started: one sees already the *strokesman* of the *first-boat*.

One would say a whole University that runs on the *towing-path*, and
that utters loud cries.

Here and there *coachmen* are seen carrying pistols and pronouncing
terrible execrations.

Why these pistols?.

A little brutal, these English: but of a force, a virility!

...

I myself who speak to you am infected by this enthusiasm.

I run: I utter cries: I *raffole* of the *leading-boat*: I shout En avant! Vive
la Madeleine! Vive le Cercle Nautique! Hourra!.

But one does not do these things at forty years.

I am out of breath, what? I wish to stop.

Arrest yourselves, my friends too impetuous!

I appeal to you in the name of France, who respects you: do not
annihilate me, do not pulverize me...

Vain appeal! One would say the car of Juggernaut.

I am knocked down: I am *criblé* with kicks: I am massacred.

...

Ah!

THUCYDIDES ON THE INFLUENZA

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the epidemic among the Oxonians, how they had the epidemic, having begun to write as soon as it broke out on No. 2 Staircase, and considering it to be the most noticeable of all that had appeared previously. (For the place was not liable to diseases at other times, but especially free from them, except that which affected the teeth: on account of which they used to go up to the metropolis, in word to consult the Delphic oracle but in deed to go to Olympia, so that not a few were banished from the city both for other reasons and not least this.) As to the causes of it, then, let any one speak who is aware of them: but I will show what things happened on account of it, having both myself put on an æger and seen others similarly afflicted, so that I can describe it with equal certainty more than the narrative of another not having done so, but relying on the incredibility of historians more than the sureness of experience.

For in the first beginning of the sickness men remembered what Homer says about the lower and higher animals in the Trojan business —

First did he assail the mules and fleet dogs, but afterward, aiming at the men his piercing dart, he smote, seeing that now too not less but equally as much first, the College Tutors were attacked, and next the scouts, and last of all the men themselves. But most of all the scouts were affected, and this caused the greatest calamity: so that a man must often wish that his scout might recover, wishing indeed contrary to nature, but being persuaded by the greatness of the surrounding misfortune, lest he should suffer even worse things at the hands of a scout's boy, or considering it terrible if he shall lose even the daily enjoyment of his breakfast not being brought to him. And all laws concerning meals were brought into a state of confusion, so that many anticipated taking the commons of another. And they welcomed the hospitality of those outside the walls, regarding their hunger in the present as much more important than another man's inability to pay his debts in the future.

But when the men themselves began to suffer, then indeed the disease was the commencement of lawlessness to a greater extent for the city. For cuttings of chapels and avoidings of lectures, which are an agony for the present more than a possession for ever, and in short all such things as the indulgence of was formerly more disguised, these a man easily dared to do, it being uncertain on the one hand whether his tutor has the influenza, and on the other if he himself might not put on an æger before being hauled he should pay the penalty. And though some, indeed, did things exactly contrary to this, and being before unaccustomed now went in the morning with a run to chapel in order that fewer being present the paradoxicalness of their appearance when compared with the multitude of those who were absent might gain them a prestige of virtue not real but simulated – yet with most there was now neither fear of the Dean by land nor by sea of their coaches: disobeying whom they ate and drank all kinds of things contrary to law, no one being willing to exert himself for that which seemed to be honourable, and calculating that the present abstention from pastry was not equivalent to the possibility of being bumped in the future about as much and not less than if he had smoked three pipes and a cheroot. And not only was injustice prevalent among those who were as yet in good health, but many of those in the ships, being or seeming to themselves to be sick, had their places taken by others accustomed rather to fight upon the land, whose manly inexperience, though in word more creditable than the cowardice combined with experience of the others, was in reality less powerful than the language which those on the bank thought worthy to use concerning them.

Nevertheless, about this time the Oxonians sent an expedition against Cambridge, having manned a slow train to Bletchley, Nicolaidas being commander second himself; and they advanced as far as Third Trinity, and having ravaged part of the land and set up a trophy, they returned home.

HERODOTUS ON HORSEBACK

At this time the Chancellor being among the Oxonii there was instituted a contest of horses such as this nation is accustomed to celebrate every spring. And this contest is of such a kind, not being well arranged according at least to my opinion: – Having dug trenches and built other ramparts parallel indeed to each other but transversely to the running of the horses themselves, they do not any longer stand round them invoking the gods as those do who play golf, but on the contrary, when they have placed men upon horses they cause them to cross these by leaping under the lash, as far as the goal: and whoever anticipates the others arriving at the goal, sitting at least on the same horse on which sitting he set out, and not it running, having left him behind, nor he himself on foot, he is considered to have conquered. The reason why I said that this contest is not well arranged, is of the following kind: because it being possible to contend in a level place without danger or difficulty, the Oxonii nevertheless themselves make obstacles so as to prevent the horses from (not) arriving at the end of the course, neither being compelled nor there being any necessity (οὐδεμίης ἀναγκαίης εὐσύης). Then, however, they did these things, and also, as they are accustomed to do on such occasions, they sent messengers to inquire of other prophets and also of the Delphic oracle who should be the conqueror. The Pythian priestess, being mindful how she had formerly made a good shot in respect of the Median business, replied in the hexameter rhythm that the issues of victory lay around a wooden wall. Now having this as a proof I will neither refuse to believe in oracles myself nor allow others to disbelieve them. For when the race had begun and the horses had been sent away by the sound of a trumpet, other men were taking part in the contest, and also Pheron the son of Trapezites a Corinthian: this is not the Pheron who, his father having founded a city, was himself expelled from it by the few, who were called Hetairi, because he had allied himself with the democracy forsooth (δηθεν). And there are other things written about this Pheron in the history composed by Proctor, who was tyrant of Oxonia second himself for one year, and in fact caused Pheron to fall out by reason of sedition. What I have said just now is a digression and refers to other matters, and I will now come back to my former story. So then the men, having in the first part of the contest done things worthy of themselves, and having for the most part, although not all, yet the majority, avoided the (not) falling into ditches and the like incurably at least, came presently to the wooden fence, which I conjecture to be the wall meant by the Delphic oracle. It being then necessary either remaining on the hither side to be driven away from all hope of the prize or leaping to run risks concerning their lives, and the rest having leapt in such a way that they crossed the fence sitting rather upon the ground than upon their horses, and some neither with them nor upon them, as the Lacedæmonians say about their shields: this Pheron, of whom I have before made mention, showed himself to be prudent in other things and also in this. He, having a horse much the most active of all the rest, was not left behind by it, but sat there holding on firmly until he had arrived at the farther side; and from thence, the race being easy for him, he came to the goal very much the first, having anticipated. In this way he obtained the prize. I have learnt the names of all the other competitors: but I do not think it proper to relate them, not now at least.

When the spectators had seen these things (and there was also a contest for the natives of the country, in which not a few were roughly handled) they returned in chariots to the city, driving not straight like the Greeks, but obliquely, as is customary. This story some relate, relating things credible to me at least; there being two Oxonii in one chariot, and no one else, one of them entreated the other after they had gone some way without misfortune that he also might be allowed to hold the reins of the horses: to whom the other replied “But – for do you not already hold them?” These men then having left such a memorial of themselves did nevertheless arrive safely at the city.

TAC. HIST., BK. VI

De Avla S. Edmvardi

1. Nunc initia causasque motus Mauretanicæ expediám. Mauretaniám post decessum Tediurii cuicumque servitio expositam avaritia et mala cupidine fines augendi contemptis populi studiis occupaverant Brigantes, barbara gens. mox rectorem imposuere e sacerdotibus Peripateticorum instituta professum. non tulere Mauri intempestivam sapientiam. namque ut divitias ita librorum scientiam contemptui habent: et est plerisque indocta canities.

2. Pollebat inter Mauros Rursus quidam Aratus multa scholarum patientia. is collectis in aulam Edmundi popularibus ad seniores hunc in modum locutus fertur: “si apud rerum humanarum inscios verba facerem plura cohortandi causa dicenda erant. nunc autem sunt in oculis quibus alios iniuriis validiorum potentia læserit. quid memorem Scotos Stubbinsiorum dominatu potitos? quid Tabernarios Balliolensibus traditos, mox ab iisdem suum lucrum ex aliena benevolentia comparantibus invitos venditos atque mancipatos? Scimmerios cum maxime Rhodesii subiectos habent, puerili rei nummariae imperitia generis humani regimen expostulantes. quanta profanarum litterarum scientia pacatissima loca polluerint, non est opus dictu apud gnaros. quid meliora ab iis expectatis qui Hiberniam nuper [praemii nomen] occupaverunt? eandem nobis Brigantes necessitatem imponent, gradum capessendi. et baccalaureos videbimus.” tum ad iuvenes conversus “eone ventum esset” interrogat “ut antiquissima aulae iura corrumpi sinerent? Reginensium specioso vocabulo nuncupatos pessimam servitutem passuros: praelectiones et deorum templa prope noctu insolitis adeunda: et praecipua foeditate Brigantium arcana. mox et specimen partium Magrathium remigare coacturum, eo immitius quia toleravisset. num et sanctissimam Edmundi effigiem nuper a cive in somnis visam inter quaggas et aprorum capita et eiusmodi ludicra fore ostentui? proinde simplex et pastoricius et aratro adsuetus populus priscam et traditam a patribus tranquillitatem coleret et tueretur.”

3. His et talibus accensos ducit in viam, Brigantium fines et principes ipsos gentis rutilo pigmento maculatuos, ni liberentur. egressis claudit portas Reginensis sacerdos, metu an conscientia dubium: nec non Brigantes quamquam civili bello distracti struxere vallum et loricam hostem arcendi. igitur utrinque exclusi palantur in viis Mauri: procurtoribus grata ea species nomina et collegii genus per ludibrium percunctantibus. mox ab Omnianimensibus propter mediocritatem doctrinae consimilibus hospitio accipiuntur: et inter socios conscribi concessum. ibi per speciem cruditatis interfecti. aula in formam provinciae redacta. nec enim magis iustis indiciis unquam adprobatum est, non esse curae Vice-Cancellario securitatem bonorum, esse extinctionem.

THE JOURNALISTIC TOUCH ¹

(I.) THE TRUE TALE OF TROY

(It is perhaps not generally known that the *Daily Hieroglyphic*, one of the leading morning papyri of Egypt under the – th Dynasty, despatched a special correspondent to Greece at the time of the Trojan War. Some fragments of his communications have been discovered by the energy of modern tomb-robbers, and the courtesy of the British Museum has enabled us to publish these *dissecta membra*, which may perhaps be of interest to the public at the present juncture.)

The only social *événement* (writes the correspondent under date Jan. 10, 1100 b. c., or thereabouts) which I have to chronicle is a reported domestic *esclandre* in the family of Menelaus, the genial and popular Prince of Sparta. In consequence of this the Princess Helena, it is alleged, has gone to Paris.

Mycenae, January 12.

It appears from the *Court Circular* that Her Royal Highness has been advised by her physicians to reside for some time in Asia Minor. At the same time I cannot conceal the fact that the Corinthian society paper, *Alethea*, mentions the name of a Trojan prince in connexion with this story. I am naturally unwilling to make myself the mouthpiece of scandal.

February 1.

The fact can no longer be disguised that grave international complications are likely to arise between Troy and Mycenae. It is stated on the highest authority that the Argive ambassador has been recalled from the former capital, the alleged reason being promotion to a still higher diplomatic post: there seems, however, to be no reasonable doubt that the practical rupture of relations between the Empires of the West and East is not remotely connected with the eternal maxim, “Cherchez la femme.” Much sympathy is expressed with H.R.H. Prince Menelaus.

February 20.

Everything points to war. Orders for a substantial increase of the Navy have been placed in the hands of Messrs. Odysseus & Co., the celebrated firm of shipbuilders. Heroes are earnestly called for.

The Argive Chamber was, last Wednesday, the scene of an animated debate. M. Diomedes, War Minister, demanded a vote which would enable him to enrol three more phalanxes. He was bitterly opposed by M. Thersites, Leader of the Extreme Left, who demanded to know why the Achaean nation was to be plunged recklessly into war for the settlement of matters properly pertaining to the province of a Divorce Court. Fortunately for the success of M. Diomedes’ proposal, the closure was put in operation.

Later.

M. Thersites’ funeral is announced for to-morrow (about the time of loosing oxen).

February 25.

I cannot better describe the existing political situation than by quoting the opinion of leading newspapers in Achaea and elsewhere.

All the official journals are consistently warlike in tone. They declare that nothing will satisfy Achaean aspirations but the annexation of Helen. The Athenian *Asty* declares that should King

¹ 1897

Agamemnon employ the opened floodgates of popular enthusiasm as a stepping-stone to lop off another limb from the decaying trunk of the (so-called) Trojan Empire, he will have achieved a permanent blessing to civilization.

On the other hand, the *Olympian Times* comments severely on the precipitate action of Agamemnon, and animadverts on the rash proceedings which have led to a rupture that might have been averted by diplomacy. As the *Times* is understood to be the mouthpiece of the Powers, such an utterance may well give rise to the gravest apprehensions.

The *Oracle*— a Phocian organ of pronounced clerical tendencies — preserves an ambiguous tone.

Everything indicates a warlike attitude on the part of the *entourage* of King Priam. Hector Pasha has been appointed War Minister. The *Prehistoric Post* speaks of the enlistment of two new regiments of Hittite Bashi-Bazouks in the interior of Asia Minor. The *Cassandra*, however, a journal little read although supposed by some to be inspired, has constituted itself the organ of the peace party, and confidently predicts the destruction of Troy.

The *Ephemerios Chronographos* has received the following telegram from the veteran statesman Nestor: “Profound sympathy Achaean aspirations. Bag and baggage only possible policy. Postcard follows. — Nestor, Hawarden, Pylos.”

March 1.

His Majesty and the Greek Fleet sailed to-day from Epidaurus, amid scenes of great enthusiasm. Her Majesty the Queen and His Excellency Count Aegisthus were both visibly affected. Mycenae is daily paraded by crowds shouting, “To Ilium!”

March 8.

The Fleet is at Aulis, waiting until the process of raising the wind shall have been concluded. Meantime, the services of the notorious Klepht Achilles have been engaged. This popular enlistment creates great enthusiasm.

The report recently prevalent as to human sacrifices is contradicted this morning by an official *démenti*.

H.R.H. the Princess Iphigeneia has joined a Russian religious house.

Trojan bonds are quoted to-day at 53.8 (a fall of 0.2).

Later.

The attitude of the Olympian Powers causes considerable anxiety.

Tenedos, March 15.

Telegrams per Beacon will have informed you that the Powers have issued a Collective Note to the Greek expeditionary force, forbidding the landing of heroes and others. Notwithstanding this, there seems to be no doubt that several demi-gods under Achilles have landed, and are endeavouring to effect administrative reforms. Achaean newspapers of all shades condemn the recent action of Poseidon in attempting to raise a storm. Hector Pasha is committing atrocities.

March 17.

In spite of the known discrepancy between the views of the Powers, they have issued a Collective Note urging upon His Majesty King Agamemnon the necessity of prompt withdrawal. In view of his possible refusal, it is understood that thunderbolts are in preparation, and Ares has been mobilized. This action is severely commented upon by the Achaean Press in general. The *Phaeacian Daily Chronicle* goes so far as to threaten a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square. Meanwhile, Hector Pasha is committing atrocities.

March 18.

The Powers have issued Collective Notes to the contending parties. It is understood that nothing short of a *Deus ex machina* can avert a formal rupture of relations between the Courts of Troy and Mycenae, as acts which are liable to the interpretation of belligerency are daily committed.

The ambiguous attitude of Zeus tends to complicate the situation. His Majesty the King narrowly missed being hit by a thunderbolt this morning.

March 20.

I am authorized to state that the intervention of a *Deus ex machina* has brought about the arrangement of a *modus vivendi*. The Achaean expeditionary force is to withdraw, and Helen is to be autonomous. Menelaus, however, is to be free to enforce administrative reforms.

March 21.

Peace with Honour has been proclaimed. It is possible, however, that some embarrassment may still arise from the action of King Priam in assessing the material, moral, and intellectual damage inflicted on himself and his allies at 152,833 tripods, 18 women, and an ox. This sum will certainly be disputed.

It is asserted as probable that the Poet Laureate, – Homer, will be invited to compose an epic poem commemorating the events of the raid. An edition of 20,000 copies will be issued, including 50 on India paper, with corruptions and emendations by eminent scholars.

THE JOURNALISTIC TOUCH

(II.) FORGOTTEN HISTORY

The Roman correspondent of the *Stella Lugdunensis* writes to his paper under date a. v.c. 817:

—
All the Press is naturally full of the recent debate in the Senate on the alleged unconstitutional indiscretions of our Imperial Master. (H.I.M., I should add, is at present on a lecturing tour in the Peloponnesus; statements in the *Custos Burdigalensis* to the effect that He is giving a series of violin recitals are wholly without foundation.) The impression produced is on the whole one of unanimous condemnation of His Majesty's recent action. How – it is argued even by the Right – can it tend to the stability of Roman foreign policy that in the regrettable military operations between the Suebi and the Chatti the Emperor should have directed General Count Corbulo to prepare an invincible plan of campaign for each of the belligerents? The Extreme Left, as represented by Messrs. Barea and T. Peters (? Paetus), goes much farther, and does not hesitate to criticize the autocratic dilettantism which professes to lay down the law on artistic matters which it does not in the least understand. It is time (said one speaker) that our so-called Emperor should cease to be persuaded by the plaudits of a decadent and servile entourage into imagining Himself a Second Sarasatius. Absolutism is generally condemned.

Messrs. Nerva and Nymphidius and other prominent Imperialists have, of course, defended their master; but their apologies, it is felt, were somewhat perfunctory and half-hearted. In allusion to the lamented demise of the Dowager Empress, it was pointed out that pity and loyalty alike should forbid trampling on a Ruler bowed down by repeated domestic bereavements; and attempts were made to enlist sympathy for the Imperial Orphan. These, however, have not been uniformly crowned with success.

Tension undoubtedly exists. I cannot (to speak plainly) conceal from myself the fact that in a given contingency, the nature of which it is unnecessary and, perhaps, undesirable to specify further, circumstances at present unforeseen might conceivably pave the way for developments of which it might be impossible to predict the eventual termination.

* * * * *

“Ought Nero to Abdicate?” is the subject of a “symposium” in the current *Primum Saeculum et Post*. The signatures L and S are commonly associated with the talented author whose *Pharsalia* has long been recognized as the most charming of Saturnalian gift-books, and the Rev. L. A. Seneca, formerly private tutor in His Majesty's household. Should H.I.M. decide to abdicate, it is anticipated that He will edit our Boeotian contemporary the *Oracle*, which is sadly in need of new blood. Nero will give it that. The meetings held at the Palazzo Pisone were strictly private.

* * * * *

The Suebian Press continues to hint at fresh indiscretions. There is no doubt that a state of tension exists, which can only be alleviated by the restoration of reciprocal confidence between H.I.M. and the Roman people. The result of the approaching conference between the Emperor and Prince Tigellinus is eagerly discussed.

Later.

H.M.'s interview with the Chancellor at Brundisium is stated to have been productive of entirely satisfactory results. It is said that Nero now thoroughly understands the situation, and is resolved to remodel His conduct accordingly. Tension is greatly alleviated.

* * * * *

I cannot more graphically summarize the present improved situation than by quoting the headlines in the *Acta Diurna*.

GREAT REVIEW OF PRAETORIANS

OUTSIDE THE SENATE HOUSE

RESTORED RELATIONS BETWEEN

CONSCRIPT FATHERS AND EMPEROR

HIS MAJESTY IN THE SENATE

AVE CAESAR OPTIME MAXIME

GREAT ENTHUSIASM

DIVINE HONOURS PRACTICALLY CERTAIN

IMPROVED FINANCIAL POSITION

NEW ISSUE OF CONSULS EXPECTED

All this tends to indicate that the period of mutual suspicion and distrust is practically at an end. Nothing shows it more clearly than the happy renewal of social relations between the Emperor and the leading members of the Senate. As a guarantee of good feeling, several of our legislators have consented, at His Majesty's earnest request, to assist Him in the forthcoming Pageant of Empire to be held in the Circus Maximus. Their collaboration is indeed indispensable, large consignments of empty lions being reported to have arrived at Ostia. The hearty sympathy between our Ruler and

His people is still further attested by the fact that several Senators who were but lately among the foremost critics of Absolutism are now taking a personal and prominent share in the scheme of street illuminations recently suggested to the Emperor by His Chancellor. Members of the Stoic Democratic Federation have been invited to meet H.I.M. at dinner at the Café Locusta.

* * * * *

The Café Locusta dinner has been a great success. It is not expected that the Stoic Democratic Federation will express any further opinion hostile to the Imperial policy.

M. Nymphidius has been commissioned to form a Ministry.

Not the least noteworthy among social *événements* is the departure of Piso (whose tendency to form cabals has for some time been a sore subject in Imperialistic circles) for his estates in Thule, N.B. He has left, according to one account, by the Hook (*unco*).

* * * * *

I quote from the Court Journal: —

“The Emperor Nero reigns in the hearts of His People. Persons asserting the contrary will be decapitated.”

PHILOGEORGOS, OR CONCERNING BRIBERY

Going down the other day to the Kerameikos, I met my friend Philogeorgos, who is at present one of those who desire to hold office in the city. And I said to him —

“Philogeorgos, you look sad; is it because you fear lest you should not be elected Archon?”

“No, Socrates,” he replied. “It is not that which saddens me; it is the baseness of those who try to prevent the people from choosing me.”

“In what way do they act basely?” I asked.

“There is a certain wine-seller,” he said, “who is offering what the Hyperboreans call Free Drinks (that is, you know, draughts of wine without payment) to all those who will vote for Misogeorgos, but not for me.”

“That is very unkind of the wine-seller. But why do you say that the transaction is base?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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