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This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Inez Gertrude Scott final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts . We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

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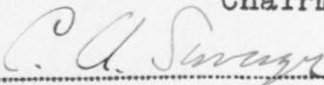
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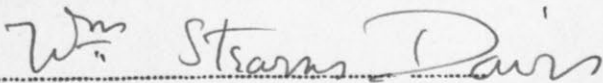
Report  
of  
Committee on Thesis

The undersigned, acting as a Committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Inez Gertrude Scott for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

  
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Chairman

  
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Some Aspects of Court Life under the Early Empire.

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of the

University of Minnesota

by

Inez G. Scott,

In partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the  
degree of  
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June,

1921.

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The testimony of the original sources.

The silver age of Latin literature has given us a list of writers of no mean talents. It is to the prolific writings of this age that we are indebted for our knowledge of the early imperial times. And since the emperor and his court occupied the center of attention at the capital city, it is only natural that the literature of the time should furnish us with a detailed story of court life. Some of the sources, it is true, might be suspected of giving a distorted impression of life at the palace. As Tacitus says, "The histories of Tiberius and Gaius, of Claudius and Nero, were either falsified through fear, if written during their lifetime, or composed under feelings of fresh hatred after their fall." We may apply the same statement to other fields of literature from which we obtain our knowledge of court life. In the writings of Martial we constantly find servile and flattering praises of the tyrannical Domitian.<sup>2</sup> In Juvenal's satires, written after the death of Domitian, that emperor is heaped with indignant and bitter reproaches;<sup>3</sup> and we cannot help feeling that Juvenal's references to Domitian are the more bitter because his own experiences under that emperor were still vividly present in his memory.

There are, in the main, three different fields of Roman literature from which we draw our information concerning court life; the first and most important field is that of history. Tacitus and

1. Tacitus' Annals, I.1,5.

2. Martial's Epigrams, I.91, and 92; De Spectaculis, 16b, and 17.

3. Juvenal's Satires, IV,37.

and Suetonius have each written an account of the lives and principates of the early emperors. In the second field, that of poetry, Juvenal and Martial have made the court the subject of a large portion of their writings. In the third class of sources we may place the letters of the younger Pliny. In the pages of the historian we often find more space devoted to the dark side of the story, the evils and disturbances in the life of the prince, than to the more agreeable aspects. The satirist, naturally, turns his attention to the faults rather than to the virtues, often even exaggerating them for the purpose of satirizing them. It is a relief to turn from viewing court life through the eyes of Juvenal or Tacitus, to the contemplation of the picture given in the letters of Pliny, the refined gentleman, the friend and admirer of the emperor.

In considering the various sources separately, we shall first deal with the historians, from whom we obtain by far the greater share of our information. Tacitus and Suetonius both write of the same subjects,--- for the "Annals" and the "Lives of the Caesars" deal alike with the time of the early empire; each writer takes up separately the principates of the successive emperors; each devotes his attention largely to the description of court life. And yet, in spite of the similarity of subject matter, there is a very marked contrast between the work of Tacitus and that of Suetonius. We can see several reasons for this contrast if we consider the character of the writers themselves. Tacitus was a member of the nobility, steeped in the ancient traditions of the senatorial order.<sup>4</sup> A senator himself during the reign of Domitian, he had seen and shared

4. Dill, Chapter II, p.58.

in some of the indignities suffered by the senate at the hands of that tyrant. He was bitterly indignant at the impotence of the senate, and at the servile flattery of the emperor shown even by senators of the most noble families. In speaking of the establishment of the imperial power by Augustus, he says, "And there was no one to oppose; for the most ardent patriots had fallen on the field or in the proscriptions; and the rest of the nobles, advanced in wealth and place in proportion to their servility, and drawing profit out of the new order of affairs, preferred the security of the present to the hazards of the past."<sup>5</sup> A Roman senator, looking back from such a time to the old days when the senate was the mainstay of the republic, could not help contrasting the senate's former glory with its weakness in Domitian's time; and Tacitus became embittered and pessimistic as a result of the contrast. Even after the tyranny of Domitian had passed, and Trajan had restored some measure of liberty to the senate, Tacitus holds vividly in his mind the degradation of the former tyranny. He seems sometimes to be hurling forth all the bitterness and indignation which he had been forced to suppress for so long. When he is compelled to record some disgraceful act of servility on the part of the senate, his bitter sarcasm knows no bounds. After describing Nero's assassination of his mother, the congratulations of the soldiery on his escape from the treachery plotted by Agrippina, the sacrifices of thanksgiving for his safety offered in Campanian towns,-- Tacitus says, "But since places cannot change their features as easily as men their faces; and as the grim aspect of that sea and shore was

5. Annals, I.2,1..

ever before his eyes,... he moved on to Neapolis"<sup>6</sup>. Following Nero's letter to the senate announcing his escape from his mother's treachery, with "remarkable eagerness" thanksgivings were decreed, and flatteries were heaped upon Nero<sup>7</sup>. When he returned to Rome, Nero was met outside the city by the exulting throngs of citizens of all classes, from plebeian to senator, in festal garb, as if he were a triumphing general; and "publici servitii victor Capitolium adiit, grates exsolvit"<sup>8</sup>. Again, Tacitus says of Tiberius, "When he left the senate house he would say in Greek, 'O men meet for slavery!' For even that enemy of freedom felt disgust at such abject and all-enduring servility"<sup>9</sup>.

Tacitus was a moralist as well as an historian<sup>10</sup>. In relating an incident or an act, he usually placed upon it his stamp of approval or disapproval; he did not often record things simply because they happened, but because they had some moral significance. He himself said that it was not his purpose to "set forth every motion made in the senate, but only such as were either very honorable or specially disgraceful. For I deem it to be the chief function of history," he states, "to rescue merit from oblivion, and hold up before evil words and deeds the terror of the reprobation of posterity"<sup>11</sup>. To write everything with a view to bringing out the moral aspect would naturally not be conducive to perfect impartiality; for the personal prejudices of the historian

6. Annals, XIV.10,5.

7. Annals, Xiv, 12,1.

8. Annals, XIV, 13,3.

9. Annals III.65,3.

10. Furneaux, Introduction to the Annals, Chap.IV, p.27.

11. Annals, III.65,1.

must necessarily play a great part in his ideas with regard to the moral significance of things.<sup>12</sup> In reading the Annals we sometimes feel that Tacitus' sympathies are too much with the senatorial nobles and with the old order of things for absolute fairness. After describing the trial and condemnation of Gnaeus Piso, a member of the Calpurnian family, and of Lepida, of the Aemilian family, he writes, "For these calamities to great families, some consolation was afforded by the restoration of Decimus Silanus to the Junian family."<sup>13</sup> Ramsay remarks upon this passage, "Tacitus cannot suppress a sigh over the condemnation, however well deserved of two such noble personages." The sympathies and the point of view of Suetonius stand in striking contrast to those of Tacitus. Suetonius was not affected from the standpoint of personal experience or class sympathies by the degradation of the senate at the hands of the tyrants. The son of a Roman knight, he held no public office and took no part in political affairs. He practiced law for a time, and he may possibly have been a teacher of grammar;<sup>14</sup> he received a military tribuneship through the influence of his friend, Pliny, but soon asked that it be transferred to a relative. He held the position of imperial secretary for a few years during Hadrian's reign.<sup>15</sup> If he felt any particular emotions in regard to the tyrannies of former times, he took care not to make them apparent. But he appears to be entirely untouched by any feeling of bitterness or hatred in telling his story. He seems to relate the facts

12. Ramsay, note 2, on III.65,2; p.247.

13. Annals, III.24,1.

14. Dill, Book II, Chap.I, p.168.

15. John C.Rolfe, Introd. to Lives of the Caesars; p.X. *Loeb*

*Classical Library.*

simply because they were facts; he has set as his subject "The Lives of the Caesars", and he relates everything that concerns the prince of whom he writes. Nothing was too trivial to relate, if only it concerned the life of the emperor. In his "Life of Augustus" he devotes a chapter to describing in minute detail the personal appearance of the emperor;<sup>16</sup> another chapter comprises a catalogue of all Augustus' infirmities and illnesses;<sup>17</sup> in the next chapter he lists the different articles of clothing which Augustus wore. Contrast his idea of what he could properly include in his work with Tacitus' lofty and aristocratic idea. In recording the events of the year 57, Tacitus writes, "Few things worthy of memory happened, unless it pleases anyone to fill his volumes with praises of the foundations and the beams which Caesar used in constructing an amphitheatre in the Campus Martius, although it has been established as a custom, by the dignity of the Roman people, to record "res illustres" in the Annals, and such things in the "Actis diurnis" of the city".<sup>18</sup>

The style of writing adopted by the two authors is entirely different, as would naturally be the case, in view of the difference in the character of the men, and also in view of the fact that one is writing history, the other, biography. Tacitus gives a chronological account of the events, usually those of each year separately; he gives us a faithful, if sometimes a bit confusing, account of the military campaigns along the frontier. But the affairs of the

16. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.79.

17. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.81.

18. Annals, XIII.31, 1.

imperial family occupy the greater share of his attention, and he is at his best when he narrates some story of court life.<sup>19.</sup> Suetonius devotes all his attention to describing the personal life of the emperor himself. As opposed to the chronological order of events in the Annals, Suetonius gives facts by order of topics. Where Tacitus would describe the emperor's military campaigns and public acts, each in proper order of time, Suetonius disposes of them all in a chapter, usually by simply giving us a list of them.<sup>20.</sup> Again, Tacitus describes separately and in detail the unjust murders of persons of noble rank, brought about by the plots of Claudius' wives and favorite freedmen;<sup>21.</sup> Suetonius, in one chapter, lists the names of persons thus destroyed,--- Appius Silanus, the two Julias, Gnaeus Pompey, Lucius Silanus, and in all, thirty five senators and three hundred knights.<sup>22.</sup>

Suetonius' biographies are simply a series of incidents, arranged usually according to the personal characteristics which they illustrate. For example, in his "Life of Claudius", Suetonius takes up one after another the different phases of the prince's character, his cruel disposition,<sup>23.</sup> his cowardice,<sup>24.</sup> his absent-mindedness,<sup>25.</sup> and illustrates each characteristic by a series of incidents. "His attitude, according to Dill, "is that of an antiquarian, writing his biography"from a carefully kept notebook",<sup>26.</sup> rather than that of an historian. La Harpe says, "He relates

19. e.g., Annals, XIII. 15-17; 19-22.

20. e.g. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap. 9; Life of Augustus, c. 21.

21. e.g. Annals, XI. 1-3; XII. 22; 59.

22. Suet; Life of Claudius, Chap. 29.

23. Life of Claudius, chap. 34.

24. Life of Claudius, chap. 35.

25. Life of Claudius, chap. 39.

26. Dill, Book I, Chap. I, p. 29.

everything, but paints nothing"<sup>27</sup>. Tacitus, on the contrary, paints pictures, with all the brilliant colouring furnished by a vivid imagination combined with remarkable powers of description. He heightens the dramatic effect of the story he is telling by the use of poetic and picturesque expressions, best calculated to vivify in the mind of the reader the scene which he depicts.<sup>28</sup>

Ramsay, in his introduction to the Annals, says, "His style never droops; he is never trivial, commonplace, or dull.... He shews himself a master in the art of painting with words"<sup>29</sup>. Sometimes careless of constructions, Tacitus realizes that "grammar must be the servant, not the master, of the thought"<sup>30</sup>.

Tacitus and Suetonius must have used largely the same sources of information. Neither quotes his authorities, except in cases where the historians differ; Tacitus states that it is his custom to give the consensus of opinion among the writers, quoting names only when the authorities give different stories.<sup>31</sup> "The points of contact between Tacitus and Suetonius".. says Furneaux, "do not decide the question whether the latter author used the former or both followed a common source"<sup>32</sup>. He is inclined to believe that Suetonius used more numerous sources than Tacitus did, taking from each only what suited him.<sup>33</sup> In the works of both authors there is undoubtedly much that is simply hearsay, told or handed down by those who were alive at the time of the event, and heard the

27. Alexander Thomson, Introduction to "Lives of the Caesars", p.vi. (Bohn's Classical Library).

28. e.g. Annals, XIII.15-17.

29. Ramsay's Introduction, p.72.

30. Ramsay's Introduction, p.73.

31. Annals, XIII.20,3.

32. Furneaux, Introduction, Vol.I, Chap. IV, p.26.

33. Furneaux, Introduction, Vol.I, Chap.IV, p.26.



stories which were then floating about. Frequently Suetonius introduces some story on such authority as "When I was a boy I heard my grandfather say"<sup>34</sup> or more often simply "it was said",<sup>35</sup> or "it was believed".<sup>36</sup> Suetonius is the more often suspected of giving as a fact some incident which rests only upon rumour; he shows a marked taste for trivial bits of gossip, relating a rumour, "not because he believes it to be true, but in order to omit nothing".<sup>37</sup> Where Tacitus records an incident with the qualifying statement, "fama huc inclinat",<sup>38</sup> Suetonius often gives the same story as an undoubted fact, sometimes even adding to it.<sup>39</sup> Tacitus, however, although he seldom takes the responsibility of asserting the truth of a rumour, often later refers to it and draws inferences from it as if it were an established fact. For example, Tacitus refuses to vouch for the truth of the rumour that Augustus' wife, Livia, had brought about the death of Gaius and Lucius Caesar;<sup>40</sup> yet later he practically assumes the truth of the hearsay when he refers to Livia as a "stepmother who was a scourge to the house of the Caesars".<sup>41</sup> But for the most part, Tacitus seems to feel bound to tell the unprejudiced truth in so far as it is possible;<sup>42</sup> in choosing his material, he disregards adulatory writers as sources,<sup>43</sup> and he departs from the authorities where he believes them to have shown favoritism or prejudice.

34. Suet., Life of Caligula, chap. 19.

35. Suet., Life of Augustus, chap. 13.

36. Suet., Life of Tiberius, chap. 52.

38. Annals, XIV.2,4.; XV.15,2.

39. Suet., Life of Nero, 28, 39.

40. Annals, I.3,3.

41. Annals, I.10,4.

42. Furneaux, Vol. I, Introduction, Chap. IV., p.31.

43. Furneaux, Vol. I, Introduction, Chap. IV., p.26.

As we turn from the field of history to that of satire, we see at first glance several similarities between Tacitus, the historian, and Juvenal, the satirist. Both had lived through the dark days of tyranny under Domitian, and, after Trajan's accession, were taking advantage of the freedom allowed them to give vent to their indignation against the degradation of former times<sup>44</sup>. Juvenal, although he declared his intention of satirizing only the faults of the dead,<sup>45</sup> yet was evidently striking at the vices of his own day. He, like Tacitus, had grown bitterly pessimistic;<sup>46</sup> in fact, while Tacitus' pages are occasionally brightened by an account of some brave or noble character,<sup>47</sup> the satirist seems to forget that there is any virtue left in the world, and paints his pictures always in the darkest colors. He, as well as Tacitus, was a moralist;<sup>48</sup> the difference was that while Tacitus told only the deeds that were "very honorable or specially disgraceful",<sup>49</sup> in order to arouse men's admiration for the honorable and their hatred for the disgraceful, Juvenal confined himself to the "specially disgraceful". In his opinion, his own generation had reached the dizzy-height of vice and luxury;<sup>50</sup> the next generation could go no further than to simply repeat the vices of this. Juvenal and Tacitus both idealized the past at the expense of the present. In the minds of both, the golden age lay far in the past, when men's desires were few and simple, when a man was content with one slave, a hut, and a little plot of ground not large enough for a garden in the days of luxury which the

44. Dill, Book I, chap. II, p. 58.

45. Juvenal, I. 1.170.

46. Dill, Book I, chap. II, p. 58.

47. e.g. Annals, XIV, 47, 1.

48. Dill, Book I, chap. II, p. 62.

49. Annals, III. 65, 1.

50. Juvenal, I, 1.149.

world had now reached.<sup>51</sup> All evil came into the world with luxury and the desire for wealth; "thence the cause of crime: no vice of the human heart has mixed more poisons, or has more often had recourse to the sword, than the raging desire for immoderate wealth.<sup>52</sup> According to Tacitus' opinion, in ancient times, when men were "led by their own nature to pursue none but virtuous ends, they required no rewards.. and penalties. But when self-seeking and violence drove out simplicity and modest living,"<sup>53</sup> monarchies came into being, and laws were made. This Stoic idea that the human race has gradually degenerated from its primitive state of virtue and simplicity, would naturally cause a pessimistic attitude toward one's own time. Almost the only brighter parts in the dark coloring of the picture shown us by Juvenal are the passages which describe the frugal life of ancient Rome; and these brighter spots only serve to bring out by contrast the darker hue of the rest of the picture.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, Juvenal may be contrasted with his friend and brother poet, Martial. The two poets dealt largely with the same subject matter,--- the luxury and corrupt morals of the upper classes at Rome, the niggardliness of patrons and the hardships of clients, the failure to appreciate and patronize literary men. The chief difference between the two,-- and it is an all-important difference,-- was in their purpose and point of view. Juvenal, as we have observed, was a moralist, indignant at the vices which he

51. Juvenal, XIV.11.165-170.

52. Juvenal, XIV, 11. 172-5.

53. Annals, III.26.

54. e.g. Juvenal, XIV.11.166-170, 179-184.

pictures; "Martial, of course," to quote Dill, "is not a moralist at all; the mere suggestion excites a smile. He is a keen and joyous observer of the faults and follies, the lights and shades, of a highly complex and artificial society which is 'getting over-ripe'".<sup>55</sup> Martial has given us a minutely detailed picture of the society of Domitian; "but this very vividness and truthfulness is chiefly due to the fact that Martial was almost without a conscience".<sup>56</sup> Martial did not hesitate at times to use a tone of the most servile flattery, extravagant beyond measure in praises and adulation of the emperor.<sup>57</sup> His writings illustrate the influence of the oppressive tyranny upon the literature of the times; hypocrisy and insincere adulation were natural at a time when it was dangerous to speak a word unfavorable to the emperor.<sup>58</sup> The only alternative to base flattery was silence or retirement. The contrast between the attitude of Martial toward Domitian with that of Juvenal confirms in regard to poetry the statement made by Tacitus in regard to history,-- that it was "falsified through fear (and, we might add, through hope of gaining favor) if written during the lifetime of the prince, or composed under feelings of fresh hatred after his death."

Tacitus and Juvenal, in their bitter pessimism, and Martial, in his "joyous observation of faults and follies," have pictured the dark side of life in Rome under the early empire; the younger Pliny has given us a picture taken from the opposite angle. It is

55. Dill, Book I, chap.II, p.61.

56. Dill, Book I, chap.II, p. 62.

57. e.g. Book II, 91 and 92. (Martial's Epigrams.)

58. Inge, page 93.

a relief to find at least one writer who dwells upon the more agreeable aspects of the same society which Juvenal and Martial have rendered infamous. Pliny, like the other authors, had seen the reign of terror in Domitian's time. Part of that period he had spent in retirement, devoting his time to literary work;<sup>58</sup> but he also had felt the oppression and the dangers to life and liberty. In one of his letters concerning a case which he was pleading, he writes of the danger of defending anyone who had fallen under the emperor's displeasure. Upon Pliny's quoting as authority a judgment once given by Metius Modestus, then in banishment, his enemy, Regulus, asked him what he thought of Modestus. Pliny refused to state his opinion, on the ground that it was unfair to ask his opinion concerning a man who had already been condemned. "You see," he writes, "what a risk I should have taken if I had replied that I had a high opinion of him".<sup>59</sup> Again, in writing to Suetonius of an inauspicious dream concerning a case in which he was about to act as advocate, he says, "My adversaries were some of the most important men in Rome, and particular favorites of Caesar, any of which circumstances was sufficient, after such an inauspicious dream, to have discouraged me."<sup>60</sup> Pliny had also witnessed the degradation of the senate under the tyrant; he writes to Aristo, "I served in the army when I was a youth; but it was at a time when courage was suspected and want of spirit rewarded... I likewise, in my youth, attended the senate, but a senate shrinking and speechless, where it

58. Dill, Book II, chap. I, p. 150.

59. Pliny's Letters, Book I, letter 5.

60. Pliny's Letters, Book I, letter 18.

was dangerous to utter one's opinion, and mean and pitiable to be silent".<sup>61</sup> But Pliny's nature was not, as were the natures of Juvenal and Tacitus, warped and embittered by the reign of terror. He still remained the good-natured aristocrat,<sup>62</sup> charitable and tolerant, loyal to his friends, and somewhat inclined to shut his eyes to their faults.<sup>63</sup> Pliny was above all else, optimistic; in his letters he cheerfully speaks of Trajan's accession as the "return of Liberty",<sup>64</sup> seeming to ignore the defects inherent in the monarchical government, and to consider the accession of Trajan as a remedy for all the evils of the preceding decades. He has sometimes been criticized for his superficiality; he did not attempt, so far as we can learn from his letters, to deal with the real problems of his age, and in the work he has left us he simply "skims the surface of social life".<sup>65</sup> His letters are valuable, however, in that they give a vivid picture of the ordinary life of the class to which he belonged. Pliny's circle of friends and acquaintances was composed of men and women who were among the highest in Rome in respect to character, culture, and refinement. In fact, the friends of Pliny, and others of the same type, made up the solid element in the society of the time.<sup>66</sup> Pliny was on intimate terms with most of the prominent literary men of the day; with Tacitus, Suetonius, and Quintilian; he was also a friend and admirer of Martial, who, however, was "only a distant observer or hanger-on of that world of wealth and refinement in which Pliny was a con-

61. Pliny's Letters, Book VIII, letter 14.

62. Dill, Book II, chap. I, p. 141.

63. Pliny's Letters, Book VII, letter 28.

64. Pliny's Letters, Book VIII, letter 14.

65. Dill, Book II, chap. I, p. 163.

66. Dill, Book II, chap. I, p. 144.

spicuous figure!"<sup>67</sup>. Pliny was, besides, the loved and honored friend of the emperor, and in his letters, particularly in his correspondence with the emperor, he has given us much valuable information with regard to the principate and character of Trajan. In his references to the life of the court, as well as in his description of the social life of the aristocracy, Pliny is peculiarly interesting and valuable in that his testimony counterbalances that of the other authorities; they show us one extreme, she shows us the other. We finally conclude that the truth of the case lies somewhere between the two, -- that society in the time of the early empire, as in every age, was neither wholly good nor wholly bad; and that perhaps the bad was not as much in preponderance as we should be inclined to believe if we had not the testimony of Pliny to balance that of Juvenal, Martial, and Tacitus.

67. Dill, Book II, chap. I, p. 158.

## CHAPTER II. Court Life.

In the early years of the empire, the imperial court was not at all the institution with which we usually associate the name. The Emperor Augustus adopted the policy of avoiding everything that would seem to distinguish or set him above others of the nobility. In consequence of this policy, he established a court which was simply the home of the "first among the citizens", no different from the home of any other noble, except that, as a natural result of the greater duties of the "first citizen", it required a greater number of attendants and household officials. As the mode of life in the homes of the nobles would naturally vary from generation to generation, so the mode of life at the Palace varied, as the "imperium" passed from one prince to the next. The character of the prince in large measure determined the character of the court life. The life and fortunes of those who comprised the prince's retinue was far different in the reign of an affable Trajan than in the reign of a tyrannical Domitian. The luxury of the surroundings, the number of domestic attendants, the ostentation and extravagance in dress, banquets, and entertainment, varied as the emperor was fond of display, like Nero, or a natural lover of simplicity, like Vespasian.

Let us notice the different classes of people who resided at the imperial palace, and comprised what we might call the "court retinue". First, and most important in point of rank, at least, were the members of the imperial family itself. Besides the emperor's wife and children, often his mother, sisters, and sometimes other relatives, resided at the Palace. Some of the emperors made a pract-



tice of bringing to the court children of the petty princes of the Orient, to be reared and educated along with the children of the imperial family.<sup>68.</sup>

Next, we notice the class of persons, occasionally but not necessarily bearing the rank of freedmen or slaves, who lived at the court in the capacity of teachers, physicians, musicians, and entertainers of all sorts.<sup>69.</sup> Among the teachers at court we sometimes find men of distinction in the fields of philosophy, rhetoric, philology; the names of Apollodorus of Pergamus,<sup>70.</sup> Seneca,<sup>71.</sup> Quintilian,<sup>72.</sup> and Fronto,<sup>73.</sup> are to be found in the list of noted scholars and philosophers who acted at one time in the capacity of teachers at the Palace. We cannot doubt but that the presence of such men at court must have exerted a potent influence upon affairs at the court and upon the character of the emperors. We might take Seneca as an illustrious example of the influence exerted by a teacher upon the acts of his imperial pupil. Recalled from exile to act as the tutor of the young prince, Nero,<sup>74.</sup> Seneca remained as Nero's chief adviser for the first few years of his principate. With the aid of Burrus, prefect of the praetorians, he managed to keep partially in check Nero's natural tendencies toward evil; and the comparative moderation and good government during the first five years of Nero's reign were in no small measure due to the influence of Seneca and Burrus.<sup>75.</sup>

68. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.48.

69. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p.82.

70. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap. 89.

71. Tacitus' Annals,XII. 8,3.

72. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p.67.

73. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p. 67.

74. Annals, XII.8,3.

75. Annals, XIII,2,1.

The emperor's freedmen and slaves make up the third class of people at the court, the lowest in rank, but not always by any means the lowest in importance. The imperial freedmen often exerted an influence upon the acts of the prince which was a factor to be reckoned with even in important state affairs. Freedmen had opportunities to gain influence as an inevitable result of the kind of court established by Augustus. Since it was a matter of policy that the court should be considered in no essential way different from the home of any noble, but simply the private household of the first citizen, it would have been incongruous with this policy for nobles to perform services at the court which, in the home of an ordinary noble, would be performed by a freedman.<sup>76.</sup> Such services were those of secretary, "master of petitions", and treasurer. But in the home of the man who had in his hands the management of the affairs of the greater part of the known world, the office of secretary, for instance, differed greatly from the same office in a senator's household. The person in charge of the emperor's official correspondence in his business of ruling the world, would inevitably exercise an influence in affairs of government. Such a person would have intimate knowledge of matters of the highest importance to the state, and would have abundant opportunity for influencing the emperor's decisions and policies. But at the time of the beginning of the empire, men of noble rank had not learned the tremendous power and influence which might be gained by holding such an office, and they would probably have considered as beneath their dignity such a task as that of imperial secretary. This fact may have been

76. Friedländer, Vol. I, p. 33.

an added reason for Augustus' practice of placing official duties within his household under the charge of his own freedmen. Then too, this custom of putting freedmen in charge of such important offices at court had in it the advantage, more important while the empire was still in the process of being set on a firm basis, of preventing any dangerous increase in the power of one noble. It would be easier to quell any sign of disloyalty or presumption in a freedman, over whom the patron had more or less recognized power, than in a man of noble birth and rank.<sup>78.</sup> But, apart from these considerations, there were undoubtedly many able men among the freedmen,<sup>79.</sup> well fitted to perform important duties at court. In the ranks of freedmen were men from all parts of the world, often of high ability and wide experience. The Greeks, whom the Romans professed to despise as crafty, deceitful, and servile, were given the highest and most influential positions.<sup>80.</sup> From the Orient chiefly the emperor drew his domestic servants and attendants, his guards from the north and west.<sup>81.</sup> But to the Greeks he gave posts that required high intellectual ability.

Although the influence of a class of persons living in such close contact with the emperor, and holding such important positions, was bound to be great, it varied greatly under different princes. Pliny says, "Great freedmen and little princes go together"; and he also says that "most of the princes are lords over citizens, and

78. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p.33.

79. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p. 55.

80. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p. 36.

81. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p. 36.

and slaves of freedmen"<sup>82</sup>. Under the master hand of Augustus, the freedmen were allowed to exercise no undue influence, and any who showed signs of presumption were promptly and firmly suppressed. Augustus' secretary, Thallus, upon accepting a bribe in return for revealing the contents of a letter, met with severe punishment;<sup>83</sup> the tutor and advisers of the young prince, Gaius, when they took advantage of the opportunity afforded by his illness and death to exercise insolence and rapacity in his province, were thrown into the river.<sup>84</sup> And yet, even in Augustus' reign, according to Suetonius' story, a few freedmen were advanced to honor and high position; his freedman, Celadus, attained great influence, and Licinus ruled for a time in Gaul with almost autocratic power.<sup>85</sup> In the time of the morose and haughty Tiberius the imperial freedmen exerted no very significant influence, but during Caligula's principate they began to be really powerful.<sup>86</sup> Among his many favorites, Callistus, as "Master of petitions", held a preeminent place. Not until Claudius' time, however, did the power of the imperial freedmen reach its height; no story of his reign is complete without a record of his favorite freedmen and of their sway over him.<sup>87</sup> Callistus still held his office and some measure of his former influence, but the outstanding figures of this reign were Narcissus, the imperial secretary, and Pallas, steward of the treasury. Both were notorious for their wealth and power; Narcissus, in fact, is believed to have owned the most enormous fortune ever held by an in-

82. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 43.

83. Suetonius, Augustus, 67.

84. Suetonius, Augustus, chap. 67.

85. Suetonius, Augustus, chap. 67.

86. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 39.

87. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, 28 and 29.

dividual in ancient times. His wealth was estimated at four hundred million sesterces,<sup>88.</sup> that of Pallas, at three hundred million.<sup>88.</sup> "As rich as Pallas"<sup>89.</sup> became a by-word among the Romans. The arrogance of the freedmen at this period was unbounded. In the Annals we have the story of Narcissus' boldness at the time of Messalina's accusation and death. After telling Claudius that during his absence from Rome his wife, Messalina, had gone through the form of lawful marriage with her lover, Silius, and urging the emperor to action, lest "his wife's husband make himself master of Rome as well"<sup>90.</sup> Narcissus practically took affairs into his own hands. He rode with Claudius back from Ostia to Rome, and when Messalina came to meet them,<sup>91.</sup> in hope of prevailing upon Claudius' good nature, the freedman drove her away with shouted accusations. And when Claudius, his wrath somewhat softened, ordered word sent to Messalina that she should be given a hearing, Narcissus immediately ordered her execution.<sup>92.</sup> For these services Narcissus was given the insignia of the quaestorship.<sup>93.</sup> When finally, in Nero's reign, Pallas fell from favor because of his presumption and his gruffness, and was dismissed by Nero, he left the Palatine with as much dignity as if he had been the highest official finishing his term of office, stipulating that no investigation should be made into his former acts,-- that "accounts between him and the state were balanced".<sup>94.</sup> Claudius' rule well illustrates the statement that "great freedmen and little

88. Annals, XII, 53, and note by Furneaux.

89. Juvenal, I. line 109.

90. Annals, XI.30,5.

91. Annals, XI.34,3.

92. Annals, XI.37,3.

93. Annals, XI.38,5.

94. Annals, XIII.14.

princes go together". Always subject to the influence of those about him, this weak-willed emperor put to death many a noble unjustly, urged by the insinuations and false accusations by which his favorites played upon his fears. With the help of Messalina, Narcissus invented a scheme which ended in the execution of Appius Silanus: according to the plan agreed upon, Narcissus remarked in Claudius' presence that he had dreamed that Appius Silanus had murdered the emperor. Messalina, affecting surprise, replied that she had had a similar dream. That same day, in answer to a summons which the conspirators had previously sent in the emperor's name, Silanus appeared at court. Claudius was so greatly frightened at this succession of incidents that he ordered Silanus' immediate execution.<sup>95.</sup>

We are told by Suetonius that Claudius put to death twenty five senators, and more than three hundred knights, most of them at the instigation of his wives and freedmen.<sup>96.</sup> After Claudius' time the power of the freedmen gradually declined, although during Nero's reign a few favorites held tremendous power. During Nero's tour through Greece, the freedman, Helius, was given entire charge over affairs at Rome.<sup>97.</sup> The favorite Pölyclitus was sent, in the year 64, to investigate and report on affairs in Britain. He made the journey to Britain, we are told by Tacitus, in great state, burdening Italy and the provinces with his enormous retinue. Upon arriving in Britain, he entirely over-awed the Roman soldiers, but was scoffed at by the barbarians, who had not learned the tremendous power of a freedman of the emperor.<sup>98.</sup>

95. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. 37.

96. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. 29.

97. Suetonius, Life of Nero, 23.

98. Annals, XIV, 39.

As the imperial government became gradually more firmly established, the emperor became more openly a despot; and as he surrounded himself with the pomp and splendour of an imperial court, he lived more or less in seclusion, separated by a wide gulf even from those nearest him in rank.<sup>100.</sup> The imperial freedmen, as we might say, bridged this gulf: they stood between the emperor and the nobles, giving to the latter information concerning the emperor's plans and intentions, or influencing the emperor to favor some noble who had flattered or bribed them.<sup>101.</sup> The favorite freedmen of the prince, however much they were despised and hated, were yet courted by even the highest nobles, for the influence with they exerted at the Palace.<sup>102.</sup> Often by the influence of a freedmen whose favor they had bought, nobles were given offices and honors. Hadrian is said to have secured his adoption by Trajan through bribes given to one of the court freedmen.<sup>103.</sup> Juvenal writes of the power of the actor, Paris, one of Domitian's favorites: "It is Paris who appoints men to military commands; it is Paris who puts the golden ring around the poet's finger after six months of service. You can get from a stage-player what no great man will give you: why frequent the spacious ante-chambers of the Bareae or the Camerini? It is <sup>104.</sup> "Pelopea" that appoints our Prefects, and "Philomela" our tribunes!"

On the contrary, it was dangerous to incur the displeasure of a powerful freedman. A haughty look or a contemptuous word directed against one of the favorites might bring exile or death: it is

100. Emile Thomas, chap.III, p.83.(part II).

101. Emile Thomas, chap.III, p.83.(part II).

102. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p.44.

103. Friedländer, Vol.8, chap.II, p.42.

104. Juvenal, VII, 11.88-92.

thought that the poet, Juvenal, was punished by exile for writing verses, possibly the verses above quoted, aimed against the favorite Paris, and his great influence at court.<sup>105.</sup> We have already noticed the number of nobles in Claudius' time whose deaths are ascribed to the influence of freedmen. We are not surprised, therefore, to find even the highest nobles ready to court their favor and flatter them. Barea Soranus, a scion of one of the most influential senatorial families, proposed a decree providing that a large gift of money and a vote of thanks be given to Pallas, a descendant of the line of Arcadian kings, for putting aside his ancestral prerogatives to become the servant of the Roman people. Pallas accepted the honor only, declining the gift; and thereupon, as Tacitus scornfully tells us, a bronze tablet was inscribed with the Senate's commendation of the frugality shown by this possessor of three hundred million sesterces.<sup>106.</sup> We

We might suppose from the foregoing discussion that the imperial freedmen occupied a vastly important position in the private life of the court, and that much of the prince's time was spent in the companionship of freedmen. This supposition is entirely true in the case of a prince like Claudius, and at least partially true in the case of all the princes of the early empire. We must not think, however, that the prince did not come into contact with freeborn and noble Romans except as he met them in public life. Besides men of different orders whom the prince, according to his fancy, gathered about him as his companions, there was a distinct class of persons

105. Wilson's Juvenal, Introduction, p. 16.

106. Tacitus' Annals, XII.53.



whom we may designate as "friends of the emperor".<sup>107.</sup> The title of "friend of the emperor" was a more or less technical name applied to a member of the prince's "council of advisers". This institution was entirely informal at first, not even recognized as an "institution";<sup>108.</sup> the prince would naturally wish to ask advice of those whom he knew and trusted, and he made a practice of calling together a few of his friends to advise him in important matters. To this little council he might summon his own kinsmen, and his personal friends whom he had known before his accession to imperial power,<sup>109.</sup> as well as influential senators, prefects of the city and of the guard, whose advice he might wish to seek in virtue of their office.<sup>110.</sup> As this council of friends became a more formally established institution, the title of "friend of the emperor" did not necessarily imply personal friendship, although it did imply more or less personal relations with the prince. Tacitus, in his Annals, describes a number of these informal council meetings, sometimes recording in detail the conflicting arguments put forth by different "friends".<sup>111.</sup> With his council of friends the emperor was accustomed to discuss matters of administration and policy, the granting of citizenship to some district, provincial affairs, the giving of a festival, and all sorts of other questions.<sup>112.</sup> A consultation of Domitian with his friends is satirized by Juvenal: the council which he describes had been called by the emperor at his

107. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 71.

108. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 71.

109. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 81.

110. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 73.

111. Annals, XI, 23 and 24.

112. Annals, XI, 23.

Alban villa, to decide what shall be done with a huge turbot presented to him by a fisherman of Picenum. "No platter could be found big enough for the fish; so a council of magnates is summoned: men hated by the Emperor, and on whose faces sat the pallor of that great and perilous friendship"<sup>113</sup>. Among those who came to the villa in trembling haste were Pegasus, who "had lately been appointed bailiff over the astonished city"<sup>114</sup>, the aged Crispus, who had avoided the wrath of tyrants for so many years by never "speaking freely the thoughts of his heart"<sup>115</sup>, and Pompeius, "whose gentle whisper would cut men's throats"<sup>116</sup>. Finally Montanus, a past master in the art of eating, gives the wise advice that "a deep vessel be provided to gather the huge dimensions within its slender walls"<sup>117</sup>. This advice accepted, "the Council rises, and the councillors are dismissed: men whom the mighty Emperor had dragged in terror and hot haste to his Alban castle, as though to give them news of the Chatti or the savage Sycambri"<sup>118</sup>.

By Juvenal's words we are led to believe that, under some of the emperors, at least, the position of "friend of the emperor" was not entirely desirable. We may conclude from the words of Epictetus that the philosopher's attitude toward friendship with the emperor coincided with that of the satirist. "Who", he says, "would be so dull as not to bewail every instant of his life as the emperor's friend?"<sup>119</sup>. Under such a prince as Augustus, however, such

113. Juvenal, IV, ll. 72-75.

114. Juvenal, IV. l. 77.

115. Juvenal, IV. l. 91.

116. Juvenal, IV. l. 110.

117. Juvenal, IV. ll. 131-132.

118. Juvenal, IV. ll. 144-147.

119. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 78.

an attitude would be entirely unjustified. Suetonius says concerning Augustus, "He was cautious in choosing his friends, but clung to them with great constancy; not only rewarding the virtues and merits of his friends according to their deserts, but bearing likewise with their faults and vices, provided they were of a venial kind".<sup>120.</sup>

Only two of his friends fell from his favor, one because of his malicious temper, the other because he was convicted of plotting a rebellion.<sup>121.</sup> "The rest of his friends of all orders flourished throughout their whole lives, both in power and wealth".<sup>122.</sup>

From among all the friends and favorites of the jealous Tiberius very few escaped destruction: we are told by Suetonius that he was assisted in the management of the government by twenty or more of the most eminent citizens, besides his intimate friends; of these, "scarcely two or three escaped the fury of his savage disposition".<sup>123.</sup>

Among the "friends" who formed the emperor's council, there were usually a few to whom the emperor was attached in real and personal friendship. Two of Augustus' most trusted advisers, Agrippa and Maecenas, were also his most intimate friends. Marcus Agrippa had been his companion and assistant in military affairs long before the founding of the empire.<sup>124.</sup> At Augustus' attainment of imperial power, Agrippa acted as his adviser, and that he might be bound to the emperor by ties of kinship as well, Augustus gave him his daughter in marriage. It is probable that, but for his untimely death, he would have succeeded to the empire at Augustus'

120. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.66.

121&2 Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.66.

123. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap.55.

124. Annals, I.3,1.

death. All his life Augustus maintained an intimate friendship with Maecenas, the famous patron of arts and literature; he spent many leisure hours in Maecenas' luxurious home on the Esquiline, in companionship with Maecenas and his circle of literary friends.<sup>125.</sup>

In the succeeding principate one of the emperor's friends rose above all the rest in the prince's favor, until in power and influence he stood second only to Tiberius himself.<sup>126.</sup> The career of Aelius Sejanus is one of the most notorious examples of the tremendous power which a man might hold for a time through the favor of a prince. This man was born at Volsinii, the son of a Roman knight. He began his career by attaching himself to Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus; and in the course of time, he "acquired an ascendancy over Tiberius so complete that he brought that monarch, impenetrable as he was to all the world beside, to be open and unguarded to him alone... Daring in spirit, incapable of fatigue, as obsequious as he was insolent, beneath an exterior of studied modesty he concealed a boundless ambition, to which he would minister sometimes by extravagance and debauch, more often by energy and vigilance."<sup>127.</sup> Sejanus, during the sixteen years when he was enjoying the emperor's favor, was secretly aiming at imperial power. One by one he set about to destroy the natural successors to the principate. He first effected the death of the emperor's son, Drusus, with the assistance of Drusus' wife, whom he had seduced by promises of marriage with himself, and a share in the imperial

125. Friedländer, Vol. III, chap. I, p. 30 and p. 56.

126. Tacitus' Annals, IV, 1.

127. Annals, IV, 1.

power.<sup>128.</sup> Gradually he aroused the emperor's suspicions against his daughter-in-law and grandchildren, by constantly whispering insinuations against them. He succeeded in persuading the jealous prince that they were a menace to his own power, and finally effected the downfall of all except the young prince, Gaius.<sup>129.</sup> The height of Sejanus' power came when Tiberius retired to Capri, and intrusted to him the administration of the imperial duties.<sup>130.</sup> As chief minister of the absent emperor, Sejanus held almost autocratic power at the capital. Men began to speak of Tiberius as ruler of an island, of Sejanus as master of Rome.<sup>131.</sup> When Tiberius and Sejanus crossed from the island to the Campanian coast, "thither flocked senators, knights, and crowds of the commoner sort, all looking anxiously to Sejanus, who was difficult of access, and could only be reached by means of intrigue, or by participation in his designs".<sup>132.</sup>

The final fall of Sejanus illustrates the usual fate of the favorites of a tyrant. At length the suspicions of the emperor, so often aroused by Sejanus to the destruction of some innocent person, were aroused against the mighty favorite himself.<sup>133.</sup> Swiftly there followed a letter to the senate, denouncing and accusing Sejanus of treason. As the letter was read in the senate-house, those "who had but now been flocking round Sejanus to congratulate him on his new honors, and to assure him of their support, edged away from his side".<sup>134.</sup> When the final denunciation was read, "the

128. Annals, IV. 3, 3.

129. Annals, IV. 60; Supplement to Book V. p. 345 & 6; IV. 12. (Ramsay).

130. Annals, IV. 58.

131. Annals, Supplement to Book V. p. 350. (Ramsay)

132. Annals, IV. 74.

133. Annals, Supplement to Book V. p. 349.

134. Annals, Supplement to Book V. p. 352. (Ramsay).

long pent-up hatred against the favorite broke forth in one roar of triumph and exultation over his fall, and a storm of insults and reproaches, from foes and friends alike, burst upon the head of the unhappy man, who, but yesterday, had been reckoned 'second in the whole world'".<sup>135.</sup> Sejanus was dragged off to prison, and strangled there that same day; his body was thrown down the Gemonian Stairs, and finally into the Tiber.<sup>136.</sup> The favorite's downfall was followed by the destruction of all his kinsmen and all who had been his friends.<sup>137.</sup> Juvenal describes men's haste to trample upon his body exposed on the banks of the Tiber, in their fear lest they be accused of having been friends of Sejanus.<sup>138.</sup>

In Nero's time there flourished a different type of court favorite. Petronius, a man of equestrian rank who enjoyed Nero's favor during the early years of his principate, lived at the palace as the emperor's boon companion in his hours of leisure rather than as an assistant in the administration of imperial power.<sup>139.</sup> He so greatly endeared himself in the affections of the youthful Nero, that in the entertainments at court nothing pleased the emperor unless it also pleased Petronius. So notable was this fact that Petronius was given the title of "Arbiter elegantiae".<sup>140.</sup> This gay and dissipated, but refined, favorite<sup>141.</sup> entertained the emperor during his leisure time, "ordering for him shows, comedies, music, and everything to make the time pass pleasantly".<sup>142.</sup> He so greatly pleased

135. Annals, Supplement to Book V, p.352. (Ramsay).

136. Annals, Supplement to Book V. p.353. Juvenal, X. 1.85.

137. Annals, V.6, and 7 and 9.

138. Juvenal, X. 11.85 and 86.

139. Annals, XVI.18.

140. Annals, XVI.18,1.

141. Alexander Thomson, Remarks on Life of Nero, (Bohn's Suetonius). p.393.

142. Alexander Thomson, Remarks on Life of Nero. p.393.

the emperor by his entertainments and by his own charming personality, that he held his position as court favorite for several years. In the end, however, Petronius Arbiter met the fate which might have been expected, in view of the character of his master,-- a fate shared by other court favorites, before and after Petronius' time. As he had risen to favor by the prince's whim, it was not strange that he should fall when this whim changed; the career of an imperial favorite was often brilliant, but it was above all things precarious. When Nero had given himself up to the indulgence of his passions and vices, his favor naturally turned from his "Arbiter elegantiae" to a profligate like Tigellinus, who would sanction and gratify his vices.<sup>143.</sup> And finally, taking advantage of the opportunity furnished by a false accusation against Petronius, Nero was glad to destroy his former favorite.<sup>144.</sup>

Life at the Palace, even for the members of the imperial family, was not always untroubled and secure. We have seen, in following the career of Sejanus, how a powerful favorite might bring about the destruction of the relatives of the emperor. The annals of the court are interspersed with stories of dissensions, jealousies, and murders within the imperial family. The absence of any fixed law of succession to the principate gave rise to continual rivalries. At the accession of a new prince, those who, by their kinship with the late emperor, might lay claim to the imperium, were in imminent danger; for the new emperor sought to prevent conspiracies and revolts by putting out of the way all possible rivals. Gaius and Lucius,

143. Alex. Thomson, Remarks on Life of Nero, (Bohn's Class. Lib.). p. 393.

144. Annals, XVI. 18, 5.

grandsons of Augustus, were destroyed, it was believed, by the schemes of Augustus' wife, Livia, in order to secure the succession to her own son, Tiberius.<sup>145.</sup> When, at Augustus' death, Agrippa Posthumus was murdered, Tiberius was suspected of having instigated the crime.<sup>146.</sup>

In Nero's reign his step-brother, Britannicus, fell victim to the emperor's fears for the security of his power. Britannicus, the son of Claudius, was the rightful heir to the principate; but, persuaded by his wife, Claudius adopted her son, Domitius, giving him the name of Nero.<sup>147.</sup> Nero, a few years older than Britannicus, was thereafter treated as standing first in the line of succession, and at Claudius' death he was immediately proclaimed emperor.<sup>148.</sup>

A few years later, when his mother reproached him for his disobedience to her, insinuating that Britannicus, the rightful heir, might yet be placed in power, he at once resolved to destroy his step-brother.<sup>149.</sup> According to the account given by both Suetonius and Tacitus,<sup>150.</sup> the first attempt to poison him failed, on account of the weakness of the poison prepared. Thereupon Locusta, famous in the art of poisoning, was ordered to prepare a concentrated dose which would act quickly. As Britannicus sat, according to the custom at the court, with the other children of the Palace at a smaller table near that at which the emperor reclined, he was given the poison in a hot drink, and immediately after drinking it he fell unconscious. As he was carried from the room, Nero remarked that Britannicus had been afflicted from early childhood with epilepsy,

145. Annals, I.3,3.

146. Annals, I.6,4.

147. Annals, XIII.26,2.

148. Annals, XII.26 and 41 and 69.

149. Annals, XIII.15,4.

150. Annals, XIII.15-17; Suetonius, Nero, 33.



and would soon return to consciousness. Britannicus' sister, Octavia, understood what was taking place, but at the court of the tyrant she had learned to control her emotions; and "after a brief silence, the hilarity of the banquet was resumed".<sup>151.</sup>

Two other members of the imperial family fell victim to Nero's displeasure within the next decade: his mother and his young wife, Octavia. Nero gradually became weary of his mother's arrogance, and threw off all pretensions of deference to her. He banished her from the Palace, took away her accustomed escort of soldiers, and employed persons to annoy her.<sup>152.</sup> He finally decided to destroy her, and adopted the plan devised by his freedman, Anicetus.<sup>153.</sup> Pretending that he wished to effect a reconciliation with her, Nero invited Agrippina to visit him at Baeae, at the time of the festival of Minerva.<sup>154.</sup> For her return to her villa, she was given a ship so constructed that it gave way when out at sea, and Agrippina was thrown overboard;<sup>155.</sup> but she managed to save herself by swimming until she was rescued by a fisherman. Pretending to be unaware of any plot against her, she sent word to Nero that she had safely escaped from a shipwreck; and that same night she was assassinated by Anicetus.<sup>156.</sup> Nero sent a letter to the senate, charging Agrippina with an attempt to murder him through the agency of the messenger she had sent to him. He was promptly congratulated upon his escape, and thanksgivings were decreed for his safety; a few days later he entered the city with the pomp of a triumphing general, amid the

151. Annals, XIII.17,1.

152. Annals, XIII.18,4and5.

153. Annals, XIV.3,5.

154. Annals, XIV.4.

155. Annals, XIV.5.

156. Annals, XIV.6-8.

greetings and congratulations of all Rome.<sup>157</sup> Three years after his mother's death, Nero divorced Octavia in order that he might marry Poppaea Sabina.<sup>158</sup> Octavia was first banished to Campania, where she was kept under military custody, and finally, on a groundless charge of adultery, was condemned and executed.<sup>159</sup>

The picture of the court during the time from Tiberius' to Nero's reign is one of the darkest in all the period of the empire. During this time the Palace was the scene of constant plots and conspiracies against the lives of the residents there; Nor were the conspiracies confined within the imperial household; the prince was always on his guard against plots on the part of the class most affected by his tyranny, the nobility. Often a wholesale slaughter of hundreds of nobles was occasioned by the discover of a plot against the emperor. We have noted the reign of terror which followed the fall of Sejanus, when all who could be suspected of having shared in his designs, even all who had had any friendly relations with him, were destroyed. Upon the discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero, dozens of the most influential nobles perished, and many of the ancient families were entirely wiped out.<sup>160</sup> But in spite of the severe punishment of conspiracies, four of the first five emperors died by violence.

The reign of Vespasian brought a change in the life at the capital, both at the court and among the upper classes at Rome.<sup>161</sup>

157. Annals, XIV.13, 2 and 3.

158. Annals, XIV.60, 1.

159. Annals, XIV.62, 3.

160. Annals, XV.58-70.

161. Annals, III.55, 5.

A great many of the nobles had been killed during the preceding reigns, whether they fell victim to the prince's personal hatred, or aroused his greed by excessive wealth.<sup>162.</sup> With the accession of the soldier, Vespasian, a new nobility flourished at Rome; men came from Italy and the provinces, uncorrupted by the extravagance and luxury which had been rampant at the capital. This introduction of new blood, and more especially the example set by the emperor himself, wrought a revolution in manner and style of living among the upper classes.<sup>163.</sup> His time saw none of the wild extravagances of former reigns; the simplicity and frugality which were in vogue at court could not help exerting an influence upon manners outside the court. Vespasian showed none of the jealousy of his predecessors in guarding the dignity and safety of the prince's position. He abolished the custom, prevalent since Claudius' reign, of having those who came to salute the emperor searched, to make sure that they were carrying no weapons.<sup>164.</sup> Upon being warned against Metius Pomposianus, on the ground that his horoscope predicted imperial power, Vespasian made him consul, saying that if Metius should become emperor he would not forget that benefit conferred on him.<sup>165.</sup> In spite of Vespasian's frugality, Suetonius records that he constantly entertained guests at his table, often giving banquets in great state and luxury.<sup>166.</sup> He was never more genial and indulgent than at dinner, and we are told that his servants always seized their opportunity at that time to request any favor from the emperor.<sup>167.</sup>

162. Annals, III.55,3.

163. Annals, III.55,5 and 6.

164. Suetonius, Life of Vespasian, chap.12.

165. Suetonius, Life of Vespasian, chap.14.

166. Suetonius, Life of Vespasian, chap.19.

167. Suetonius, Life of Vespasian, chap.21.

Both Vespasian and his successor, Titus, were very generous in granting requests. At the games, on one occasion, Titus declared his intention of managing the games "not according to his own fancy, but that of the spectators";<sup>168.</sup> he encouraged the people to ask anything they wished, and denied none of their requests. Once at supper, reflecting that he had done nothing for anyone that day, he remarked, "My friends, I have lost a day".<sup>169.</sup> Of all who came to Titus with any petition, he sent none away without hope; and when his ministers reproached him for promising more than he could fulfill, he gave as his excuse that "No one ought to go away downcast from an audience with his prince".<sup>170.</sup> Titus' idea of the principate, that the prince should live to serve his people, stands in pleasant contrast to Nero's intoxication with the idea of his omnipotence, and his mad desire to satisfy his every whim, if only to show that he had the power to satisfy it. In contrast to Tiberius' jealous severity toward any hint of a plot against his power, it is agreeable to notice Titus' indifference to conspiracies. He showed no decrease in his affection and respect for Domitian, in spite of his brother's constant attempts to stir up rebellion against him.<sup>171.</sup> Upon being informed that two nobles were aspiring to the imperial power, he advised them to abandon their ambitions, since "sovereign power was disposed of by fate;"<sup>172.</sup> he promised, however, that he would grant any other request which they might wish to make. After the tyranny of the preceding emperors, it is not strange that at the

168. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.8.

169. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.8.

170. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.8.

171. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.9.

172. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.9.

death of this prince the people "mourned for him, as for the loss of some near relative", and that he was called "the darling and delight of mankind".<sup>173.</sup>

The Flavian period, closed by the oppressive and tyrannical reign of Domitian, was shortly followed by one of the most glorious principates of which we have record. The moderation which characterized Trajan's reign were all the more appreciated because those who now saw liberty in some measure restored were the same men who had suffered indignities and insults at the hands of Domitian. The younger Pliny, an intimate friend of the emperor, has given us in his letters a most valuable record of conditions during Trajan's principate. Trajan entirely abandoned the luxury and display which had characterized the court of Domitian. While he was generous in erecting buildings for public use, he "was ashamed of his predecessors' accumulations; of their houses and estates, ornaments and furniture, extorted from the fears of miserable subjects".<sup>174.</sup> He gave them to his friends, or sold them and devoted the returns to "works of utility and grandeur".<sup>175.</sup> Trajan's attitude and bearing throughout the whole of his reign was in accordance with the description, which Pliny gives in the Panegyric, of his arrival at Rome when he was first proclaimed emperor: he "deigned to approach the home of law and freedom on foot, unattended by guards, distinguished only by the eminence of his stature and the dignity of his bearing;... admitting the greetings of the senators on his return as emperor with

173. Alex. Thomson, Remarks on Life of Titus, (Bohn's Suetonius). p. 474.

174. Merivale, Vol. VIII, p. 62 (Pliny, Panegyric, 35.)

175. Merivale, Vol. VIII. p. 23. "

the same graciousness with which he had accepted them when he went forth as fellow-subject;.. and entering the palace of the Caesars as the modest owner of a private mansion".<sup>176.</sup>

Let us notice for a while the things that occupied the prince's attention during his leisure time. The banquets at the Palace comprised a feature of court life at least somewhat closely akin to "amusements" in the stricter sense. The "cena" of the Romans was a much more imposing ceremony than is the dinner of modern times,--- often accompanied by different sorts of entertainment, and forming one of the most common means of social intercourse. The banquets at court were naturally even more pretentious than those in an ordinary home; and they were for the imperial family the principal medium of friendly association with men and women of noble rank. Suetonius tells of banquets to which sometimes all the senators and their wives were invited, sometimes all the equestrians.<sup>177.</sup> At banquets given at the court in Claudius' time, sometimes as many as six hundred guests sat down together.<sup>178.</sup> The luxury of the court feasts naturally depended upon the fondness for display or the frugality of the prince. Augustus' banquets were moderate in luxury, as would be in accordance with his love of simplicity in other ways; but he carefully chose his guests, inviting only those who were worthy of his friendship.<sup>179.</sup> His banquets, if not sumptuous, abounded in good will and geniality, a thing which might not be said with equal truth

176. Merivale, VIII. p.23.

177. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 17.

178. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. 32.

179. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap. 74.

of some of the succeeding princes. Caligula, it is said, once fell to laughing while dining with the consuls; upon their asking the reason for his laughter, he replied, "Nothing but that, at a single nod of mine, you might both have your throats cut".<sup>180.</sup> This emperor went beyond all bounds in his wild extravagances, in the banquets which he ordered, as well as in everything else. To his table he brought new and strange eatables from all parts of the known world; it was he, we are told, who first invented the custom of drinking pearls dissolved in vinegar.<sup>181.</sup> Nero frequently began his feasting at midday, and often did not leave the banquet hall until far into the night.<sup>182.</sup> In his Golden House, the largest dwelling place ever built, extending over a great share of both the Palatine and Esquiline hills, there were vast banquet halls, with fretted ceilings of ivory, the panels of which were made to turn and scatter flowers among the guests, and were fitted with pipes to sprinkle perfumes upon them.<sup>183.</sup> The height of Roman luxury was reached during the period from the battle of Actium to the accession of Vespasian; after this time, excessive expenditures on the pleasures of the table went out of fashion. Tacitus calls Vespasian a "great promoter of economy", saying that "feelings of deference to the emperor, and a desire to follow his example, proved more powerful" than the penalties of the sumptuary laws.<sup>184.</sup>

Many of the princes took up the study of poetry as a pastime.

180. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 32.

181. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 37.

182. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap. 27.

183. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap. 31.

184. Annals, III.55,5.

Carefully instructed in their youth in both Greek and Latin language and literature, several of the early emperors showed great interest in literature, and some ability in writing prose and verse. During the first century of the empire, poetry was one of the pastimes of men of the upper classes at Rome; versification was practiced as one of the essential accomplishments of the well educated gentleman.<sup>185</sup> Writing verses was so common an amusement that even prosaic natures like the younger Pliny considered it quite necessary to write poetry at times. In one of his letters he says, "you will do quite right again to refresh yourself with poetry; not poetry that turns on subjects of length and continuity, but those little pieces of the sprightly kind of poetry, which are reliefs to other employments... You will be surprised how the mind is enlivened and refreshed by these little poetical compositions, as they turn upon love, hatred, satire, tenderness, politeness, and everything, in short, that concerns human life".<sup>186</sup> This view probably represents that of men of the upper classes; and it is not surprising that most of the princes of the first century sometimes turned to poetry as a means of refreshing their minds from the cares and duties of the principate. Augustus gathered about him a group of men who, although not famed as writers themselves, were well-known patrons of the poets of their time. This circle of literary enthusiasts included men such as Messalla and Asinius Pollio; but the center of the circle was occupied by the famous Maecenas.<sup>187</sup> Augustus, as Suetonius puts it,

185. Friedländer, Vol.III, chap.I, p.34.

186. Pliny's letters, Book VII, letter 9.

187. Friedländer, Vol.III, chap.I, p.29.



"made some attempts at poetry".<sup>188.</sup> The results of his literary efforts were a book of hexameter verse entitled "Sicily", and a book of epigrams. He undertook to write a tragedy, but, being dissatisfied with it, he destroyed the whole work. Tiberius sometimes wrote verses in both Greek and Latin, imitating the style of the Alexandrian school;<sup>189.</sup> his nephew, Germanicus, amid his soldierly pursuits, composed several Greek comedies.<sup>190.</sup> Nero seems to have written verses with ease and skill, although Tacitus thinks that the poems ascribed to him were really the work of unknown poets who either composed the verses themselves, or put Nero's faulty verses into poetical form.<sup>191.</sup> During his youth, Nero's mother had discouraged him in the study of philosophy, in the ground that it was not a proper study for a future emperor; and Seneca kept him from studying the ancient orators, lest he himself might suffer by comparison. Consequently the young prince turned his attention to poetry and music.<sup>192.</sup> Nero was the only one of the emperors who really aspired to fame in the fields of poetry and music. He instituted the "Neronian Games",<sup>193.</sup> as they were called, in imitation of the Greek festivals, in which poetical and musical contests, as well as feats of physical strength, comprised the entertainment. Although these contests were founded ostensibly to stimulate interest in poetry and music, it soon became clear that the emperor intended to be the successful contestant. It was unwise to outshine Nero in any per-

188. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.85.

189. Friedländer, Vol.III, chap.I, p.30.

190. Friedländer, Vol.III, chap.I, p.30.

191. Annals, XIV.16,2; also Martial, III,20.

192. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.52.

193. Annals, XIV.20,1.

formance, although to retain the emperor's friendship it was necessary to show an interest in and an appreciation of poetry.<sup>194</sup> The poet, Lucan, was at first welcomed into Nero's circle of friends; but shortly, having aroused Nero's jealousy by his poetical skill, he fell from favor, and was probably forbidden to recite in public.<sup>195</sup>

Nero's greatest interest was, however, in music. Suetonius describes his great diligence in acquiring skill as a harpist: he had known something of music from his youth; and after his accession to the principate he sent to Terpnus, famed at that time for skill as a harpist, inviting him to come to the court to instruct him in the art. He would sit for hours, we are told, listening to Terpnus' playing; and then he would practice far into the night trying to imitate him.<sup>196</sup> After spending some time in cultivating his voice, Nero finally ventured to appear in the theatre at Naples, as yet not daring to perform publicly at Rome.<sup>197</sup> In the following year (65), however, he appeared on the stage at Rome;--- applauded and praised by the populace, who "delighted in seeing their emperor take part in the things which they enjoyed,"<sup>198</sup> but, in the eyes of the nobles, disgracing the principate by appearing as a stage-performer. During the year which Nero spent in Achaëa, he continually took part in musical contests, and gave musical performances in all parts of the peninsula. As a contestant he always showed the greatest awe of the judges, regarding their decision as of the utmost importance; he would often degrade his dignity by railling at his adversaries as if

194. Friedländer, Vol.III, chap.I, p. 32.

195. Friedländer, VOL.III, chap.I, p.32.

196. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.20.

197. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.20; also Annals, XV.33.

198. Annals, XVI.4,1.

he were entirely on a level with them, sometimes bribing them to allow him to win in the contest.<sup>199</sup> Nero is said to have been so sensitive to others' opinion of his musical ability, that he "declared his friendship or enmity according as each man praised and applauded his singing."<sup>200</sup> He seems to have considered his success as a musician of far greater importance than his duties as head of the Roman empire. During his tour through Greece his freedman, Helius, was left to control affairs at Rome; and when Helius wrote that the situation in Rome demanded his presence, he wrote in reply, "you ought rather to advise and hope that I may come back with a character worthy of a Nero."<sup>201</sup> When Nero finally did return to Rome, he entered the city in a splendid procession, wearing one of the crowns which he had won, and having the rest borne before him.<sup>202</sup>

Nero cannot, however, be taken as a fair representative of the emperors of the first century. No other prince gave himself up so wholly to a pursuit foreign to his duties of administration; poetry and music in most cases held a place in the prince's life as pastimes, but not as essential occupations. Vespasian, although no poet himself, encouraged others in literary pursuits by his approval and his gifts; the tragedian, Apelles, and the harpist, Terpnus, were among the many who were richly rewarded by his generosity.<sup>203</sup> His son, Titus, who had been brought up at court as a companion of Britannicus, had been carefully instructed in both Greek and Latin.<sup>204</sup> He is mentioned by Pliny as a poet, and Suetonius says that "he made

199. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.23.

200. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.25.

201. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.23.

202. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.25.

203. Suetonius, Life of Vespasian, chap.19.

204. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap.2.

speeches and wrote verses in Latin and Greek with ease and readiness".<sup>205</sup> Titus also devoted some attention to singing and to playing on the harp. Domitian instituted contests in music, oratory, and poetry, one at the festival of Minerva, and another in honor of Jupiter Capitolinus,<sup>206</sup> but not, like Nero's, to the exclusion of all talent except his own. Genius was allowed to flourish, and was really encouraged at the contests. During the early part of his life, Domitian showed a great taste for poetry, and frequently recited in public.<sup>207</sup> Martial, with his usual tone of flattery, calls him the "Lord of the sisters nine".<sup>208</sup> At the opening of Hadrian's principate, Juvenal expresses a hope that better fortunes are in store for poets, since an indulgent emperor is ready to be their patron.<sup>209</sup> Hadrian, one of the most cultured of the emperors, devoted a great deal of time to writings both in prose and verse; of the few of his verses now extant, at least one, which has been translated by Merivale, shows poetical ability.<sup>210</sup>

Besides the prince's literary pastimes, there were certain amusements of the common people in which he shared, sometimes probably more from policy than from any enjoyment afforded. Among these, one was the ancient custom of exchanging holiday gifts and greetings; another, the attending of the spectacles. The latter occupation undoubtedly afforded real amusement to most of the emperors; the former, which must have been more or less a burden, was kept up by most

205. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap. 3.

206. Suetonius, Life of Domitian, chap. 4.

207. Suetonius, Life of Domitian, chap. 2.

208. Friedländer, Vol. III, chap. I, p. 33.

209. Juvenal, VII. 1. 1.

210. Friedländer, Vol. III, p. 34.

of the emperors as a valuable means of gaining popularity. During the Saturnalian festival the emperor often exchanged gifts with the common people. According to the ancient custom, the poor took the initiative, giving some trifle, in hope of a larger gift in return.<sup>211</sup> The Kalends of January was a holiday, when the emperor, in his robes of state, received the good wishes and gifts of the knights and senators, and of the populace as well. The citizens would file past the prince, each presenting his good wishes for the new year, with his new year's gift, usually a coin; and each would receive from him a gift, larger, of course, than the one given.<sup>212</sup> It is not difficult to imagine that this ceremony was a very tedious one for the emperor; it often lasted for days, and even for weeks. Tiberius forbade new year's gifts to be given after the Kalends, and returned no gifts except on that day, although then he returned them four-fold with his own hand.<sup>213</sup> Often, however, he tried to avoid the ceremony altogether, by absenting himself from Rome during the holiday.<sup>214</sup> The emperors frequently gave presents to the populace at the games, particularly during the time of the Saturnalia; at a splendid festival given by Domitian, all sorts of gifts were showered down upon the people from the top of the amphitheatre.<sup>215</sup> Suetonius gives an idea of the sorts of things given to the populace at the spectacles: in his list he names corn tickets, fowls, clothing, gold, silver, gems, pearls, pictures; besides these there were ships, houses, lands, slaves, beasts of burden, given in lottery.<sup>216</sup>

211. Emile Thomas, Chap.V. p.124.

212. Thomas, Chap.V. p.118.

213. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, 34.

214. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, 34.

215. Thomas, Chap.V. p.126.

216. Suetonius, Nero, chap.11.

Such gifts formed a part of the amusement regularly expected and greatly enjoyed by the people when they attended the games.

We shall briefly consider the subject of the games, important in that they served the double purpose of furnishing the prince with a means of keeping the populace contented, and also a means of amusement for all classes alike, from prince to plebeian. In the general class of "spectacles" we may include three different types of amusement,-- the circensian games, the entertainments of the arena, and the theatrical games. It is surprising to notice how great a place, in point of time, at least, the games occupied in the lives of the Romans. The games ordinarily lasted from sunrise to sunset; and the number of days thus wholly devoted to the spectacles was gradually increased from eighty seven in the time of Tiberius, to one hundred thirty five in the time of Marcus Aurelius. In the later period of the empire, as many as one hundred seventy five days were regularly set aside for the spectacles.<sup>217</sup> Besides the regular games, extraordinary games were frequently given, sometimes by the aediles, to gain popularity, and sometimes to celebrate some extraordinary occasion. At the dedication of the Colosseum, Titus furnished extraordinary games lasting one hundred one days; and Trajan, to celebrate his victory over the Dacians, gave spectacles lasting one hundred twenty three days.<sup>218</sup> When we consider the amount of time given over to the spectacles, we wonder that the Romans had time to do anything except attend the games. But the Roman's devotion to the games, his chief amusement, was only a natural result of the imperial system established by Augustus. Juvenal aptly describes the

217. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 12.

218. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 12.

situation in saying "From the time when we ceased to sell our votes, the crowd has put off all cares; for now the populace which once awarded imperium, fasces, legions, and everything, anxiously desires two things only, 'panem et circenses'".<sup>219</sup> Since republican times the populace had been fed by public corn doles; and in order to keep the idle crowd contented, and to prevent them from resenting the loss of their powers, Augustus adopted the policy of keeping them amused by public entertainments. The emperor himself, if he were wise, made a practice of attending the games as frequently as possible. It was of value to him to make the people feel that he shared and enjoyed their pleasures. ~~Aside~~ from the custom of exchanging holiday gifts, the games furnished almost the one point of contact between the emperor and the people; and most of the princes considered this one point of contact too valuable to be neglected. Thus we find that the emperor very frequently attended and presided at the spectacles. We cannot suppose, of course that policy was the only motive for attendance; for it would be strange if the prince were indifferent to this amusement which appealed so powerfully to the great majority of the Romans. At any rate, it is certain that many of the prince's leisure hours were spent in watching the games; and although not a part of the life at court, they at least held an important place in the life of the emperor. Augustus was frequently absent from the games, but when present he never read letters or sent dispatches, a practice which had brought down criticism upon his uncle, Julius Caesar;<sup>220</sup> Suetonius seems uncertain, however,

219. Juvenal, X. 1,81.

220. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.45.

whether Augustus' attitude was assumed so as to avoid criticism, or whether he really enjoyed the games. In contrasting Augustus and Tiberius with regard to their attitude toward the theatrical games, Tacitus says, "Augustus was himself also fond of entertainments of this kind, and it was a part of his popular policy to share in the amusements of the people. Very different was the temperament of Tiberius; but as the people had been indulged for so many years, he did not venture as yet to turn their tastes in a more serious direction"<sup>221</sup>. After Tiberius had become more firmly established in the principate, he not only absented himself from the games on most occasions,<sup>222</sup> but he also reduced the expenditures for the entertainments, and restricted the number of gladiators to be exhibited.<sup>223</sup> Claudius frequently entertained the people with magnificent spectacles; he was always good natured and often hilarious at the games, frankly enjoying them himself.<sup>224</sup> He was so fond of gladiatorial combats that he would often go to the amphitheatre at daybreak, and even sit through the noon hour.<sup>225</sup> At the dedication of the Flavian amphitheatre, Titus gave the most splendid games; beside other amusements, of which one was a great naval fight in the Naumachia, he brought into the arena in one day as many as five thousand wild beasts.<sup>226</sup> The emperor Trajan, however, surpassed all his predecessors, both in the frequency and the splendor of his entertainments. A later writer calls his prodigality in furnishing games "a sign of great statesmanship"<sup>227</sup>.

221. Annals, I.54.

222. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap. 47.

223. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap. 34.

224. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. 21.

225. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. 34.

226. Suetonius, Life of Titus, chap. 7.

227. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I. p. 3.



As the imperial family entered the amphitheatre or the circus, and seated themselves in the place reserved for them, the populace rose and applauded; congratulations and good wishes to the emperor and his family were shouted by thousands of Roman citizens.<sup>228</sup> Frequently when the emperor himself was absent, some other member of the imperial family presided at the games and received the acclamations of the crowd. When Claudius, before his accession, was presiding in Caligula's place, he was greeted by shouts of "Success to the emperor's uncle! Hail, brother of Germanicus!"<sup>229</sup> Nero and Domitian viewed the spectacles from an inclosed imperial box; but Trajan is praised by Pliny for not following his predecessors' example in this respect, on the ground that it was wise for the emperor to let the citizens see him "sitting publicly amongst them".<sup>230</sup> Sometimes in their boyhood the princes took part in the entertainments, particularly in the "Trojan game", a representation of the siege of Troy, in which sons of nobles took part.<sup>231</sup> Beyond this, none of the early emperors participated in the games, except Nero; he habitually performed in the theatre, and often took part in the races as a charioteer.<sup>232</sup>

Of the three classes of spectacles, the circensian games were the most popular at the time of the early empire. In the later republican times, the gladiatorial combats had been best liked, but the custom of betting on the different factions in the circus gave first place to the races.<sup>233</sup> Pliny scoffs at the populace for being

228. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 4.

229. Suetonius, Life of Claudius, chap. .

230. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 4.

231. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap. 43

232. Annals, XIV. 14.

233. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 12.

so fascinated by the races, and particularly at their enthusiasm for a certain faction. If they enjoyed the speed of the horses or the skill of the drivers, "there might be some pretense of reason for it".<sup>234.</sup> But "it is the dress that takes their fancy;.. such mighty charms, such wondrous power reside in the color of a paltry tunic".<sup>234.</sup> He is surprised that this fascination exists not only "with the common crowd, but even with serious-minded people".<sup>234.</sup> As a matter of fact, even the emperors would sometimes take sides in the races, and cheer for their favorite color. When Domitian was present at the circus, few dared to take sides against him;<sup>235.</sup> but under Titus the people were freely allowed to cheer what faction they pleased. He himself usually took sides at the races, applauding his favorite color, and jeering at his opponents.<sup>236.</sup>

Beside furnishing the people with their chief form of amusement, the games gave them an opportunity to express their complaints and their desires; and as a rule, great freedom was allowed to them in giving voice to their wishes at the spectacles. The demonstrations of the populace, usually at the theatre, where the whole multitude would shout out demands, were of all the more importance because there were now no popular assemblies where they might express their opinions; these comprised the one method still left the Roman people of making known their wishes and of obtaining what they desired.<sup>237.</sup> Often the demand made referred to the games themselves, -- demands for a certain kind of entertainment, for the freedom of a combatant, for rewards for favorite actors.<sup>238.</sup> Requests of other kinds were

234. Pliny's letters, Book IX. letter, 6.

235. Friedländer, Vol.II, chap.I, p.5

236. Friedländer, Vol.II, chap.I, p.3

237. Friedländer, Vol.II, chap.I, p.5.

238. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, 47, (e.g.)

often made as well; even the haughty Tiberius felt obliged to grant the request that he should restore a certain statue of Lysippus', which he had taken from Agrippa.<sup>239</sup> After he had been obliged by a demand of the people to grant the freedom of the comedian, Actius, he seldom attended the games, "lest the people should again be too importunate in their requests".<sup>240</sup>

It is not difficult to see that the prince's attitude at the games would in large measure determine the feeling of the populace toward him. A prince could, by generosity in giving spectacles, frank enjoyment of them, and leniency in granting the people's requests, gain for himself the greatest affection of the people. While on the other hand, a Tiberius, with his grudging attendance at the games, or a Domitian, with his stern and haughty attitude, could make himself feared and hated by the people. The tyrants, Caligula and Nero, were popular with the crowd, because of their prodigality in furnishing entertainments. Long afterward the name of Nero was remembered with joy, and an emperor who was favored by the populace was hailed by the name of Nero.<sup>241</sup> Thus the spectacles occupied a place in the prince's life of far greater importance than that of one among many forms of amusement. They were, in their deepest significance, one of the foundation stones in the structure of the imperial power.

239. Friedländer, Vol. II, chap. I, p. 5.

240. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap. 47.

241. Suetonius, Life of Otho, chap. 7.

## CHAPTER III. General Survey of the Character of Court Life.

As we have already noted, the imperial court, as established by Augustus, had none of the pomp and display which we naturally would expect in an "imperial court". Augustus' reasons for avoiding such display are not far to seek: he had learned from the fate of his adoptive father the danger of appearing to seek for absolute power, and the danger of arousing the jealousy of contemporaries.<sup>242</sup> The name and appearance of monarchy was odious to the Romans; and Augustus' only possible way of holding monarchical power was to conceal it in every possible manner. One of the easiest and most natural methods of disguising his imperial power was to avoid, in his style of living, everything which would seem to set him above ordinary citizens. He therefore chose the unassuming title of "First citizen," and in every way practicable he lived up to the title. He bore himself always as "first among the citizens", but not in any essential way different from them.<sup>243</sup> He lived on the Palatine, in a small house belonging to Hortensius,<sup>244</sup> which was remarkable for nothing except its simplicity. He attended the games as a matter of policy, in order that, by sharing their amusements, he might make the people feel that he was one of them.<sup>245</sup> The titles by which Augustus allowed himself to be addressed were carefully chosen in such a way as to avoid any odium; he refused the title of "dominus", which might arouse the antagonism of the Romans,<sup>246</sup> but accepted that of "Imper-

242. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.45.

243. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.53.

244. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.72.

245. Annals, I.54.

246. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.53.

ator", which had often before been given to a successful general by his soldiers.<sup>247</sup> The title of "Augustus" was also free from any unpleasant associations in the mind of the Roman.<sup>248</sup> Augustus allowed freedom of speech in the senate, permitting criticism of himself, as if his position were no different from that of men influential in political affairs under the Republic. He calmly ignored insolence and even serious libels,<sup>249</sup> for it was not in harmony with his policy that libels against the emperor should be considered as offenses against the state.

While the founder of the empire lived, all outward show of monarchy was avoided, both in his actions and in his manner of living. Let us see whether we can trace any consistent and continuous change, as time went on, in the character of life at the court, and in the outward display of the despotic power which was established and so sedulously disguised during the reign of Augustus. Augustus' immediate successor, Tiberius, imitated him in avoiding all adulatory titles, and all undue honors. He declined to accept the flattering honors decreed to him at the opening of his reign, refusing the titles of "Emperor" and "Pater patriae", and forbidding the giving of his name to the month of September.<sup>250</sup> He severely rebuked persons who addressed him as "dominus", and displayed dislike for all forms of flattery.<sup>251</sup> He did not, however, follow consistently the statesmanlike policy of Augustus; his haughty manner, even at the very beginning of his principate, was bound to make his rule offensive to those with whom he came into contact.<sup>252</sup> As time went on, Tiberius

247. Davis, p.28. 248. Davis, p.28.

249. Suetonius, Life of Augustus, chap.54.

250. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap.26.

251. Suetonius, Life of Tiberius, chap.27.

252. Annals, I.7,7; also, 8,6.

made the despotism of the imperial system all too evident by his pernicious enforcement of the law of "majestas".<sup>254</sup> To regard slurring words against the emperor as acts of treason against the state was a long step toward making the government openly a despotism. One by one the members of the imperial family were destroyed, as each fell victim to the jealous cowardice of Tiberius, or to the schemes of the favorite Sejanus. The favorites at court were those who acted as informers; and many men of the highest rank stooped to make accusations against even their closest friends, as the one method of avoiding destruction and of retaining the tyrant's favor.<sup>255</sup> The class known as "delatores", whom Augustus had discouraged,<sup>256</sup> Tiberius at first ignored or treated with contempt.<sup>257</sup> Gradually, however, his policy changed, until finally he openly encouraged and abetted them;<sup>258</sup> when a decree of the senate was proposed, providing that the informers be deprived of a share in the confiscated property of an accused man who committed suicide before his condemnation, Tiberius replied that they would "better upset the laws than remove their guardians".<sup>259</sup> And yet, although Tiberius' jealousy and cowardice made his reign tyrannical, the home of the tyrant had not yet become an "imperial court". The Palace was not notable for its splendor or ostentation. The freedmen who had charge of the house offices had not yet become important figures in state affairs; and the emperor bore himself as in no way higher than a mortal,<sup>260</sup> attempt-

254. Annals, I.72.

255. Annals, VI.3 and 7.

256. Suetonius, Augustus, chap.32.

257. Annals, I.73.

258. Annals, I.74.

259. Annals, IV.30.

260. Annals, IV.38, 1.

ing faithfully to discharge the heavy duties laid upon him.

Caligula's pretensions to divinity, his alleged communications with Jupiter, and his plans to build a palace in the court of the capitol in order to be nearer to the God,<sup>261</sup> are clearly the results of a disordered brain rather than of any plan or policy. Caligula seems always to have been actuated by a mad desire to show his omnipotence, whether it appealed to his fancy to bridge the bay of Baeae,<sup>262</sup> or to compel senators to attend his chariot and wait upon him at table.<sup>263</sup> As opposed to the original policy of concealing the despotism, Caligula took delight in parading it before the world. Senselessly extravagant, he drained the treasury of the empire to furnish luxurious baths, banquet halls, and feasts, declaring that a man "ought either to be frugal or be Caesar."<sup>264</sup>

In his reign, too, the imperial freedmen in charge of the house offices of secretary, treasurer, and master of petitions, began to be important as state offices; Callistus, as Master of Petitions, exercised enormous influence in public affairs.<sup>265</sup> The growth in importance of house services at the Palace was an indication that the emperor's home was becoming more and more an imperial court with its circle of influential courtiers. In Claudius' reign the influence of the imperial freedmen reached its height, when the emperor's secretary, Narcissus, and his treasurer, Pallas, were the real masters of the empire. The official services within the imperial household continued to be held by freedmen until, by the time of Hadrian,

261. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 22.

262. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 19.

263. Suetonius, Life of Caligula, chap. 26.

264. Suetonius, Caligula, chap. 37.

265. Friedländer, Vol. I, chap. II, p. 39.

these positions were the "objects of the knights' ambitions".<sup>266.</sup> Thus in one respect there seems to be a more or less continuous development in the change from the "home of the first citizen" to the "court of the absolute monarch",-- namely, the growth in importance of the positions of the emperor's personal assistants until they became public offices, held by men of some rank and influence, and regarded as posts of political preferment.

We do not, however, find the same consistent change with regard to the splendor and ostentation at the Palace. There seems to be a continuous increase in display until we come to the end of Nero's reign; in his principate the splendor of the court far surpassed that of any former emperor. This prince accepted the basest adulation and flattery, hearing all his crimes extolled as virtues, and celebrated by public vows and thanksgivings.<sup>267.</sup> At the games he set himself above all others by viewing the spectacles from an inclosed imperial box.<sup>268.</sup> His Golden House, with all its extravagant display, was the largest dwelling place ever built;<sup>269.</sup> the extent of its courts and porticoes was ridiculed by a popular verse,

"Roma domus fiet; Veios migrate, Quirites,

Si non et Veios occupat ista domus".<sup>270.</sup>

After the period of confusion which succeeded Nero's death, there was a revolution in the character of court life,-- a reversion from the extravagances of the preceding reigns to a frugality almost resembling that of early Roman times. Vespasian's reign, as even

266. Friedländer, Vol.I, chap.II, p.34.

267. Annals, XIV.10,5, and 12,1.

268. Friedländer, Vol.II, chap.I, p.4.

269. Inge, chap.10, p.248.

270. Suetonius, Life of Nero, chap.39.



the pessimistic Tacitus admits, wrought a moral revolution among the upper classes at Rome;<sup>271</sup> moderation and frugality were imitated from the example set by the emperor. But, if we pass over the reigns of Vespasian and Titus as exceptions, we find in Domitian's principate a fitting culmination of the increase in the splendor at the court. Domitian openly assumed the role of absolute sovereign, maintaining a court such as might have existed in any oriental despotism. He chose to be addressed by the titles of "Dominus" and "Deus";<sup>272</sup> in public he habitually wore the purple triumphal robes, "with a pomp and circumstance carefully shunned by the less pretentious 'first citizens' of the earlier principate".<sup>273</sup> When we come to consider Trajan's reign, however, we again encounter a revolution, a reversion to the original imperial policy. Again the emperor posed as "first citizen", gave the senate a nominal share in the government, and, in fine, to use Pliny's expression, restored "Liberty"<sup>274</sup> to the Roman state. We are finally led to the conclusion that there was no consistent and continuous development in the character of court life under the successive emperors; that the sort of court maintained by princes of the character of Nero and Domitian would necessarily be different from the court of a prince like Trajan. There were, however, certain inherent weaknesses in the policy adopted by Augustus which opened the way for abuses under the succeeding emperors. The effort of Augustus to keep from the home of the princeps any appearance of being the court of an absolute monarch necessitated the pol-

271. Annals, III.55.

272. Suetonius, Life of Domitian, chap.13.

273. Davis, chap.II, p.100.

274. Pliny's Letters, BookVIII, letter14.

icy of placing the emperor's freedmen in charge of official functions within the emperor's household; we have already considered the evil which resulted from this policy,-- the undue influence of freedmen in state affairs, which gradually increased until its culmination in the principate of Claudius. Augustus' effort to maintain a show of liberty resulted in the absence of any fixed law of succession to the imperium. To maintain the pretense that the supreme power was still in the hands of the senate, he went through the farce of receiving his imperial power by the vote of the senate.<sup>275</sup> Thus, since the imperium was nominally bestowed by that body, no member of the emperor's family had a preeminent claim to the succession; and as a result, as we have already seen,<sup>276</sup> during the early empire we find continual jealousies, quarrels and murders within the imperial family. "It was the fiction of freedom," says Ramsay, "with the absence of any recognized law of succession in the imperial family, which deluged Rome with her own best blood, and finally extirpated the family of the Caesars."<sup>277</sup>

A study of the state of affairs at the court cannot be taken as a representation of the conditions throughout the empire. The historians give much of their attention to the life at the court and the life of the nobility at Rome; and in reading the histories of the early empire we are unconsciously inclined to judge the conditions throughout the empire by those which existed at court and among the nobility at the capital. But while the character of the individual

275. Annals, I. 11.

276. Chapter II, p. 31.

277. Ramsay, note on Annals; I. 11.

emperors deeply affected life at Rome itself, the people in Italy and the provinces enjoyed a more even existence, little affected by cruelties of the princes and by the dangers at the capital. The faults and weaknesses of the imperial system become less noticeable when we view the condition of the empire as a whole; and after all the excesses, abuses, and crimes of the Claudian Caesars, we find that the empire was, at the close of the period with which we have been dealing, just entering upon the period of its greatest power and prosperity.