

70. At Rome, too, when the Tenth Legion agitated for their discharge and bounty and were terrorizing the city, Caesar defied the advice of his friends and at once confronted the mutineers in person. Again he would have disbanded them, though the African war was still being hotly fought; but by addressing them as 'Citizens' he readily regained their affections. A shout went up: 'We are your soldiers, Caesar, not civilians!' and they clamoured to serve under him in Africa: a demand which he nevertheless disdained to grant. He showed his contempt for the more disaffected soldiers by withholding a third part of the prize-money and land which had been set aside for them.

71. Even as a young man Caesar was well known for the devotion and loyalty he showed his dependants. While praetor in Africa, he protected a nobleman's son named Masintha against the tyranny of Hiempsal, King of Numidia; with such devotion that in the course of the quarrel he caught Juba, the Numidian heir-apparent, by the beard. Masintha, being then declared the King's vassal, was arrested; but Caesar immediately rescued him from the Numidian guards and harboured him in his own quarters for a long while. At the close of this praetorship Caesar sailed for Spain, taking Masintha with him. The lictors carrying their rods of office, and the crowds, who had come to say goodbye, acted as a screen; nobody realized that Masintha was hidden in Caesar's litter.

72. He showed consistent affection to his friends. Gaius Oppius, travelling by his side once through a wild forest, suddenly fell sick; but Caesar insisted on his using the only shelter that offered - a wood-cutter's hut, hardly large enough for a single occupant - while he and the rest of his staff slept outside on the bare ground. Having attained supreme power he raised some of his friends, including men of humble birth, to high office and brushed aside criticism by saying: 'If bandits and cut-throats had helped to defend my honour, I should have shown them gratitude in the same way.'

73. Yet, when given the chance, he would always cheerfully come to terms with his bitterest enemies. He supported Gaius Memmius' candidature for the consulship, though they had both spoken most damagingly against each other. When Gaius Calvus, after his cruel lampoons of Caesar, made a move towards reconciliation through mutual friends, Caesar took the initiative by writing him a friendly

letter. Valerius Catullus had also libelled him in his verses about Mamurra¹, yet Caesar, while admitting that these were a permanent blot on his name, accepted Catullus' apology and invited him to dinner that same afternoon, and never interrupted his friendship with Catullus' father.

74. Caesar was not naturally vindictive; and if he crucified the pirates who had held him to ransom, this was only because he had sworn in their presence to do so; and he first mercifully cut their throats. He could never bring himself to take vengeance on Cornelius Phagita, even though in his early days, while he was sick and a fugitive from Sulla, Cornelius had tracked him down night after night and demanded large sums of hush-money. On discovering that Philemon, his slave-secretary, had been induced to poison him, Caesar ordered a simple execution, without torture. When Publius Clodius was accused of adultery with Caesar's wife Pompeia, in sacrilegious circumstances, and both her mother-in-law Aurelia and her sister-in-law Julia had given the court a detailed and truthful account of the affair, Caesar himself refused to offer any evidence. The Court then asked him why, in that case, he had divorced Pompeia. He replied: 'Because I cannot have members of my household accused or even suspected.'

75. Nobody can deny that during the Civil War, and after, he behaved with wonderful restraint and clemency. Whereas Pompey declared that all who were not actively with the government were against it and would be treated as public enemies, Caesar announced that all who were not actively against him were with him. He allowed every centurion whom he had appointed on Pompey's recommendation to join the Pompeian forces if he pleased. At Ilerda, in Spain, the articles of capitulation were being discussed between Caesar and the Pompeian generals Afranius and Petreius, and the rival armies were fraternizing, when Afranius suddenly decided not to surrender and massacred every Caesarean soldier found in his camp. Yet Caesar could not bring himself to pay Afranius back in the same coin. During the battle of Pharsalus he shouted to his men: 'Spare your fellow-Romans!' and then allowed them to save one enemy soldier apiece, whoever he might be. My researches show that not a single Pompeian was killed at Pharsalus, once the fighting had ended, except Afranius

1. Catullus, *Poems* 29 and 57.

and Faustus and young Lucius Caesar. It is thought that not even these three were killed at his instance, though Afranius and Faustus had taken up arms again after he had spared their lives, and Lucius Caesar had cruelly cut the throats of the dictator's slaves and freedmen, even butchering the wild beasts brought by him to Rome for a public show! Eventually, towards the end of his career, Caesar invited back to Italy all exiles whom he had not yet pardoned, permitting them to hold magistracies and command armies; and went so far as to restore the statues of Sulla and Pompey, which the city crowds had thrown down and smashed. He also preferred to discourage rather than punish any plots against his life, or any slanders on his name. All that he would do when he detected such plots, or became aware of secret nocturnal meetings, was to announce openly that he knew about them. As for slanderers, he contented himself with warning them in public to keep their mouths shut; and good-naturedly took no action either against Aulus Caccina for his most libellous pamphlet or against Pitholaus for his scurrilous verses.

76. Yet other deeds and sayings of Caesar's may be set to the debit account, and justify the conclusion that he deserved assassination. Not only did he accept excessive honours, such as a life-consulship, a life-dictatorship, a perpetual Censorship, the title 'Imperator' put before his name, and the title 'Father of his Country' appended to it, also a statue standing among those of the ancient kings, and a raised couch placed in the orchestra at the Theatre; but took other honours which, as a mere mortal, he should certainly have refused. These included a golden throne in the Senate House, and another on the tribunal; a ceremonial chariot and litter for carrying his statue in the religious procession around the Circus; temples, altars, and divine images; a priest of his own cult; a new college of Lupercals to celebrate his divinity; and the renaming of the seventh month as 'July'. Few, in fact, were the honours which he was not pleased to accept or assume.

His third and fourth consulships were merely titular; the dictatorship conferred on him at the same time supplied all the authority he needed. And in both years he substituted two new Consuls for himself during the last quarter, meanwhile letting only tribunes and aediles of the people be elected, and appointing prefects instead of praetors to govern the city during his absence.

One of the Consuls died suddenly on New Year's Eve and, when

someone asked to hold office for the remaining few hours, Caesar granted his request. He showed equal scorn of traditional precedent by choosing magistrates several years ahead, decorating ten former praetors with the emblems of consular rank, and admitting to the Senate men of foreign birth, including semi-civilized Gauls, who had been granted Roman citizenship. He placed his own slaves in charge of the Mint and the public revenues, and sent one of his favourites, a freedman's son, to command the three legions stationed at Alexandria.

77. Titus Ampius has recorded some of Caesar's public statements which reveal a similar presumption: that the Republic was nothing – a mere name without form or substance; that Sulla had proved himself a dunce by resigning his dictatorship; and that, now his own word was law, people ought to be more careful how they approached him. Once, when a soothsayer reported that a sacrificial beast had been found to have no heart – an unlucky omen indeed – Caesar told him arrogantly: 'The omens will be more favourable when I wish them to be; meanwhile I am not at all surprised that a beast should lack the organ which inspires our finer feelings.'

78. What made the Romans hate him so bitterly was that when, one day, the entire Senate, armed with an imposing list of honours that they had just voted him, came to where he sat in front of the Temple of Mother Venus, he did not rise to greet them. According to some accounts he would have risen had not Cornelius Balbus prevented him; according to others, he made no such move and grimaced angrily at Gaius Trebatius who suggested this courtesy. The case was aggravated by a memory of Caesar's behaviour during one of his triumphs: he had ridden past the benches reserved for the tribunes of the people, and shouted in fury at a certain Pontius Aquila, who had kept his seat: 'Hey, there, Aquila the tribune! Do you want me to restore the Republic?' For several days after this incident he added to every undertaking he gave: 'With the kind consent of Pontius Aquila.'

79. This open insult to the Senate was emphasized by an even worse example of his arrogance. As he returned to Rome from the Alban Hill, where the Latin Festival had been celebrated, a member of the crowd set a laurel wreath bound with a royal white fillet on the head of his statue. Two tribunes of the people, Epidius Marullus and Caesetius Flavus, ordered the fillet to be removed at once and the

offender imprisoned. But Caesar reprimanded and summarily deposed them both: either because the suggestion that he should be crowned King had been so rudely rejected, or else because – this was his own version – they had given him no chance to reject it himself and so earn deserved credit. From that day forward, however, he lay under the odious suspicion of having tried to revive the title of King; though, indeed, when the commons greeted him with ‘Long live the King!’ he now protested: ‘No, I am Caesar, not King’; and though, again, when he was addressing the crowd from the Rostra at the Lupercalian Festival, and Mark Antony, the Consul, made several attempts to crown him, he refused the offer each time and at last sent the crown away for dedication to Capitoline Jupiter. What made matters worse was a persistent rumour that Caesar intended to move the seat of government to Troy or Alexandria, carrying off all the national resources, drafting every available man in Italy for military service, and letting his friends govern the city. At the next meeting of the House (it was further whispered), Lucius Cotta would announce a decision of the Fifteen who had charge of the Sibylline Books, that since these prophetic writings stated clearly: ‘Only a king can conquer the Parthians,’ the title of King must be conferred on Caesar.

80. Because his enemies shrank from agreeing to this proposal, they pressed on with their plans for his assassination. Several groups, each consisting of two or three malcontents, now united in a general conspiracy. Even the commons had come to disapprove of how things were going, and no longer hid their disgust at Caesar’s tyrannical rule but openly demanded champions to protect their ancient liberties. When foreigners were admitted to the Senate someone put up a poster which read: ‘Long live our country;’¹ but if any newly-appointed senator inquires the way to the Senate House, let nobody direct him there!’ And the following popular song was sung everywhere:

Caesar led the Gauls in triumph,
Led them uphill, led them down,
To the Senate House he took them,
Once the glory of our town.
‘Pull those breeches off,’ he shouted,
‘Change into a purple gown!’

1. *Bonum factum (sit)*, a formula prefixed to edicts.

As Quintus Maximus, one of the three-months’ Consuls, entered the Theatre, the lictor called out as usual: ‘Make way for the Consul!’ Cries of protest went up: ‘What? For him? He’s no Consul!’ The deposition of Caesetius and Marullus caused such widespread annoyance that at the next Consular elections the commons cast a great many votes in their favour. Someone then wrote on the pedestal of Lucius Brutus’ statue: ‘If only you were alive now!’ and on that of Caesar himself:

‘Brutus was elected Consul
When he sent the kings away;
Caesar sent the Consuls packing,
Caesar is our King today.’

More than sixty conspirators banded together against him, led by Gaius Cassius and Marcus and Decimus Brutus. A suggested plan was to wait until the consular elections, when Caesar would take his stand on the wooden bridge along which voters walked to the poll; one group of conspirators would then topple him over, while another waited underneath with daggers drawn. An alternative was to attack him in the Sacred Way or at the entrance to the Theatre. The conspirators wavered between these plans until Caesar called a meeting of the Senate in the Pompeian Assembly Room for the Ides of March; they then decided at once that this would be a convenient time and place.

81. Unmistakable signs forewarned Caesar of his assassination. A few months previously the veterans who had been sent to colonize Capua under the Julian Law were breaking up some ancient tombs in search of stone for their new farm-houses – all the more eagerly when they came across a large hoard of ancient vases. One of these tombs proved to be that of Capys, founder of the city, and there they found a bronze tablet with a Greek inscription to this effect: ‘Disturb the bones of Capys, and a man of Trojan stock will be murdered by his kindred, and later avenged at great cost to Italy.’ This story should not be dismissed as idle fiction, or a lie, because our authority for it is none other than Cornelius Balbus, a close friend of Caesar’s. Soon afterwards news reached Caesar that a herd of horses which he had dedicated to the river Rubicon, after fording it, and allowed to roam untended in the valley, were beginning to show a repugnance for the

pasture and shedding bucketfuls of tears. Again, during a sacrifice, the augur Spurinna warned Caesar that the danger threatening him would not come later than the Ides of March; and on the day before the Ides a little bird, called the King Bird, flew into the Hall of Pompey with a sprig of laurel in its beak - pursued by a swarm of different birds from a near-by copse, which tore it to pieces there and then. And on his last night Caesar dreamed that he was soaring above the clouds, and then shaking hands with Jupiter; while his wife Calpurnia dreamed that the gable ornament, resembling that of a temple, which had been one of the honours voted him by the Senate, collapsed, and there he lay stabbed in her arms! She awoke suddenly and the bedroom door burst open of its own accord.

These warnings, and ill-health, made him hesitate for some time whether to go ahead with his plans, or whether to postpone the meeting. Finally Decimus Brutus persuaded him not to disappoint the Senate, who had been in full session for some time, waiting for him to arrive. It was about ten o'clock when he set off for the House. As he went, someone handed him a note containing details of the plot against his life, but he merely added it to the bundle of petitions in his left hand, which he intended to read later. Several victims were then sacrificed, and despite consistently unfavourable omens, he entered the House, deriding Spurinna as a false prophet. 'The Ides of March have come,' he said. 'Yes, they have come,' replied Spurinna, 'but they have not yet gone.'

82. As soon as Caesar took his seat the conspirators crowded around him as if to pay their respects. Tillius Cimber, who had taken the lead, came up close, pretending to ask a question. Caesar made a gesture of postponement, but Cimber caught hold of his shoulders. 'This is violence!' Caesar cried, and at that moment, as he turned away, one of the Casca brothers with a sweep of his dagger stabbed him just below the throat. Caesar grasped Casca's arm and ran it through with his stylus; he was leaping away when another dagger blow stopped him. Confronted by a ring of drawn daggers, he drew the top of his gown over his face, and at the same time ungirded the lower part, letting it fall to his feet so that he would die with both legs decently covered. Twenty-three dagger thrusts went home as he stood there. Caesar did not utter a sound after Casca's blow had drawn a groan from him; though some say that when he saw Marcus Brutus about

to deliver the second blow, he reproached him in Greek with: 'You, too, my child?'

The entire Senate then dispersed in confusion, and Caesar was left lying dead for some time until three slave boys carried him home in a litter, with one arm hanging over the side. The physician Antistius conducted the *post mortem* and came to the conclusion that none of the wounds had been mortal except the second one, in the chest. It had been decided to drag the dead man down to the Tiber, confiscate his property, and revoke all his edicts; but fear of Mark Antony, the Consul, and Lepidus, the Master of Horse, kept the assassins from making their plans good.

83. At the request of Lucius Piso, Calpurnia's father, Caesar's will, which he had drafted six months before at his villa near Lavicum, and entrusted to the safekeeping of the Chief Vestal, was unsealed and read in Antony's house. From the time of his first consulship until the outbreak of the Civil War (according to Quintus Tubero) Caesar's principal heir had been his son-in-law Pompey, and he used to read out this part of his will to the assembled troops. In his last will, however, he cancelled the bequest and left three-quarters of his estate, after certain legacies had been deducted, to Gaius Octavius, afterwards Augustus, and one-eighth each to Lucius Pinarius and Quintus Pedius. These were the three grandsons of his sister. At the close of the will he also adopted Gaius Octavius into the Caesar family, but provided for the possibility of a son being subsequently born to himself and appointed several of the assassins as guardians to the boy. Decimus Brutus even figured among his heirs in the second degree.¹ Caesar left the general public his gardens on the banks of the Tiber for use as a recreation ground, and three gold pieces a man.

84. When the funeral arrangements had been announced, his friends raised a pyre on the Campus Martius near his daughter Julia's tomb, and a gilded shrine on the Rostra resembling that of Mother Venus. In it they set an ivory couch, spread with purple and gold cloth, and from a pillar at its head hung the gown in which he had been murdered. Since a procession of mourners laying funeral gifts would have taken more than a day to file past the pyre, everyone was invited to come there by whatever route he pleased, regardless of

1. Those who would inherit if the heirs in the first degree were prevented by death or unwillingness from accepting the legacy.

precedence. Emotions of pity and indignation for Caesar's murder were aroused at the funeral games by a line from Pacuvius's play *Contest for the Arms of Achilles*:

What, did I save these men that they might murder me?

and by a similar sentiment from Atilius' *Electra*. Mark Antony dispensed with a formal eulogy; instead, he instructed a herald to read, first, the recent decree simultaneously voting Caesar all divine and human honours, and then the oath by which the entire Senate had pledged themselves to watch over his safety. Antony added a very few words of comment. When the ivory funeral couch had been carried down into the Forum by a group of magistrates and ex-magistrates, and a dispute arose as to whether the body should be cremated in the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter or in Pompey's Assembly Hall, two divine forms suddenly appeared, two javelins in their hands and sword at thigh, and set fire to the couch with torches. Immediately the spectators assisted the blaze by heaping on it dry branches and the judges' chairs, and the court benches, with whatever else came to hand. Thereupon the musicians and professional mourners, who had walked in the funeral train wearing the robes that he had himself worn at his four triumphs, tore these in pieces and flung them on the flames - to which veterans who had assisted at his triumphs added the arms they had then borne. Many women in the audience similarly sacrificed their jewellery together with their children's breast-plaques and robes. Public grief was enhanced by crowds of foreigners lamenting in their own fashion, especially Jews, who came flocking to the Forum for several nights in succession.

85. As soon as the funeral was over, the populace, snatching fire-brands from the pyre, ran to burn down the houses of Brutus and Cassius, and were repelled with difficulty. Mistaking Helvius Cinna for the Cornelius Cinna who had delivered a bitter speech against Caesar on the previous day, and whom they were out to kill, they murdered him and paraded the streets with his head stuck on the point of a spear. Later they raised a substantial, almost twenty-foot-high column of Numidian marble in the Forum, and inscribed on it: 'To the Father of His Country'. For a long time afterwards they used to offer sacrifices at the foot of this column, make vows there and settle disputes by oaths taken in Caesar's name.

86. Some of his friends suspected that, having no desire to live much longer because of his failing health, he had taken no precautions against the conspiracy, and neglected the warnings of soothsayers and well-wishers. It has also been suggested that he placed such confidence in the Senate's last decree and in their oath of loyalty, that he dispensed even with the armed Spaniards who had hitherto acted as his permanent escort. A contrary view is that as a relief from taking constant precautions, he deliberately exposed himself, just this once, to all the plots against his life which he knew had been formed. Also, he is quoted as having often said: 'It is more important for Rome than for myself that I should survive. I have long been sated with power and glory; but, should anything happen to me, Rome will enjoy no peace. A new Civil War will break out under far worse conditions than the last.'

87. Almost all authorities agree on one thing, that he more or less welcomed the manner of his death. He had once read in Xenophon's *Boyhood of Cyrus* the paragraph about the funeral instructions given by Cyrus on his deathbed, and said how much he loathed the prospect of a lingering end - he wanted a sudden one. And on the day before his murder he had dined at Marcus Lepidus' house, where the topic discussed happened to be 'the best sort of death' - and 'Let it come swiftly and unexpectedly,' cried Caesar.

88. He was fifty-five years old when he died, and his immediate deification, formally decreed, was more than a mere official decree since it reflected public conviction; if only because, on the first day of the Games given by his successor Augustus in honour of this apotheosis, a comet appeared about an hour before sunset and shone for seven days running. This was held to be Caesar's soul, elevated to Heaven; hence the star, now placed above the forehead of his divine image.

The Senate voted that the Assembly Hall where he fell should be walled up; that the Ides of March should be known ever afterwards as 'The Day of Parricide'; and that a meeting of the Senate should never take place on it again.

89. Very few, indeed, of the assassins outlived Caesar for more than three years, or died naturally. All were condemned, and all perished in different ways - some in shipwreck, some in battle, some using the very daggers with which they had murdered Caesar to take their own lives.