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The Life of Cæsar

Guglielmo Ferrero
THE LIFE OF CÆSAR
GUGLIELMO FERRERO

THE LIFE OF CÆSAR

Translated by

A. E. ZIMMERN

Montague Burton Professor
of International Relations, Oxford University
Author of “The Greek Commonwealth”
etc., etc.

Routledge
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THE LIFE OF CAESAR
This bust was formerly thought to be a contemporary bust of Caesar, but is now known to be a comparatively modern work.

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NEW YORK
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This book is the anti-fascist, or, if the reader prefers, the anti-bolshevist history of Julius Cæsar. He need not be alarmed; he will not be asked to read a political pamphlet. This history of Julius Cæsar was written thirty years ago in 1900–1901, when the words “Fascism” and “Bolshevism” had no political meaning for the world in general. The present edition, which an enterprising publisher is offering to the public, only differs from the original in that certain abridgments have been made and the copious notes of the first edition omitted.

How was the author able to write an anti-fascist or anti-bolshevist history of Julius Cæsar at a time when Fascism and Bolshevism did not exist? That is what will be explained in this preface.

The nineteenth century thought of Julius Cæsar mainly as the destroyer of the Republic and the founder of the Empire. Civil war and dictatorship were the crown of his achievement. He had striven all his life to bring about the dictatorship; to replace the “parliamentary” government of the aristocracy and the Senate by the despotism of genius; to invest the Empire with monarchical institutions which were to assure it three centuries of peace, order, prosperity and greatness. He had understood that republican oligarchy had run its course, that the world had need of a strong monarchical power; and he had hastened the pace by a masterly and successful stroke. Praise to his immortal genius!

This is the thesis which was developed by the most famous historians of Cæsar in the nineteenth century, such as Drümann, Mommsen and Duruy—a thesis which was currently accepted.

When I resumed my study of Roman history at the end of the nineteenth century, I quickly discovered that this supposed history of Julius Cæsar was only a romance. The Roman Empire in the first two centuries of our era was not a monarchy, either in the ancient or in the modern conception of the word. Cæsar did not destroy the Republic or create the imperial government; the latter was the slow creation of several generations who owed nothing of their achievement to Julius Cæsar. Cæsar never intended to seize the supreme power for himself; civil war was only an accident provoked by the hatred
of his enemies and not by his ambition. It ended by placing him, his enemies, the whole Republic, in an inextricable position, and instead of putting an end to the crisis with which the Republic was contending, it complicated matters still further. If Cæsar occupies a great place in history, it is not because he destroyed the Republic and founded the Empire, but because he conquered Gaul. The conquest of Gaul was the beginning of European history.

But how was it that a young man of thirty could so easily overthrow the historical tradition of an entire century without being treated as an iconoclast, that he could even rouse sympathy? It was because towards 1900 the passion which had inspired the great romantic misrepresentations of Drümann, Mommsen and Duruy had died down. What was this passion? The admiration of that creation of romanticism, the hero-usurper and the saviour-tyrant. After 1830, when the generation which had known the horrors of the Napoleonic régime began to die out and to forget, the tyrant of genius became popular in every quarter. In conservative circles he was regarded as an antidote to the liberal and democratic tendencies of the middle and lower classes; in liberal circles, as a weapon against traditional monarchy, the principle of heredity and respect for the old classes. In their enthusiasm for the tyrant of genius, for the hero-usurper, it was not enough to create one such figure and place it at the threshold of the nineteenth century, like a tutelary deity; they had to look about for precursors. So they manufactured a Cæsar, the elder brother of Napoleon, whom the ancients would not have recognized.

When this romantic passion had calmed down a little, towards 1900, many people allowed themselves to be convinced by the new version of Cæsar. The transfiguration of Cæsar should have been followed by an analogous transfiguration of Napoleon whose figure has been even more distorted than that of Cæsar; and both should have helped to free our generation from the fatal poison of nineteenth-century political romanticism, source of revolutions and reactions equally absurd.

But the World War intervened, and after the war came the revolutions which ended in so many countries with despotic usurpations by individuals or groups. These usurpations have everywhere awakened the old romantic illusion of the saviour tyrant. Even in privileged
countries living under a legitimate government, there are many people who turn to Moscow or Rome, wondering whether a *coup de main* suppressing discussion and control of the government would not be the quickest and safest remedy for the ills of the world. Everywhere people are again beginning to falsify the history of Julius Cæsar and of other personages who might incarnate the romantic type of the hero-usurper. Almost all the books on Napoleon published since 1919 will count among the worst examples of historical writing of recent times. Formerly, an effort was made to present a Napoleon who would at least appeal to the imagination of the deluded but cultured few; to-day, he is a hero-usurper for typists and cooks.

That is why I started out by saying that this book is the anti-fascist or anti-bolshevist history of Julius Cæsar. I have summarized therein the results of long historical research, made thirty years ago and consequently without partisan feeling or immediate political prejudice. The conclusion I arrived at thirty years ago as a result of my researches is that this first case of supposed regenerative usurpation and saving despotism is merely a romance. The salvation of Rome was a much longer, more complicated and more difficult process.

I am now engaged, for the purposes of my courses in modern history at the University of Geneva, in completing the work begun thirty years ago. After Cæsar, Napoleon; the same critical process leads to the same conclusions. There was no saviour hero at the beginning of the nineteenth century, any more than there was twenty centuries ago. I am grateful to the Republic and the University of Geneva for having enabled me to continue in an atmosphere as charged with menace as that of this present epoch, an intellectual labour begun under the serene skies of the dawning twentieth century. If my fate is to die in exile, the unity of my thought will not at least have been impaired by the tempests which have been laying waste the whole earth during the last quarter of a century. I have kept faith with truth, such as I discovered it thirty years ago when it held no danger, in an epoch when so to keep faith has laid me open to grave perils.

For the rest, it was my duty. Revolutionary usurpation is an historical experiment which the West must thoroughly understand, if it is not to be brought to ruin by the illusions in which it wraps itself. Julius Cæsar and Napoleon are the two most complete and most instructive
examples of this experiment, the course of which is always and everywhere the same, as if it followed a constant law.

The initial stage is always a violent perturbation of an old legal order. Sometimes a man, sometimes a group, is at a certain moment driven more by circumstances than by ambition to seize the power by a coup de force which violates the principle of the legality of the pre-existing power. The man or group responsible for this coup de force always believes that such violation of legality will be only exceptional and temporary; that once he is at the helm, he will have no difficulty in legitimizing his rule. But that is a common error. The fact that his position is illegal provokes opposition, distrust, criticism, which alarm the usurper precisely because his authority is not founded on solid law. In his alarm, he defends himself by strengthening the element of force and by having recourse to corruption. But he aggravates the unlawfulness of his position; his violence and corruption breed opposition, hatred, violence which in turn urge him still further along the road of violence and corruption, that is, of illegality. Despairing of ever being able to legitimize his position, the usurper finally attempts to justify it by results: he endeavours to do, and still more to have it believed that he is doing, great things, things which no other government could do; that he is averting a great danger, conquering a great empire, creating a new civilization. This is what the Russians would have us believe.

The result of a policy is, however, always open to discussion, whilst a principle of law consolidates a government in so far as it is indisputably recognized by the whole world. From the moment when a government endeavours to legitimize itself by the results of its policy, criticism becomes insupportable to it. To doubt its policy is to question its right to govern, to declare it illegal and a usurper, to prejudice the safety of the State. Hence the necessity for a usurping government to lay down the principle of its infallibility as a dogma, to stifle all independent criticism. But such violence superimposed upon other acts of violence exasperates the spirit of opposition; therefore the government must intensify and prolong violence, must do, or let it be assumed that it is doing, more and more extraordinary and difficult things. Thus, little by little, the usurper plunges deeper and deeper into the morass until nothing short of a catastrophe can extricate him—in Julius Caesar's
case the “Ides of March”; in Napoleon’s, Waterloo. But the catastrophe will always mean a general liberation—for the usurper as well as for his victims.

Such is the historical reality out of which the nineteenth century has woven the romantic legend of the hero-usurper and the saviour-tyrant. The West must dissipate the legend and lay bare the underlying reality if it is not to become a prey to the usurper who is everywhere increasing his numbers in Europe, Asia and America, just as he became a common phenomenon in Europe between 1792 and 1815. Usurpation, whether on a grand or a small scale, cannot now, any more than in the past, be a solution but only a complication—an extreme complication of an already difficult situation, which the advent of a usurper renders insoluble save by a catastrophe. The West has therefore nothing to hope from usurpers who can only increase the difficulties with which it has to contend. Above all, we must beware of the high-sounding promises of usurpers made in the belief that they can change the course of history. These pledges conceal a far more modest issue—the only issue which really concerns those called upon to obey a government which owes its place to usurpation—whether or no it has the right to command

GUGLIELMO FERRERO

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A century before Christ, Rome was already the first Mediterranean power. Although she was only a small republic, governed by not more than a hundred noble families, she had already conquered and latinized almost the whole of Italy; she was mistress of the coasts of Gaul, Spain, Greece, and had firmly established herself on the African and the Asiatic coasts. But at the same time she was suffering from a terrible internal crisis which affected her political, economic, moral and intellectual life. A close acquaintance with the history of this crisis is necessary if we are to understand the stormy history of the famous man with whom this book is concerned. What was its cause?

For more than a century, Rome and Italy had been achieving remarkable progress in very many directions. The diffusion of Greek philosophy, the progress of education and the increase of wealth had made men more sensible of the severity of the old legal code, and the stupid and barbarous superstitions which it embodied. The last vestiges of human sacrifice disappeared within a few years of this date. The decrees of the Praetors marked a continuous development of the principles of equity: Roman law, as we know it, began gradually to take shape. It was about this time, for instance, that the lex Aebutia swept away the cumbrous and pedantic machinery of the so-called legis actiones, replacing it by a more flexible and rational procedure better suited to a business age. Both in literature and art there was evidence of considerable activity. Nobles and merchants began to build handsome palaces in the metropolis, using marbles from Hymettus, and other exotic materials in place of the familiar Italian travertine. Literary dilettantism became a prevailing fashion; distinguished Senators dabbled in history and philosophy, and scribbled verses both in Latin and in Greek. There were orators to be heard in the Forum, such as Antonius and Licinius Crassus, who had
elaborated their style with care upon Greek models. The arts of Greece and Asia found an ever widening circle of admirers, and Greek sculptors and painters, among them even a woman, Iaia of Cyzicus, were employed in increasing numbers by wealthy patrons in the capital.

Yet in whichever direction we look, whether at political or social conditions or at the sphere of individual morality, we see signs of encroaching disorder and decay. The rise in the standard of living was forcing the old aristocracy into strange shifts for a livelihood: some kept afloat by peculation or extortion or the simpler expedient of debt; others by acquaintance or marriage connection, wholly regardless of appearances, with wealthy tax-farmers or financiers. Many of the country proprietors studied agriculture in the writings of the Greeks, or in the Carthaginian treatise of Mago, which had been translated by order of the Senate. They borrowed a little capital, planted olives and vineyards, and tried to improve their methods of cultivation. But want of experience, together with difficulties of transport, imperfect organization, and the high rate of interest, generally ended by bringing failure both upon the experiments and those that made them. Moreover, the law of Spurius Thorius, by converting so large a part of the public land into private property, had encouraged landlords to be extravagant, and thus, after a burst of short-lived prosperity, ended by leaving them worse off than before.

These tendencies were only accentuated by the spread of education. In the metropolis and in the Latin and allied towns new schools of rhetoric were opening their doors to train young Italians in a common language and a national oratory; and Latin gained ground daily, both as a spoken and a written language, upon the Sabellian and Oscan dialects of the countryside. But this new and coveted culture was as yet out of touch with the life of the community. Many of the young advocates turned out by the schools found neither patrons to befriend them, nor clients to plead for; and emigration into the provinces became a tempting and often a necessary expedient. Many Italians made fortunes in the slave-trade, which was now largely in the hands of the pirates; for the few slaves captured in war and trade with the barbarians no longer sufficed for the increasing demand. Delos became a huge slave market for the whole of the Mediterranean basin; and
many a young Italian fresh from school sold his manuscripts of Homer and Plato to make a living as a buccaneer. Others found their way into Egypt, or oftener still to the new province of Asia, where, thanks to the arrangements of Caius Gracchus, the exploitation of the old kingdom of Pergamus had proved immensely profitable. The tax-farmers, all of them either Romans or Italians, enjoyed the open patronage of the governors in their systematic pillage of the province.

But there were far more, of course, who went under, and the glaring contrast between the ill-gotten gains of the few and the penury of the many did much to accentuate the general unrest. A new line of cleavage appeared in Italian society. On the one side was the great host of men who had lost all they had to lose in the world, the bankrupt traders and ruined landowners who were to be found in every corner of Italy; on the other, a small and grasping clique of parvenu millionaires. The moderate incomes, which might have bridged the gulf between the two, were gradually disappearing. It was a narrow and exclusive ring of capitalists, composed of a few surviving nobles, of some of the ancient Italian aristocracy and of knights, plebeians, and freedmen, which was thus accumulating land in Italy, wringing fortunes out of the unhappy natives of Asia, and paying for them with the universal detestation of their countrymen.

Meanwhile the Treasury was empty, the army disorganized, and the fleet which had conquered Carthage was left rotting in the harbours of Italy; Rome had hardly strength enough to quell the slave revolts which were continually breaking out in Sicily and Campania. Yet she would soon need all the forces at her command. Mithridates, always on the alert, had profited by the Cimbric war to break his alliance with the King of Bithynia and to seize Cappadocia, while in Italy the rivalry between the knights and the Senate, between the rich financiers and the nobility, grew daily more acute. After the Senators, the knights were the most eminent class in the social order, forming between the plebs and the hundred families who represented the senatorial nobility, a kind of secondary aristocracy, through which one had to pass to become a member of the Senate and the senatorial nobility. For many centuries the knights had respected and served the senatorial nobility with deference; but during the last twenty-five years they had become unruly. Caius Gracchus had enriched them,
by allowing them to exploit the old kingdom of Pergamus, a province of Asia; and by approving a judiciary reform by which the Tribunals, which until then had been composed of Senators, were to be composed only of knights, thus unduly increasing their political power. They now formed a class of rich capitalists and financiers, independent of the senatorial nobility which consisted of big landowners.

Their wealth, their newly acquired rights in the law-courts all justified self-assertion. Although they generally left politics to the aristocrats, and stuck to business and money-making, they felt themselves the equals or even the superiors of the old bankrupt nobility. All this was not unnaturally resented by the aristocrats. Disgusted with the universal disorder, for which the intrusion of the plutocracy seemed the most obvious cause, embittered by the sting of unaccustomed poverty and by the insolence of their newly discovered rivals, they looked longingly back upon the days of their undisputed supremacy, and clamoured for rigorous legislation against the abuses of capitalism. They could not forgive a member of their own class like Caius Julius Cæsar, who bound himself by friendship and marriage with an obscure equestrian family, or defied the ostracism of society by embarking upon a business career.

But if the nobility as a body was opposed to the knights, the nobility itself as a united body was no longer what it was a century before. For thirty years, since Tiberius and Caius Gracchus had founded a Democratic or popular party, the hundred families which represented the Republic, had also been divided. The majority still formed a party which might be termed Conservative, and which represented the traditions of a time when the aristocracy had governed the Republic as a united and unanimous body. A small minority supported by the common people and the middle classes, carried on the struggle which the Gracchi had initiated and attempted to reform and rejuvenate the Republic, but with vague and changing programmes. Their aim was to modify the rigorous oligarchical rule of the old nobility, to improve the standard of living of the common people, the small landowners, and the middle class; but by what means they did not know precisely. Every few years, new schemes were launched for the people’s approval—only to be rejected as revolutionary by the Conservative nobility.
This incessant rivalry and unrest in the upper ranks of society was a fresh incitement to the Democrats, who had for the last decade been resuming a vigorous agitation both in the Assembly and the Law-courts. But the old popular party too had fallen on evil days. It had declined from the pinnacle to which the Gracchi and their enthusiasts had raised it. Two wild and insolent politicians, Saturninus and Glaucia, were the leading popular agitators of the day. Though its leaders went on repeating the old invectives against the nobles, and bringing forward fresh Corn Laws just to flavour their abuse, no serious attempt at constructive legislation had been made.

The respectable members of both parties, excluded from a political career, found a cheap consolation in lamenting the evils of their times. Justice had become simply one more instrument of oppression in the hands of the wealthy. Fraud and violence, extortion and bribery, were the familiar incidents of public life. At Rome, as at Carthage in the days of her decline, money was fast becoming the sole goal of ambition and the supreme measure of worth. Yet there were hundreds foolish enough to give up an assured, if modest, position in the country in order to risk their fortunes in some business venture: and many more who reduced themselves well-nigh to bankruptcy to give a superior education to their children. The younger generation, flushed with the rhetoric of their school training, thought that a year or two's chattering in the Forum would talk them into wealth and power. They produced a not unnatural reaction among the upper classes, where the opinion was commonly held that the spread of education was in itself an evil: that all it achieved was the manufacture of a superfluous intellectual proletariat of upstarts, agitators and criminals. "To learn Greek is to learn knavery," was a proverb common on men's lips.

That there was some truth in the taunt is proved by the corresponding increase of crime, which was connived at and fomented by the authorities. Murder, poisoning, theft, assassination, even family tragedies, became alarmingly frequent. The Roman household no longer fulfilled the disciplinary and judicial functions that had been given it by the old constitution, and the domestic tribunal was regarded as a mere relic of a bygone age. There was a large category of crimes committed by women and young persons which went entirely unpunished, being still outside the cognizance of the law, and no longer
dealt with by the family. Moreover, even recognized offences, when committed by Roman citizens, often evaded a penalty. The rough and primitive provisions of the ancient penal code knew no other punishments to the person beyond flogging or death. Imprisonment was not recognized as a penalty, prisons serving merely for the detention of the accused before being brought up for trial. Flogging and the death penalty having been abolished for Roman citizens, there was no alternative but exile; and exile still meant what it had meant in the old days when Rome was an isolated town among a number of hostile rivals—a convenient retirement to Palestrina or Naples. And even this not very formidable prospect was easily averted by a little skilful expenditure. Roman citizens, in fact, were practically immune from every sort of penal jurisdiction.

Hence the increasing desire among the Italians to obtain the privileges of citizenship. For the agitation was now spreading far and wide through the peninsula to the consternation of the Conservative party. The intellectual and economic unification of Italy was gradually breaking down all distinctions between Romans, Latins and allies, and the old political organization of the separate districts had by now lost all reality and meaning. Middle-class Italians, often heavily in debt and deprived of the patronage of the old local nobility, were now united in their demand for emancipation, and in their hostility to the clique that held the reins of power at Rome. The franchise seemed the remedy for all their grievances.

This wild and disordered conflict of material interests could not fail to find reflection in the world of ideas. But here the confusion was intensified by the innumerable and contradictory doctrines of Greek philosophy. It was the fashion for men to consult the philosophers to find out their political bearings; and every educated man had his own particular standpoint from which he looked down upon the distress of the time. The theories thus evolved marked the final extinction of any ancient and definite doctrines which still survived into the new era. There were interminable discussions on the diseases from which Rome was suffering. No one tried the remedy of action. Men frittered away their energies in a morbid inertia, pouring vain encomiums upon a golden past, and childishly appealing for the intervention of some heaven-sent deliverer. Intellectuals singled out
the unfortunate Caius Gracchus (it was characteristic that they should choose just the greatest of their statesmen for their scapegoat) as the originator of all the various mischiefs of the time. It was Gracchus who by his corn laws had emptied the Treasury; it was Gracchus who by his judicial arrangements had made the plutocracy all-powerful; it was Gracchus who had let loose the demagogues, disorganized the army and abandoned the provinces to capitalist rapacity. All Italy cried aloud for a saviour.

In the year 100 B.C. a man named Caius Marius believed himself to be the desired saviour. A knight by origin, he embarked, like almost all of them, on a business career, but failed. He then devoted himself to politics and warfare, in which he was more successful. Thanks to the support of the Democratic party, he became Consul in 107, in spite of the old nobility, who resented this office being filled by a knight. He defeated Jugurtha and afterwards repelled the Cimbri and the Teutones with great slaughter in the valley of the Po. His action in checking the invasion of the Cimbri led to his being elected Consul five times in succession with the support of the Democratic party, although this was contrary to the laws.

Intoxicated by his successes on the battlefield, he regarded them as preludes to new triumphs in the Forum. At the particular moment which we have reached, his efforts were centred upon the attainment of a sixth spell of consular office. But he would have to step down for once into the party arena. Hitherto the proud and masterful soldier had disdained to take sides with either party; nor had it been necessary for him to do so. During the continuance of the Cimbric war he had accepted the suffrages of the Democrats without even having to ask for their support. But now that the invaders were finally repelled he had to face a very different situation. The spontaneous enthusiasm in his favour, generated by the Cimbri, had evaporated at their disappearance, and he could now only become Consul as the representative of one of the two parties in the State. The choice was not so difficult. The Conservatives could never forgive him for having been for four years the champion of the democratic party. The moderate party, as usual in a crisis, was a wholly negligible factor. There remained the Democrats. Marius entered into a compact with Saturninus and Glaucia, securing the Consulship for himself, the Tribuneship for
Saturninus, and the Praetorship for Glaucia. Together they formed
the Popular government of the year 100, a government in which the
conqueror of the Cimbri practically became the instrument of the two
demagogues. His colleagues soon set to work. Saturninus produced a
Land Bill, which appears to have assigned the land devastated by the
Cimbri in Transpadane Gaul to the Romans and the poor Italians, a
Corn Bill reducing the price of the State-sold corn, and a Colonial
Bill in which, reviving the idea of Caius Gracchus, he created
settlements in Greece, Macedonia, Sicily and Africa for the veterans
of Marius.

These schemes were all of them well enough in the abstract, but
in the disturbed state of public opinion no serious discussion of them
was possible. In the excitement of controversy the two parties soon
came to blows. The turbulent demagogues summoned bands of armed
peasants to Rome, and by this means secured the passing of their
proposals in the Comitia. Worse was to follow. At the consular
elections for 99, Saturninus gave the signal for open insurrection by
putting to death Caius Memmius, one of the most capable and re­
spected members of the opposite party. This was the turning-point in
the struggle. The rich capitalists, who had so far lent powerful support
to the popular party, were frightened into the camp of law and order.
The Senate decreed a state of siege, and all respectable citizens armed
themselves in self-defence. It was a difficult situation for Marius; an
old man's ambition and a soldier's instinct fought hard in him for
supremacy. Discipline won in the end; but it was a doubtful victory.
He put himself at the head of the Senators and Knights to suppress
the rising of his colleagues; but his action displayed so much weakness
and vacillation that the Conservatives believed him to be an accom­
plice of the rebels, while the advanced Democrats of course regarded
him as a traitor. Finally, however, he succeeded in quelling the revolt,
and Saturninus and Glaucia were put to death by a band of incensed
nobles and capitalists under his command.

It was in this troubled year of Marius's Consulship that his sister
Aurelia bore her husband, C. Julius Cæsar, a son, who was given his
father's name.

The cry of revolution or spoliation never fails to bring Conserva­
tives to heel. The rich financiers had been scared out of their Demo-
cratic allegiance, and the general public, disgusted at the turn matters had taken, veered round with equal rapidity. Marius soon felt his position undermined. Suspected by all parties within a year of his triumph over the Cimbri, he discreetly set out on a long journey to the East. The Conservatives thus returned both to office and to power. The more enlightened members of the party timidly urged the claims of social reform. But their feeble protests passed unheeded, and the government preferred to stake its credit upon a spirited foreign policy. It succeeded indeed in inducing the Senate to refuse the legacy of the Cyrenaica, which had been left to the Roman people by Ptolemy Apion on his death in 96, being reluctant at a time of military and financial embarrassment to assume fresh responsibilities in a disturbed and semi-barbarous country. But it was all the more anxious definitely to re-establish Rome's waning prestige in the East. There was no lack of opportunity for interference. In 95 Nicomedes of Bithynia was commanded to restore the territory he had taken, and given to understand that disobedience would be disastrous. Galatia was then given back to the Tetrarchs, Paphlagonia declared a free country, and Cappadocia put under the charge of a Parthian noble called Ariobarzanes, who was given the title of King. When two years later Mithridates concluded an alliance with Tigranes, King of Armenia, invaded Cappadocia and drove out Ariobarzanes, the aristocratic party proved equal to the emergency, and the Propraetor Lucius Cornelius Sulla was at once despatched with a small army to re-establish Ariobarzanes on his throne.

But these foreign successes were wholly insufficient to ensure peace in Italy. Distress was growing on every side. The Italians were haunted by their ambition for the franchise and a jealous hostility to the small oligarchy at Rome; and the Democrats were moving heaven and earth to recover their predominance. Marius had now returned from the East and could not resign himself in his own lifetime to the role of a mere historical personage. The financiers, driven temporarily by Saturninus into an unnatural allegiance, were rekindling their old fires against senatorial rivals. In 93 a comparatively unimportant incident, the trial of Publius Rutilius Rufus, provoked the long expected crisis.

Rufus was a Conservative and an aristocrat, a man of unblemished
record and unquestioned courage, hostile both to the demagogues and the capitalists, and an outspoken admirer of the old régime. During his government of Asia as Legatus Pro praetore, he had had the misfortune to offend the capitalist interest by vigorous action against the rapacity of the Italian financiers. His enemies vowed vengeance. On his return to Rome they concocted against him a charge of extortion, and secured his condemnation by a tribunal of their friends. Rufus went off quietly into exile; but his martyrdom was not suffered in vain. It awakened all that was best in the old aristocracy to what was going on all round them, to the decay and disappearance of the old order and the ugly and unscrupulous injustice of the new. They saw that it would soon be too late to resist, that they must fight, and fight at once; and fortune provided them with a leader.

Livius Drusus, an ambitious and passionate young aristocrat, was the man of their choice. Elected Tribune of the people in 91, Drusus endeavoured to adopt against the financiers the policy which Caius Gracchus had found so useful against the big landlords. His idea was to isolate the moneyed interest by means of an alliance between the aristocracy and the popular party. He brought forward a number of laws designed to secure him the favour of the democracy; amongst them a Bill depriving the knights of their powers in the law-courts, and a measure making the tardy concession of citizen rights to the Italians. The idea of Italian emancipation had been slowly making way among the Roman electorate; but it had still to encounter very obstinate resistance. Not a few of the aristocrats had been converted to its support, though they could not help being conscious of the danger it involved to their class and party. But a great number were blinded by a prejudice so traditional as to be almost a second nature, and they confirmed it by the argument that any increase in the number of poor and ignorant electors would aggravate rather than allay the disorders in the capital. The financiers and the rich Italians were bitterly and outspokenly hostile. They were convinced that political reform would only be the prelude to a huge social upheaval, and that the Italians, most of whom were poor and indebted, would promptly make use of the franchise to introduce those bogies so familiar to students of ancient history, a revolutionary Land Law and the wholesale abolition of debt. A terrible agitation now broke out, dividing the
aristocracy into two angry camps, and stirring all the old embers of controversy into flame. One morning Livius was found assassinated in his house. Profiting by the disturbances which followed his disappearance, the knights hastily passed through a bill creating an extraordinary tribunal to try all who were suspected of sympathy with the Italians, thus ridding themselves by prosecution and exile of all the chief of their opponents among the aristocracy and the Democrats.

But this paltry retaliation was soon rudely interrupted. The death of Livius had sent an earthquake shock through the Peninsula, and Rome soon felt the ground trembling beneath her feet. The whole country south of Liris raised the standard of revolt. Men rushed to arms in the cause of a united Italy, against Rome, the allied cities, and the Latin colonies of the centre and north of the Peninsula, most of which remained faithful to their allegiance. Rome was taken utterly by surprise. For once all party quarrels were hushed. The legions scattered broadcast throughout the Empire were hastily recalled to Italy; naval contingents were brought up from Heraclea, Clazomenae and Miletus, and arms distributed among all classes both free and slave. Even Marius, mindful of his reputation, begged for a command. Then ensued a war whose horrors can be but dimly descried behind the scanty records that have come down to us. Roman generals marched ruthlessly up and down Italy, burning farms, sacking towns, and carrying off men, women and children, to sell them in the open market, or work them in gangs on their own estates.

It was in these campaigns that a studious young man named Marcus Tullius Cicero, born in the year 106, and belonging to a well-to-do family at Arpinum, first saw active service.

It was the very barbarism of such a warfare in the very heart of their own country which brought about its cessation. Romans were forced to realize that magnanimity was a safer policy than conquest, and the party among the nobles which was opposed to the financiers and sympathetic to the Italians came once more into power. In the year 90 the Consul Lucius Julius Cæsar was able to pass a law providing that citizen rights should be extended to the States which had remained faithful to Rome. Not long afterwards, at the end of the same year or at the beginning of the next, two Tribunes proposed
the *lex Plautia Papiria*, according to which any citizen of an allied town domiciled in Italy could acquire the rights of Roman citizenship on making a declaration within sixty days to the Praetor at Rome. Other measures soon followed. In 89 a *lex Plautia* took away the law-courts from the knights, and enacted that judges should be chosen by the tribes from among every class in the State. It was perhaps in the same year that the Consul Cneius Pompeius Strabo proposed to extend the rights of the Latin colonies to the towns of Cisalpine Gaul, in order to relieve them from the obligation of military service and as a compensation for the losses they had suffered by serving in the Allies' Revolt. These concessions were far more effective than military operations in bringing the war to a close, and it was not long before only the Samnites and Lucanians remained in the field.

Italy had hardly begun to recover from the horrors of civil war when she was darkened by the shadow of a far worse calamity in the East. Mithridates had been surprised by the Social War just at the moment when he was preparing to embark on a great campaign to drive Rome out of Asia. As, however, at the moment of the outbreak of the Allies' Revolt his preparations were not yet concluded, he had assisted a younger brother of Nicomedes of Bithynia to seize that kingdom, and had joined hands with Tigranes, regardless of possible Roman intervention, in reconquering Cappadocia and putting his son on the throne. This was a direct challenge to the Romans, and it had been unexpectedly taken up. The aristocratic party, eager to win its spurs in foreign policy, sent out Manius Aquilius in the year 90 with a special mission to re-establish the two kings in their States, with the help of the small force of the Proconsul Lucius Cassius. Aquilius and Cassius had no difficulty in accomplishing their mission. But Aquilius had not come to the East to be bought off by the promises of Nicomedes. Thirsting for operations on a large scale against Mithridates, he tried to induce Nicomedes and Ariobarzanes to make filibustering expeditions over the frontier of Pontus. The unfortunate King showed a very reasonable hesitation. But Nicomedes was in the debt of the Roman bankers at Ephesus for large sums of money borrowed at Rome and in Asia during his exile to facilitate his restoration. Aquilius demanded payment. Nicomedes
had no alternative but to raise the money out of the spoils of a raid into Pontus. Anxious to gain time and anxious also to put his adversary in the wrong, Mithridates sent in to Aquilius a modest and reasonable claim for damages, which was of course refused. At the end of the year 89 his preparations were complete. Sending his son to invade Cappadocia, he continued to bombard Aquilius with vigorous requests for reparation. Aquilius replied by a demand for unconditional submission. The result was a declaration of war.

When operations commenced in the spring of 88, Mithridates had at his command a fleet of four hundred ships, and one of those enormous armies, comparable to the conscript levies of modern Europe, which Oriental strategy, reckoning solely by quantity, has always insisted on regarding as formidable. It is said that he had a horde of 300,000 men, composed of Greek mercenaries, Armenian cavalry, and an infantry force of Cappadocians, Paphlagonians, Galatians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Thracians, Bastarni and Celts. Aquilius on the other hand had only been able during the winter to collect a small fleet from Bithynia and Asia, and a small army, including the raw Asiatic recruits of the King of Bithynia, which had been incorporated among the scanty Roman contingents. The result was as might have been foreseen. The four corps into which the Roman army was divided were defeated or dispersed within a few weeks; the Roman fleet surrendered to the superior force of the enemy; the King of Bithynia fled into Italy; the Roman generals were taken prisoners, and Mithridates proceeded at leisure to the invasion of Asia.

Great was the consternation when this news reached Italy. The Allies' Revolt had already been sufficiently disastrous. It had ruined many of the small and moderate proprietors by the destruction of their farms and cattle, and had interfered with the rents drawn by many of the rich aristocrats from their South Italian estates. The invasion of Asia now snatched away at one blow all profits on the vast capital expended by Roman financiers throughout the province. A serious financial crisis ensued. The tax-farmers refused payment, while owing to the prevailing conditions of trade the other imposts brought in but little. The Treasury was empty. Capitalists were too
frightened to invest, and made strenuous efforts to recover all outstanding liabilities. There was a general scarcity of money, and much of what was in circulation was counterfeit. A Praetor who set his face against the brutality of creditors was assassinated one morning at sacrifice by a band of financiers. Rome was filled with riot, assassination and robbery. The old and the new citizens seized the occasion to vent their grievances in street-fighting. The Italians complained that the Senate had refused to inscribe them within the thirty-five tribes, and was trying to gain time by proposing all manner of schemes to nullify their new rights; one proposal, for instance, was to inscribe them in ten new tribes; another to include them in only eight of the old thirty-five. But worse news from the seat of war in the East broke into these petty bickerings.

What faced Rome in Asia was not, as she had first thought, a mere struggle between an Eastern and a Western Power, but an organized and widespread revolution against plutocracy. Mithridates was posing, not simply as the hero of Hellenism, but as the avenger of the artisans and the peasants, the middle-class traders and landlords of Asia, who were suffering under the extortions of Roman bankers and of Levantine, Jewish and Egyptian usurers. He had sent orders to the governors of all the conquered provinces warning them to prepare for a general massacre of the Italians on the 30th day after the date of his letter, and had skilfully inflamed the passions of the common people, already hotly excited by the condemnation of their protector, Rutilius Rufus. He promised liberty to all slaves, and a 50 per cent. remission to all debtors who killed their creditors. On the day fixed, 100,000 Italians, men, women and children, were attacked and cut down in the streets, or drowned, or burnt alive, by the furious populace in all the greater and smaller towns of Asia. Their slaves were set free, and their goods divided between the towns and the Royal Treasury. The same treatment was accorded to the possessions of non-Italian capitalists such as the Jewish bankers of the Island of Cos. The spirit of rebellion soon spread to Greece. At Athens the people rose in insurrection, philosophers and University professors helping to fan the flame. Mithridates, having laid the train, was well prepared for the explosion. His general, Archelaus, was immediately despatched with a fleet and an army to reduce the
towns which had not yet revolted against the Romans and to conquer and devastate the rich trading centre of Delos. It was a great and far-reaching struggle for mastery in the Greek world. On the one side was an Asiatic monarchy reinforced by a revolutionary proletariat, on the other the Italian plutocracy reinforced by a decadent aristocracy and a democracy still unconscious of its strength. The intellectual classes, the men of letters and philosophers so numerous in the East, were ranged, as in all great social conflicts, some on one side and some on the other, according to individual sympathies, interests and attachments.

The Senate rose at once to the emergency. It entrusted Sulla, who was Consul in 88, with the direction of the war, and, finding the Treasury empty, it took the decisive step of selling all the goods which were under mortmain, including the whole of the treasures in the temples at Rome. Yet there was treachery almost in their own camp. Nothing is more significant of the bitterness which possessed all parties in Italy at this time than that they should have seized this moment of national danger to pursue their internecine conflicts. The Samnites and Lucanians, who were still under arms, sent ambassadors to Mithridates with proposals for an alliance. A large number of ruined Italians incited by hatred of the Conservatives, who were trying to evade their concession of citizen rights, and by the necessity of somehow making a livelihood, fled to Asia and joined the army of Mithridates. At Rome a party among the knights, who resented the loss of their judicial power, were preparing to recover it by revolutionary means, with the sinister assistance of Marius. The old veteran, who had long been fuming at the loss of his old popularity, was now indulging in wild and fantastic dreams of glory; to deprive Sulla of his command against Mithridates, win the fabled treasures of Pontus, and live over again before his death the great days of his Cimbric triumphs. The coalition found a ready instrument in Publius Sulpicius Rufus, an aristocrat who had been driven by his debts and also, it appears, by personal animosities to become an ardent member of the Democratic party. Rufus was at this time Tribune of the people. On the pretext of giving a tardy satisfaction to the new citizens, he proposed a law according to which the Italians should be partitioned out among the thirty-five tribes, and had it passed by hiring bands of
cut-throats to terrify the electors and do violence to the Consuls. Both Consuls were forced to leave Rome. Sulla went off to join the army which was being assembled at Nola. Thereupon Marius, who was now in company with Rufus supreme master of Rome, had a law passed conferring the Eastern command upon himself, and sent orders to Sulla to give up his troops.