

TACITUS

THE ANNALS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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BOOKS XIII—XVI



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totaque urbe quasi domo uti. Et celeberrimae luxu famaepulae fuere, quas a Tigellino paratas ut exemplum referam, ne saepius eadem prodigentia narranda sit. Igitur in stagno Agrippae fabricatus est ratem, cui superpositum convivium navium aliarum tractu moveretur. Naves auro et ebore distinctae, remigesque exoleti per aetates et scientiam libidinum componebantur. Volucris et feras diversis e terris et animalia maris Oceano abususque petiverat. Crepidinibus stagni lupanaria adstabant inlustribus feminis completa, et contra scorta visebantur nudis corporibus. Iam gestus motusque obsceni; et postquam tenebrae incedeant, quantum iuxta memoris et circumiecta tecta consonare cantu et luminibus clarescere. Ipse per licita atque illicita foedatus nihil flagitii reliquerat, quo corruptior ageret, nisi paucos post dies uni ex illo contaminatorum grege (nomen Pythagorae fuit) in modum sollemnium coniugiorum denupsisset. Inditum imperatori flammeum, missi¹ auspices, dos et genialis torus et faces nuptiales, cuncta denique spectata, quae etiam in femina nox operit.

XXXVIII. Sequitur clades, forte an dolo principis incertum (nam utrumque auctores prodidere), sed omnibus, quae huic urbi per violentiam ignium

¹ missi *Frobeniana* : misit *Med.*, visi *Rhenanus*.

¹ The exact site is not determined.

² II. 14 n.

³ Those who survive follow the more sensational version (Suet. *Ner.* 38; D. Cass. LXII. 16; Plin. *H.N.* XVII. 1, 5; [Sen.] *Oct.* 831 sqq.). There is obviously no possibility of deciding the question.

treat the entire city as his palace. In point of extravagance and notoriety, the most celebrated of the feasts was that arranged by Tigellinus; which I shall describe as a type, instead of narrating time and again the monotonous tale of prodigality. He constructed, then, a raft on the Pool of Agrippa,¹ and superimposed a banquet, to be set in motion by other craft acting as tugs. The vessels were gay with gold and ivory, and the oarsmen were catamites marshalled according to their ages and their libidinous attainments. He had collected birds and wild beasts from the ends of the earth, and marine animals from the ocean itself. On the quays of the lake stood brothels, filled with women of high rank; and, opposite, naked harlots met the view. First came obscene gestures and dances; then, as darkness advanced, the whole of the neighbouring grove, together with the dwelling-houses around, began to echo with song and to glitter with lights. Nero himself, defiled by every natural and unnatural lust had left no abomination in reserve with which to crown his vicious existence; except that, a few days later, he became, with the full rites of legitimate marriage, the wife of one of that herd of degenerates,² who bore the name of Pythagoras. The veil was drawn over the imperial head, witnesses were despatched to the scene; the dowry, the couch of wedded love, the nuptial torches, were there: everything, in fine, which night enshrouds even if a woman is the bride, was left open to the view.

XXXVIII. There followed a disaster, whether due to chance or to the malice of the sovereign is uncertain—for each version has its sponsors³—but graver and more terrible than any other which has

acciderunt, gravior atque atrocior. Initium in ea parte circi ortum, quae Palatino Caelioque montibus contigua est, ubi per tabernas, quibus id mercimonium inerat, quo flamma alitur, simul coeptus ignis et statim validus ac vento citus longitudinem circi corripuit. Neque enim domus munimentis saeptae vel templa muris cincta aut quid aliud morae interiacebat. Impetu pervagatum incendium plana primum, deinde in edita adsurgens et rursus inferiora populando, anteit remedia velocitate mali et obnoxia urbe artis itineribus hucque et illuc flexis atque enormibus vicis, qualis vetus Roma fuit. Ad hoc lamenta paventium feminarum, fessa¹ aut rudis pueritiae² aetas, quique sibi quique aliis consulebant, dum trahunt invalidos aut opperiuntur, pars mora, pars festinans, cuncta impediabant. Et saepe, dum in tergum respectant, lateribus aut fronte circumveniebantur, vel si in proxima evaserant, illis quoque igni correptis, etiam quae longinqua crediderant in eodem casu reperiebant. Postremo, quid vitarent quid peterent ambigui, complere vias, sterni per agros; quidam amissis omnibus fortunis, diurni quoque victus,³ alii caritate suorum, quos eripere nequiverant, quamvis patente effugio interire. Nec quisquam defendere audebat, crebris

¹ fessa *Lipsius*: fessa aetate. ² [pueritiae] *Haase*.

³ victus <egeni> ?

¹ Similar descriptions are common. The town, in fact, was, as *Livy* puts it, "built promiscuously" after the Gallic disaster of 390 B.C. (V. fin.), and the meanness of its appearance struck the Greeks forcibly (XL. 5).

befallen this city by the ravages of fire. It took its rise in the part of the Circus touching the Palatine and Caelian Hills; where, among the shops packed with inflammable goods, the conflagration broke out, gathered strength in the same moment, and, impelled by the wind, swept the full length of the Circus: for there were neither mansions screened by boundary walls, nor temples surrounded by stone enclosures, nor obstacles of any description, to bar its progress. The flames, which in full career overran the level districts first, then shot up to the heights, and sank again to harry the lower parts, kept ahead of all remedial measures, the mischief travelling fast, and the town being an easy prey owing to the narrow, twisting lanes and formless streets typical of old Rome.¹ In addition, shrieking and terrified women; fugitives stricken or immature in years; men consulting their own safety or the safety of others, as they dragged the infirm along or paused to wait for them, combined by their dilatoriness or their haste to impede everything. Often, while they glanced back to the rear, they were attacked on the flanks or in front; or, if they had made their escape into a neighbouring quarter, that also was involved in the flames, and even districts which they had believed remote from danger were found to be in the same plight. At last, irresolute what to avoid or what to seek, they crowded into the roads or threw themselves down in the fields: some who had lost the whole of their means—their daily bread included—chose to die, though the way of escape was open, and were followed by others, through love for the relatives whom they had proved unable to rescue. None ventured to combat the fire, as there were

multorum minis restinguere prohibentium, et quia alii palam faces iaciebant atque esse sibi auctorem vociferabantur, sive ut raptus licentius exercerent seu iussu.

XXXIX. Eo in tempore Nero Antii agens non ante in urbem regressus est, quam domui eius, qua Palatium et Maecenatis hortos continuaverat, ignis propinquaret. Neque tamen sisti potuit, quin et Palatium et domus et cuncta circum haurirentur. Sed solacium populo exturbato ac profugo campum Martis ac monumenta Agrippae, hortos quin etiam suos patefecit et subitaria aedificia exstruxit, quae multitudinem inopem acciperent; subvectaque utensilia ab Ostia et propinquis municipiis, pretiumque frumenti minutum usque ad ternos nummos. Quae quamquam popularia in inritum cadebant, quia pervaserat rumor ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scaenam et cecinisse Troianum excidium, praesentia mala vetustis cladibus adsimulantem.

XL. Sexto demum die apud imas Esquilias finis incendio factus, prorutis per immensum aedificiis, ut

¹ Suetonius is more circumstantial:— . . . *incendit urbem, tam palam ut plerique consulares cubicularios eius, cum stuppa taedaque in praediis suis deprehensos, non attigerint* (Ner. 38). Whatever the worth of the statements, it is clear that, if the town was fired deliberately, no particular secrecy was attempted: for there must have been a full moon on the night before the outbreak (July 17–18).

² On the Esquiline, and now imperial property. The house—*domus transitoria* (Suet. Ner. 31)—rose from its ashes as the Golden House: see chap. 42.

³ The great buildings erected by Agrippa, at the height of

reiterated threats from a large number of persons who forbade extinction, and others were openly throwing firebrands¹ and shouting that “they had their authority”—possibly in order to have a freer hand in looting, possibly from orders received.

XXXIX. Nero, who at the time was staying in Antium, did not return to the capital until the fire was nearing the house by which he had connected the Palatine with the Gardens of Maecenas.² It proved impossible, however, to stop it from engulfing both the Palatine and the house and all their surroundings. Still, as a relief to the homeless and fugitive populace, he opened the Campus Martius, the buildings³ of Agrippa, even his own Gardens, and threw up a number of extemporized shelters to accommodate the helpless multitude. The necessities of life were brought up from Ostia and the neighbouring municipalities, and the price of grain was lowered to three sesterces. Yet his measures, popular as their character might be, failed of their effect; for the report had spread that, at the very moment when Rome was aflame, he had mounted his private stage,⁴ and, typifying the ills of the present by the calamities of the past, had sung the destruction of Troy.

XL. Only on the sixth day, was the conflagration brought to an end at the foot of the Esquiline, by demolishing the buildings over a vast area and his power, in the Campus Martius—the Pantheon, Diribitorium, Saepta Iulia, etc.

⁴ See the beginning of chap. 33. Suetonius and Dio give him more conspicuous eminences: the former, the Tower of Maecenas on the Esquiline; the latter, the palace-roof. The verses, if there is truth in the story, were doubtless from the *Troica* which Juvenal regarded as his crowning atrocity.

continuae violentiae campus et velut vacuum caelum occurreret. Necdum positus¹ metus aut redierat plebi spes:² rursum grassatus ignis patulis magis urbis locis, eoque strages hominum minor: delubra deum et porticus amoenitati dicatae latius procidere. Plusque infamiae id incendium habuit, quia praediis Tigellini Aemilianis proruperat; videbaturque Nero condendae urbis novae et cognomento suo appellandae gloriam quaerere. Quippe in regiones quatuordecim Roma dividitur, quarum quattuor integrae manebant, tres solo tenus deiectae: septem reliquis pauca tectorum vestigia supererant, lacera et semusta.

XLI. Domuum et insularum et templorum, quae amissa sunt, numerum inire haud promptum fuerit: sed vetustissima religione, quod Servius Tullius Lunae, et magna ara fanumque, quae praesenti Herculi Arcas Evander sacraverat, aedesque Statoris Iovis vota Romulo Numaque regia et delubrum Vestae cum Penatibus populi Romani exusta; iam opes tot victoriis quaesitae et Graecarum artium decora, exim monumenta ingeniorum antiqua et incorrupta, ut³ quamvis in tanta resurgentis urbis

¹ positus *Jacob*: post.

² redierat plebi s<pes> *Madvig*: rediebat lebis *Med.* (with space for three letters left vacant).

³ <ut> *Halm*.

¹ The exact site is uncertain.

² The title contemplated was supposed to be *Neronopolis* (Suet. *Ner.* 55). Commodus, faced by a similar problem, decided with more originality for *Colonia Commodiana*.

³ Both the archaeological and the literary evidence show this assertion to be too sweeping.

⁴ The temple of Luna stood on the Aventine; the Ara Maxima and temple of Hercules, in the Forum Boarium; that

opposing to the unabated fury of the flames a clear tract of ground and an open horizon. But fear had not yet been laid aside, nor had hope yet returned to the people, when the fire resumed its ravages; in the less congested parts of the city, however; so that, while the toll of human life was not so great, the destruction of temples and of porticoes dedicated to pleasure was on a wider scale. The second fire produced the greater scandal of the two, as it had broken out on the Aemilian property¹ of Tigellinus and appearances suggested that Nero was seeking the glory of founding a new capital and endowing it with his own name.² Rome, in fact, is divided into fourteen regions, of which four remained intact, while three were laid level with the ground: in the other seven nothing survived but a few dilapidated and half-burned relics of houses.³

XLI. It would not be easy to attempt an estimate of the private dwellings, tenement-blocks, and temples, which were lost; but the flames consumed, in their old-world sanctity, the temple dedicated to Luna by Servius Tullius, the great altar and chapel of the Arcadian Evander to the Present Hercules, the shrine of Jupiter Stator vowed by Romulus, the Palace of Numa, and the holy place of Vesta with the Penates of the Roman people.⁴ To these must be added the precious trophies won upon so many fields, the glories of Greek art, and yet again the primitive and uncorrupted memorials of literary genius;⁵ so that, despite the striking beauty of the

of Jupiter Stator, the Regia, and the shrine of Vesta, on the northern side of the Palatine.

⁵ The natural inference, though direct evidence is lacking, is that the Palatine Library had suffered in the fire.

pulchritudine multa seniores meminerint, quae reparari nequibant. Fuere qui adnotarent XIII Kal. Sextiles principium incendii huius ortum, quo et Senones captam urbem inflammaverint. Alii eo usque cura progressi sunt, ut totidem annos mensisque et dies inter utraque incendia numerent.

XLII. Ceterum Nero usus est patriae ruinis extruxitque domum, in qua haud perinde gemmae et aurum miraculo essent, solita pridem et luxu vulgata, quam arva et stagna et in modum solitudinum hinc silvae, inde aperta spatia et prospectus, magistris et machinatoribus Severo et Celere, quibus ingenium et audacia erat etiam, quae natura dene-gavisset, per artem temptare et viribus principis inludere. Namque ab lacu Averno navigabilem fossam usque ad ostia Tiberina depressuros promiserant, squalenti litore aut per montis adversos. Neque enim aliud umidum gignendis aquis occurrit quam Pomptinae paludes: cetera abrupta aut arentia, ac si perumpi possent, intolerandus labor

¹ Rome was fired by the Gauls after Allia in 390 B.C., and the 454 years separating the two conflagrations may be resolved, though not exactly, into 418 years, 418 months, 418 days. The sentence, which had baffled Lipsius and succeeding editors, was explained in 1843 by Grotefend.

² The celebrated *Domus Aurea*, which moved the emperor to the admission that he "had begun to be housed like a human being." Its short-lived splendours are catalogued by Suetonius (*Ner.* 31): a modern monograph is Weege's *Das Goldene Haus des Nero*, 1913. It was demolished by Vespasian, and his Colosseum now occupies perhaps one-tenth of its area.

rearsen city, the older generation recollects much that it proved impossible to replace. There were those who noted that the first outbreak of the fire took place on the nineteenth of July, the anniversary of the capture and burning of Rome by the Senones: others have pushed their researches so far as to resolve the interval between the two fires into equal numbers of years, of months, and of days.¹

XLII. However, Nero turned to account the ruins of his fatherland by building a palace,² the marvels of which were to consist not so much in gems and gold, materials long familiar and vulgarized by luxury, as in fields and lakes and the air of solitude given by wooded ground alternating with clear tracts and open landscapes. The architects and engineers were Severus and Celer, who had the ingenuity and the courage to try the force of art even against the veto of nature and to fritter away the resources of a Caesar. They had undertaken to sink a navigable canal³ running from Lake Avernus to the mouths of the Tiber along a desolate shore or through intervening hills; for the one district along the route moist enough to yield a supply of water is the Pomptine Marsh;⁴ the rest being cliff and sand, which could be cut through, if at all, only by intolerable exertions for which no

³ The lake could be made accessible from the Bay of Baiae by repairing the Julian Harbour (see XIV. 5 n.). The canal was then to have been carried northwards to the Tiber by convict labour drawn from every quarter of the empire, the estimated length being 160 Roman miles (*Suet. Ner.* 31).

⁴ The water-logged, fever-ridden tract, some 30 miles long and from 6 to 11 broad, in S. Latium between the Volscian hills and the sea. The problem of its reclamation seems to have been definitely solved by Mussolini.

nec satis causae. Nero tamen, ut erat incredibilium cupitor, effodere proxima Averno iuga conisus est, manentque vestigia inritae spei.

XLIII. Ceterum urbis quae domui supererant non, ut post Gallica incendia, nulla distinctione nec passim erecta, sed dimensis vicorum ordinibus et latis viarum spatiis cohibitaque aedificiorum altitudine ac patefactis areis additisque porticibus, quae frontem insularum protegerent. Eas porticus Nero sua pecunia exstructurum purgatasque areas dominis traditurum pollicitus est. Addidit praemia pro cuiusque ordine et rei familiaris copiis, finivitque tempus, intra quod effectis domibus aut insulis apiscerentur. Ruderī accipiendō Ostiensis paludes destinabat, utique naves, quae frumentum Tiberi subvectassent, onustae rudere decurrerent, aedificiaque ipsa certa sui parte sine trabibus saxo Gabino Albanove solidarentur, quod is lapis ignibus impervius est; iam aqua privatorum licentia intercepta quo largior et pluribus locis in publicum fluere, custodes adessent;¹ et subsidia reprimendis ignibus in propatulo quisque haberet; nec communione parietum, sed propriis quaeque muris ambirentur.² Ea ex utilitate accepta decorem quoque novae urbi attulere.

¹ <adessent> Jackson, <essent> Madvig.

² nec . . . ambirentur]. Plausibly transposed by Nipperdey, to follow impervius est above.

¹ The object, apart from the draining of the Marshes was to enable the grainships to avoid 125 miles of open and dangerous coast.

² Two kinds of the volcanic *peperino* of the Campagna—the latter quarried in the Alban hills, the former in the level between Tivoli and Frascati.

sufficient motive existed.¹ None the less, Nero, with his passion for the incredible, made an effort to tunnel the heights nearest the Avernus, and some evidences of that futile ambition survive.

XLIII. In the capital, however, the districts spared by the palace were rebuilt, not, as after the Gallic fire, indiscriminately and piecemeal, but in measured lines of streets, with broad thoroughfares, buildings of restricted height, and open spaces, while colonnades were added as a protection to the front of the tenement-blocks. These colonnades Nero offered to erect at his own expense, and also to hand over the building-sites, clear of rubbish, to the owners. He made a further offer of rewards, proportioned to the rank and resources of the various claimants, and fixed a term within which houses or blocks of tenements must be completed, if the bounty was to be secured. As the receptacle of the refuse he settled upon the Ostian Marshes, and gave orders that vessels which had carried grain up the Tiber must run down-stream laden with débris. The buildings themselves, to an extent definitely specified, were to be solid, untimbered structures of Gabine or Alban stone,² that particular stone being proof against fire. Again, there was to be a guard to ensure that the water-supply—intercepted by private lawlessness—should be available for public purposes in greater quantities and at more points; appliances for checking fire were to be kept by everyone in the open; there were to be no joint partitions between buildings, but each was to be surrounded by its own walls. These reforms, welcomed for their utility, were also beneficial to the appearance of the new capital. Still, there were

Erant tamen qui crederent, veterem illam formam salubritati magis conduxisse, quoniam angustiae itinerum et altitudo tectorum non perinde solis vapore perrumperentur: at nunc patulam latitudinem et nulla umbra defensam graviore aestu ardescere.

XLIV. Et haec quidem humanis consiliis providebantur. Mox petita dis piacula aditque Sibyllae libri, ex quibus supplicatum Volcano et Cereri Proserpinaeque, ac propitiata Iuno per matronas, primum in Capitolio, deinde apud proximum mare, unde hausta aqua templum et simulacrum deae perspersum est; et sellisternia ac pervigilia celebravere feminae, quibus mariti erant. Sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur. Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressa-que in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. Igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multi-

those who held that the old form had been the more salubrious, as the narrow streets and high-built houses were not so easily penetrated by the rays of the sun; while now the broad expanses, with no protecting shadows, glowed under a more oppressive heat.

XLIV. So far, the precautions taken were suggested by human prudence: now means were sought for appeasing deity, and application was made to the Sibylline books; at the injunction of which public prayers were offered to Vulcan, Ceres, and Proserpine, while Juno was propitiated by the matrons, first in the Capitol, then at the nearest point of the sea-shore, where water was drawn for sprinkling the temple and image of the goddess. Ritual banquets and all-night vigils were celebrated by women in the married state. But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices,¹ whom the crowd styled Christians.² Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus,³ and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast

¹ The charges bandied about in the next century were those always favoured in such cases: ritual murder, nameless abominations with extinguished lights, *et hoc genus omne* (Just. Mart. *Apol.* I. 26, etc.).

² About twenty years had elapsed since the name arose in Antioch (*Acts* xi. 26).—For a clear statement of the main problems of this "Neronian persecution," the reader may be referred to Furneaux' *Excursus* (II². 416–427).

³ The only mention in heathen Latin.

tudo ingens haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contexti laniatu canum interirent, † aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi †, atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur.¹ Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistent. Unde quamquam adversus sontis et novissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica, sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur.

XLV. Interea conferendis pecuniis pervastata Italia, provinciae eversae sociique populi et quae civitatum liberae vocantur. Inque eam praedam etiam di cessere, spoliatis in urbe templis egestoque auro, quod triumphis, quod votis omnis populi Romani aetas prospere aut in metu sacraverat. Enimvero per Asiam atque Achaïam non dona tantum, sed simulacra numinum abripiabantur, missis in eas provincias Acrato ac Secundo Carrinate. Ille libertus cuicumque flagitio promptus, hic Graeca doctrina ore tenus exercitus animum bonis artibus non imbuerat.² Ferebatur Seneca, quo invidiam sacrilegii

¹ So the *Mediceus*, corruptly and, it would seem, defectively; nor is it possible to restore the original with the help of the version of *Sulpicius Severus* (about 400 A.D.):—interirent, multi crucibus adfixi aut flamma usti, plerique in id reservati ut, cum defecisset e.q.s. (*Chron.* ii. 29). *Nipperdey* cut the knot by cancelling aut crucibus . . . flammandi.

² imbuerat *Lipsius*: induerat.

¹ The expression, of course, may mean anything. Gibbon compared the terms applied by Livy to the 7,000 people involved in the Bacchanalian scandals—*multitudinem ingentem, alterum iam populum* (XXXIX. 13), *multa milia hominum* (ib. 15).

² Jewish "misanthropy"—which was proverbial—may have

numbers¹ were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race.² And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his Gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.

XLV. Meanwhile, Italy had been laid waste for contributions of money; the provinces, the federate communities, and the so-called free states, were ruined. The gods themselves formed part of the plunder, as the ravaged temples of the capital were drained of the gold dedicated in the triumphs or the vows, the prosperity or the fears, of the Roman nation at every epoch. But in Asia and Achaia, not offerings alone but the images of deity were being swept away, since Acratus and Carrinas Secundus had been despatched into the two provinces. The former was a freedman prepared for any enormity; the latter, as far as words went, was a master of Greek philosophy, but his character remained untinged by the virtues. Seneca, it was rumoured, to divert the odium of sacrilege from

partly suggested the charge; though from a passage of *Sulpicius Severus*, almost certainly transcribed from the *Histories* (see vol. ii. p. 220 of this edition), it is evident that the gulf between Jew and Christian had been clearly recognized by the Roman high command in 70 A.D.