**TACITUS – ANNALS 1**

**3** *Augustus seeks to perpetuate his family dynasty*

Turning now to other matters: as supports for his dominance, Augustus advanced Claudius Marcellus, his sister’s son, still very much a youth, with the pontificate and curule aedileship, and Marcus Agrippa, ignoble in status but good at soldiering and his partner in victory, with twinned consulships, [and] soon took him on as son-in-law when Marcellus died; he honoured his step-sons Tiberius Nero and Claudius Drusus with the titles of “imperator,” even though at that time his own house was intact. For he had taken the offspring of Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius, into the household of the Caesars, and although their [*toga*] *praetexta* of boyhood had not yet been put aside, he had desired most ardently that they be called *principes iuventutis* [heads of the equestrian order] and that they be designated in advance as consuls, despite his pretence of refusing this. When Agrippa had departed from life, [both] Lucius Caesar as he went to the armies of Spain and Gaius as he was returning from Armenia and frail due to a wound were carried off by a death brought on quickly by fate or else by the trickery of their stepmother Livia, and as Drusus had perished long ago, Nero alone was left of the stepsons. Thither everything converged: he was taken on board as a son, as a colleague in empire, and as a partner in the tribunician power, and he was paraded through all the armies, not by the dark arts of his mother as formerly, but openly with her encouragement. For to such an extent had she tied the elderly Augustus [around her finger] that he cast off to the island of Planasia his only grandson, Agrippa Postumus, [a man] undoubtedly raw in terms of good qualities and stupidly insolent in his bodily strength, but nevertheless detected of no outrage. Yet, by Hercules, he put Germanicus, the son of Drusus, in command of eight legions on the Rhine and ordered that he be adopted by Tiberius, even though there was a young son in Tiberius’ house, but [this he did] that he might consolidate his position with more protective measures. At that time no war remained except that against the Germans, [a war that was] more to wipe out the disgrace due to the army lost with Quintilius Varus than from any desire of expanding the empire or on account of a worthy prize. At home things were tranquil: the titles of the magistrates were the same; the younger men had been born after the Actian victory; even most of the old men were born during the citizens’ wars. How many remained who had seen the Republic [lit. in what numerical order stood each remaining man who had …]?

**4** *As Augustus grows old, Romans discuss suitability of Agrippa Postumus and Tiberius to succeed him*

Therefore, as the state of the republic had been overturned, nothing in any way of the old-time sound morality [remained]: once equality had been stripped away, everyone looked to the commands of their *princeps* without any fear for the present, whilst Augustus, strong in the prime of his life, supported himself and his house and the peace. But after his now advanced age began to be worn out by a sick body also and his end was at hand as well as new hopes, a few discussed in vain the benefits of freedom, more feared war, others desired it. By far the greatest number began with various gossip to defame their impending overlords: [they said that] Agrippa, savage and inflamed by his ignominious treatment, was neither by age nor by experience of affairs equal to such a massive task. [They said that] Tiberius Nero was mature in years and proven in war, but [that] he was [infected] with the old inbred arrogance of the Claudian family, and many proofs of his cruelty, although suppressed, were breaking out. [They said that] he had been brought up even from his infancy in the regal home; [that] consulships had been heaped on him as a young man; [that] not even in those years in Rhodes, in which under the pretext of retirement he had acted like an exile, had he studied anything other than anger and dissimulation and secret lusts. Then came his mother, with her female unruliness: they would have to serve a woman and two young men to boot, who in the meantime would oppress the republic and at some point tear it apart.

**5** *Augustus dies in suspicious circumstances*

While people were considering things such as these, the health of Augustus grew worse, and some suspected crime on the part of his wife. For in fact a rumour had got underway a few months beforehand that Augustus, with the knowledge of a select few and one Fabius Maximus as a companion, had travelled to Planasia to visit Agrippa; and there had been many tears there on both sides and signs of affection and the hope that from this the young man would be restored to the hearth of his grandfather: Maximus had disclosed this to his wife Marcia, she to Livia. This became known to Caesar; when Maximus expired not long afterwards, whether by a procured death is uncertain, the groans of Marcia had been heard at his funeral, reproaching herself that she had been the cause of his death. However that matter stood, scarcely yet had Tiberius entered Illyricum when he was summoned by a hasty letter of his mother; but it has not been satisfactorily proved whether he discovered Augustus at the city of Nola still breathing or lifeless. For Livia had fenced off the house and roads with zealous guards, and from time to time good news was announced, until, after provision had been made for what the occasion required, the same report announced simultaneously that Augustus had died and that Nero was in control of affairs.

**6** *The new principate immediately murders Agrippa Postumus*

The first crime of the new principate was the murder of Agrippa Postumus, unaware and unarmed, whom a centurion, though firm in resolution, dispatched with difficulty. Tiberius discussed nothing about the matter in the senate: he pretended that there existed orders from his father wherein he had written in advance to the tribune placed in charge of custody not to hesitate to put Agrippa to death whenever he himself had completed his final day. Augustus, having made many and doubtless fierce complaints about the young man’s behaviour, had ensured that his exile be sanctioned by decree of the senate: but he never steeled himself to the murder of any of his relatives, nor was it believable that death had been brought on a grandson for the security of a stepson! It is nearer the truth that Tiberius and Livia, the former through fear, the latter through a stepmother’s hatred, had expedited the death of the suspected and hated young man. To the centurion announcing (as is the way of the military) that what he had ordered had been done, Tiberius replied that he had given no order and that an account of the deed needed to be recounted in the Senate. After the imperial confidant Sallustius Crispus discovered this – it was he who had sent the note to the tribune – fearing lest he be scapegoated [lit. substituted as the one responsible], it being equally perilous whether he voiced falsehoods or truths, he advised Livia that the secrets of the palace, the counsels of friends and the ministries of soldiers should not be made public; nor should Tiberius dissolve the strength of the principate by calling everything to the Senate: the condition of imperial rule was such that the accounts only balanced when handed over to one man.

**7** *Tiberius takes full control, whilst feigning indecisiveness*

But at Rome the consuls, senators and knights rushed into servitude. The more illustrious someone was, the more disingenuous and in a rush they were; and with an artificial expression, lest [they appear] happy at the departure of [one] *princeps* or too sad at the beginning [of another], they were mixing tears and joy, laments and adulation. The consuls Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius were the first to swear allegiance to Tiberius Caesar, and in their presence Seius Strabo and Gaius Turranius, the former the prefect of the Praetorian Cohorts, the latter of the grain supply; shortly afterwards the Senate, the soldiers and the people. For Tiberius began everything through the consuls, as though [he were still] in the old republic and in two minds about ruling: not even the edict whereby he was calling the Fathers to the Curia did he issue except under title of the tribunician power received under Augustus. The words of the edict were few and of a very moderate tone: he would take advice about the honours due to his parent, and he was not leaving the body, and that alone of his public duties was he assuming. But, when Augustus had passed away, he had given the watchword to the Praetorian Cohorts as though he were the emperor; there were watches, armed men, and all the other things associated with the court; soldiers would escort him into the forum, and soldiers into the Curia. He sent a despatch to the armies as though the principate had been acquired, nowhere hesitant except when he spoke in the Senate. The chief reason for this arose from his fear that Germanicus, at whose disposal lay so many legions, immense reinforcements of allies, and amazing goodwill among the people, might prefer to have power rather than wait for it. He was also giving it out to public opinion that he be seen to have been called and chosen by the republic rather than to have crept in through wifely intrigue and senile adoption. Subsequently it was learned that his indecisiveness had been put on to fathom the inclinations of the leading men as well: for he would store up their words, twisting their looks into a criminal offence.

**11** *Tiberius’ fake modesty vs senators’ abject appeals*

Prayers were then directed to Tiberius. And he began to speak variously about the vastness of the empire [and] his own lack of ambition. Only the mind of the Divine Augustus had the capacity for such a massive task. He himself, having been called by him to have a share of his cares, had learned from experience how arduous, how subject to fortune was the burden of ruling everything. Accordingly, in a state which depended on so many illustrious men, they should not refer everything to a single individual; several would more easily execute the duties of the republic by their combined labours. In such a speech there was more worthiness than credibility. And even in matters where he was not hiding things, Tiberius’ words were, whether by nature or habit, always up-in-the-air and obscure. But this time, as he was struggling to hide his feelings within, they [his words] were even more enfolded in uncertainty and ambiguity. Yet the senators, whose only fear was that they might appear to understand [his insincerity], burst into lamentations, tears and prayers. To the gods, to the effigy of Augustus, to the knees of Tiberius himself they were stretching out their hands, when he ordered a document to be brought forward and read aloud. Contained [therein] were the public resources: how many citizens and allies were under arms, how many fleets, kingdoms, provinces, direct and indirect taxes, and essential expenditures and goodwill donations. All of which things Augustus had written out with his own hand, and he had added the recommendation – whether by fear or jealousy is unclear – of confining the empire within its [existing] frontiers.

**12** *Asinius Gallus’ flattery unable to mollify Tiberius’ secret anger*

Meanwhile, whilst the Senate was stooping to the basest entreaties, Tiberius happened to say that, as he was not equal to the whole republic, he would thus take on as his charge whatever part might be entrusted to him. At that point, Asinius Gallus said, ‘May I ask, Caesar, which part of the republic you wish to be entrusted to you.’ Unnerved by the unforeseen question, he was a little reticent. Then, gathering his thoughts, he replied that in no way was it becoming to his sense of honour to choose anything or to evade that from which he would prefer to be excused altogether. In turn, Gallus – for he had surmised offence in his expression – said that the question had not been asked for the purpose that he should divide what could not be separated, but that, by his own admission, it might be proved that the body of the republic was one thing and should be ruled by the mind of one man. He added a eulogy of Augustus, and reminded Tiberius himself of his own victories and the things which he had done with distinction in a toga over so many years. But not even for that did he assuage his anger, for he had long been hated inasmuch as, having married Vipsania, Marcus Agrippa’s daughter, who once had been the wife of Tiberius, he aspired to be more than a citizen and retained the arrogance of his father Asinius Pollio.

**13** *Arruntius, Haterius, Scaurus … Tiberius takes deadly offence with all!*

After this Lucius Arruntius, disagreeing little with Gallus’ speech, caused offence in the same way, although Tiberius had no longstanding anger against Arruntius; but he held him under suspicion as he was wealthy, enterprising [lit. ready for action, ‘up-for-it’], and possessed of outstanding skills and an equal reputation in the public eye. For indeed Augustus, in his final conversations – when he was mulling over those who would refuse to acquire the top position though they might be up to it, or those unequal [to the task] who would want it, or those who were likewise capable and desirous of it – had said that Marcus Lepidus was capable but dismissive of it, Gallus Asinius was greedy for it and too lightweight, [and] Lucius Arruntius was not unworthy and, if the opportunity were given, would venture to take it. About the first two there is a consensus; [but] instead of Arruntius some have given Gnaeus Piso. All except Lepidus were soon beset with false charges at Tiberius’s devising. Even Quintus Haterius and Mamercus Scaurus grazed his mistrustful mind: Haterius when he had said, ‘How long, Caesar, will you suffer there to be no head of state?’ and Scaurus because he had said that there was hope that the Senate’s prayers were not in vain judging from the fact that Tiberius had not vetoed the consuls’ motion with the authority of his tribunician power. Tiberius immediately inveighed against Haterius; Scaurus, against whom he raged more implacably, he passed over in silence. And worn out by the uproar of them all and by the expostulation of individuals, he gradually changed his stance, not so as to acknowledge that the imperium was being assumed by him, but so as to desist from refusing it and being petitioned. It is generally agreed that Haterius, when he had entered the Palatine in order to ask for pardon and was grovelling at the knees of Tiberius as he was walking, was nearly killed by the soldiers because Tiberius, either by chance or obstructed by that man’s hands, had fallen forwards. Nor yet was he [Tiberius] softened by the danger to such a man until Haterius petitioned Augusta and was protected by her most anxious entreaties.

**14** *Tiberius restricts honours to Livia yet promotes Germanicus*

Much of the senators’ adulation [was directed] towards Augusta. Some proposed that she should be styled Parent, some Mother of the Fatherland, and the majority that ‘Son of Julia’ should be appended to the name of Caesar. He [Tiberius] – repeatedly stating that the honours paid to women should be moderated and that he would employ the same restraint in those that were being bestowed upon himself, but in fact anxious with envy and taking a woman’s elevation to be a diminution of his own – suffered not even a lictor to be decreed for her, and he forbade an ‘altar of adoption’ and other things of this kind. Yet he sought proconsular power for Germanicus Caesar, and legates were sent to confer this, as well as to console his grief for the passing of Augustus. The reason the same was not demanded for Drusus was that Drusus was consul designate and present [in Rome]. He [Tiberius] nominated twelve candidates for the praetorship, the number passed down by Augustus; and when the Senate encouraged him to increase this, he pledged with an oath that he would not exceed it.

**16** *Legions start to riot in Pannonia as Percennius stirs things up*

This was the state of affairs in the city, when sedition came upon the legions in Pannonia, due to no new reasons other than that the change of *princeps* held out a licence for riots and hope of rewards from civil war. In the summer camp three legions were being held under the command of Junius Blaesus, who, on hearing of the end of Augustus and the accession of Tiberius, had interrupted the customary duties for the sake of a *iustitium* (cessation of legal and commercial business for public mourning) or rejoicing. From that beginning, the soldiery began to run riot, quarrel, lend their ears to the talk of each and every rogue; in fine they craved extravagance and leisure, they spurned discipline and labour. There was in the camp a certain Percennius, at one time a ringleader of theatre claqueurs, then a common soldier, insolent in tongue and expert at embroiling gatherings due to his zeal for the stage. The man gradually incited minds that were inexperienced and uncertain what the condition of the military would be after Augustus. [This he did] in night-time discussions. Or else, when day had turned to evening and the better men had dispersed, he gathered together all the very worst men.

**17** *Percennius passionately summarises the soldiers’ grievances*

Finally, as others also were now ready to be agents of sedition, he began in the style of a demagogue to ask why like slaves they were obeying a few centurions and even fewer tribunes. When would they dare to demand redress, if they were not going to approach a new and still wavering *princeps* with their petitions or with their arms? Because of their indolence they had been wronged quite enough for so many years, for they are putting up with thirty or forty year periods of military service, old men, most with their bodies mutilated with wounds. Even for those who had been retired was there no end to military service, but, quartering with the *vexillum* (veteran reserve troops), they were carrying out the same tasks under a different name. And should any of them survive so many misfortunes with his life, then, on top of this, he is dragged off to remote lands where under the name of “fields” they receive damp patches of marshland or uncultivated bits of mountainside. Indeed, military service itself is costly and fruitless: soul and the body is valued at ten asses a day: out of this comes their clothing, weapons and tents, out of this the savagery of the centurions and exemptions from duties are paid. But, by Hercules, whippings and wounds, harsh winter, gruelling summers, savage war or barren peace, are everlasting. And no other remedy is there than for military service to be brought under fixed laws, so that they earn one denarius, so that the sixteenth year bring an end to their service, and so that they no longer be kept under the *vexilla*, but a reward be paid in cash in the same camp. Do the praetorian cohorts, who received two denarii, who are returned to their fireside gods after sixteen years, undertake more perils? Not that the city watches are being disparaged by them: yet [living as they do] among fearful tribes, the enemy can be espied by them from their [very] tents!

**18** *Blaesus confronts mutineers as they attempt to merge legions*

The crowd were cheering due to a variety of incentives – some bringing up the marks of whiplashes, some their grey hair, most of them their worn out clothing and naked bodies. Finally they reached such a point of frenzy that they agitated for merging the three legions into one. Dissuaded by their rivalry – for each man sought that honour for his own legion – they turn to another plan and place together the three eagles and the standards of the cohorts; together they pile up turf, they erect a platform, so that the site might be more conspicuous. As they were rushing about, Blaesus arrives, and he began to rebuke and restrain them one by one, shouting repeatedly: “Rather with my slaughter stain your hands. With less disgrace will you kill your legate than [if] you break allegiance with your supreme commander [Tiberius]. Either I will preserve the loyalty of my legions while I’m alive or I will hasten their repentance with my throat cut.”

**19** *Blaesus persuades mutineers to send an embassy to Rome*

The turf was being piled up nonetheless and already it had grown to chest-height, when finally, defeated by his relentlessness, they abandoned what they had begun. Blaesus, with great skill in speaking, said that the soldiers’ wishes should not be relayed to Caesar through sedition and riots; that their predecessors had not sought such novelties from their commanders of old, nor had they themselves from the divine Augustus; and that it was not a good time for the concerns of an incipient *princeps* to be burdened. Yet if they were aiming to attempt in peacetime what not even the victors of the civil wars had demanded, why, contrary to their custom of obedience, contrary to the divine law of discipline, might they be contemplating violence? Let them appoint legates and give them their demands, in his presence. They shouted that Blaesus’ son, a tribune, should perform that embassy and should request discharge for the soldiers after sixteen years; they would demand the rest when the first had succeeded. When the young man had set out there was a modest respite; but the soldiers were arrogant because [their use of] the legate’s son as pleader for a public cause sufficiently demonstrated that things had been extorted by compulsion which they would not have obtained by self-restraint.

**20** *Companies in Nauportus run amok, abusing centurions and camp prefect*

Meanwhile, after the companies sent to Nauportus prior to the sedition for the sake of roads and bridges and other necessities had heard about the mayhem in the camp, they uproot their standards and, having ransacked both the neighbouring villages and Nauportus itself, which was the size of a municipal town, they lay into the centurions restraining them with derision and insults, finally with beatings, their main anger being against Aufidienus Rufus, the prefect of the camp, whom they pull out of his carriage and load with soldiers’ packs and drive at the head of the column, repeatedly asking him in mockery whether he bore such immense loads, such long marches gladly. The reason for this was that Rufus, for a long time a maniple soldier, then a centurion, and soon in charge of the camp, was restoring the old-fashioned, tough military service, intent [as he was on] hard work and labour, and all the sterner because he had put up with them [himself].

**21** *Renewal of camp sedition; Blaesus’ incarceration policy backfires*

Upon their arrival the sedition is renewed, and roving about they began to plunder the surrounding areas. Blaesus gives orders that a few men who were laden to the hilt with booty be subjected to flogging and shut up in prison in order to instil terror in the rest; for even at that time the commander was being obeyed by the centurions and by the best of the maniple soldiers. The men in question, struggling against those hauling them off, clasp the knees of the bystanders; at one moment each calls on the names of individuals, at another on the century, the cohort, the legion of which he was a maniple soldier, repeatedly shouting that the same fate hangs over them all. At the same time they heap invective on their commander, they call to witness heaven and the gods, they leave nothing undone to excite hatred, pity, fear and anger. There is a universal rush to help and, once the prison has been broken open, they loosen the chains, and they now associate with themselves deserters and those convicted of capital crimes.

**22** *Vibulenus melodramatically asserts that Blaesus murdered his brother*

More flagrant then did the violence become, and there were more ringleaders for the sedition. And a certain Vibulenus, a rank-and-file soldier, having been lifted up before Blaesus’ tribunal on the shoulders of those standing around him, said to the unsettled and those focused on what he was preparing, ‘Yes, you have restored light and breath to these innocent and most wretched men. But who is to restore life to my brother, who is to restore my brother to me? Despatched to you from the German army with regard to our common interests, he [Blaesus] cut his throat last night using his gladiators, the ones he keeps and arms for the destruction of [us] soldiers. Answer, Blaesus. [Tell us] where you threw his dead body? Not even the enemy begrudges a burial. When with kisses, when with tears I shall have satisfied my grief, order me too to be butchered, provided that these men may bury us, we who have been killed on account of no crime, but because we were consulting the utility of the legions.

**23** *Vibulenus’ lies spark off systematic attacks on the officers*

He was inflaming his remarks by weeping and beating his chest and face with his hands. And soon, when the men on whose shoulders he was held up had been cast aside, falling on his face and rolling around at the feet of individuals, he excited so much dismay and resentment that some of the soldiers tied up the gladiators from Blaesus’ slave-gang, some the rest of said man’s household, and others dispersed to look for the body. And had it not been speedily ascertained that there was no body to be found, and that the slaves denied the killing even under the application of torture, and that that man never had a brother, they came close to doing away with the legate. Yet they thrust out the tribunes and camp prefect, the sacks of the fleeing men were ransacked, and the centurion Lucilius is killed, on whom with military jocularity they had fastened the nickname “Give Me Another” because, when his vine-rod broke on the back of a soldier, he would to demand a second one in a loud voice and then again another. Hideouts protected the rest, with only Julius Clemens being held back, as he was considered suitable for passing on the demands of the soldiers due to his ready wit. Nay, the Eighth and Fifteenth legions themselves were readying their swords against each other – while the former demand the centurion nicknamed Sirpicus be handed over to be put to death, the men of the Fifteenth protect him – had not the soldiery of the Ninth interjected their entreaties and, against those who spurned them, their threats.

**24** *Tiberius reacts to the sedition by sending his son Drusus with a huge escort*

The report of these things drove Tiberius, inscrutable though he was and especially secretive about all that was most grievous, to send his son Drusus with the foremost men of State and with two praetorian cohorts, with no sufficiently fixed instructions, but to take counsel as the situation required. And the cohorts were strengthened above normal with specially picked troops. To these is added a considerable part of the praetorian cavalry and the flower of the Germans who were around at that time as the emperor’s guards. Along with them also was the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, Aelius Sejanus, appointed as a colleague of his own father Strabo, a man with great influence over Tiberius; he was to act as a guide to the young man, and to everyone else as an advertiser of dangers and rewards. When Drusus approached, the legions came to meet him as though out of duty, not joyfully as is customary, nor glittering with their insignia; but because of their degrading filth and ugly looks, although they were putting on a show of dejection, they [looked] closer to defiance.

**25** *Drusus read his father’s despatch to the menacing mutineers*

After he had entered the rampart, they make fast the gates with sentry posts, they order clusters of armed men to wait in certain locations of the camp. The rest crowd around the tribunal in a vast troop. Drusus was standing there demanding silence with his hand. Those men, as often as they cast their eyes back towards the multitude, cried out with savage voices, but turning around again they trembled at the sight of a Caesar. There was an uncertain murmur, an atrocious clamour, and suddenly a lull; because of the conflicting emotions of their minds, they were both suffering and inspiring dread. At last, when the tumult had been interrupted, he reads his father’s despatch wherein it was written in full that he had an especial care for his very brave legions, with whom he had endured very many wars; that, as soon as his mind had recovered from its grief, he would bring before the Fathers the question concerning their demands; that in the meantime he had sent his son to concede without delay those things which could be immediately granted; and that the rest must be reserved for the Senate, [for] it was right that they be considered as free from [both] favour and severity.

**26** *Soldiers abuse Drusus for failing to deal personally with their demands*

The response from the assembly was that the centurion Clemens had the demands he was to pass on. He commences with discharge after 16 years, with rewards of completed service, [insisting] that one denarius should be the daily stipend, and veterans should not be kept in the *vexillum* [special reserve]. When to counter this Drusus pleaded the decision of the Senate and his father, he is thrown off his stride by an uproar: Why had he come, if neither for increasing the soldiers’ stipends nor for alleviating their hardships, in a word, with no licence to to do them any good? But by Hercules floggings and execution are permitted to everyone! Tiberius had once been in the habit of frustrating the legions’ desires with the name of Augustus; Drusus has brought back those same arts. Will there never come to them [anyone] except minors [lit. sons of families]? It’s a novelty for sure that the emperor should refer to the Senate the soldiers’ interests alone! The self-same Senate should be consulted, then, when executions or battles are proposed! Or are rewards to be under the thumb of their overlords, whilst punishments are [dispensed] without an arbitrator?

**27** *The mob menaces Caesar’s entourage and almost kills Cn. Lentulus*

At last they abandon the tribunal, stretching out their hands [threateningly] whenever any of the praetorian soldiers or Caesar’s friends came their way – [an act that was] the cause of strife and beginning of armed conflict –[being as they were] especially hostile to Cnaeus Lentulus, because he before others, by reason of his age and renown in war, was believed to be encouraging Drusus and to be foremost in scorning those blots on military service. Not long after, as he was heading away from Caesar and with foresight of his danger making for the winter camp, they surround him, asking him repeatedly where he was proceeding: Was it to the emperor or to the Fathers, so that there too he might oppose the legions’ interests?! At the same time they rush upon him, they fling rocks. And now bloodied from the blow of a stone and certain of his death, he was [only] protected by the running-up of the throng which had arrived with Drusus.

**28** *Drusus exploits eclipse, wins officers to his side, and restores camp order*

That night was menacing and poised to erupt into crime, but chance calmed it; for suddenly in a clear sky the moon appeared to grow faint. This the soldiers, ignorant of the reason, took as an omen of their present situation, likening the failure of the star to their own efforts, and [believing] that what was going on would turn out prosperously if the goddess’ brilliance and splendour were restored [to her]. Therefore, with the sound of brass, with a concert of trumpets and horns, they raised a din; to the extent that she grew more splendid or more obscure, they rejoiced or mourned. And after clouds had arisen and obstructed her from view and it was believed that she had been buried in darkness, then, just as minds once unnerved are prone to superstition, they lament that never-ending hardship is portended for them and that the gods are averting themselves from their crimes.

Caesar, thinking that that inclination should be exploited and that what chance had offered should be turned to wise account, orders the tents to be canvassed. The centurion Clemens is summoned along with any others who are pleasing to the common soldiers for their good qualities. These men insert themselves among the watches, sentries and gatekeepers; they offer hope, they hold out fear. ‘How long will we besiege the emperor’s son? What will be the result of our struggles? Is it to Percennius and Vibulenus that we are to pronounce an oath of allegiance? Will Percennius and Vibulenus lavish stipends on soldiers, fields on ex-soldiers? In a word, are they, instead of the Neros and Drususes, to seize control of the Roman people? As we were the last to be at fault, why are we not rather the first to repent? Tardy are the things that are demanded in common; a private favour you may merit immediately, receive immediately.’ With their minds stirred by these things and mistrusted by each other, they disassociate themselves, the new recruit from the veteran, legion from legion. Then by degrees the love of obedience returns; they quit the gates, they restore to their own sites the standards assembled in one place at the start of the sedition.

**29** *Soldiers agree to send second embassy to Rome; Vibulenus & Percennius clandestinely executed*

When day arose and an assembly had been called, Drusus, although untrained in speaking, yet with an inbred nobility finds faults with their prior behaviour but commends the present. He says he is not won over by terror and threats. If he should see them inclined to moderation, if he should hear them suppliant, he would write to his father so that, once placated, he might receive the legions’ entreaties. At their request, the same Blaesus and L. Aponius, a Roman knight from Drusus’ cohort, and Justus Catonius, a first-rank centurion, are sent to Tiberius. Then ensued a conflict of opinion, since some were of the opinion that the legates should be awaited and the soldiers softened up with kindness in the interim, others that the situation should be handled with stronger remedies. [The latter declared that] there is nothing of moderation in the rabble; they inspire fear unless they quake with fear; [but] when they are affrighted, they can be despised with impunity; while superstition impels them, terror-tactics from the commander should be applied, the authors of the sedition having been done away with. Drusus had a character inclined to the harsher measures: he orders Vibulenus and Percennius to be summoned and put to death. Most report that they were covered over inside the commander’s tent; others that their bodies were flung outside the rampart for show.

**30** *Ringleaders cut down; demoralized troops return to winter quarters*

Then, to the extent that each was a chief troublemaker, they were tracked down; and part of them, as they were wandering outside the camp, were cut down by the centurions or by soldiers of the praetorian cohorts; some even the companies themselves handed over as proof of their loyalty. A premature winter had increased the soldiers’ anxieties, with continuous showers so savage that they could not leave their tents, not congregate with one another, barely protect their standards, which were constantly being snatched up by squall and floodwaters And there lingered also the dread of celestial wrath, nor was it in vain [thought they] that stars grow dim against impious men, that storms rush down upon them: no other relief from their miseries was there than for them to leave the ill-favoured and defiled camp, and, having purged themselves by expiation, for each to be returned to their own winter-quarters. First the eighth, then the fifteenth legion returned; the ninth had repeatedly cried out that Tiberius’ letter should be waited for, but soon, isolated by the departure of the others, they pre-empted the imminent necessity of their own accord. And Drusus too, without awaiting the legates’ return, because present affairs had sufficiently settled down, went back to the city.

**46** *Tiberius criticised in Rome for not visiting the rebellion sites himself*

But at Rome, some it was not yet known what the outcome in Illyricum had been, and since the commotion among the German legions had been heard about, the fearful citizenry begins to criticise Tiberius on the grounds that, while with his feigned hesitation he makes fools of the senators and the plebs, feeble and defenceless things [as they are], meanwhile the soldiery are in dissension and cannot be checked by the still immature authority of two young men. He ought to have gone himself and set his imperial majesty against those who would [surely] yield when they had seen the *princeps* with his long experience and that the self-same man was sovereign in both severity and generosity. Could it be that Augustus in his weary old age had been able to travel to the Germanies so often, [whereas] Tiberius, still vigorous in years, sits in the Senate cavilling at the words of the Fathers? Sufficient provision has been made for urban servitude! It was to military spirits that dressings needed to be applied so that they might be willing to endure peace!

**47** *Analysis of Tiberius’ private reasons for staying in Rome*

In the face of talk of that kind Tiberius had the immovable and fixed [resolve] not to abandon the hub of things or to expose himself and the state to risk. For the fact was that many different things were anguishing him: stronger was the army through Germany, nearer was the one at Pannonia; the former was supported by the wealth of the Gallic territories, the latter menaced Italy; whom therefore should he treat first? And [he was afraid] lest those put second be incensed by the slight. But through his sons matters could be approached evenly, his majesty remaining safe, and greater from afar would the reverence be thereto. At the same time it was excusable for the young men to refer certain matters to their father, and those resisting Germanicus or Drusus might be appeased or smashed by him. What other fallback was there if they should spurn their commander? But, as if here were about to leave here and now, he picked companions, collected his baggage, decked out ships. Shortly afterwards, variously pleading the winter or business, he fooled first the intelligent, then the crowd, then the provinces for the longest period of all.

**48** *Germanicus threatens slaughter if Caecina fails to punish rebels*

But although Germanicus had gathered an army and prepared for vengeance against the defectors, [nevertheless] thinking that an interval should still be granted to see if they might consult their own interests following the recent example, he sends an advance despatch to Caecina. [He said that] he was on his way with a powerful detachment and that, unless they first take punishment on the guilty, he would use indiscriminate butchery. Caecina reads this out secretly to the eagle-bearers and standard-bearers and that part of the camp which was untainted, and urges them to remove disgrace from everyone and death from themselves; for in peacetime cases and merits are observed, [but] when war rushes onwards, innocent and guilty fall side by side. These [men], then, to the tried-and-tested [soldiers] whom they thought suitable, after they see that the greater part of the legions is dutiful, appoint a time regarding the legate’s decision at which they might assail with the sword all those most loathsome and prompt for sedition. Then, once the signal had been given among themselves, they burst into their tents, they slaughter the unsuspecting, with no one knowing except the accomplices what the beginning of the slaughter was and what the end.

**49** *Following the undisciplined reprisals at Vetera, Germanicus prepares to renew war on Germans*

Different from all the civil warfare which had ever taken place was its appearance. Not in battle, not from opposing camps, but from the same beds, they whom the day had had eating together and the night had had resting together separate into factions [and] rain down their weapons [on one another]. The clamour, the wounds and the blood are in plain sight, the reason in secret; all else chance directs. And some good men were cut down after the worst also had seized arms when it was understood against whom the rage was directed. Neither legate nor tribune was present [to act] as a moderator; licence was permitted to the mob, and revenge and the glutting [thereof]. Shortly afterwards Germanicus, having entered the camp and in floods of tears calling that thing not a remedy but a disaster, orders the bodies to be cremated. Even then a desire of going against the enemy flies into their savage minds as an atonement for their frenzy. Not otherwise [they declared] could the ghosts of their fellow soldiers be appeased unless [lit. than if] they had received honourable wounds on their impious chests. Caesar follows up the soldiers’ ardour, and, after a bridge had been joined together, he sends across twelve thousand from the legions, twenty-six allied cohorts, and eight wings of cavalry, whose restraint in that sedition had been untarnished.