

## EIGHTH PERIOD.

### AUGUSTUS, OR THE FOUNDATION OF THE EMPIRE.

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#### CHAPTER LXV.

##### ORGANIZATION OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT (30—13 B.C.) <sup>1</sup>

##### I.—DECREES OF THE SENATE AFTER THE DEATH OF ANTONY (30—28).

**A**NTONY being dead, and Egypt reduced to a province, Octavius returned to Syria, where he received from the king of the Parthians a first embassy, in no way haughty in tone, for

<sup>1</sup> *Chronology of the Reign of Augustus after Actium.*—B.C. 30, death of Antony; Egypt reduced to a province; Octavius passed the winter at Samos. 29, Return of Octavius to Rome; he closed the temple of Janus. 28, Census taken by the consuls; 4,164,000 citizens. 27, Octavius received the title of Augustus, divided the provinces with the senate, and remained three years (27-25) in Gaul and Spain. 24, He returned to Rome. 23, He was invested with the tribunitian power for life, and received an embassy of Parthians. 22, Conspiracy of Murena; Candace invaded Egypt; revolt of the Cantabri. 21, Augustus repaired to the East; passed the winter at Samos, and married his daughter Julia to Agrippa. 20, The Parthians restored the standards taken from Crassus; Augustus at Samos. 19, Return to Rome [his *potestas consularis*]; death of Virgil. 18, *Lex de maritandis ordinibus*. 17, The secular games; Agrippa sent to Asia. 16, Defeat of Lollius; Augustus repaired to Gaul, where he again remained three years (16-14). 15, Tiberius and Drusus subjugated the Ræti and Vindelici. 13, Augustus returned to Rome. 12, Death of Agrippa and Lepidus; Drusus in Gaul; the altar of Rome and Augustus at Lyons. 11, War of Drusus against the Germans, of Tiberius against the Dalmatians and Pannonians; Tiberius marries Julia. 10, Augustus in Gaul. 9, Death of Drusus. 8, Augustus in Gaul for the fourth time; Tiberius in Germany; death of Mæcenus and Horace. 7, Tiberius in Germany. 6, Tiberius received the tribunitian power for five years, and retired to Rhodes, where he remained seven years. 2 B.C., Banishment of Julia. 2 of our era, Return of Tiberius to Rome. 4, Tiberius adopted by Augustus, repaired to Germany, where he remained three years (4-6). 6, Revolt of the Pannonians and Dalmatians. 7, Germanicus in Germany; three campaigns of Tiberius in Illyricum (7-9). 9, Defeat of Varus; exile of Ovid. 10 and 11, Tiberius in Germany. 11, Tiberius returned to Rome and triumphed. 14, Closing of the census; 4,197,000 citizens; Augustus died on the 19th of August, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and the thirty-seventh of his tribunitian power.

Phraates, in order to prevent the Roman *imperator* giving his support to a candidate for the throne who had taken refuge in the territories of the Empire, sent him his own son as a hostage. Augustus employed the winter and the spring of the year 29 in regulating the affairs of the Asiatic peninsula. Ephesus and Nicæa, the two capitals of Asia and Bithynia, were authorized to build each a temple to the two new deities, Rome and the hero Julius; Pergamum and Nicomedia, to establish "consecrated enclosures in honour of Octavius and Rome." This was the second year which he passed away from Italy. But he was in no hurry to return thither. He wished to strengthen his power by exercising it at a distance, and allow the Romans time to accustom themselves to the idea of a master. Indeed he was over-cautious; the secret wrath of the aristocracy did not require such prolonged circumspection.



Octavius.

Moreover Mæcenas and Agrippa kept guard for him at Rome; the letters of Octavius to the senate and consuls passed through their hands; he had even left them a seal like his own that they might modify according to circumstances the contents of his dispatches.<sup>1</sup> They gave the watchword for devotion, they prompted enthusiasm, they directed deliberations and voting. Thanks to the universal desire for peace, this was an easy task.

Since the blundering attempt of Lepidus, that salutary warning which Augustus had so well understood, the calm had not been disturbed, and the only clamour which agitated the city was that of the adulatory decrees of the senate. After Actium they had voted a triumph, after the subjection of Egypt they decreed another and commenced in his name the building of the great temple of Fortune at Præneste. Then the priests were ordered

Coin of Augustus.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This seal bore the image of the sphinx, the emblem of his conduct; later on he made use of a ring on which was engraved the head of Alexander, and a signet bearing a good likeness of himself. (Suet., *Octav.*, 50; Dion., li. 3; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xxxvii. 4.) For correspondence with his counsellors he had a cipher, which consisted of putting instead of the required letter the one immediately following it in the alphabet. (Dion, *ibid.*)

<sup>2</sup> Head of Octavius, consul for the sixth time. On the reverse a crocodile, the symbol of Egypt, and the inscription, *Egypt captive*. Denarius.

to offer up prayers for Octavius as they did for the Roman people, and in their petitions to join his name with that of the gods; the citizens were enjoined to pour out libations in his honour at their banquets; the vestals, senators and people were to go forth to meet him on the day when he should re-enter Rome. That day was to become a yearly festival; two triumphal arches, one at Brundisium, the other in the Forum, were to be raised to perpetuate the memory of his victories; on solemn occasions he was to wear the purple mantle; and finally the entrance to his house was to be adorned with branches of laurel and a civic crown. We possess a medal whereon this crown surrounds the inscription which courtiers of fortune are so ready to lavish upon those whom they call saviours of their country, *ob cives servatos*.

To these showy honours it was well understood that power must be added. At the beginning of January in the year 29, while Octavius in Asia was entering upon his fifth consulship, the senators and magistrates at Rome swore to obey his decrees, and the tribunitian power was offered him for life with the right of extending its inviolability to whosoever should implore it. But all this had for the most part been given to others, and they wished to do something fresh. A classical idea cleared away the difficulty. Before the Areopagus, Orestes had been saved by the vote of Athene; it was decided that in criminal causes Octavius might vote in favour of the accused. This was the right of pardon, which has remained one of the attributes of sovereignty.<sup>1</sup>

A deputation from the senate went to bear him these decrees. They found him occupied in making a god of Cæsar and permitting temples to be built to himself in Pergamum and Nicomedia. With the Greeks, who had long since grown accustomed to these sacrilegious flatteries, he readily allowed an apotheosis to be decreed him during his lifetime;<sup>2</sup> with the Romans he did not accept all

<sup>1</sup> Dion, li. 19. In the year 13 it was decreed, on his return from Gaul, that to all those who should go out to meet him *ἐντὸς τοῦ πωμηρίου ὄντα ἄδειαν εἶναι* (*id.*, liv. 25.) When he re-entered Rome no criminals were executed on that day. Finally, his temples and statues became inviolable asylums, and in the colleges of priests he could increase the number of members as much as he liked. (Senec, *de Clem.*, i. 18; Tac., *Ann.*, iii. 36; Dion, li. 20.)

<sup>2</sup> On this question see, in vol. iv., chapter lxxvii., § iii.: *Religious Reform*.

that was offered him; he even refused the most valuable of these prerogatives, the tribunitian power for life, in order to leave some doubt as to his intentions and an illusion to those who still indulged in them.

Meanwhile his lieutenants made his arms triumphant everywhere: Statilius Taurus in Spain; Nonius Gallus and Carinas in Belgica; Messala in Aquitania;<sup>1</sup> Crassus against the Bastarnæ and Daci. He might have ascended to the Capitol escorted



Ruins of Nicomedia.<sup>2</sup>

by triumphant generals, and inaugurated his government by announcing to the Romans the end of all war. It was the propitious moment for returning to Rome; he passed through the gates in the month of *sextilis*, which afterwards took his name (August 29th B.C.), and triumphed thrice, for the Dalmatians, for Actium,<sup>3</sup> and for Egypt, whose great river, according to custom,

<sup>1</sup> Messala had taken with him his *protégé* Tibullus, who was no more of an ardent soldier than Horace. (Cf. Tibullus, *Eleg.*, i. 7.)

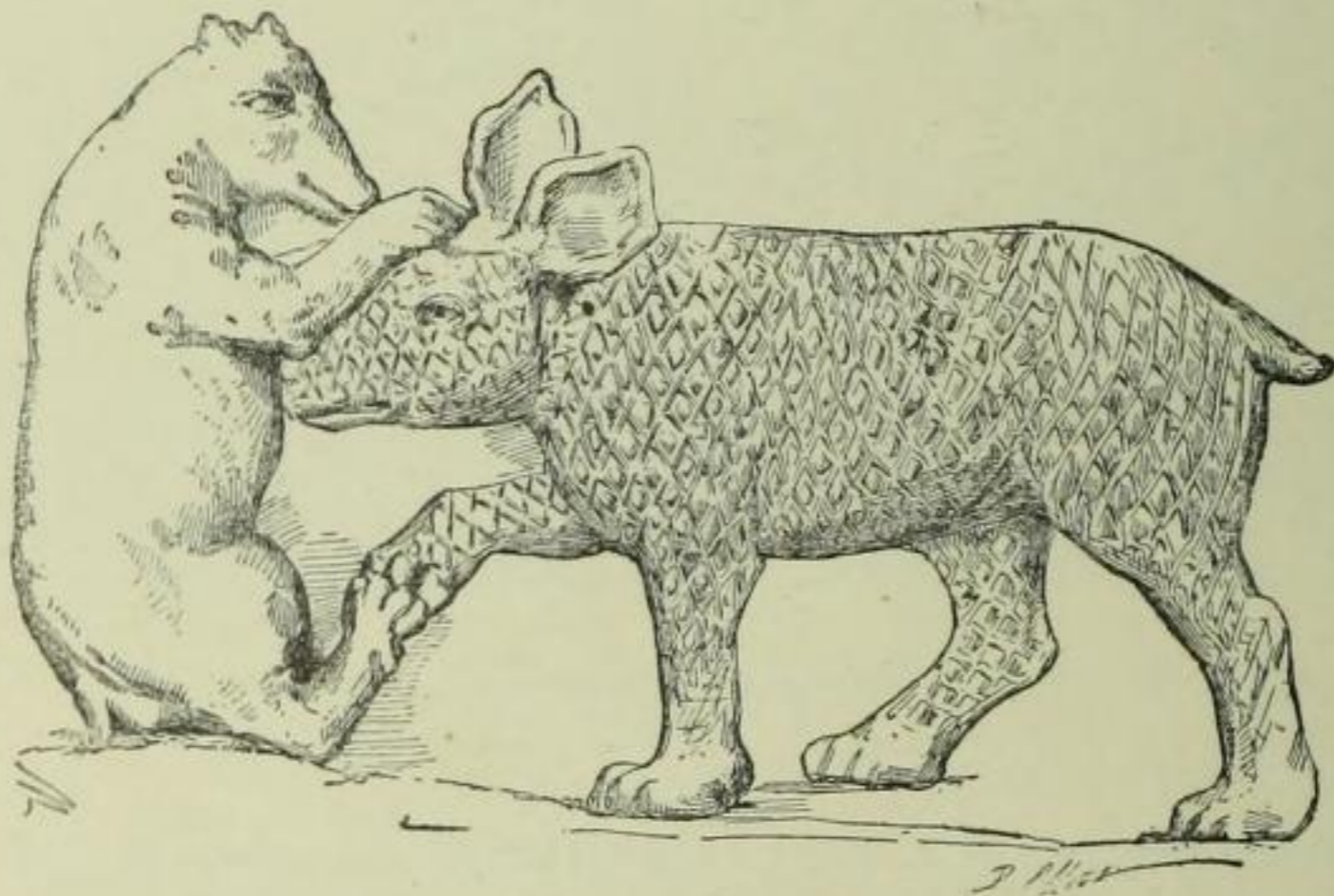
<sup>2</sup> Texier, *Descr. de l'Asie Mineure*, vol. i., pl. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The name of Antony was not even uttered; it was for his victory over the Egyptian fleet at Actium that Octavius triumphed; but decrees of the senate had already overthrown the statues of the triumvir, declared the day of his birth unlucky, and forbidden any member of the *gens Antonia* to bear his surname of Marcus.

figured in the ceremony, and thus gained for us the beautiful statue of the Nile, which is preserved in the Vatican. On descending from the Capitol he vowed a temple to Minerva, the goddess who had given him his precocious wisdom, and in the Julian Basilica, which he dedicated, he placed that statue of victory which after the triumph of Christianity remained to the last pagans at Rome the venerated symbol of the glorious history of their fathers. The recompenses to the soldiers and the gratuities to the citizens were such as the treasures of the Ptolemies permitted: 1,000 sesterces each to the former, and they were 120,000 in number; 400 to the latter; even the children, who usually counted only over eleven, received their share, in honour of the young Marcellus.<sup>1</sup>

So much gold was suddenly brought into circulation that throughout Italy the interest on money fell two-thirds, from twelve to four per cent., and the price of property was doubled.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this expenditure, Octavius was still rich



Combat between a Rhinoceros and a Bear.<sup>3</sup>

enough to make sumptuous offerings to the temples of Rome, although he had refused the golden crowns offered according to custom by the cities of Italy; he had paid all his debts without

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Octav.*, 41. Octavius had found a great quantity of gold in the palace of Cleopatra, for the queen on her return from Actium had despoiled the temples and the rich citizens of Alexandria, which freed Octavius from the necessity of doing so. He confiscated property, however, of those who could be accused for having sided with Antony, and all the other inhabitants had to yield him the sixth part of their fortune. (Dion, li. 17.)

<sup>2</sup> Dion, li. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Rich, *Dict. des Ant. rom. et grecq.*, under the head *Venatio*.

demanding anything from his numerous debtors, and had burnt the acknowledgments of State debts.<sup>1</sup> These royal manners and the splendid fêtes which followed: Trojan games, at which Marcellus and Tiberius appeared, combats between Servian and Dacian prisoners, hunts in the circus, in which were seen for the first time a rhinoceros and a hippopotamus; so many largesses and pleasures sowed oblivion and hope. In order to announce solemnly the commencement of the new era, Octavius closed the temple of Janus, which had been open for two years, and caused the augury of safety to be taken.<sup>3</sup>

A Hippopotamus.<sup>2</sup>

Fifteen years previously, a youth from the schools of Apollonia, small in stature and of feeble constitution, had set out alone from that city, and arrived almost unknown at Rome, where notwithstanding the advice of his kindred and the entreaties of his mother, the ambitious boy of eighteen had had the boldness to claim the heritage of his adopted father, who had fallen under twenty dagger-thrusts. At first he had been laughed at. But he had deceived the most able men, he had crushed the strongest, and on the ruins of all parties and of all ambitions, he had raised an unassailable fortune. Having reached the limit, what would he do now? It is said that he consulted Agrippa and Mæcenas; that the former advised him to abdicate, the latter to retain the Empire.<sup>4</sup> Such counsels are only given from the benches of rhetoricians.

Being really a cautious, practical man, without large ideas, Octavius set himself to build up bit by bit a constitution which has remained nameless in political language, and which for three centuries rested upon a lie. Fraud never endures so long; in this case only the form was false. Everyone well understood the

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Octav.*, 30; and Dion, liii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> From a coin of Julia Mammæa, published by Pellerin, *Mélanges*, vol. 1, p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> *Monum. Ancy.*; Suet., *Octav.*, 31; and Dion, li. 20: τὸ οἰώνισμα τὸ τῆς Ὑγείας (or σωτηρίας.) Dion has previously explained (xxxvii. 24) what this ceremony was, which could only be accomplished when no army was engaged in a campaign. The augurs took the auspices in order to know whether the prayers addressed to the goddess *Salus* would be accepted that day.

<sup>4</sup> Dion, li., 1-30.