DURING the period 264–133 B.C. Rome strode out of the Italian peninsula into the Mediterranean world like an all-conquering colossus. First it took the western half of the Mediterranean basin; then, after 200, its armies turned eastward into Greece and Asia. Geographically such an expansion of a unified Italy may have been inevitable; but certainly the political and cultural conditions then existing in the Mediterranean aided the process. Politically the area was divided into many mutually hostile states and so invited conquest; culturally it was becoming ever more one unit, that embraced by Hellenistic civilization. The entrance of Rome into this world resembles the introduction of a magnetic field. All the particles which before drifted about aimlessly swung together in patterns centering on Rome; moreover, while lines of force radiated out from Rome, strong counter-currents of Hellenistic civilization flowed in upon it.

The Hellenistic world, at which we must look briefly, represents an absorbing part of the development of ancient civilization. Originating in the Macedonian conquest of the Orient under Alexander (334–323), it was in many respects a very modern world. Socially cosmopolitan, its life was one of large cities. The political relations among its states
were intricate and rested upon a subtle, shifting balance of power. Its civilization was graceful, learned, and critical. On the surface it displayed lavish richness, but underneath was the vital problem of the interaction of Oriental and Greek systems of thought and organization. The Hellenistic world held and transmitted to Rome much more of the Orient than one might suspect at first glance.

Hellenistic Politics and Economy

Politically the Hellenistic world included all the shores of the eastern Mediterranean and extended into Asia as far as the Iranian plateau. Within this area the three main states in 264 were Egypt, Syria-Mesopotamia, and Macedonia. Smaller districts were held by such powers as the rising state of Pergamum in Asia Minor, the great trading city of Rhodes, and two leagues of Greek city-states, the Achaean and Aetolian. The major states were ruled by Macedonian stock and were largely governed by fortune-hunting Greeks, who poured out into the East after Alexander. With them they brought their insistence upon a rational approach to all problems, and in many areas broke down the traditionalism of the Orient. Hellenistic Egypt was a marvel of centralized state planning, but in the end it still resembled the Egypt of the Pharaohs more than a city-state like Athens. Hellenistic states were large, and they were in almost all cases autocratic; this age introduced into western civilization the Oriental concept of the divine ruler. Yet at the same time these kings did their utmost to promote Greek culture, at least down to 200; then the effort at Hellenization ran into political difficulties as the natives began to react more strongly.

Economically Greek rationalism improved both agricul-
tural and commercial techniques of the ancient Orient. The peasants on the Nile now gave up their stone hoes for tools of iron. Wide areas began to use money in trade for the first time, and commerce reached the height of its specialization during the ancient world. But, at base, the Orient still lingered. Unlike the small, individualistic trader in Greece, the Hellenistic trader was often an agent for a king or big landowner. Land itself was not held in small sections as in stony Greece but in great estates; and the plantation style of farming tended to spread, first into Greece itself, then into Roman Italy, with tremendous political and social effects.

**Hellenistic Culture**

In this period the system of classical education, built around grammar, dialectic, and especially rhetoric, was refined and widely spread. Hellenistic authors were more deft at criticizing and evaluating the past than in creating new works of enduring value, though a great deal of popular and learned literature was produced. Overly refined, replete in mythological allusions, striving for originality, most Hellenistic literature lacks depth of real feeling and so betrays its artificial social and cultural base. Similarly Hellenistic art, though based on conventions and techniques of classic Greek art, is far more realistic, is inclined to explore the pathetic, and is overly forceful in emotion. Technically, however, the poets and sculptors of this period were very competent. They had a great influence on Roman culture, for Rome, it must be remembered, met the Hellenistic world, not the classic Greek era, when it expanded eastward.

In essence the Hellenistic may be distinguished from the classic Greek as being more cosmopolitan, more polished,
less original. Nevertheless it was not entirely without force and originality in some fields. Hellenistic science is one of the great stars in the crown of the Greek genius. One can do little more than name such men as the geometer Euclid (c. 300), Archimedes the mathematical physicist (c. 287–212), or Aristarchus (c. 310–230), who guessed that the earth went around the sun. Even more distinguished in their day were the versatile scholar Eratosthenes (c. 275–194), who measured the circumference of the earth by a truly scientific method and with remarkable accuracy, and Hipparchus (c. 190–120), the greatest Greek astronomer, who invented trigonometry in his efforts to correct earlier astronomical and geographical research. In mathematics, geography, and astronomy the Hellenistic advances were spectacular, as also in medicine, where dissection was carried out at Alexandria. These scientific developments had little connection with the practical techniques of industry; motivated chiefly by intense curiosity, the scientists of the Hellenistic world used logic as their main tool, but did employ experiment and the collection of information more than their predecessors before Aristotle.

Hellenistic developments in philosophy, again, were notable and had a tremendous influence on Roman thinking. The problem which met the philosophers now was an urgent and serious one: thousands upon thousands of Greeks had left their small city-states, where they were supported and strengthened by local ties and customs, and were now living in the cosmopolitan society of the great Hellenistic states under absolute rulers. These uprooted Greeks needed some form of guidance in life under the new conditions.

Of the numerous answers given, Epicureanism and Stoicism became the most famous. Epicurus (342–271) was a
gentle soul living at Athens, who felt that his fellow man was afflicted by superstition and fear. To remove these terrors he preached a doctrine of materialism. The gods did indeed exist, but they paid no attention to mortals; all the world, including man, was formed by the accidental collocation of atoms. When a man died, his body dissolved into its atoms. So why fear what happens now or in the future? The main aim in life to a sincere Epicurean was intellectual pleasure, to be gained by a simple life of retirement from the problems of the world.

Contemporary with Epicurus was the gaunt Zeno (335–263), who walked up and down the Painted Portico (Stoa Poikile) at Athens, expounding the Stoic philosophy. Unlike the fixed Epicurean system, Stoic thought changed considerably in later generations and eventually absorbed a tremendous portion of the main concepts in ancient thinking; in Rome this philosophy was to be of far-reaching significance, and it later influenced Christian leaders. To the Stoic the world was governed by the divine spirit. Man had a spark of the divine in him, and it was up to him to lead an active life in this world so that the spark might go back to the divine upon his death. Essentially the only good and evil was within one’s mind, for the body was mere dross; anything that happened to it, accordingly, was incidental—the Stoic, indeed, could argue that all events were in accordance with divine will and were for us to accept and understand. His was a life of duty; and since all men equally had a spark of the divine, they were essentially his brothers, or fellow citizens in a great world state.

Despite its originality in science and philosophy, or its technical skill in art and literature, Hellenistic civilization did not have a long bloom. After 200 B.C. decay becomes
apparent in one field after another. Astronomy turned into astrology, geography became purely descriptive, medicine stressed the empirical rather than the inquisitive, Oriental religions gave a nonrational answer to the world's problems which began to rival that of the philosophers. The reasons for this change are hotly debated. There can be no doubt that outside pressure weighed heavily, the Romans pressing in from the west, such peoples as the Parthians advancing from the east; for certainly the Roman conquest was brutally destructive of Hellenistic economy. But as one studies the record of war among the Hellenistic states after 250 B.C., one cannot but feel that these states first tore themselves to pieces by their own rivalries. Nor may one forget that few of the states had attained an internal balance between Greeks and natives. Yet, though the Hellenistic world invited—almost required—conquest, the power of the Greek tradition, as encased in its Hellenistic form, has never been better shown than in its terrific effect upon the political conqueror. Looking back from the age of Augustus the poet Horace rightly exclaimed that “Greece, the captive, made her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium.”

Rome and Carthage

When Rome began to expand outside Italy, it first turned west. In 265 B.C. the western Mediterranean was divided among three powers—the Roman confederacy in Italy, the various Greek states in eastern Sicily and southern France, and the Carthaginian trade empire of Africa, Spain, and western Sicily. Relations between Carthage and Rome had thus far always been incidental but amicable, and in the 270's the two states were actually allied against a mutual danger, King Pyrrhus. Victory against Pyrrhus, however, had
brought Rome down to the shores of the strait separating Sicily from Italy, and through difficulties in Sicily the two greater states soon drifted into war. This First Punic War lasted almost a generation (264–241 B.C.), largely because of Rome’s unfamiliarity with the sea. When the Romans did build a fleet and challenged Carthage on its own element, they proved that discipline and daring were as valuable as nautical skill in ancient battle, for they won all but one engagement; but they failed to respect the storms of the Mediterranean and lost fleet after fleet through foolhardiness. During the war something like 500 Roman warships and 1,000 transports went down; at least 100,000 Italians drowned. Bled white, the Romans and their subjects could only grope gorgingly for a few years after 250, but then in one last dogged spurt they built another fleet, and the war ended. Rome gained control over all Sicily plus an indemnity.

After the First Punic War Rome conquered the Gauls in the Po Valley, gained a protectorate over the piratical islands on the east side of the Adriatic, and filched Sardinia and Corsica from Carthaginian rule. Spurred by its rival Massilia, the Roman Senate also cast anxious eyes at the Carthaginian expansion in Spain, which was directed after 221 by a young man of noble family called Hannibal. Only twenty-five when he assumed control in Spain, Hannibal (247–c. 183) rapidly proved himself to be an astute politician, an able general, and an implacable foe of Rome. Roman efforts to interfere in Spain eventually produced the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.), the most severe test which Roman character and the Italian confederacy were ever to meet.

In this war Rome held unquestioned mastery of the seas
and planned to invade both Spain and the Carthaginian homeland. The plodding Roman generals, however, had not taken Hannibal into account. The Carthaginian leader broke across the Pyrenees with his devoted army of Spaniards and Africans in the spring of 218, crossed the Rhone before the Romans could stop him, and made his way over the Alps in the early fall just after the first snows. Once in Italy with 20,000 foot and 6,000 horse, he hoped to rouse the Gauls, defeat the Romans completely, and so shatter the Roman confederacy. In his calculations Hannibal made only one mistake: born and bred in an empire which rested more on force than on consent, he failed to perceive the strength of the ties between Rome and its subjects.

Otherwise all went as he had planned. He enticed the overconfident Roman leaders in the Po Valley into a battle on the Trebia River in the morning mists and utterly defeated them, though the generals got away and claimed a victory. For the next year (217) the populace elected one of its favorites, the demagogue Flaminius, as a consul; Hannibal inveigled him into a trap and destroyed both consul and army. Again for 216 the people insisted upon a popular hero, Varro, while the senatorial aristocracy secured the election of Paullus as the other consul. The Senate by now had begun to fear the effect on Italy of this Carthaginian conqueror and broke its usual policy by directing the consuls to give him battle.

The result was the battle of Cannae in Apulia. On an August day Varro and Paullus led out their large forces (about 60,000) on a smooth, open plain by the south bank of the Aufidus River, facing southwest with cavalry on the flanks and infantry packed tightly together in the center for a power play. Hannibal lined up opposite with some
45,000 men, his larger cavalry force likewise on the flanks and his infantry—Africans, Spaniards and Gauls, and Africans again—in the center, bowed out toward the enemy. In the action the Romans pressed back the Carthaginian center until it was straight, then drove it back yet more. Hot, blinded by a dusty wind, crowded together, the Roman foot pushed on—only suddenly to find Hannibal’s Africans wheeling in on their flanks and Hannibal’s cavalry, victorious over the Roman horse, coming in behind them. Hannibal’s cunning tactics had once more entrapped the Romans and led to the almost complete destruction of the encircled army.

After Cannae some of Rome’s subjects in south Italy revolted. The rest, however, stuck with Rome, and Hannibal now began to experience the true strengths of the city. The Romans refused to ransom the captives of Cannae, they took down the arms dedicated in their temples and armed slaves, they forbade the word “Peace” in the city, internal cleavages were forgotten, and above all they made desperate efforts even by human sacrifice to regain “the peace of the gods,” the loss of which evidently had doomed their army.

Never again in Italy did a Roman general allow Hannibal to draw him into a full-scale battle; rather, one army dogged his footsteps while others reoccupied the lost territories and took Spain. In 212 the Romans had twenty-five legions under arms in addition to a large navy. In 204 the Roman conqueror of Spain, Scipio (Africanus), invaded Africa and forced Carthage to a truce, during which Hannibal at last left Italy. For fifteen years he had supported his army in a hostile country and had maintained within that army of diverse elements a high level of efficiency. In Africa one last battle remained for him—at Zama in 202, where Scipio turned Hannibal’s tactics against him and won the day in a hard-
fought action. Carthage then yielded to a harsh peace. Spain became Roman, the Carthaginians lost their navy, and they were forbidden to make war except with Rome's consent.

**Conquest of the East**

After the defeat of Hannibal Rome held the western Mediterranean under its control. One might have expected peace, for the state and people appeared exhausted by the desperate struggle, which to later generations marked the height of the old Roman *virtus*. Instead, Rome turned east within a year and hurled its armies in quick succession at two of the major powers in the Hellenistic world, Syria and Macedonia. The ostensible cause of the new wars was the appeal of skillful ambassadors from Rhodes and Pergamum: hoping to draw Rome in to redress the eastern balance of power, they played on the dangers to Rome of a reported alliance between the ruthless Philip V of Macedonia and Antiochus III of Syria, who was looming up like a second Alexander. Beneath the surface, however, one can detect the grave effects of the Second Punic War. The Senate, which had been given virtual control of the state machinery as a result of the reverses by popular leaders early in that war, appears to have been warped by an almost hysterical fear complex and showed very poor judgment. A preventive war was first declared against Philip (200–196) “to free the Greeks” and so prevent the kings from using Greece as a base of operations against the Italian peninsula. Philip was defeated, the Greeks were freed, and then Rome found Antiochus moving into the vacuum left in the Aegean. The war against Philip thus made inevitable the war against Antiochus (192–189), which expelled him from the Aegean and Asia Minor.
Rome took no territorial gains from these wars. Its leaders gave Greece a presumably definitive reorganization and seem to have hoped for voluntary support by the liberated Greeks; instead, they found that the Greeks wanted complete freedom and were not entirely grateful to their "barbarian" friends who looted widely and then posed as benefactors. All in all, the Roman Senate failed to understand the complexities of the Hellenistic political system; in turn each faction in the Greek states tried to gain Roman support for its own ends and failed to comprehend both the vigor and the simplicity of Roman thought. The result was explosion after explosion in the middle of the second century until finally Roman patience gave way to irritation and then to open arrogance. In 148 Macedonia became a province, and two years later the Greek states were attached to it as a dependency. Asia Minor, mostly in the hands of Pergamum, was left to Rome by the last king of Pergamum in 133 and also became a province.

Problems of Empire

After 150 B.C. Rome's will dominated everywhere in the Mediterranean, in provinces, dependencies, and technically independent states alike; but Rome was not governing the Mediterranean very successfully. Its vacillating attitude and occasional brutality had had terrific effects on the economic and social system of the Hellenistic East. The Spaniards, rebelling at extortion and injustice, fought one long guerrilla war after another. Carthage was provoked into rebellion and then utterly destroyed (149–146). In Sicily and Italy there were serious slave rebellions; on the seas pirates grew steadily bolder as Rome eliminated the last Hellenistic navies. Just before the turn of the century German invaders, the
Cimbri and the Teutons, broke into Gaul, destroyed a Roman army (105) in the greatest disaster since Cannae, and were only with difficulty beaten when they penetrated the Po Valley. Clearly something was wrong with Rome, but to understand the roots of the trouble we must turn to consider the effects of the conquest thus far.

In the first place the Roman methods of government, though subtly changed by the acquisition of power, did not expand in the right directions. The Romans stumbled into empire. They had very little comprehension of the problems of imperial government and refused to copy the elaborate state organizations of the Hellenistic powers. One underlying difficulty was the fact that the senatorial aristocracy, the main framer of policy after the Second Punic War, was reluctant to enlarge its closed ranks to supply extra magistrates. Twenty-five main senatorial families so dominated the government during the second century that only five men whose ancestors had not held office became consuls from 200 to 146. Though the great, closely-knit families marshaled their tenants and other hangers-on against each other in fierce contests to gain offices of state, these feuds rarely involved serious questions of policy. The Roman state drifted and refused to meet its slowly growing problems; its leading elements concentrated on enjoying the fruits of Hellenistic civilization and on amassing money.

In its new possessions Rome did not introduce the Italian type of alliance which called for soldiers in time of war; instead, it continued the usual Hellenistic policy of requiring tribute from the subject cities. The step was almost inevitable, but thenceforth Italy and the provinces were quite distinct and remained so for a long time. To each province created through 146—Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, Nearer
Spain, Farther Spain, Macedonia, and Africa—Rome sent each year only an elected, unsalaried praetor, with a quaestor as his assistant. The great bulk of local government was left in the hands of the basic political units, cities or tribes; here Rome tended to encourage the growth of cities and oligarchic control.

Over these governors the Senate had little real supervision. Our general impression is that, once the initial severities of the Roman conquest were past, most Roman governors did a fair job, but they were hampered by a lack of continuity, lack of centralized control, and lack of expression from below. When now and then a rapacious praetor, imbued with the increasing individualism and love of money which appears in second-century Rome, played the tyrant over the provincials, little could be done about it. In 149 the Senate set up a standing court to try such persons, but all evidence suggests that its senatorial members were loath to condemn their fellows merely to please provincials. Equally dangerous with the lack of control over the governors was the failure to provide a standing army and navy for the defense of the empire. Rome had always raised its forces to meet a specific need, and this policy of extemporization was continued even though the needs of the state were steadily becoming more continuous.

*Economic and Social Changes at Home*

Another field of far-reaching change was the economic. The wealth of Rome not only increased tremendously, it also shifted significantly in distribution. Together with the building of roads, maintenance of public buildings, and so on, the collecting of taxes in the provinces was farmed out by state contract, and the group which tended to specialize
in this field became known as the equestrian order. These equestrians gained considerable wealth from their activities for the state and from their wide-scale money-lending activities. The equestrian "publicans" were not noted for being merciful or even just; on the contrary they combined at times with the governors to shear the provincials and charged exorbitant interest rates.

While this element rose rapidly in wealth and significance, the senatorial group still retained its primacy. Debarred by law from state contracts or even commerce, the victorious consuls and praetors put the profits of war and governorship chiefly into land. They thus helped speed a revolution in Italian agriculture—the shift from intensive farming by independent peasants to the creation of large farms under central, scientific management, operated largely by slaves. This revolution, one of the crucial points in the development of Rome, can be detected in its beginnings before the Second Punic War, but it was much assisted by the course of that and subsequent wars. Hannibal's ravaging of Italy put many a small farm out of operation; the system of conscription, which took only property owners, kept men away from their homes for year upon year as the military demands of the empire grew. Again, the wars brought hosts of slaves to Rome; to give an extreme example, in one year one general enslaved 150,000 persons in the area now called Albania. As a technical base for the new type of slave agriculture the Roman landowners adopted the scientific principles of Hellenistic land management. Here the Hellenistic world began to have its revenge upon its conqueror.

By the middle of the second century much of south Italy was devoted to large ranches. Campania, Latium, and Etruria were largely given over to plantations of considerable size,
raising olives, grapes, vegetables, wheat, and other products as the location permitted. From the economic point of view the change was an advance, but in its political and social effects it was catastrophic: the element upon which the state essentially rested was being rooted out. Some of the small farmers drifted to the exciting, ever-growing city of Rome; others moved to the provinces; many settled in the Po Valley, where small farms were still possible. But in Spain or the Po Valley these Romans could no longer attend the assemblies, and those citizens who barely kept alive in Rome were not the best voters from whom to expect independent, careful judgment. Trade and industry in Rome, or in Italy generally, did not keep pace with the rise of the state, for imports from the Hellenistic world gained the upper hand in many spheres; in the others, skilled slaves from the East tended to take over both production and sale, operating for the account of a wealthy equestrian or senator. Though any free Roman might swell with pride as he watched the triumphs and saw new temples and mansions rising, he might have trouble earning his daily bread in second-century Rome.

While the drift of the poor to the city represented a loss of incalculable value to the armies and institutions of the state, the ever-increasing ostentation of the rich could only harm that class from the point of view of the old Roman morality. The individualistic tenor of Greek philosophy began to act as a dissolvent on old Roman group attitudes. Within the family women became ever more emancipated and marriage ever less sacred in the old sense; toward the end of the century one Roman censor soberly urged his fellows to undergo the necessary evil of marriage to keep up the population. Changes in moral attitudes must always be assessed gingerly, but there can be no doubt that social
tensions grew in second-century Rome as the contrasts between rich and poor, free and slave, Roman and non-Roman became sharper.

_The Surge of Hellenistic Civilization_

The political prominence of Rome and its wealth naturally attracted culture. The ensuing changes in Roman civilization from the mid-third century down to about 133 are of tremendous significance in the history of the state. The onrush of Hellenistic influence began in the third century after Rome's conquest of south Italy and Sicily, but it did not reach full flood until the second, and still more the first, century, when Roman generals and soldiers came into direct contact with the main centers of the Hellenistic world and brought back booty, slaves, and dependents to Rome. It was inevitable that the rather naïve and simple Roman should look favorably upon the luxuries and arts of the cosmopolitan, graceful inhabitants of the East: the Romans had almost nothing of their own in these fields, and insofar as any outside civilization had influenced Rome since the days of the kings it had been primarily the Greek. Yet the degree to which the conqueror bent culturally before the conquered and humbly admitted his inferiority was extraordinary.

The Romans first borrowed means of entertainment and physical pleasure. Bakers, cooks, painters, sculptors, and a host of other specialists appeared in Rome either voluntarily or as slaves, bearing the latest tricks of the Hellenistic world in pampering the body, delighting the eye, or lulling the ear. Particularly significant and somewhat more easily seen is the awakening interest in Greek literature at Rome after 250 B.C. In this field the Romans first took plays, to be performed for the populace on state occasions, and the stresses
of the war with Hannibal encouraged the frequent presentation of such drama.

The first writer of note, Livius Andronicus (c. 284–c. 204), came from Tarentum; in his plays he put side by side material from Homer, the Attic drama, and the New Comedy. Succeeding dramatists wrote mainly comedy, though by “writing” one means primarily “translating.” Nor did these Roman playwrights merely reproduce one Greek work; since they had a wide field of Greek originals from which to choose and a simple audience with an appetite for heavy doses of amusement, the usual practice was to take pieces from two or three Greek plays, stitch them together, and present the result as one play. Plots in Roman comedy, as a result, are sometimes peculiar. Still, it must be admitted that the Roman writers have a gift for telling phrase and absurd situation which is not merely copied from the Greek originals. The Umbrian Plautus (T. Maccius Plautus, c. 251–184) had a superb sense for dialogue and a broad vein of humor; Terence (P. Terentius Afer, c. 195–159), on the other hand, was more refined and more interested in psychological delineation of character. As he tells us in one of his prologues, his plays did not always please the Roman audience; once a ropedancer set up nearby, and all his audience left to see the more interesting sport.

In addition to comedies, tragedies were also translated and performed, but were less popular. Livius Andronicus translated the *Odyssey*, and the resulting Latin poem replaced the Twelve Tables as the standard text for boys learning their mother tongue. Various poets were also commissioned by noble patrons to celebrate the great deeds of the epoch. Naevius (Cn. Naevius, c. 270–201) thus wrote an epic on the First Punic War, and Ennius from Calabria (Q. Ennius,
239–169) composed a great poem in rugged hexameter entitled \textit{Annales}, which chanted of Roman history from the beginning. In the work of men like Ennius or the Roman senator Fabius Pictor, who wrote a history of Rome in Greek about 200, appears the pride of Romans in their past development and character.

All this literature, together with the numerous originals and copies of Greek art and sculpture which poured into Rome, served to please and divert the Romans or to satisfy their pride. But its effects went much further. Inevitably the surge of Hellenistic civilization into Rome had a considerable, ever-increasing effect upon Roman thought and attitudes toward life. Exposed to the full charm of the civilization when they served in the East, surrounding themselves with its products in Rome, reading and seeing its literature, listening to its persuasive philosophers and rhetoricians, the Roman aristocrats had no native tradition of learning or philosophy with which to stop up their ears and eyes. When a character drawn by Ennius declaimed on the stage:

\begin{quote}
'Tis my creed both now and ever—there are gods beyond the skies;  
But I hold they never trouble what we human beings do,  
Else the good would thrive and villains wither—which is far from true! \footnote{Translated by J. Wight Duff, \textit{Cambridge Ancient History}, VIII (Cambridge, 1930), 405 (by permission of the Cambridge University Press).}
\end{quote}

he was voicing a stock thought of Epicureanism, but many a Roman must have gotten a shock which set him thinking about the old gods of Rome.

Yet it will not do simply to say that the Romans took over
Hellenistic civilization lock, stock, and barrel. On the contrary the influence of this civilization was curiously limited in several respects. In politics, law, and military matters the Romans seem to have felt that the East had little to teach them. From Hellenistic science the Romans accepted chiefly the practically useful discoveries in such fields as agriculture and medicine. The one field of the arts in which Romans were outstanding, that of architecture, owed much to Hellenistic precepts, but the Romans early became independent; though the Romans did not invent the arch, they made ever greater use of it in their mortar-and-brick work and later developed the dome.

For itself the aristocracy claimed a wide freedom of thought, but it was chary of admitting that freedom for its inferiors, whether in literature, religion, or social activity. In the main it preferred down to the last century B.C. to fight its feuds on its own level and did not look with favor upon appeals to the common people which might result in the loss of dignity by individual nobles. Native citizens of the upper classes did not write plays, and most authors and artists were dependent upon aristocratic patrons both for money and for protection. A man like Plautus was careful to put his displays of sin in another land, and the Romans boasted that their stage did not have the unrestrained license of the classic Athenian comedy. Naevius, for instance, attacked Scipio Africanus from the stage and was put in jail until he recanted. Nowhere in the Roman Republic will one find Romans asserting that freedom of speech is a vital part of liberty; Ennius summed up the situation in a famous line, "It is dangerous for a plebeian to mutter aloud."
The Old and the New

To understand the currents of the second century, after Hellenistic influence was rising in Rome, one could not do better than to study and compare two of its major leaders, Cato the Censor (M. Porcius Cato, 234–149) and Scipio Aemilianus (185–129). Cato came from old country stock and made his way up into the senatorial aristocracy through sheer dogged ability coupled with friendship in high quarters. In his youth he fought against Hannibal and could show scars to prove it; then he opposed Scipio Africanus in the factional strife of the era and eventually drove the conqueror of Carthage into semiexile. Cantankerous, violent in speech, Cato prided himself on being an Old Roman. He opposed the Greek sympathizers in politics, and he struggled against Hellenistic influence in daily life. As censor he tried to cut down the scale of luxury in Rome, even going so far as to rip out water mains laid into private houses. For his son he wrote a truly Roman history "in large letters." One paragraph from this or another work runs as follows:

I shall speak in the proper place, of those damned Greeks; I shall say what I saw in Athens, and how it may be good to glance at their literature, but not to go into it deeply. I shall prove how detestable and worthless is their race. Believe me, Marcus my son, this is an oracular saying: "if ever that race comes to pass its literature to us, all is lost." 2

One would hesitate to call Cato a fraud, but certainly he was more a creature of his age than he admitted—in fact, he was as thoroughgoing an individualist as his opponents. He learned Greek himself, and many of his famous aphor-

risms were filched from the Greek. Rather than being simple Cato really was avaricious and boastful, and though of rustic origin he was in his age one of the leading practitioners of capitalistic farming on the Hellenistic model. The earliest monument of Latin prose is Cato's work on agriculture. Politically he was successful in leading the Romans to adopt a harsher attitude toward the eastern states, but intellectually he failed to stem the onrush of Hellenistic thought and customs. Cato's defeat here was a victory for later civilization, for though Rome henceforth had no chance to develop a purely native culture, it was to pass on to the medieval and modern world much of the Greek civilization it acquired during and after the second century.

Scipio Aemilianus, the grandson by adoption of Scipio Africanus, flourished at the end of Cato's life and reflects the adjustment to Hellenistic thought which the aristocracy had made by the late second century. He encouraged Terence, harbored Polybius, the greatest Greek historian after Thucydides—whose subject was the rise of Rome—and was the sponsor of Panaetius, the Greek philosopher who adapted Stoicism to the Roman pattern of life. The circle about Scipio Aemilianus, both Roman and Greek, was truly cultured and influenced Roman thought greatly. Yet this same man was the general who led the Roman army at the final conquest and destruction of Carthage, the general who ended one of the bitterest wars in Spain. Cultivated and thoughtful, such a man still retained much of the old Roman vigor.

By 133 B.C. Hellenistic culture was coming close to being dominant at Rome but cannot be said to have impregnated Roman life. By this date Rome had essentially conquered its empire, but it had not yet mastered the political, economic,
and social effects of conquest, which were just becoming apparent. The next century, to which we shall now turn, was to be a troubled one, revolving about two main points: a solution to the problems of the empire, both in its government and in its effects at Rome, and a synthesis of the Hellenistic and Roman attitudes toward life.
CHAPTER IV

Trial and Error

THE last century (133–30 B.C.) of the Roman Republic is one of the most exciting periods of the ancient world. The problems are great, and their varied solutions are absorbing. Out of the turmoil rise such figures as Sulla the Fortunate, Cicero of the golden tongue, and towering Caesar—

he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.

These are men to kindle the world’s imagination.

The century saw the Roman state slide from republic to disguised dictatorship. The Senate, which at the outset united in its hands the major powers of that state, could not control the governors or the tax collectors; supervision within the provinces proper was inadequate; the absence of a standing army and navy prevented adequate defense. The nature of the Roman people itself was undergoing great changes, as we have already noted. In the country the sturdy peasant stock, which had formed Rome’s armies, gave way in many districts to slaves, who frequently rose in savage outbursts. The masses of the city, recruited largely from freedmen of